

Departure ceremony of (remains of) U.S. military forces from Curacao and Aruba, February 6, 1947. [Photo from the National Archives and Records Administration]

# Territories as Tropical Toolset?

A Historical Perspective on the Strategic Relevance of the Dutch  
Caribbean Islands

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## INTRODUCTION

The United States (US) and the Kingdom of the Netherlands pride themselves on maintaining diplomatic relations for over 200 years. After Dutch recognition of the US in 1782 (being the second country to do so), the Netherlands soon supplied this new republic with money, supplies and weapons to fight against the British. In the decades to come, the Netherlands would prove to be an ally in wartime and in peace. Ronald Reagan described the relationship between the US and the Netherlands as “*the longest unbroken, peaceful relationship that we have had with any other nation*”.<sup>1</sup> The relation between these two countries is nowadays exemplified in multilateral forums such as the United Nations (UN) and the North-Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and by their joint military efforts in Korea (1950-1953), Kosovo (1998-1999) and Iraq (2003-2011). Looking at the historical perspective, the Netherlands and the US seem easily to preserve a strong strategic relationship. However, if a more regional approach is considered, the strategic relationship between the Netherlands and the US is not as simple as this broad history suggests. The Kingdom of the Netherlands currently consists of four autonomous territories, including Aruba, Curacao and St. Maarten located in the Caribbean basin. The Kingdom is seated in The Hague in the Netherlands, which is the fourth autonomous territory. Having these three ‘parts’ of the Kingdom in the Caribbean, which is often regarded as the backyard of the US, puts the Netherlands alongside two other European powers which also have ‘remainders’ of their colonial period: France and the United Kingdom (UK). The Caribbean islands are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, which means that these autonomous countries are subject to the Kingdom for their foreign policy and collective defence. These islands are not the only countries with this exceptional status: French and British Caribbean islands are in similar categories which put Paris and London in the decisive position.

However, since the Caribbean Basin is widely regarded as the US backyard, what is the strategic position of the European countries in regard to the US in the Caribbean? Most research in the field of International Relations does not account for the strategic dependencies between the US and the European powers with their (semi-)autonomous island states in this particular region. Although the status of non-sovereign territories, microstates or quasi-colonialism in the Caribbean has been researched, their relevance in state-to-state relationships has not been

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<sup>1</sup> Via the ‘American Presidency Project’: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=42416> (assessed on 10-05-2018)

assessed.<sup>2</sup> Other authors, such as Robert Pastor, did study the inter-state relations in the Caribbean with the US but did not include these smaller territories or dependencies.<sup>3</sup> This leaves an undiscussed field where these territories and their influence on political-strategic developments remain unknown.

More specifically, an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the Netherlands and the US that also incorporates the importance of the Caribbean autonomous regions of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has not yet been formulated. The strategic relationship between the US and the Netherlands has been researched by authors such as Duco Hellema and John Dumbrell, but they have neglected to address the strategic relevance and implications of the Caribbean part of the Dutch Kingdom.<sup>4</sup> Exemplarily in this respect is Griffith, who offers a framework for Caribbean security analysis in the post-Cold War setting, but does not take the influence of (the territories that are governed by) the Netherlands, France or the United Kingdom into account.<sup>5</sup> Within the academic debate, strategic interests are often connected to the concept of (national) security. As Hugh Whites notes, this connection often results in broad definitions and therefore incoherent interpretations of the matter involved.<sup>6</sup> This is, for instance, exemplified by Richard Youngs, who showcases the use of human rights norms in the more ‘comprehensive’ and often European approach of (national) security interests.<sup>7</sup> As the analysis in this study focusses on the political-military aspect of interests, we follow Whites idea that strategic interests are “those interests that are linked with the security of the state resulting from changes in the international system of states, distribution of power and influence, and the

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance: L. De Jong and D. Kruijt (eds.), *Extended Statehood in the Caribbean: Paradoxes of Quasi Colonialism, Local Autonomy, and Extended Statehood in the USA, French, Dutch, and British Caribbean*, Amsterdam: Rozenberg Publishers 2005; W.P. Veenendaal, “Analyzing the Foreign Policy of Microstates: The Relevance of the International Patron-Client Model” in *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 13, Issue 3, July 2017, page 561-577; P. Clegg & D. Killingray (eds.), *The Non-Independent Territories of the Caribbean and Pacific, Continuity or Change?*, London: Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> His work remains one of the standards on US-Caribbean relations. R.A. Pastor, *Whirlpool: U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Latin America and the Caribbean*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1992. Giles Scott-Smith and David Snyder assess the Dutch-American (economic) relations in the Caribbean, but do not account for the ‘Caribbean factor’ in the Washington-The Hague connection in G. Scott-Smith and D. Snyder, “A Test of Sentiments: Civil Aviation, Alliance Politics, and the KLM Challenge in Dutch-American Relations” in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 37, No. 5, (2013).

<sup>4</sup> D. Hellema, *Dutch Foreign Policy: The Role of the Netherlands in World Politics*, Dordrecht: Republic of Letters (2009). and J. Dumbrell, *America’s ‘Special Relationships’: Foreign and Domestic Aspects of the Politics of Alliance*, (edited by J. Dumbrell and A.R. Schäfer), London: Routledge (2009).

<sup>5</sup> I.L. Griffith, “Understanding Caribbean Security: Back to Basics and Building Blocks” in *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (March 2004).

<sup>6</sup> H. White, “Strategic Interests in Australian Defence Policy: Some Historical and Methodological Reflections” in *Security Challenges*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2008): page 66. (63-79)

<sup>7</sup> R. Youngs, “Normative Dynamics and Strategic Interests in the EU’s External Identity” in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 42, Issue 2 (2004): 421-422.

balance of military capabilities”.<sup>8</sup> This definition simultaneously scopes down the definition of strategic interests without hampering the concept over timeframe that is used in this study.

The Caribbean region as a whole can still be considered as a strategic relevant region for the US. The Centre for Strategic & International Studies noted in a 2017 report that the region deals with the paradoxical issue of being ‘formally at peace’ while transnational criminal organisations, corrupting influences and geopolitical competition flourish.<sup>9</sup> This shows a strategic relevance for the US, but does this also mean that the smaller Dutch islands contribute to a political-strategic relevance in the bilateral relationship? Some scholars see the foundations of the strategic relationship between the US and the Netherlands formed in the European or NATO geopolitical theatre rather than the US-‘backyard’ of the Caribbean.<sup>10</sup> This could be the reason why some scholars, especially after the end of the Cold War, foresaw a risk for the Caribbean to become ‘irrelevant’.<sup>11</sup> This supposed irrelevance is still a matter of debate, as relevant matters of security for both the US and the Netherlands are found in the Caribbean region (Venezuela, hurricanes, illicit drug trading, small arms dealings) as well as in other parts of the world (supposed Russian meddling in democratic elections, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, bombings by Islamic State). The policy change by the Obama administration to enhance relations with Cuba, for instance, downplays the relative ‘danger’ that this region poses for the US. This sketches the background of the question to what degree the Caribbean region still holds relevance for both the US and the Netherlands. The argument of this study is that the Caribbean area played a special role in the forging of the bilateral relation between the US and the Netherlands after World War II (WWII) and continues to convincingly impact the strategic interests of The Hague and Washington, although this role has seen a deteriorating course over the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As shown earlier, an analysis in the connectedness between the US on the one side, and the Caribbean dependencies of the Netherlands and its foreign policy with one of its main global policy-‘anchors’ on the other side, is still missing out. This thesis will fill this academic void by analysing the strategic relation from the perspective of the United States with the Kingdom of the Netherlands with regard to the Dutch Caribbean domain.

To adequately address this vacuum, this study will focus on the following question: “*To*

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>9</sup> A.T. Bryan et al, “The Relevance of U.S.-Caribbean Relations: Three Views”, *Centre for Strategic & International Studies*, ed. by M.A. Matera, June 2017, page 1.

<sup>10</sup> Giles Scott-Smiths’ analysis of the ‘special relationship’ points to these two geographical areas. G. Scott-Smith, *America’s Special Relationships: Foreign and Domestic Aspects of the Politics of Alliance*, (edit. by J. Dumbrell & A. Schäfer), Routledge: New York, 2009, page 116-117, 126-128.

<sup>11</sup> M. B. Rosenberg, “Whither the Caribbean? Whither Florida?” in *Western Hemisphere*, Issue 5, No. 2 (1993).

