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Student name: Lois Sealey

Student ID no.: 816021367

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Supervisor: Dr. Chinien

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ABSTRACT

Through this dissertation, I will study the existing relationship between France and two of its départements d'outre-mer, Guadeloupe and Martinique, which, through departmentalization, has attributed to these islands the benefits of full French citizenship. I will explore the post-colonial perspective along with the concept of neo-colonialism and apply it to the study of the French Antilles in an effort to identify any correlations between these concepts and the reality faced by Guadeloupe and Martinique. It looks closely at the unusual path that the former French colonies took towards decolonization, and the impact that this choice has had on the social, economic, and political development of these nations. I will assess whether the relationship between these countries is mutually beneficial or if the benefits of the said relationship is inequitably distributed. Furthermore, it will provide a glimpse as to how the concept of departmentalization has evolved over the years from its inception in 1946 as compared to its present structure.

Keywords: France, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Neo-colonialism, Decolonialization, Dependency.

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Introduction

For many formerly colonized countries, the shadow of colonialism still looms heavily over them. Its impact was not limited to the past because it has shaped the current state of international affairs especially where the distribution of power is concerned as Caribbean states were robbed of their resources and impoverished while most European economies continued enriching themselves. It is this dynamic which not only gave Europe the economic resources to fast forward their development but simultaneously retard that of the Caribbean. This is an impact that can still be felt to this day and which was made worse by corruption and mismanagement of state resources within many of these former colonies. Therefore, in a world that is becoming increasingly interdependent, it is important that smaller states remain conscious of these historical facts, so that they can avoid repeating these patterns of exploitation, especially as this newfound interdependence makes Caribbean economies vulnerable once again to modern forms of colonialization and exploitation.

Over the years, the heads of the Caribbean region have been trying increasingly to band together and present themselves as a unified force to give the islands a voice on the international stage. The West Indies Federation, CARICOM¹, CSME², and OECS³ are among many of the attempts for further

¹ CARICOM- The Caribbean Community and Common Market.

² CSME- CARICOM Single Market & Economy.

³OECS- The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States.

Caribbean unification. However, the French Caribbean's lack of presence and limited participation in these organizations has become more and more apparent in this increasingly globalised society where regional and international integration has become imperative. The English-speaking Caribbean seems to dominate regional politics and appears to be at the centre of most of these discussions and attempts at integration while France dominates French politics, which includes the affairs of its dependencies. As both Guadeloupe and Martinique constitute a part of France (DOMs) and are thus official members of the European Union: "the French regions of the Caribbean who wish have the opportunity to join regional organisations in their geographical area have requested the authorities of the Republic about it."⁴ (Région Guadeloupe – press kit, 3). Therefore, while the French departments can join other political institutions, they must first seek the approval of France, and even if given permission, their involvement in such organizations are usually limited to that of associate members. This raises the question of the place of the French Antilles in Caribbean politics and the role that they play in this region, and furthermore, their role in their own internal politics. They always seem to observe from the sidelines especially where regional politics is concerned, on the other hand, despite France being farther geographically, there is no questioning the economic, political and even social ties between the French Caribbean and its most

⁴ https://www.regionguadeloupe.fr/fileadmin/user_upload/OECO_Adhesion_de_la_Guadeloupe_DP_EN.pdf.

important ally, France. The influence that France has on the politics of the French Caribbean is undeniable and many may argue that this relationship leaves little to no room for relations with other territories, even those nearest to them geographically.

The relationship that the DOMs⁵, such as Guadeloupe and Martinique, share with France is singular and perplexing. In a time where many Caribbean countries sought autonomy, Guadeloupe and Martinique favoured departmentalization over independence. This movement was heavily influenced by the works of Martinican writer Aimé Césaire⁶ on negritude, a movement which ironically had previously been used to denounce the empire under the Vichy regime during the Second World War, a time that was filled with international economic and political uncertainty and which also saw growing social and political tension between the French metropole and the French Caribbean. These works especially in the wake of the Second World War gave rise to a nationalist sentiment amongst both Martinican and Guadeloupean citizens and led to the creation various political parties and organizations such as the Popular Union for the Liberation of Guadeloupe, and the PPM⁷ However, instead of voting for their independence, the Antilles settled for the political status of departmentalization which they saw as more beneficial to them. The aforementioned relationship has

⁵ Départements d'outre-mer.

⁶ A prominent Martinican Author and political activist.

⁷ Parti Progressiste Martiniquais.

widely been viewed as disadvantageous for the French Antilles, by both French nationals and the international community. Nevertheless, the multiple referendums done by both Martinique and Guadeloupe, prove that this relationship does provide benefits considering that an overwhelming majority of locals voted against independence. I will study the relationship between France and its departments with special focus being placed on the post-colonial era, more specifically the period directly after they decided to become “départements d’outre-mer” up until present day. Furthermore, the idea of neo-colonialism will be analysed, the idea that “the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus its political policy is directed from outside.” (Nkrumah, 9) using the works of various post-colonial theorists. Additionally, it will delve further into the economic, political, social, cultural impact of the aforementioned relationship. Therefore the aim of this study is to reach a deeper understanding of the relationship that exists between France and its departments. This study remains pertinent as the continued examination of this region, that is so often ignored, the French Caribbean, may help to expose methods of subjugation of the Caribbean. Furthermore, it may encourage these states to work towards creating an entirely new system that promotes development rather than dependency. Ideally, the deductions formulated from such a study will encourage continued research on these issues, while acknowledging the colonial past so as to learn from it.

The aim is to determine whether this relationship is parasitic or symbiotic. A parasitic relationship refers to a relationship where one party benefits more than the other while the other party sustains harm as a result of the said relationship. In the context of Francophone Caribbean-Metropolitan relations, especially in the post-colonial discourse, generally the results of such relationships between ‘colony’ and ‘colonizer’ are parasitic due to the ever-present fact that is colonialism. Furthermore leaning on the work of Dujardin and Dei-Cas “[o]nce established, the host-parasite association is solid: it is difficult to eliminate the parasite from its host” (Dujardin, Dei-Cas, 253) This evokes an image of the neo-realists’ theory that sees States as self-interested organisms that believe solely in relative gains which essentially means that they ensure that they are better off than the other states around them and they are only concerned in their State’s interests. However, taking into account the process of decolonialization and the subsequent departmentalization of the French Antilles, does France still reap disproportionate gains from its DOMs? In the wake of this shift of thought, another pertinent question becomes whether the relationship can still be defined as parasitic or rather has it moved into the realm of symbiotic mutualism? A symbiotic relationship, refers to a relationship that is mutually beneficial to all parties concerned, “[p]articipants in a mutualistic relationship fully cooperate to gain value... mutualism is a relationship between participants who positively influence each other” (Yoon, Moon, Lee, 8-10) Essentially, it lends itself to the neo-liberalist school of thought which reasons that States work

together to ensure each other's (the other's) survival in the anarchic international system and to ensure that all parties involved make absolute gains, a mutually beneficial relationship from which everyone profits. Therefore, it is via these definitions of symbiotic and parasitic relationships that a conclusion will be drawn on the nature of the relationship between France and its departments.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter will discuss the concept of modern-day colonialism, or rather neo-colonialism as presented by various post-colonial authors as a means of further understanding the case of the French Caribbean. The second chapter will analyse the economic situation in Martinique and Guadeloupe and analyse the effect that their relationship with France has had on their economic growth and development. The third chapter will focus on the manner in which departmentalization has affected the political make-up and relationships of these two Francophone Caribbean islands, additionally this chapter will delve further into some of the socioeconomic and cultural significance of the said political relations.

Rationale

This examination of French Caribbean and French Metropolitan relations seeks to build upon previous research done in the field. Its aim is to go beyond

just simply assessing the nature of the relationship, but to ascertain whether the outcome provoked by this association is more negative or positive, and why both parties continue to maintain the said relationship in spite of the supposed negative effects that it has had. Moreover, it seeks to identify some of the major ways in which departmentalization has evolved over the past 77 years and the impact that these changes have had on the various economic and political exchanges between France and the DOMs.

Parameters

While there is one other départements d'outre-mer in the Caribbean, French Guiana, and other French speaking islands such as St. Marteen, this study will be focused on Guadeloupe and Martinique, due to their positioning at the centre of the archipelago, and due to the very similar history that the two share in terms of their journey to departmentalization.

Methodology

This is a multifaceted study that takes into account the cultural, social, economic and political impact of the existing relationship between France and its two departments. Additionally, the study will adopt a relativist approach as it examines both sides of the argument, looking at the positive and negative impact that such a relationship would have on Caribbean society. The relativist approach maintains that there is no one absolute truth but rather the outcome of the analysis

will vary depending on the point of view that the researcher decides to adopt. As this study aims to deduce the nature of a relationship between two subjects, France and its departments, it is important that the researcher weighs the advantages and disadvantages that the aforementioned relationship has on either subject in order to obtain an objective result. Moreover, this study utilizes qualitative literary data in the form of primary and secondary documentary sources, more specifically: books, journal articles, previous studies on the topic, newspaper articles and various online sources. Finally, as this dissertation is focused in part on the Caribbean, substantial portions of the analysis are influenced by post-colonial works and theory. Post-colonial theory is relevant to this study as it assesses the reality faced by former colonies within the context of colonialism, it looks at the impact that the past has had on the present.

Literature review

The post-colonial studies reader, as the name implies, evaluates post-colonial theory and the role that it plays in reshaping Caribbean identity especially in the face of new forms of European domination. It assesses the part that imperialism continues to play in establishing this inequitable distribution of power and resources between former imperial nations and former colonies. Therefore, former colonies seem to remain puppets that are forced to follow the demands of more powerful nations who continue to pull their strings both overtly and covertly. Thus, these former colonial powers are once again given the power to control and form Caribbean identity as they see fit. While this text focuses predominantly on the English-speaking Caribbean, it still provides the reader with a clear and accurate understanding of post-colonial theory and how it can be applied in a Caribbean context.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's, '*Can the Subaltern Speak*' is yet another work that is applicable as she discusses two critical points: the first point being the inherent differences that distinguish the problems of the West as compared to those of the global South, and the role of the post-colonial writer in the fight for development. She contends that the Western world does not truly understand the suffering of the south due to their complete disregard for the historical, social and economic differences that sets them on incomparable playing fields. Therefore, how could the West create theories and solutions for these problems that they

cannot understand? It is for this reason, according to Spivak that the post-colonial author is of the utmost importance, as they give voice to the suffering of the ‘Other’ who is often silenced and caught in a vicious cycle of dependency within the French Caribbean.

Another text that is pertinent to this study is *‘Resourcing Dependency Decolonisation and Post-colonialism in French Overseas Departments’*, by Fred Reno. In his article, Reno highlights the impact that colonialism had on the French departments and the ensuing vicious cycle of dependency of the DOMs. According to him, the “plantation system” continues to exist despite decolonisation. He acknowledges the efforts that have been made by various political movements to decentralize and potentially gain independence. While Reno admits that the system of dependency has been effective in keeping the periphery connected to the mainland politically and economically, they were unable to completely rob the periphery of their individuality and identity, as distinct cultural differences do exist between them. This identity has allowed the birth of many French Caribbean movements such as creolization that encouraged the masses to think for themselves and seek change.