*what extent has the Dutch Caribbean lost their political and strategic relevance towards the United States and what does this imply for the Dutch position towards the Caribbean part of the Dutch Kingdom?”* In order to qualitatively assess the supposed decline of political and strategic relevance of the Dutch Caribbean territories that have been dubbed ‘irrelevant’ above, this study uses a recently developed analytical tool made by the Centre of Strategic Studies in The Hague (HCSS): The Dutch Foreign Relations Index. This analytical tool looks at two qualitative indicators in foreign state-to-state relationships: utility and compatibility.<sup>12</sup> This tool has been developed by HCSS to support the Dutch government in making choices regarding international cooperation. It assesses and categorizes countries in terms of the aforementioned two indicators. Furthermore, it puts countries into one of five categories: anchors, associates, prospects, contradictors or disruptors. In this study, this analytical tool will be used to stimulate and expand the discussion regarding the development and construction of the international partnership between the Netherlands and the United States. By a historical and contemporary assessment of the relationship in a specific region and using these two distinctive yet complementary indicators, the overall bilateral development between these two countries can be put into a different, debateable and so far unused perspective.

The utility-indicator revolves around the importance of interests and will be used to answer the following question in this study: *“From the American perspective, what is the level (of change) of strategic relevance of the Dutch Caribbean?”*. The answers to the first question support the part of the research that will reveal the change of strategic attribution by the US to the Dutch Caribbean. It establishes this strategic value of Dutch Caribbean for the Americans against the backdrop of several (historical) international developments. The second indicator, compatibility, considers the distance between the US and the Netherlands in terms of values. These political-military values, sentiments or viewpoints, are subject to change as (inter)national circumstances shift and develop. In the analysis of this indicator, the question that will be answered is: *“To what extent does the American policy viewpoint differ from the strategic policy of the Dutch perspective in the Caribbean region?”* This second question goes into the policy viewpoints and therewith assesses the ‘mental alignment’ between the two countries in the Caribbean region and, moreover, assesses the (relative) value of the Dutch territories within the larger Dutch-American relationship. In other words, it fixes upon the complementarity in values between the US and the Netherlands in the Caribbean region.

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<sup>12</sup> T. Sweijs et al, “Vital European and Dutch Security Interests: Prioritizing Promising Partners: Analytical Support for International Cooperation Choices for the New Dutch Coalition Government”, The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies: October 2017. Via: <https://hcss.nl/report/monthly-alert-dutch-foreign-relations-index>

Therefore, less compatibility means less of a corresponding vision between the two countries.

These two indicators are applied on two domains within the Dutch-American Caribbean relationship: politics and defence. The utility indicator largely corresponds to the first part of the main question, which assesses the usable relevance of the Dutch Caribbean for the US. It also relates to the position of the Netherlands in respect to the importance of these territories. Compatibility factors the state of mind from the perspective of both countries and is applicable to both parts of the inquiry at hand, although it is focussed on portraying the difference between values of the two countries at hand. These two indicators are complementary, as a high utility Dutch Caribbean does not make a suitable partner for the US when the relevant values on related issues do not correspond. Combined, they fundamentally help to answer both components of the main question in this research. In the historic chapters, these indicators will be assessed on the basis of archival sources which has been primarily derived from the National Archival and Records Administration in Washington D.C.. The fourth chapter is a contemporary assessment of these two indicators using more secondary literature and other recent sources. The timeframe for this study will entail the end of the Second World War (WWII) until present time. Following this context, the research and its results will be presented along four chapters which each will carry its own part of this timeframe. The historic chapters go along timeframes that correspond with constitutional changes regarding the Dutch Caribbean territories (1954 and 2010) and the Cold War (1991). These milestone-years also represent foreign policy alterations for both the US and the Netherlands.

Many scholars write about the problems which are present in the Caribbean Basin, such as drugs trafficking and transnational crime, but they do not seem to be interested in the role of European countries that still hold relevance and responsibility in combatting these problems. The deterioration of these postcolonial relationships between the European countries and the Caribbean is often attributed to a revived interest into the Middle East, Asia and Africa, disintegrated economic relations and renewed constitutional relations that not yielded the promised or expected results.<sup>13</sup> This shift of focus is not only present from Europe, but also from the American perspective.<sup>14</sup> That the approach in this study is worth researching may

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<sup>13</sup> Clegg discusses the P. Clegg, "The Commonwealth Caribbean and the Europe: The End of the Affair?" in *The Round Table*, Vol. 104, No. 4, p. 429-440. Veenendaal looks into the Caribbean relationships between "non-sovereign jurisdictions and their metropolises" in W. Veenendaal, "Smallness and Status Debates in Overseas Territories: Evidence from the Dutch Caribbean", *Geopolitics*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 148-170.

<sup>14</sup> The so-called 'pivot' of American foreign policy after late 2011 has been discussed extensively, for instance by R. Kelley, "The 'Pivot' and its Problems: American Foreign Policy in Northeast Asia" in *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2014): 479-503 and H. V. Pant & Y. Joshi, "The American 'Pivot' and the Indian Navy" in *Naval Defense College Review*, Vol. Vol. 68, No. 1 (Winter 2014): 47-69.



become apparent by the recent escalation of tensions in Venezuela, which, as a regional power, has a substantial influence in local power politics. Venezuela is even more important as the autonomous islands of Curacao and Aruba are just some sixty miles of the Venezuelan coast. Being a large oil producing country, Venezuela has a regional role and global influence in the energy sector. The role of Venezuela will therefore prove important in the contemporary Dutch-American strategic relationship in the Caribbean. Taking a geopolitical perspective into account, the Caribbean Basin can be regarded as the ‘Mediterranean Sea’ of the American hemisphere.<sup>15</sup> Subsequently, the Basin is not a natural border that holds off the problems for the US, adding to political and military interest to this body of water. Although the strategic value of the Caribbean has been recognized by the United States via numerous programs and official statements, the (bilateral) security relations between this largest player in the region and relevant regional state security actors has not yet been thoroughly researched. It is therefore worthwhile to determine why there has not been a scholarly examination of these issues while the US puts substantial amounts of money and political effort into this region.

The first chapter will address the strategic relevance of the islands during and following WWII. During the war, these islands were mainly used by the Americans as fuel depots and strategic points of interest due to the islands’ developed harbours. This portrays a distinct level of utility for the US, which should align with a balanced amount of compatibility. However, as will be demonstrated in this chapter by a case study of KLM flight rights with regard to the Dutch Caribbean, this was not always the case. In the second chapter, the Caribbean importance in the Dutch-American relation will be analysed along three major developments during the subsequent time frame: the socialist/communist rise in the Caribbean and Latin-America, the Cuban Crisis and the rise of the Latin-American drugs cartels. These three developments were the main problems in this region during the Cold War and an analysis against the backdrop of the Netherlands Antilles will show the importance of the Dutch Caribbean in the region. The third part covers the ‘détente’ of the later Cold War with respect to the Dutch Caribbean islands. In this chapter, the focus will lie on militarization, which resulted from the rise of violent transnational crime networks and drugs cartels. It was during this period the Americans opened two ‘Forward Operating Locations’ (FOL’s) on the Dutch islands of Aruba and Curacao. This poses the question why this strategic importance was showcased in a global phase of rapprochement and reconciliation. Lastly, this chapter will also deal with the ‘reset’ of American foreign policy after the 9/11 attacks. Because the attention of the US shifted more

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<sup>15</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *De Wraak van de Geografie: Wat de Wereldkaart ons Vertelt over Komende en Conflicten en het Gevecht tegen het Onvermijdelijke*, Antwerpen: Spectrum, (2012): page 105.

towards other regions in the world, for instance towards the Middle East, it is interesting to analyse the change in strategic relevance of the Caribbean islands for the Netherlands.

The final chapter will look towards two recent policy changes: the shift towards a more autonomous position of the Dutch Caribbean islands and the focus of both President Obama and President Trump towards the Caribbean region. The last chapter shall also use accumulated insights of the first three chapters to find prolonged or new elements in the larger Dutch-American relation. For instance, this contemporary viewpoint will show that the current military Dutch-US compatibility is certainly influenced by the strategic position of the Dutch Caribbean territories. Combined together, these four chapters will provide a historical track record on the strategic Dutch-American relationship in the Caribbean while also portraying a conceptual analysis of the contemporary strategic relevance for the US of the Caribbean islands of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This latter part also gives way for some mutually beneficial recommendations with regard to the future of this regional relationship.