Justin Daniel also analyses the economic and political relationship between Guadeloupe and Martinique, in his article *‘Political Constraints of Economic Dependency: The case of Guadeloupe and Martinique’*. Daniel focuses heavily on the economic ties and the cycle of dependency. He identifies the

DOMs' reliance on the French economy as a major contributor to their stunted development and blames to some extent local politicians for the islands' continued dependency. Furthermore, Daniel looks at the theme of Caribbean identity and the role of the French Antilles within the region. He points out the fact that the Antilles try to uphold French standards which sets them apart from the rest of the Caribbean. Daniel begins a very important conversation as the French Caribbean, for years, has seemed to be absent from movements towards regional development and very little is said about their interaction with the rest of the Caribbean.

In *'Seeking Imperialism's Embrace'*, Kristen Childers provides a nuanced analysis of the decolonization process in the French Caribbean territories of Guadeloupe and Martinique. She argues that the French Caribbean elites pursued a strategy of negotiated autonomy in order to maintain their political and economic power while simultaneously preserving their cultural and national identities. This approach was shaped by a number of factors, including the historical ties between the French Caribbean territories and France, as well as the economic advantages that came with remaining DOMs. She also examines the role of the French state in shaping these negotiations and argues that France was willing to grant a certain degree of autonomy to its overseas territories in order to maintain its own global influence and prestige. This allowed France to maintain control over key areas such as defence, foreign affairs, and currency, which

limited the extent to which the French Caribbean territories could truly govern themselves. Through her analysis, Childers sheds light on the complexities of decolonization and the challenges faced by colonized peoples as they sought to navigate the transition from colonialism to independence.

These articles acknowledge the influence of colonialism on Caribbean relations, and the role that it continues to play in creating structures that facilitate the survival of systems of domination and unequal power dynamics. They highlight the fact that the West uses various tools to socialize and manipulate the affairs of smaller societies which has consequently led to the creation of dysfunctional systems in many Caribbean societies, a fact that seems to remain true even for the French Caribbean. Nonetheless, these articles focus largely on the negative implications of relationships between the West and the South, and they rarely examine the positive aspects of these relations; the benefits that Western countries such as France stand to gain by engaging in such relations, or more generally some of the reasons why they continue to maintain these relationships.

Chapter 1: Neo colonialism from the post-colonial perspective

Many theories that have sought to define and understand the inequalities and evolution of the international system. However, human beings are unpredictable and the system that they have created mirror this dynamism and thus is ever in flux. Hence, theories used to explain and understand this system are also constantly evolving as to remain relevant and thus, neo- theories are created. The prefix neo- is applied to theories which examine the modernization and reimagining of existing processes, as is the case with neo-colonialism which saw the application of contemporary methods to encourage the continued expansion centuries of old empires.

Post-colonial theory stands apart from other theories as “We use the term ‘post-colonial’ to represent the continuing process of imperial suppressions and exchanges throughout this diverse range of societies, in their institutions and their discursive practices. Because the imperial process works through as well as upon individuals and societies ‘post-colonial’ theory rejects the egregious classification of ‘First’ and ‘Third’ World and contests the lingering fallacy that post-colonial is somehow synonymous with the economically ‘underdeveloped’” (Ashcroft et al., 3). Post-colonial theory was not only a means of denouncing the traumatic event that was imperialism, but rather, it is also used as a catalyst for change, “[f]or civilizations which, for a long time, have been oppressed and

dispossessed of their own history, their foremost task would be to examine the concordances and discordances with the dominant European ideology” (Chinién, 5). Its aim is to, through literature and the presentation of history from a perspective outside of the dominant European thought, transform people’s perception of the ‘third world’ as ‘poor’, ‘powerless’ and ‘inferior’ nations that are incapable of growing their own economies and building strong, stable societies. Post-colonial theory acknowledges that the ‘disadvantaged’ reality of economic turmoil, and social, cultural and political instability that the Caribbean inherited is in fact a consequence, not of the failings of ‘third world’ nations, but rather the result of Europe successfully convincing the world of a false narrative. Furthermore, post-colonial works reveal how this narrative continues to be propagated in the present-day liberal international system which ‘values’ cooperation and freedom.

As highlighted by works of post-colonial writers like Spivak, the West does not truly understand the problems of the global south. Spivak uses the example of French intellectuals’ study of prisoners which they use draw parallels with the global south,

“[t]his S/subject curiously sewn together into transparency by denegations, belongs to the exploiters’ side of the international division of labor. It is impossible for contemporary French intellectuals to imagine the kind of Power and Desire that would inhabit the unnamed subject of

the Other of Europe. It is not only that everything they read, critical or uncritical, is caught within the debate of the production of that Other, supporting or critiquing the constitution of the Subject as Europe. It is also that, in the constitution of that Other of Europe, great care was taken to obliterate the textual ingredients with which such a subject could cathect, could occupy (invest?) its itinerary – not only by ideological and scientific production, but also by the institution of law. However, reductionistic an economic analysis might seem, the French intellectuals forget at their peril that this entire overdetermined enterprise was in the interest of a dynamic economic situation requiring that interests, motives (desires) and power (of knowledge) be ruthlessly dislocated. To invoke that dislocation now as a radical discovery that should make us diagnose the economic (conditions of existence that separate out ‘classes’ descriptively) as a piece of dated analytic machinery may well be to continue the work of that dislocation and unwittingly to help in securing ‘a new balance of hegemonic relations’” (Spivak, 75).

Simply put, though European intellectuals have studied the problems faced by the global South, the research was done from a European perspective, a perspective that isn't tainted by the atrocities and consequences of colonialism, a perspective that does not have to take into account their 'inferior' place in the wider context as they (Europe) were the ones that created the context. Therefore,

they tend to ignore the differences that differentiate the suffering of the South from the problems faced by the most disadvantaged groups in Europe. By overlooking these seemingly 'insignificant' factors Europe discounts the fact that not all nations are copies of the West and that these Southern societies each have their own particularities which would alter the manner in which various social, cultural, political and economic issues would be managed in these territories and the impact that they would have. Often these issues have a more negative effect due to the weakened social structures in regions such as the Caribbean which was caused by colonialism. Hence, these nations further handicap the South by giving them advice, through organizations like the IMF and World Bank, which is not completely applicable to their situation and thus prevents them from making any strides forward that will help to reverse or at least lessen the impact of colonialism. Instead, the South seems to be increasingly affected by new problems whether it be poverty, dependency, or just general economic and social ruin.

Therefore, although certain processes, such as slavery, associated with colonialism were abolished, colonialism in its traditional form continues to persist as neo-colonialism. Colonialism set the foundation for a system that perpetually facilitated European 'supremacy' and essentially created a glass ceiling that these 'free' colonies could not surpass, with their only hope of reaching anywhere near this ceiling being with the aid of their former colonial masters. Even so, when

they do reach the ceiling they do not have the tools required to destroy it. After all, “[t]he most formidable ally of economic and political control had long been the business of ‘knowing’ other peoples because this ‘knowing’ underpinned imperial dominance and became the mode by which they were increasingly persuaded to know themselves: that is, as subordinate to Europe. A consequence of this process of knowing became the export to the colonies of European language, literature and learning as part of a civilising mission which involved the suppression of a vast wealth of indigenous cultures beneath the weight of imperial control.” (Ashcroft et al., 1) Therefore, in the case of Guadeloupe and Martinique, by tying themselves once again to France, they were able to achieve significant economic and social growth compared to the rest of the Caribbean. Their connection to France led to them being indoctrinated into one of the most powerful trading blocs of this century, the EU. Thus, in theory, the alliances formed with some of the world’s most powerful nations should have transformed the DOMs into leading economies at least in the Caribbean region. However, while they seemed ‘better off’ economically compared to other Caribbean nations, a visit to the islands would reveal a very high cost of living, increased foreignization such as the privatization of beaches that have been sold to individuals residing in France, and finally, infrastructure that is in disrepair. Therefore, while their admission into the EU brought them to the glass ceiling, that being the global divide that exists between smaller and larger economies, they still were not able to push past this divide to a more dominant position on

the international market, not even within the Caribbean. This can be seen as one of the many long-lasting effects of colonialization, “History and occidental law had codified what civilization was to the exclusion of many other civilizations” (Chinien, 4). In other words, colonial rule gave European nations such as France the freedom to persuade the world (both Europeans and non-Europeans) that Europe was the centre, those in control and thus allowed them to define the rules of the international system “There has been a Western will to establish an ontological and epistemological distinction with the aim to dominate, restructure and acquire more power.” (Chinien, 4). These rules remain pervasive and highly effective to this day as many of the nations that were targeted by these instruments of subjugation continue to struggle to achieve and maintain economic, social, political and even cultural stability. For this reason, the attempts of many Antillean authors to revive and reconnect with other facets of their identity outside of the dominant European culture and standard, facets often labelled by Europe as inferior and bad, was seen as a threat to the status quo, an example of this being “l’africanité puis la créolité ont été clamées et perçues comme des formes de contestation culturelle de l’ordre politique.”⁸ (Réno, 1) After all, by them creating and defining their own identity, the Caribbean also reclaims power formerly held by Europe, allowing them to revisit and rewrite history as it was rather than accepting the narrative set in front of them by those who were largely

⁸ “Africanité and Créolité have been proclaimed and perceived as forms of cultural contestation of the political order.”.

responsible for the very event. With this new found understanding of their past, Caribbean nationals may become more aware of repeating patterns of domination, such as the unequal distribution of resources and power within the international system, that were normalized through their European-based cultural socialization via education, media and literature, and which has for so long dissuaded them from challenging the status quo, “ideology reproduces colonialist relations through the strategic deployment of a vast semiotic field of representations – in literary works, in advertising, in sculpture, in travelogues, in exploration documents, in maps, in pornography, and so on” (Ashcroft et al., 47) Therefore, power which was previously claimed through brute force is now achieved through subliminal messages that seem to be strategically embedded in every aspect of Caribbean life, reminding them of their place and reinforcing European superiority, “all post-colonial societies are still subject in one way or another to overt or subtle forms of neo-colonial domination, and independence has not solved this problem... This does not imply that post-colonial practices are seamless and homogenous but indicates the impossibility of dealing with any part of the colonial process without considering its antecedents and consequences.” (Ashcroft et al., 2).