## **CHAPTER I –VALUE OF THE CARIBBEAN DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II (1939 – 1953)**

From 1823 forward, the United States upheld the so-called Monroe doctrine. This policy, proclaimed by President Monroe, aimed to bring the Western hemisphere into an American sphere of influence.<sup>16</sup> The colonial possessions of the European countries were also considered a part of this ‘backyard’ of the US, which meant that the European powers should follow the lead of the US herein. Resulting from the First World War and the economic crisis of 1929, the United States pursued a policy of non-intervention and neutrality. The Second World War proved a change in this policy, when the US actively intervened in world politics. WWII also altered the Dutch-American relationship, as wartime strategic concerns brought the Caribbean into a more prominent position, especially in the political-strategic domain. This position gave the Dutch Caribbean more importance within the larger US-Dutch relationship. These territories, with their crucial WWII-strategic relevance, held this importance in the immediate aftermath of the war. The rebuilding after WWII and the emergence of the Cold War brought new economic, political and strategic issues between the US and the Netherlands and on a global scale as a whole. This chapter claims that the Dutch Caribbean played a significant strategic role from the American perspective and for the bilateral relationship in this era.

Although not a largescale theatre of actual warfighting, the Caribbean and the Western Hemisphere as a whole played a crucial part in the Allied victory over the Axis countries. Economies of the fighting parties were focussed on war production. This was true in the Caribbean as well. Total war economies required a constant flow of (raw) materials and products, making resource availability crucial for the war effort. The Caribbean was essential herein, as it soon became a source and transit point for many of these essential resources. In the immediate aftermath of the war, the economies of the US, the Netherlands and the Netherlands West Indies had to ‘normalize’ again. This posed difficulties for the Caribbean, that consisted of small and US-dependent communities. Finally, the constitutional changes within the Dutch Kingdom had consequences for the Dutch-American strategic relation in this region. In 1954, the Netherlands West Indies changed into the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam became an autonomous part within the Dutch Kingdom. This contributed to a new formation of the triangular relations between the Netherlands, the US and the Dutch Caribbean territories.

The bilateral relationship between the Netherlands and the US was shaped differently

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<sup>16</sup> See: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=23> (Assessed on 14-01-2018)

after WWII. This was the result of factors that came forward during the war, for instance the importance of the Dutch Caribbean domain, but also surfaced as the global power dynamics were ‘reshuffled’ in the aftermath, exemplified by the ideological rivalry between the Soviet Union and the US. These ‘Caribbean’ factors also contributed to a new Dutch role: it shaped the Netherlands into a strategic and political outpost of the US in Europe.

### *1.1 – THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES IN THE WAR: OCCUPATION BY AN ALLY?*

With the outbreak of the Second World War (WWII), Europe found itself again on the battlefield against Germany. Both the Netherlands and the United States tried to be neutral, but both were eventually dragged into the war. The Netherlands, relied on its neutrality, just as it did during the First World War. The overseas territories of the Netherlands, the West Indies [Caribbean] and East Indies [Indonesia], provided the country mostly with products and materials such as bauxite, refined oil and coffee. Because the government of the Netherlands was forced into exile, these commodities no longer contributed to the Dutch war effort. The goods could nevertheless still be used for Allied war activities, while also yielding the exile government essential revenue to keep administrative tasks running. The Dutch colonies produced essential materials for ‘modern’ economies at that time. The so-called ‘ABC-islands’ are all characterized by deep, natural bays.<sup>17</sup> These natural bays were gradually transformed into harbours of regional importance. Shell, the Dutch oil company, developed oil refineries on Aruba and Curacao in the 1930s as a result of large oil findings in Venezuela. This made the islands, and especially Curacao, a crucial centre for the production of refined oil. At one point, the Allied forces relied for more than 80% of their oil imports on the Dutch colonies during WWII.<sup>18</sup> Hence, the Kingdom of the Netherlands found itself in an important strategic position from the Allied perspective.

This posed dangers for the islands as they became targets for adversaries, for which they needed protection. That safeguarding was needed can be deduced from the fact that the first German torpedo attack in the Western hemisphere was aimed on a petroleum refinery in Aruba. The bauxite which came from Surinam was also essential for the American war effort. Bauxite is an important ingredient for aluminium. This, in turn, is used for the manufacturing of airplanes. Bauxite was therefore a key strategic material during WWII. Surinam provided a

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<sup>17</sup> The term ‘ABC-islands’ connotes to the islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao.

<sup>18</sup> Strategic and Critical Materials in Latin America, The Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Subject Numeric Files 1964-1966, Documents relating to the political and defense affairs with the Netherlands Antilles, Box 2504, page 41-43.

large portion of the high American demand of bauxite.<sup>19</sup> The strategic value of the Dutch West Indies can therefore be considered as quite high and as important for the Dutch-American relationship as a whole. This crucial supply role of the Netherlands during WWII would later resonate into the after-war Dutch-American relationship.

After the capitulation of Dutch forces in the Netherlands, the only land forces available to the Kingdom were the small garrisons in the East and West Indies. Hours after the Dutch administration on the islands heard about the German invasion of the Netherlands, anyone with German ties or a German surname was arrested by the local authorities.<sup>20</sup> To protect the vital petroleum refineries on the islands of Curacao and Aruba, the UK, and later the United States, stationed considerable forces to reinforce the thin Dutch garrisons. An attack by a U-boat on one of the oil refineries shows that the adversaries also acknowledged this strategic value of the islands.<sup>21</sup> This value is further demonstrated by the significant US military and intelligence presence in Curacao and Aruba. They stayed till February 1947, effectively ruling the island as a strategic asset well after the Second World War. This presence was shaped with an arrangement which was confirmed on January 6, 1942.<sup>22</sup> Notable about this arrangement is the way the Netherlands stipulated that any activities by Venezuela in the Dutch Caribbean should be accompanied by an American presence. The Dutch government in London apparently feared that the Venezuelan government could use its influence during wartime as a tool to expand their control over the refineries in Curacao and Aruba. These refineries were important for Venezuela seeing that almost all of their crude oil was refined there. The Americans agreed to these Dutch requests, but President Roosevelt described these precautions as ‘childish’.<sup>23</sup> Although not a problem in the relationship, the Dutch and Americans had different views on the status of the islands in regard to the neighbouring countries.

The strategic value of the Dutch Caribbean territories did not end after the war. When asked by the consulate in Willemstad or when circumstances dictated, the FBI would produce intelligence reports on persons of interest in Curacao and other Dutch Caribbean islands. These

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<sup>19</sup> “*The Netherlands West Indies and Surinam: Policy and Information Statement*” Department of State, November 15, 1946, Subject Files 1945-1949, Documents relating to the relationship between the US and the Netherlands Antilles, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No: 711.56B/11-1546.

<sup>20</sup> See: <https://caribischnetwerk.ntr.nl/2015/02/15/16-februari-1942-begin-oorlog-aruba-en-curacao/> (Dutch, Assessed on 05-12-2017)

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) Diplomatic Papers, 1942. Europe Part III: Netherlands*. US Department of State, page 51. Link: <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1942v03> (Assessed on 05 Nov. 2017)

<sup>23</sup> I. Klinkers, *Decolonizing the Caribbean: Dutch Policies in a Comparative Perspective*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, (2003): page 74.

persons were often connected with communism or a Communist party.<sup>24</sup> This already took place during the war and shows the islands worth keeping an eye on from the American perspective. It also shows that the Dutch-American relationship at this time was partly shaped by communist threats, which was not limited to the European mainland (where the threat can be conceived higher due to the closer presence of communist activities, for instance West-Germany). A number of these reports analysed the behaviour of persons associated with the Russian communist party, but the government of the NWI did not 'tolerate' communism on the island.<sup>25</sup> Also, the Dutch and American government cooperated in the exchange of information regarding subversive elements within the societies of the Dutch Caribbean islands. Upon Dutch request, the two countries deliberated over shaping these information exchanges.<sup>26</sup> The Dutch government was particularly interested in regional, communist developments and was keen on getting information from the US. However, the American Consul did not experience any evidence of communist activities in the months after the war.<sup>27</sup>

This illustrates the close relation of the Caribbean islands with the mind-set of the US, directly after WWII. This close affiliation can be attributed to the American military presence during the war, which the islands experienced as 'very friendly' relations between the Dutch Caribbean territory of Curacao and the US.<sup>28</sup> This can be seen as a high factor of compatibility, seeing that strategic policy between the US and the Netherlands connected. It protected the island during the war and thereby positively influenced the general attitude towards the US. Having established warm feelings between the Dutch Caribbean and the US, the aftermath of WWII would prove whether the Netherlands could promote these relations into a mutual reciprocal connection. The key issue was whether the Dutch Caribbean could retain its strategic position in spite of the declining requirements for important war goods.