The EU and by extension France, are some of the most influential economies presently. They have strong political ties and trade agreements with numerous nations around the world, which means that their influence and control

is widespread. Furthermore, they play an important role in the decision-making processes of major global organizations such as the IMF⁹ and World Bank, the lenders of last resort, that many Caribbean countries have been forced to rely on countless times. In light of this, smaller nations are usually careful to preserve their political relationships with larger nations for fear of being blacklisted internationally as was seen with US imposed Cuban 1962 embargo which led to Cuba experiencing extreme socioeconomic challenges especially after the fall of their allies, the Soviet Union. Therefore, even if Guadeloupe and Martinique were to decide to change their political relationship with the French mainland, it would have to be done on the terms of the French government to avoid any significant consequences in the future.

⁹ The International Monetary Fund.

Chapter 2: The economic implications of departmentalization

Economic growth vs economic development

As defined by the Reserve Bank of Australia, economic growth is concerned solely with the GDP of a country within a set time frame. It is an indicator of how much revenue a country has earned during an allotted period. Economic development however, is a much broader term which encompasses economic growth, “economic development [...] is highly multi-faceted [...] It is not just about growth of aggregate output, but also about the fundamental transformation of an economy, ranging from its sectoral structure to its demographic and geographic makeup, and perhaps more importantly, to its entire social and institutional fabric. These processes naturally require a much more holistic approach to economic growth and development than in many other areas of economics. Thus, the political, social and demographic elements in the process of growth are paramount. This leads to a rich array of questions and a variety of new approaches to fundamental questions of economic growth” (Acemoglu, 546). In other words, economic development does not simply look at the monetary gains that a country has made, rather it includes the overall development of a country, such as the standard of living, and other factors whether they be social,

political, geographical or otherwise, which can all be affected by the level of economic growth that the country attains.

When the relationship between France, Guadeloupe and Martinique is mentioned, one of the first concepts that may come to mind is dependency and subjugation. However, in reality the idea of departmentalization was created to erase the image of the French departments as colonies and instead have them considered as France's equals, an offshore part of the mainland. Nonetheless, the departments continue to carry a dual identity, on one hand being fully integrated with France and the EU but on the other hand still struggling with problems commonly experienced by 'the other' of the West. The DOMs may no longer be viewed as colonies but the fact remains that they are dependencies which seem to still suffer from forms of "une domination devenue silencieuse."¹⁰ (Chamoiseau, 18), the domination of the nation became implicit rather than explicit.

Why then do the DOMs choose to remain in this union? The answer to this question may lie in the department's heavy financial reliance or economic dependency on France. After all, these outermost regions: "[d]espite the thousands of kilometres separating them from the European continent [...] EU law and all the rights and duties associated with EU membership apply to the outermost regions [...] specific measures and derogations in EU legislation help these regions address the major challenges they face due to their remoteness,

¹⁰ "an imperceptible domination".

insularity, small size, difficult topography and climate, and economic dependence on a reduced number of products.”¹¹ (European Union) As these islands form part of the EU, they cannot be considered third world countries in the traditional sense but, it is unquestionable that the economic activities that they engage in coupled with their treatment by larger nations, these characteristics are generally associated with third world countries. This show of dependency between these less developed nations and their Western allies may cause many to rightfully bethink the dependency theory.

Before analysing their economy however, a proper understanding of its make-up is necessary. As always when studying the Caribbean, the role that colonialism played in every aspect of their society must be acknowledged, especially when it concerns the economy. According to Fitzgerald, through trade with its vast empire, France was able to keep its economy afloat and even make a profit. In fact, he argues that “[a]lthough France ran a deficit on her *foreign* merchandise trade in every year of the post-war decade until 1954/1955 [...] the country accumulated a surplus on *colonial* trade for eight of the ten years following 1945 (more than 200 billion francs in two years, and more than 100 billion in four years).” (Fitzgerald, 377) Furthermore, he highlights the disparity between the level of trading between France and its empire, and drew attention to the disproportionate levels of import and export amongst the two, “[f]rom 1946

¹¹ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/themes/outermost-regions_en.

to 1956 imports from the colonies averaged 24.4 percent of the value of all French imports, and an average of 37.6 percent of the value of total French exports was sold into colonial markets” (Fitzgerald, 375). This trend re-enforces the idea of the dependency theory where larger nations would buy primary products from smaller nations and subsequently flood the markets of these smaller nations with refined products. The disparity between the percentage of products exported to the empire as compared to the percentage imported from the empire, and the subsequent profit incurred by France thanks in part to “mercantilist commercial policies” (Fitzgerald, 376) denotes once again the imbalance and exploitation that contributed to France’s development: technology, transport, and infrastructure, while the French Caribbean continued to be used as a tool for imperial gain with very little being reinvested into its economy. However, through the claiming of the status of départements d’outre-mer, and more recently “Collectivité”, this dynamic seemed to change. The French Caribbean began to focus less on primary economic activities which led to agriculture, previously their main source of revenue, experiencing a decline with the primary sector only accounting for 18% of Martinique’s GDP according to La Préfecture de la Martinique (Préfecture de la Martinique - booklet, 7). Tourism became an important part of their economy and little focus was placed on the industrial sector especially with the decline of agriculture which meant they had access to an iota of raw material. According to La Préfecture de la Martinique, “Secteur secondaire: 21,6% de la production Intérieure brute...Faiblement industrialisée... Secteur tertiaire: Plus de 60 % de la

Production Intérieure Brute. Le tourisme se développe : c'est une des solutions du devenir économique"¹² (Préfecture de la Martinique- booklet, 7). Nevertheless, tourism alone would not have been enough to sustain their economy, "tourism and industrial production cannot take off and unemployment increases even more [...] the development of some activities located primarily in the tertiary sector can be explained by the high levels of public investment or monetary transfers, while the primary sector is oriented towards exports and the second remains somewhat weak. So the structural handicap grows worse with growth" (Daniel, 314-315). Therefore, they began to rely increasingly on the economic benefits that the status of 'department' afforded them. Public and social transfers accounted for a large percentage of their revenue and led to the two islands experiencing a startling amount of economic growth. In fact, "the funds derived from the mainland and the EU constitutes one of the major driving forces of an economic growth rate that is often higher than in the mainland during identical reference periods" (Daniel, 69). Furthermore, "[b]etween 1970 and 1980, economic growth has been consistently superior than the figure registered in the mainland: 4,3 % (Martinique) and 4,2 % (Guadeloupe)⁸, compared to 3,4 % in France. [which] places the French Antilles in a leading position in the Caribbean" (Daniel, 314). While these statistics may seem to imply that financially, the departments were better off than France during this period, it is

¹² "Secondary sector: 21.6% of gross domestic production... Weakly industrialized... Tertiary sector: More than 60% of gross domestic production. Tourism is developing: it is one of the solutions of the economic future".

important to remember that there is a clear distinction between economic growth, which speaks to the countries' GDP, and economic development which focuses on overall development. Therefore, while the islands did experience a significant amount of economic growth, even surpassing France and the EU, they remained behind where economic development was concerned as is evidenced by the "high unemployment (18%), the cost of living has not dropped and job insecurity is still an issue. Its population is also ageing"¹³ (République Française, Agence Française de Développement) which remains an issue till this day. In this very article by the AFD we see the ever-present core, France, in the affairs of the periphery. Their provision of loans and other types of support, leaves very little room for the islands to think independently and seek other avenues for advice for a more sustainable path to development. According to the dependency theory, the core's lingering presence may be the reason for the French departments' stunted economic development. After all, "the peripheral nations experience their greatest economic development when their ties to the core are weakest." (Reyes, 6) Of course, this assertion is not applicable to all cases, as can be seen with the situation of Trinidad and Tobago whose "economic performance over the long run [post-independence] has been unimpressive". (Ramsaran, 215) Therefore it is important to remember that there is no one road to economic growth and development and rather, "there [are] successes and failures and a gradual

¹³ <https://www.afd.fr/fr/page-region-pays/martinique>.

accumulation of knowledge and insight” (Ramsaran, 215). Thus it is the responsibility of the nation’s officials and citizens to determine the way forward based on their own reality.

As was previously mentioned, the departments are no longer as dependent on primary economic activity as they were in the past. However, further analysis of their economic activity reveals that like many other Caribbean societies they are heavily reliant on imports which supersede their export rates. They export mainly to France and the majority of their imports also come from France. Therefore, the parameters of the dependency theory can still be seen, the cycle of trade that makes the periphery economically dependent on the core. Another assertion of the dependency theory is that " the peripheral nations experience their greatest economic development when their ties to the core are weakest” (Reyes, 6). While both Martinique and Guadeloupe rejected the possibility of becoming a collectivité in 2003, the decision has been revisited by Martinique and since 2015 they have become a “collectivité territoriale”. The “collectivités exercent les compétences attribuées à un département d'outre-mer et à une région d'outre-mer et toutes les compétences qui leur sont dévolues par la loi pour tenir compte de leurs caractéristiques et contraintes particulières”¹⁴ (République Française - Vie Publique)¹⁵ Therefore, they have increased, political, economic and social

¹⁴ “the collectivite exercise the powers assigned to an overseas department and an overseas region and all the powers vested in them by law to take into account their particular characteristics and constraints.”

¹⁵ <https://www.vie-publique.fr/fiches/20148-quel-est-le-statut-de-la-guyane-et-de-la-martinique>.

autonomy, however, France remains their main benefactor. The cyclical, self-sustaining nature that constitutes and allows for the survival of systems of dependency means that unless the islands consciously make an effort to break away from the core, they will never experience true economic development and their survival will continue to hinge on France, thus making them very susceptible to any change or crisis in the French economy.

Nonetheless an aspect of this relationship that seems to be ignored in the literature is that a large majority of the money sent to the departments by the French government, will unavoidably be re-injected into the France's economy considering that "Martinique imported approximately 70% of its intermediate imported goods; 79% of its consumption imports; 75% of its agro-processed imported products and over 60% of its imported agro-processed products and over 60% of the agricultural produce, from the mainland." (Caribbean Export Development Agency, 8) However, the re-injection of Antillean funds into the Metropolitan extends beyond trade and would also include small scale, individual import of metropolitan products via online platforms such as Amazon.com, travel between the nations which is done primarily via French airlines such as Air France, and so much more. Doesn't this therefore mean that these islands, to some degree, maybe self-sustaining? It is probable that due to their heavy reliance on Metropolitan French imports, the funds that they inject into the French economy represents a portion of the revenue that is sent to them by France through social

and public transfers, even if this portion may be minute considering that “[i]n 2002, these public transfers, including social transfers, reached Euro 1.3 billion for Martinique, and Euro 1.8 billion for Guadeloupe, which represents 3,347 euros per inhabitant in the first case and 4,055 euros per inhabitant for the second” (Daniel, 62). “[I]n 2002, GDP per capita was 15,622 euros in Martinique, 14,108 euros in Guadeloupe... Departments have a relatively high standard of living, due to subsidies and imports from the French Government” (Pan American Health Organization, 345); however, this argument must be further researched as data, concerning trade between the Metropole and the départements d’outre-mer are scarce.