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<sup>24</sup> "*Communist Activities in Curacao*", Department of State: Documents of the American Consulate in Willemstad, Curacao, 29 May 1952, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No: 756B.001/5-2752.

<sup>25</sup> "*Political Report for December 1949*", Department of State: Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Documents of the American Consulate in Willemstad, Curacao, December 30 1949, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No: 856B.00/12-3049.

<sup>26</sup> "*Memorandum of Conversation with the Governor of the Netherlands West Indies*", Department of State: Office of American Republic Affairs, August 12, 1949, Subject Files 1945-1949, Documents relating to the relationship between the US and the Netherlands Antilles, Doc no.: 711.56B/8-1249.

<sup>27</sup> "*Political Report for December 1949*", Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, page 2.

<sup>28</sup> "*Political Report for June 1951*", Department of State: Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Documents of the American Consulate in Willemstad, Curacao, June 30 1951, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No: 756B.00/6-3051.

## 1.2 – U.S. POSITION ON DUTCH POSSESSIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN AFTER W.W. II

Already in 1942, the American government was considering various constitutional changes for different regions and the Western hemisphere, including the Caribbean, was no exception. Numerous documents give a good perspective of the mind-set of the American government at that time regarding this region, which portray differentiating views before WWII and afterwards.<sup>29</sup> The possessions of the Netherlands, but also of the French and the British were to be relieved of their colonial status and ‘would be placed under a process of development toward self-development’.<sup>30</sup> The sentiment of these documents portray a favourable order of the world after the war. In these scenarios, the US was aiming for decolonization of the Caribbean territories. The American government also recognized the contributions of this region towards the war effort, but the US also saw a role for the principle of self-government. It formally portrayed the American anticolonial stance with regard to European dependencies, already *during* the war. Most likely, this was a viewpoint opposite to the perspective of the European colonial powers.

However, the anticolonial pressure by the US after the war was not put on the NWI, but mainly on the East Indies (Indonesia) of the Netherlands. The so-called ‘containment’ by the US of communist ideology appears to adopt a practical approach: it does solely target the ‘Asian’ possessions of the Netherlands. In this particular instance with the Dutch former colonies, it seems that the American aversion of communism went hand in hand with the reluctance of colonial possessions of European countries. However, the US seemingly did not apply the same amount of (international) political pressure on the Caribbean territories as it did with the Asian colonies of the European powers. The Americans pressured the Netherlands to let go of Indonesia by threatening to cut the so-called Marshall Program if it did not comply. The US did not use this in the case of the Caribbean territories of the Netherlands. A specific reason for this particular move is not easily given, but seeing communist threats more plausible in the Asian than in the Caribbean region, it is possible that the US applied more pressure on the Netherlands to leave Indonesia in order to hold democratic elections and suppress communist movements. The rise of Sukarno, an anti-colonial leader from Indonesia who had strong anti-communistic political views, could also been a contributor towards the American

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<sup>29</sup> “State Department contingency plans for World War II Postwar treatment of French, British, and Dutch territories in the Caribbean area” Department Of State, 22 Oct. 1942. U.S. Declassified Documents Online: [www.tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5SS5K0](http://www.tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/5SS5K0) Page 1. (Accessed 4 Nov. 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, page 2.

position that Indonesia should be independent.<sup>31</sup> This, combined with the absence of a secession movement in the Dutch Caribbean islands, could explain the difference in the initial policy approach by the Americans. As mentioned earlier, Curacao also sided with the Americans in their anti-communist stance and could therefore be seen as loyal and a trustworthy ally in the Caribbean. However, this view on the Caribbean region was later abandoned. This was after the Castro rebellion, which was initially welcomed by the Americans, gave way for a communist government in the late 1950s.<sup>32</sup> This display of Caribbean strategic relevance only came later, and at this moment, the US considered the main battlegrounds of the Cold War to be in Europe and Asia. To further understand the strategic role of the Caribbean territories at this point within the Dutch-American relationship, the Dutch view should be incorporated as well.

From the perspective of the Netherlands, the geographical focus of the US regarding the colonial self-governing policy could have been experienced as incoherent or even hypocritical. On the one hand, the US clearly committed itself to an anti-colonialist stance, already during WWII. On the other hand, it did not pursue this intention in the Caribbean, seeing that other European powers were also not coerced in the abandonment of their colonial islands in this region at the time. Although this was a goal formulated during the war, this was eventually not pursued persistently in the Caribbean. With the end of WWII in sight, the Americans became interested in the possible relevance of the Dutch dependencies after the war, mainly from a strategic point of view. Seeing that the Queen of the Netherlands made a public announcement during the war about the constitutional future of the Dutch Kingdom and its future relations, the topic became interesting for more parties than just those directly involved (islands and the Netherlands).<sup>33</sup> The statement by the Dutch Queen reassured that the Caribbean islands would get autonomy and eventually independence. Hence, it is conceivable that the US did not actively pursue an advocacy of self-government for these islands, as the process was already underway. Namely, the change in autonomy of the islands would produce a different security landscape for the US in what was considered its backyard, as the islands would enjoy more self-governing. But where the islands were just observed, the Americans pursued a more aggressive anti-colonial approach regarding decolonization regarding the Asian colony of the Netherlands:

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<sup>31</sup> A.M. Murphy, "US Rapprochement with Indonesia: From Problem State to Partner" in *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol.32, No.3 (2010): 365. (pp. 362-87)

<sup>32</sup> S.G. Rabe, *Eisenhower and Latin America: The Foreign Policy of Anti-Communism*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press (1988): page 123.

<sup>33</sup> "State Department contingency plans for World War II Postwar treatment of French, British, and Dutch territories in the Caribbean area" Department Of State, 22 Oct. 1942. U.S. Declassified Documents Online: [www.tinyurl.com/tinyurl/5SS5K0](http://www.tinyurl.com/tinyurl/5SS5K0), page 2.



Indonesia.

In the Asian region, the anticolonial sentiment of the US was more forcefully imposed than in the Caribbean region. A reasonable explanation for this American focus to pressure European countries to decolonize in Asia can be found in the belief that the Soviet Union (USSR), the Cold War adversary of the US, was actively seeking allies in this part of the world rather than in the Caribbean. The USSR did use more dedication in Asia than in the Caribbean region, exemplified by the Soviet influence in North-Korea during and after WWI.<sup>34</sup> However, the focus on the communists' sphere of influence in Asia led to the surprise of its influence in the Caribbean (e.g. Cuba). It must be noted that other factors, such as the Dutch military actions and as well as the initial solicitation of US interest by the Dutch led to an heightened American interest in the Asian region and, specifically, Indonesia.<sup>35</sup> These aspects may explain the difference in the American approach between the two colonial territories at this era, and thus, the difference in strategic attribution to the Dutch territories in the Caribbean.

The American policy towards the Dutch dependencies was primarily derived from security and defence interests. This was not only the case during the war, but also after it. The stationing of American troops on Curacao and Aruba was to safeguard the oil refineries and also for the protection of essential communication-lines with South-America, Europe and Africa. The interests of the US lay with a secure and steady flow of petroleum products and other materials, for which the Dutch Caribbean provided during the war. In order words, the islands showcased a high utility factor for the US. After the war, it also kept a 'check' on the islands regarding any communist movements or organisations. For the Netherlands, the trade proved an important flow of needed hard-currency, especially during the war and the reconstruction period afterwards.<sup>36</sup> However, this economical focus lay most prominently on Indonesia ("the cork which keeps the Dutch economy from sinking"). This economic benefit was not applicable on the post-war relation with the Dutch Caribbean territories, which was economically 'not very large'.<sup>37</sup> Arguably, this probably contributed to the heightened sensitivity over the American pressure on the Dutch government to leave Indonesia. The conclusion of the Second World War put a sharp division between communism, led by the

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<sup>34</sup> A.N. Lankov, "The Demise of Non-Communist Parties in North-Korea (1945-1960)" in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (2001): page 105. (103-125)

<sup>35</sup> The Netherlands was actively seeking American involvement in its foreign policy since early WWII. See: D.J. Snyder, "Expropriating American Power: Dutch Clientelism and the East Indies Crises 1941-1948" in *Shaping the International Relations of the Netherlands 1815-2000* (ed. R. van Dijk et al.), London: Routledge (2018): page 156.

<sup>36</sup> Klinkers, *Decolonizing the Caribbean*, page 69.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibidem*, page 82.

Russians, and the 'Free World', led by the US. This also posed many European colonial powers with their backs against the wall as these ideological leaders were not favourable towards colonial dependencies. Subsequently, the European countries needed these territories to help rebuild their countries after the devastations of WWII. A divergence in compatibility arose between the US and the Netherlands, as both countries had distinct ideas about the Dutch colonial remnants. This places the Dutch Caribbean territories at the heart of a strategic discussion between the US and the Netherlands, most prominently after the Dutch 'lost' Indonesia. That will become more apparent in the next part of this chapter. There, the influence of the Caribbean territories within the Dutch-American relationship regarding these opposing beliefs and new economic challenges following WWII will be analysed.

### *1.3 – WHO'S DEPENDING? GAINING GRIP WITH NEW COLONIAL RELATIONS*

With the disappearance of the hostilities in the world and in the Caribbean, 'normal' life was expected to return. But the war also gave rise to new technologies and companies, not only in the United States. The European economies were recovering from the destructions of war, which also resulted in the high paced acceptance of new technologies. Together with the spirit of decolonization that was promoted by the two new superpowers of the world, this resulted in economic and political differences between the European countries and the US.

These differences can be highlighted by the dispute between the US and the Netherlands over landing rights of the Dutch airline Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij (KLM). To connect the Dutch Caribbean islands with the European mainland and gain more economic opportunities, KLM and the Dutch government intended to get a bilateral cooperation agreement for flying in the Caribbean Basin with landing rights in the US. The Caribbean islands, which were also represented in the negotiations, were looking forward to this connection as it would yield a direct line to the US while also providing a faster connection with the Netherlands.<sup>38</sup> Via certain American Senators and Congressmen, US-carriers protested heavily against the proposed air route and the issue reached up to the highest level of both governments.<sup>39</sup> This dispute illustrates the fragile equilibrium between security and economic interests after WWII in Dutch-American relations against the backdrop of access to important locations for the Netherlands i.e. the Antilles. The US was protective of its aerospace against

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<sup>38</sup> *Political Report for June 1951*", Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Doc. No: 756B.00/6-305I, page 5.

<sup>39</sup> *"Letter of the Caribbean Atlantic Airlines to the Secretary of State"*, Department of State: Documents relating to the relations between the US and the Netherlands 1945-1949, October 19 1946, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No.: 711.5627/10-1946, page 1.

European airlines: it ultimately let its strategic and commercial interests prevail over keeping a good relationship with one of its closest allies.<sup>40</sup>

The paradoxical issue was that the US supported the European recovering economies with the ‘Marshall Plan’ while simultaneously blocking the expansion of European airlines, which grew as a result from this economic support. This was a problem for the US and the American airlines, as these airliners were also expanding onto the American continent and harming the aviation business of the US.<sup>41</sup> The US saw a strategic element in these negotiations, as the US interest was partly fixed by strategic superiority and national security interests that came with the aviation industry.<sup>42</sup> The US embassy in London was also concerned over the situation, as not only the Netherlands but also other (European) countries were watching this strategic battle about the ‘freedom of the air’.<sup>43</sup> The flying rights issue is therefore not only a regional problem connected to the accessibility of the Caribbean islands, but a strategic policy problem that influenced post-war relations between the US and the Netherlands as a whole.

The US wanted the European powers at its side in advocating capitalism against the communist ideology of the USSR. However, by blocking its airspace for European competitors, it politically alienated these much-needed allies. This economic dispute between the US and the Netherlands thereby portrays the larger strategic-political difficulty between the partners at the time. Especially the European (from Amsterdam) and American (via New York) traffic headed to Curacao was a route the Americans declined. This shows a degree of hypocrisy by letting economic benefits prevail over a consistent promotion of its own ‘free-world’-ideology.<sup>44</sup> The strategic and economic importance of accessibility to the Dutch Caribbean islands was herein a bargaining chip, which was irritating the highest echelons of the Dutch (Caribbean) government.<sup>45</sup> The US used these flying rights to negotiate with the Netherlands about bilateral issues, but also with respect to developments that were happening in the European integration project. For instance, the US hoped that signing a temporary agreement in 1957 would have the Dutch stand up for American interests in the European Economic Community.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> G. Scott-Smith and D.J. Snyder, ““A Test of Sentiments”: Civil Aviation, Alliance Politics, and the KLM Challenge in Dutch-American Relations” in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 37, No. 5 (2013): page 945. (917-945)

<sup>41</sup> “*Letter of the Caribbean Atlantic Airlines to the Secretary of State*”, Documents relating to the relations between the US and the Netherlands 1945-1949, Doc. No.: 711.5627/10-1946, page 2.

<sup>42</sup> Scott-Smith and Snyder, *A Test of Sentiments*, page 920.

<sup>43</sup> “*Letter from the American Embassy in London*”, Department of State: Documents relating to the relations between the US and the Netherlands 1945-1949, January 2 1947, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No.: 711.5627/1-247, page 1-3.

<sup>44</sup> Scott-Smith and Snyder, *A Test of Sentiments*, page 925-926.

<sup>45</sup> *Political Report for June 1951*”, Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Doc. No: 756B.00/6-3051, page 5.

<sup>46</sup> Scott-Smith and Snyder, *A Test of Sentiments*, page 933.

This affair put the Netherlands and its Caribbean territories in a difficult position. It shows that the islands proved utility for the US in the larger bilateral relationship between the two. However, both countries were not aligned in their positions while negotiating about the landing rights and therewith show a disparity in their mental alignment on the importance of the Dutch Caribbean.

#### *1.4 – CONCLUDING THE WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH IN THE CARIBBEAN*

The aftermath of WWII also ignited a change to the constitutional structure of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. As the dependencies saw that they could be of value for both the Netherlands and the Caribbean region, they demanded more autonomy. Also, because of the ‘absence’ of direct Dutch rule during the five consecutive war-years, the islands experienced that they could do more, also without the guidance of the Hague. There is strong evidence that the US did not like this development: they felt that some European powers were ‘running away’ from the Western hemisphere in order to focus solely on their own reconstruction.<sup>47</sup> For instance, the French did not want to cooperate in setting up defence arrangements in the Caribbean hemisphere after WWII.<sup>48</sup> This shows an ambivalence in the American posture regarding European dependencies and its influence in the Caribbean.

It seems that the US were strong in their ideological proclamations regarding decolonization, but did not want to pursue these principles too far. This mentality was described by a State Department memo at that time when it argued to “have one strong friend on the Continent to protect our flanks”.<sup>49</sup> It was the Netherlands they envisioned for this role, as the UK retreated into the Commonwealth and the French were considered ‘undependable and feeble’ in the airline negotiations. Arguably, this could be an interesting showcase that connects the Dutch Caribbean strategic position within the larger US-Dutch relationship. The difficulties and political strain which resulted from the aviation negotiations show that the US also feared that a grouped, economic ‘attack’ by the European countries on the US could lead to serious damage, therefore toning its ideological pressure to prevent harm to its economic institutions. Self-determination was apparently important, but not as important as the economy of the US.

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<sup>47</sup> “Confidential Memorandum: Discussion of Necessity for Action with regard to the Dutch Situation”, Department of State: Documents relating to the relations between the US and the Netherlands, December 2 1947, National Archives and Records Administration, Despatch No.: 2749, page 1-2. (IMG\_1251)

<sup>48</sup> “Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense regarding Caribbean Area Defense Arrangements”, Department of Defense: Documents of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs, June 5, 1951, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No.: 756B.5/6-1351, page 3. (IMG\_1442)

<sup>49</sup> “Confidential Memorandum: Discussion of Necessity for Action with regard to the Dutch Situation”, December 2 1947, page 2.

Noticeable herein is that another ideological idea that the US often promotes, the open market-orientation of the economy, is also under fire. It is under these circumstances that a particular relation between the US and the Netherlands starts in the Caribbean region which affects the larger Transatlantic relationship between Washington and The Hague. The Netherlands, looking for opportunities to enhance the bilateral relations with a powerful ally (especially after the Indonesia-friction with the US) and strengthen its recovering economy, jumped onto the ‘aviation restrictionist wagon’. For instance, the Netherlands sided with the Americans against the British in their attempt to form a pan-European block against the US.<sup>50</sup> This way, the Netherlands positioned itself as a stronghold for American interests on the European mainland for its own interests. This was not exclusively the result of the Caribbean relationship with the US, but the islands in the backyard of the superpower made the strengthening of this relationship less of an effort.