Chapter 3: The political and socio-economic implications of departmentalization

The politics of a country affect all spheres of life and is not limited to the government, as the decisions made within the government will directly impact the country's economic and social development. According to Pavia, "the goal and substance of social development is the welfare of the people, as determined by the people themselves, and the consequent creation or alteration of institutions (including people's values, individual behaviour, and motivation) so as to create a capacity for meeting human needs at all levels" (Pavia, 329).

As highlighted by Galoustian, the choice of departmentalization "appears [...] as consent to prolonged colonialism" (Galoustian, 143) as the process of departmentalization constituted the official adoption of the French Antilles as part of France itself. Therefore, France remained at the centre of all decision-making processes and the DOMs had little to no say in the affairs of their country. As put by Chamoiseau they were "des peuples dominés"¹⁶ (Chamoiseau, 21) left once again voiceless in the face of European post-colonial domination under the guise of integration. It is important to note "[t]he French centralizing State asserted even further its institutional trends of harmonization of all its departments by denying cultural peculiarities." (Galoustian, 147). A sublime difference that is often ignored is that rather than being integrated, they seemed to have been

¹⁶ A dominated people.

assimilated with France. “Assimilation results from the willingness to identify with the other group while relinquishing membership in the first culture.” (Cormos, 2). On the other hand, “[i]ntegration results from an interest in adopting both identities, whereas marginalization consists of a rejection of both cultures” (Cormos, 2). However, Wood points out that departmentalization was chosen as it was seen as the best way to ensure the immediate survival of these states and their citizens, “the representatives chose the concrete, rational and legal benefits offered to full citizens of the new French Republic over the ideological and psychological option of anticolonial nationalism, and that this was not ‘a colonized people’s unhealthy expression of centuries-long subjugation’ but a ‘proactive choice’ aiming to ‘bridge the gap between the black majority and the white minority on the islands’: ultimately a ‘means of making good on the promises of a universal, race-blind Republic and demanding that the special relationship between France and its *vieilles colonies* finally be turned more to Antilleans’ advantage” (Wood, 3). In other words, at that point in time departmentalization represented the most effective method of ensuring the survival of the Antilles and its citizens.

In the eyes of both citizens and politicians, departmentalization, while at first controversial, signified the end of struggle¹⁷, division, domination and

¹⁷ “[f]or most Martinicans and Guadeloupeans, departmentalization represented the natural conclusion of a decades-long struggle for equality that had been proclaimed in speeches by colonial administrators but had little real substance in fact. For Césaire and those who supported the proposal in the Constituent assembly, departmentalization was a first step in the fundamental transformation of the relationship between France and its colonies.” (Childers, 55).

poverty. In particular, during that post-war period, as stated by Childers, where various parts of the economy were struggling: the sugar industry was no longer lucrative, and the franc had been had been devalued which further worsening the states of the economy. The ideal solution at that moment was a relationship that afforded them financial aid, departmentalization was this quick fix. It meant the equalizing of the standards of the French Caribbean with that of France, “Césaire himself was always quite clear that, although “assimilation” was the term used for centuries, he began to use “departmentalization” or “equalization” because it better represented Antilleans’ desires for the political and social import of a law that would “liberate a million people from subservience”[...] The Antilles, he emphasized, were at a turning point in their history because the entire economy of the islands had collapsed.” (Childers, 55) However, the subtleties of language once again hint towards the manner of relationship that would be produced overtime as a result of this arrangement. While, the citizens of the French Antilles were afforded the same privileges as any other French citizen such as access to educational opportunities not only in France but in Europe as a whole, the ability to freely travel to various countries due to the strengthening of their passport, and of course the adoption of the Euro, this did not necessarily translate into long term gain for the islands. Instead, they were offered mostly “[e]conomic subsidization that did not actually promote economic self-sustainability further deepen[ing] a dependency, reminiscent of colonial patterns of centre-periphery relationships” (Galoustian, 147).

However, this completely centralized regime would not last for very long, as many Guadeloupean and Martinican citizens and politicians began to demand further autonomy. “France, up to the late 1970s, was considered to be a quasi-ideal case of the centralized state (De Tocqueville 1856). The rather unexpected – and authoritarian – decentralization policy launched in 1981 by François Mitterrand, then the newly elected President of the Republic, both raised enthusiasm and attracted international attention” (Hayward 1983; Page and Goldsmith 1987; Schmidt 1990). During the 20 years that followed, additional modernization decisions were taken by both ruling politicians and central ministries. At the end of July 2004 the conservative majority in Parliament approved a new and relevant transfer of policy domains from the French state to the regions, the départements and the communes” (Theonig, 685). Departmentalization had served its purpose and autonomy became increasingly important as it was seen as the only way to improve local affairs and the standard of living so that it could mirror more so that of France. Indeed, the centralized form of government no longer seemed like the best way forward and many began to question whether it was “necessary to extend to the whole population of these colonies an identical system of values and juridical norms as of the mainland, thereby enlarging the circle of members of the ‘motherland’ (assimilation of people)... Such a colonial doctrine, which originated from the concept of a unified French State, had the tendency to deny all public expression of identity other than its own, and to marginalise all the others for the benefit of citizen

allegiance.” (Daniel, 59) After all, wouldn't local affairs best be run by those who understood everyday life in these countries? Therefore, decentralization, the process by which the affairs of the DOMs were controlled by a separate body outside of the centralized French government, became an increasingly popular ideology within the Antilles.