With regard to the utility of the Dutch Caribbean during this timeframe, these territories had a high value. This can be derived from the central role the islands played in the oil transport for Allied forces during WWII. Looking at the compatibility indicator, there are some remarkable developments. Both the Netherlands and the US tried to stay neutral when WWII commenced, but this proved untenable for both. The stationing of American troops on Curacao and Aruba was not only a sign of the utility of the islands, but also led to a transfer of US-values to the islands. This transfer is visible in the strong anti-communist stance by the governmental authorities on these islands during and after WWII. After the war, however, the compatibility between the Dutch and American government starts to disunite on several issues. For example, the US took a pyridoxal role with regard to the flying rights in the Caribbean. The US seemed to display a compatibility connection as policy viewpoints on a global free flying rights market aligned. Ultimately, however, the American played the issue in such a way that it irritated the Dutch government up to the highest levels. Access to the Caribbean islands was exploited in order to yield other, US-favourable, results. This developments can be seen as a diminishment of strategic relevance of the Dutch Caribbean territories, because the islands succumbed to other issues that were more important. That the Dutch later choose the American side when discussing US-relevant issues in European forums, can be seen as an rapprochement in order to enhance bilateral relations (compatibility) for both the Netherlands and the Caribbean territories. The Dutch perspective of its Caribbean territories therefore differed from the American stance.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibidem.

The Netherlands needed the US for its economic and political recovery after WWII and the Caribbean dominions proved an essential asset for this goal. The US needed a trustworthy ally that could advocate its political (anti-communist) and economic ('restrictionist') vision on the European mainland. This led to this mutually beneficial Dutch-US relationship, although the Caribbean did not play a large role herein. To relate to the larger question at hand here in this study, the Dutch Caribbean lost some relevance for the US after WWII: it was less utile as its strategic value lowered after WWII. This means that the partner-alignment between the Netherlands and the US lowered as a result of Caribbean developments during this historical period. However, the American policy viewpoint of the Caribbean negatively changed, most notably expressed in the flying rights issue. The Dutch interest with regard to its Caribbean territories has arguably shown an increase. Losing the East Indies probably attributed to this heightened relevance in the Dutch foreign policy.

## **CHAPTER II – COMING IN HOT: THE CARIBBEAN RELATION DURING THE COLD WAR IN THREE SITUATIONS (1954–1985)**

This chapter explores three key Caribbean-related events which influenced the Dutch-American relationship in the aftermath of the restructuring of the Dutch Kingdom. During the war, Queen Wilhelmina promised the Dutch dependencies more autonomous control of the territories after WWII. Although no date was given by the Queen at the time of her speech, the islands soon started to push for constitutional reform. The resulting restructuring gave birth to the Kingdom Statute, which is still the standard for the relations between the four countries of the Kingdom. As the Dutch territories in the Caribbean gained more autonomous authority and forged a new relationship with the Netherlands and the Kingdom, so was the relationship between the Netherlands and the US altered. This chapter explores the latter part of these changes. It does not focus upon the internal relationship between the Netherlands and the Caribbean Dutch islands themselves.<sup>51</sup> Because of space limits in this thesis, this chapter shall focus on three events during the Cold War period. Firstly, the Caribbean decolonization and following regional tensions in the Caribbean area shall be discussed. The aftermath of WWII meant the beginning of a global decolonization process that also influenced the Caribbean region and, subsequently, the Dutch-American relationship. Secondly, this chapter shall focus on the role of the Dutch islands in the Cold War. During the Cold War, the Caribbean was one of the areas where the US fought (indirectly) against the USSR, most visible during the Cuban missile crisis and the invasion of Grenada. The question is to what extent the Dutch Caribbean territories played a role in these (regional) tensions. In the third part of this chapter, the rise of the problems related to narcotics in the Caribbean will be discussed. Nowadays, the Caribbean and Central-America are a major transit centre for drugs heading to the US and Europe. The foundation of these problems lies in the late sixties, when corrupt governments in the Caribbean and Central-American region gave rise to ‘drugkings’. In all these developments, the degree of strategic value of the islands towards the US (utility) and whether they aligned with its policy viewpoints (compatibility) shall also be taken into account.

These three developments have been chosen because these are representative issues that characterise [the change of] the Dutch-American relationship and the Caribbean relevance herein. The constitutional changes, colonial reorientation and development of the Cold War that followed the immediate after-war period influenced the US-Dutch cooperation and resulted in

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<sup>51</sup> Although, where relevant to be of influence on the Dutch-US relationship, it will be assessed.

a prominent feature of the Caribbean region within the larger bilateral relationship. The question that endures is whether this also affected the mutually beneficial relationship that was recognized earlier.

## 2.1 – DUTCH DEPENDENCIES IN A STRUGGLE

The independence of Indonesia in 1949 resulted in the refocussing of Dutch colonial policy upon the Caribbean. The US had a key role in the independence of Indonesia, as they favoured the leader of the Indonesian independence movement, Sukarno, over the gradual decolonisation-policy of the Netherlands.<sup>52</sup> The strong pressure to give up Indonesia by the Americans, who threatened to cut off much-needed Marshall-help, was a bitter episode in the Dutch-American relations. Evidently, the compatibility in policy viewpoints regarding this affair was quite low. The subsequent problematic issue with New-Guinea, which was a Dutch protectorate after the independence of Indonesia, also posed a negative strain on the relationship. The US was opposed to the Dutch opinion that New-Guinea should be separate from Indonesia. This resulted in a strained relationship between the two countries, which was later reflected in the Caribbean cooperation between the two countries. For instance, when discussing new defence-cooperation in this region, the US-government thought that it would be better to ‘defer to the wishes’ of the Dutch regarding these agreements in the Caribbean.<sup>53</sup> The discussion over Dutch-Caribbean defence cooperation went hand-in-hand with the Dutch sensitivity over the American position in the New-Guinea issue. This is a confirmation of the sentiment that the Americans ‘owed’ the Dutch, thereby portraying a ‘compatibility rapprochement’. The government of the Netherlands were highly irritated over the US position on the Indonesia-question, which resulted in a deteriorated relationship. This resulted in the US siding with the Dutch Caribbean defence demands to prevent worsening of their relationship, linking the Caribbean more into the larger Dutch-American relationship. It also connects the decolonisation of Indonesia with the status and future of the Dutch territories in the Caribbean.

It is widely recognized that after WWII the Netherlands was no longer the (mostly naval) power it was before the war. Before WWII, the colonial possessions also contributed to the stature of the Netherlands as a sea- and economic power. Many European countries had to cut

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<sup>52</sup> G. Oostindie and I. Klinkers, *“Decolonising the Caribbean: Dutch Policies in a Comparative Perspective”* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press (2003): 72.

<sup>53</sup> *“U.S.-Netherlands Cooperation in the Defense of the Caribbean”*, Department of State: Records relating to the Caribbean Dependencies Affairs 1941-1962, April 22 1955, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 959171.



their ties with colonial dependencies under the pressure of the US and the global anticolonial movement. The foundation of the NATO alliance after WWII also made the Dutch armed forces partner in the American maritime strategy, in which it did not play a defining role.<sup>54</sup> However, the Americans did foresee that the highly strategic Dutch overseas territories were important, also after WWII. The American Consul General stated that “it will be of extreme importance to maintain the seaways between Surinam and the USA and between the Netherlands Antilles and Europe in times of war”.<sup>55</sup> It shows a mutual dependency, but also a change in the years to come on this particular shared strategic relevance in the Caribbean. These political-military adjustments also had an effect on the colonial relationships of the Kingdom.

This meant that the modification of the Dutch internal relations were of interest for the US. The Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (CKN) was the codification of the new post-colonial relation.<sup>56</sup> After it was signed in 1954, the three parties, the Netherlands, Surinam, and the Antilles were autonomous in almost all policies. Exceptions were foreign affairs, nationality, good governance and defence policy. These areas were the responsibility of the Kingdom government, which now consisted of the Dutch cabinet and two representatives (one of the Dutch Antilles and one of Surinam). The new constitutional arrangements in the Dutch realm also posed changes in the American government concerning their policy towards the territories that were now autonomous. The changes posed the question how this region was to be handled within the State department: by the European desk (because it was still part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands with its seat in The Hague) or by the Office of Inter-American Affairs (as the autonomous regions geographically fall into the American hemispheric region.<sup>57</sup> This resulted in a fragmented documentation on the issues and discussions of the Dutch Caribbean, as the administration struggled with the new constellation of its immediate region.