Throughout the history of the English-speaking Caribbean, there have been multiple attempts at cooperation - the West Indies Federation, CARICOM, CARIFORUM, the single market, OECS and many others. A similar principle led to the formations of the EU, making it “the largest trade bloc in the world. It is the world's biggest exporter of manufactured goods and services, and the biggest import market for over 100 countries.”¹⁸ (European Union). Therefore, as a part of France and an official member of the EU, Guadeloupe and Martinique have the support of one of the most powerful trading unions in the international system. On the other hand, after decolonization and independence, many of the English-speaking Caribbean islands were left vulnerable to fend for themselves and therefore, the unions previously mentioned were meant to establish them as players within the international system and provide collective security for all within the union, “Liberals stress that trade benefits all participants, since open international markets foster the efficient utilization of domestic resources”

¹⁸ https://european-union.europa.eu/priorities-and-actions/achievements_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20is%20the%20largest,thanks%20to%20the%20single%20market.

(Mansfield and Pevehouse, 776). For the French departments, this regional security that was not a necessity as they were already protected by the EU. Attempts were made to become associate members of CARICOM, and they are both associate members of the OECS and the ACS. “While the French departments in the Americas have long been present in the ACS, this is the first time that a French territory has joined one of the core regional groupings of the Commonwealth Caribbean...it should contribute to a higher level of visibility within and engagement with their regional environment.” (Byron, 280) These efforts at integration, while they may not necessarily have a huge impact on the economic growth of the French Caribbean, will definitely help to promote overall development thanks to the social and cultural exchanges that this association may encourage. In fact, “[t]he 1st Caribbean Games are scheduled in Guadeloupe from June 29 to July 3, 2022” (CANOC¹⁹). This event saw citizens from all over the Caribbean visiting Guadeloupe, many for the first time considering the language difference and the lack of direct flights via the main airlines within the Caribbean.

The relationship may seem one sided, with the departments reaping a lot of political, economic and social benefits and France nothing. However, as the European Union acknowledges: “[t]he outermost regions have unique potential and distinctive assets that can benefit the EU as a whole. They provide a European presence in strategic areas of the world and have exceptional characteristics that

¹⁹ Association of Caribbean Olympic Committees.

make them excellent laboratories for research and innovation in biodiversity, terrestrial and marine ecosystems, renewable energies, pharmacology and space sciences.”²⁰ (European Union). Here it becomes evident that the acquisition of these departments extends beyond an economic relationship, but this dynamic is also a critical asset to both France and the EU. After all, the international system, according to the neorealists, is based on the power of nations relative to others. With the end of the Second World War and the establishment of neoliberal financial and social institutions such as the IMF and WB, the US led international system, “[was] created, their structure, location, and mandate were all pretty much determined by the United States... the US was set to play a dominant role in the institutions” (Foot et al., 92) thus establishing the US as hegemon. However, this meant that the power of Europe declined placing them behind the US, “[i]n an uncertain and still dangerous world, a key challenge for Western states is to maintain their military edge [...] For the main European powers, the challenge is as much to catch up with the US military, as it is to meet a range of regional and global military commitments.” (Farrell et al., 1) Added to this, with the rise of China and other rapidly developing nations within the international system, European powers such as France once again run the risk of losing their place within the international system, and thus must do everything in their power to prevent such an occurrence. It is here that the DOMs are of high import to

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/policy/themes/outmost-regions_en.

France, as the acquisition and control of extra regional territories gives states access to increased resources, trading partners, political allies, and strategic locations to threaten other countries with military power if needed. After all, while the US and France may currently be considered allies, these alliances are very fickle²¹ as they are based on the interest of individual states and can thus change at any time.

²¹ “The difficulty with accounting for alliances is that because international politics is anarchic because there are no exogenous mechanisms for enforcing agreements any hypotheses about alliances must arise out of notions of individual self-interest, where that self-interest is mediated by expectations that agreements will be enforced.” (Niou and Ordeshook, 168).

Conclusion

Decolonization did not look the same for the entire Caribbean. The French Caribbean chose departmentalization which continues to link the DOMs to France up to this day. While this relationship does seem to put the Antilles in a disadvantageous position on account of the dependency on France and the EU, and the economic, political, social and cultural consequences that this entails. It also carries with it an array of benefits such as the DOMs' admission into the European Union, and the significant economic growth that they achieved under departmentalization, especially when compared to that of the rest of the Caribbean.

Most of the studies on departmentalization focus on how this relationship has affected the DOMs, but they rarely appear to examine the effects of departmentalization on the metropole. Departmentalization does offer a strategic political advantage to France and the EU as it gives them direct access to the Caribbean region, which includes its resources and its proximity to the US, and the importations from the DOMs. However, it has also obligated France and the EU to send billions of dollars to these islands every year in order to keep the economy afloat and provide for these citizens especially in the face of the rising unemployment rates.

Due to the complex nature of this relationship, it is near impossible to categorize it strictly as symbiotic or parasitic. Rather one must acknowledge that both parties

do benefit to some degree from this arrangement, nevertheless, they also do suffer consequences. What can be said is that consequences faced by the DOMs can be considered weightier as they directly disrupt and even inhibit the overall development of these islands, while using temporary solutions such as social transfers to boost the islands' economic growth. However, these temporary solutions seem to have successfully ensured that the islands remain bound to the French republic by giving the impression of prosperity while the islands fall into further ruin and are forced to remain dependent on France and the EU.

Further research should be done on the benefits that this relationship affords France and the role that other major nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States play in the longevity of this arrangement. Additionally, the future of departmentalization and the DOMs should be further explored, with focus being placed on changes that can be made to the arrangement to optimize the relationship so that it can promote increased sustainable development in the French Caribbean islands.

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