The new agreement between the autonomous countries of the Kingdom did not prevent the governments of Surinam, Curacao and Aruba to keep thinking about full independence. The US did, on the one hand, support the independence of colonies which was evident by its support of Indonesia. On the other hand, it saw the Netherlands Antilles as a strategic location and was pointing the Dutch government to its (military) responsibilities for the region, especially after

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<sup>54</sup> E.C.A. Meijer, “Vijf Eeuwen Nederlandse seapower” (Dutch) in *Militaire Spectator*, Vol. 182, No. 11 (January 2011): page 510.

<sup>55</sup> “*Political Report for August 1952*”, Department of State: Bureau of European Affairs, September 4 1952, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No: 756A.00/9-452, page 3-4.

<sup>56</sup> G. Oostindie and I. Klinkers, “*Decolonising the Caribbean*”, 65.

<sup>57</sup> “*Memo on the Proposed Rearrangement of Responsibility Within the Department for Posts in the Caribbean Dependencies*”, Records relating to the Caribbean Dependencies Affairs 1941-1962, June 16, 1954, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 959171, page 1.

the constitutional changes.<sup>58</sup> This stance can be attributed to the conception that it did not want to see a stable and European partner leave the Caribbean region, thereby (re)affirming the utility factor of the Dutch territories. Although it acknowledged that the impact of the Dutch Armed Forces was thin in this region, it is apparent that the US saw this bilateral defence cooperation as an important factor in the region and for the relation as a whole. Despite the new constellation of the Dutch Kingdom, which should have been more in line with the American anti-colonial stance, the US saw the Dutch Caribbean territories as essential strategic points. This was highlighted by the defence arrangements which were deemed of ‘mutual interest’ by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.<sup>59</sup> This can be regarded as a display of compatibility from the perspective of the US, which was recognized by the Dutch government by the subsequent accord of the arrangement. In this arrangement, the US favoured a bilateral, military understanding over a multilateral arrangement of the Netherlands with other European powers.<sup>60</sup> The US considered a multilateral arrangement not ‘adequate’. The argument that the Dutch territories in the Caribbean held a significant strategic relevance for the US becomes more realistic, also fortifying the (utile) position of these islands within the relationship. This position would gain relevance as the Cold War fully developed in the Caribbean.

## 2.2 – A DUTCH ROLE IN A CARIBBEAN (COLD) WAR?

As mentioned earlier, WWII had shown that new security arrangements had to be made for the protection of the vital oil transports between Curacao and Venezuela in the scenario of a new armed conflict. Governmental documents relating to these new security arrangements show the difficult position of the US after the war in the region, where the Dutch territories were at stake. To keep up good relations with all Caribbean and Latin-American countries, the US made bilateral security arrangements which sometimes conflicted with each other. This was also the case concerning the security arrangements of the vital oil transfer route Venezuela-Curacao-US. To both the Dutch and the Venezuelan government, the American government promised that in the case of ‘emergency of war conditions’, it would recognize the responsibility of this

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<sup>58</sup> “Annual Policy Assessment of the US-Netherlands Relations”, Department of State: Political and Defense Files Netherlands Antilles-US 1970-1973, February 3 1972, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 969041, page 7.

<sup>59</sup> “Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense by Forrest Sherman, Chief of Naval Operations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff”, Department of Defense: Documents relating to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 13 1951, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No.: 756B.5/6-1351, page 2-3.

<sup>60</sup> “Letter to the Dutch Charge d’Affaires ad interim of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands”, Department of State: Records relating to the Caribbean Dependencies Affairs 1941-1962, July 6 1951, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No.: 756B.5/2-2451.

critical oil-route (the Lake Maracaibo-Aruba-Curacao tanker route) to both.<sup>61</sup> The knowledge of this clause in both (secret) agreements was considered ‘*highly offensive*’ for the Venezuelans and a ‘*grave concern*’ for the Dutch.<sup>62</sup> The Dutch and Venezuelan government were both unaware that they had the same arrangement with the US, leading to conflicting provisions in the arrangements with both countries. It portrays an American value for the Caribbean from a strategic point of view. Thus, the utility factor for the US can be assessed as relevantly high. The Dutch position is more difficult to assess, but considering their commitment and the Dutch desire to set up this arrangement, the strategic attribution for the Caribbean by both the US and the Netherlands shows a strong alignment.

This particular arrangement was highly sensitive, of which the American government was also aware. The agreements with both countries stipulated that either navy would be in command of the crucial Lake Maracaibo-Aruba-Curacao tanker route. The US negotiated an almost identical Memorandum of Understanding with both governments to agree on military command of the route in times of crisis or war. The decision was made that the Dutch government was to be the navy of choice in the event of war.<sup>63</sup> This means that the arrangement with Venezuela was most likely of no worth if war would occur in this area. Furthermore, the document explicitly named the sensitivity with the arrangement, as it sensed the Dutch susceptibility of former Venezuelan references about the coastal proximity of Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire.<sup>64</sup> Although the US dismissed any claims by Venezuela on the Dutch Caribbean territories, it understood the regional tension that would be a result of when details of the arrangement would become public.

Despite the relative closeness to Cuba, the US government did not anticipate any Cuban or Soviet influence in the Netherlands Antilles. The Interdepartmental Group for Inter-American Affairs of the Department of State produced a yearly official policy statement for the Netherlands Antilles, which showed a particular affection of the Netherlands Antilles towards the US. For instance, it was noted that the islands had a spending of \$250 per capita of American

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<sup>61</sup> “*Attenda to Defense Understandings with The Netherlands and Venezuela in the Caribbean*”, Department of State: Records Relating to the Caribbean Dependencies Affairs 1941-1962, April 22 1955, National Archives and Records Administration, NND: 959171, page 1.

<sup>62</sup> “*Letter from Robert Murphy (Deputy Undersecretary for Political Affairs) to Gordon Gray (Assistant Secretary of Defense)*”, Department of State: Records the on Caribbean Dependencies Affairs 1941-1962, June 7 1956, National Archives and Records Administration, NND: 959171, page 2-3.

<sup>63</sup> “*Attenda to Defense Understandings with The Netherlands and Venezuela in the Caribbean*”, Records Relating to the Caribbean Dependencies Affairs 1941-1962, April 22 1955, page 1.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, page 2.

goods, which was one of the highest of all American trading partners.<sup>65</sup> A research memorandum by the Intelligence section of the Department of State further emphasized this sentiment. In 1967, it proclaims that the Netherlands Antilles looked towards the US as a ‘closer and obviously more powerful ally’ than the Netherlands.<sup>66</sup> It can therefore be concluded that across the Department of State, the Netherlands Antilles was considered a close and true ally of US policy. However, it is questionable whether this positive tendency worked consistently within the larger bilateral relationship between the US and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Following a surge in prices and a general resentment towards the Dutch occupation of many well-paid governmental jobs, the island of Curacao faced a violent riot in March 1969. And although the riot did not portray any dangers towards the US or its citizens, the U.S. Navy sent two ships that stayed well out of Curacao-eyesight in case American citizens needed to be evacuated from the island.<sup>67</sup> Because these riots were in part the result of low wages and at the initiation of labour unions, the American consulate believed these riots were instigated by socialist or communist motives. These moves by the US government portray a loyalty towards the Dutch Caribbean territories, who were seen as a local safe harbour in a turbulent region for the US.

Although the Kingdom government was responsible for the foreign policy, this did not mean that the Caribbean islands always followed the instructions from The Hague. As a result of more leftist-orientated governments in the Netherlands, who traditionally held principal objections regarding colonial remnants, there was also less interest in the islands from the Dutch government. This led to some remarkable differences between the Dutch Caribbean islands and the government of the Netherlands. The American consulate noted that, although the Netherlands recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Netherlands Antilles refused to do so.<sup>68</sup> The US government interpreted this as a sign of strong allegiance towards the US. This flexible attitude from the Kingdom government towards socialist regimes was also evident

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<sup>65</sup> *“United States Policy Assessment of the Netherlands Antilles”*, Department of State: Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969: Political & Defense Documents of the Consulate at Curacao, March 24 1967, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 969000, page 1.

<sup>66</sup> *“Research Memorandum by the Director of Intelligence and Research on the Future Prospects for the Netherlands Antilles and Surinam”*, Department of State: Central Foreign Policy Files 1967-1969: Political and Defense Documents of the Consulate at Curacao, October 9 1967, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 969000, page vi.

<sup>67</sup> *“Memorandum for Mr. Henry Kissinger on Disturbances in Curacao”*, Department of State: Subject Numeric Files 1967-1969 Political and Defense Files Netherlands Antilles, May 31 1969, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 969000, page 1.

<sup>68</sup> *“Airgram by the American Consulate in Willemstad about Chinese Activity in Curacao”*, Department of State: Subject Numeric Files 1964-1966, Political and Defense Files Netherlands Antilles, February 5 1964, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 959000, page 1-2.

in the Dutch proposed scheduled flights to Cuba, which were already taking place on an irregular basis since July 1964.<sup>69</sup> The Americans saw this as “a major breach” of their policy in denying travelling to Cuba. Although the Dutch government confirmed its support for the American policy, it clearly did not hinder Dutch companies when they did not comply with this policy. The Dutch government apparently did not always adhere to US policy and also defied Netherlands Antilles sentiment. Subsequently, it made Curacao a possible communist transfer point which was detrimental to the internal Kingdom relations. The American consulate in Curacao noted that they received information about influence by Cuba and Venezuela in the local Curacao-elections of 1973.<sup>70</sup> The report noted that not only money, but also sugar supplies were used to sway political parties and public opinion towards the Venezuelan government. The expected independence of the Netherlands Antilles was probably reason for this neighbour to increase its effort influence the election. Although not fully confirmed, this consulate report shows that the US was taking these signals seriously, as they saw the communist influence in other Caribbean states as harmful for American interests in the region. Not only Venezuela was ‘buying’ influence in the Netherlands Antilles. The influence of the Cuban communist government also became apparent in the Caribbean area. Opposing US policy, the left-orientated Dutch government under the leadership of Den Uyl provided aid to Cuba. To persuade the Dutch government to cease this aid and focus upon Cuba’s dependence on the USSR, the US was willing to disclose classified information.<sup>71</sup> This shows a strong determination by the American government to suppress Cuban influence in the Caribbean region, but also a role for the (Caribbean territories of) the Netherlands to do so.

### 2.3 – *THE INFLUENCE OF NARCOTICS IN THE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP*

The early seventies marked the beginning of new Caribbean problems for the US, predominantly originating from Latin-America. The use of drugs, mostly cocaine, was rising and the supply predominantly came from Latin-America. It became an important issue within the bilateral US-Dutch relationship. With their proximity to the producing countries (mainly Colombia) and direct flights to the US, the islands rapidly became transfer locations for

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<sup>69</sup> “*Memorandum on the A.L.M flights between Curacao and Havana*”, Department of State: Subject Numeric Files 1964-1966, Political Files regarding the Netherlands, December 22, 1964, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 959000.

<sup>70</sup> “*Airgram from the American Consulate on the reported Cuban and Venezuelan interest in Netherlands Antilles Election*”, Department of State: Subject Numeric Files 1970-1973, Political and Defense Files Netherlands Antilles, August 16 1973, National Archives and Records Administration, NND 969041, page 1-2.

<sup>71</sup> “*Cuban-Soviet Relation with regard to Netherlands Antilles*”, Department of State: , Political and Defense Files The Hague Embassy, 30 August 1979, Doc. No: 1979THEGA05107 (microfilm), page 2.

narcotics. This was also recognized by the US government, who started to initiate programs to counter this development in 1973.<sup>72</sup> In a few years, the former ‘drug-free’ islands transformed into transfer points for narcotics bound for the US. This development was a troubling, as it resulted in the rise of big druglords, the spreading of small arms and an increase in the amount of drug-addicts in the US. Because the Netherlands Antilles played a crucial role in the distribution of these drugs, they were soon incorporated in the antidrug policies of the US. For example, the Netherlands Antilles was asked to join narcotics trainings which were facilitated by the Drugs Enforcement Agency (DEA).<sup>73</sup> A 1977 report by the US Department of Justice (DoJ) showed that the Netherlands Antilles was the third most active political entity in the international opiate traffic of South-America.<sup>74</sup> This meant that these islands played a substantial role trafficking narcotics, which resulted in increased American interest for the Dutch Caribbean islands. The report also mentions that the DoJ got information by more than twenty informants in the Antilles and by cooperating with local police authorities.<sup>75</sup> This shows that the American government tackled this program quite fast, considering the fact that the problem was not showing until 1973.

To halt the influence of the ‘drugkings’ and thereof related criminal activities, then US President Reagan initiated the first the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI). This program, which was initiated in 1982, offered “one-way free trade, investment incentives, increased economic and military aid”.<sup>76</sup> This ‘mini-Marshall’-plan for the Caribbean region could not rely on much political enthusiasm in the US, as many of the plans did not make it through Congress. These plans, activated during the start of the détente of the Cold War, show that the US wanted to enhance and fortify its influence in this region. The Netherlands also took advantage of these plans, as it joined in with the Netherlands Antilles into the CBI.<sup>77</sup> This new developed position of the Dutch Caribbean territories as local narcotic centre also had effects on the larger Dutch-American relationship. The US saw, especially in light of the gradual disappearance of the British colonies, a more prominent role for the Netherlands to ‘to play a more active role in the

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<sup>72</sup> “*Narcotics: Developments During November in Venezuela*”, 04 December 1973, Department of State: Central Foreign Policy Files 1973-1979, Electronic Telegrams 1973, Doc no: 1973CARACA10356.

<sup>73</sup> “*DEA In-Country Narcotics Training School for Caribbean Area Memo*”, Department of State Political and Defense Files from the American Consul in Curacao, March 1976, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No.: 1976STATE058219 (microfilm), page 1.

<sup>74</sup> “*Dept. of Justice study of the illicit opium, morphine and heroin traffic in South America, 1973-1976 (GFZB-75-8033)*. Department Of Justice (1 Apr. 1977): page 98. Via: U.S. Declassified Documents Online: <http://tinyurl.galegroup.com/tinyurl/6hyo38> (Assessed on 12-03-2018)

<sup>75</sup> Idibem, page 101.

<sup>76</sup> C. Weber, “Shoring up a Sea of Signs: How the Caribbean Basin Initiative Framed the US Invasion of Grenada” in *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 12, Issue 5, page 549.

<sup>77</sup> See: <http://www.washingtontraderreport.com/CBERA.htm> (assessed on 12-03-2018)

area in the economic and security fields'.<sup>78</sup> The implications of the narcotic character of the Caribbean territories contributed to a changed relationship with the Netherlands as a whole.

To conclude, the Dutch Caribbean islands were an important strategic asset in the proximity of the US during the Cold War and regarding these three developments. The US recognized this importance mostly in direct contact with the Dutch islands, reflected in the warm connections regarding the anti-communist policies of the US. However, there is a compatibility disconnection visible in the bilateral connections between the US and the Netherlands as a whole, exemplified by the PRC-recognition and the double-agreement issue with Venezuela. The policy viewpoint between the Dutch Antilles and the US did not differ much, however, in the bilateral relation there were some differences. It becomes apparent that the increased autonomy of the islands also played up in foreign affairs, although the Dutch territories did not have any authority in this field. However, this does show that the islands lost some strategic value from the perspective of the Netherlands and therewith displayed a disparity regarding the compatibility factor. The American viewpoint deferred from this, as they increased efforts to defend their strategic interests in the Caribbean, also on the Dutch islands there. The Dutch Kingdom governments, in this era often characterized by a (partly) leftist and anticolonial mentality, maintained more distance from the islands and lost interest in the (strategic) value of the islands. Connecting these developments to the main question at hand, there is a stronger diminishment of strategic relevance of the Caribbean islands than in the previous historical period. Despite the heightened interest by the US as a result of the rise of drug related problems, the Dutch government did not always responded to this American interest in 'their' islands. The Dutch stance also resulted in strategic policies that clashed with island sentiments, for instance the PRC-recognition. Interestingly, this disagreement shows that the islands leaned more towards the US in favour of its metropole. The utility of the Caribbean islands for the US can be seen as a double-edged sword during this timeframe. On the one hand, there has been an increased strategic relevance as the Dutch territories emerged as strong supporters of the American anti-communist stance. On the other hand, the islands proved susceptible to foreign influence and the drugs trade. The Cold War era has shown that the two indicators showed some ambivalence with regard to the American perspective on the Dutch Caribbean. Did the post-Cold War era changed this equivocation?

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<sup>78</sup> "Letter to the Secretary of State: U.S. Strategy in the Caribbean", June 30 1979, via <https://www.archives.gov/aad/>, Doc. No.: 1979STATE169039, page 13.

## CHAPTER III – MILITARIZATION OF THE CARIBBEAN: KEEPING THE BACKYARD SECURE (1991 – 2010)

The end of the Cold War proved to be a changing era for the countries and territories in the Caribbean basin. With the eventual settlement of the ideological antagonism, the Caribbean region lost the external threat. Moreover, it also lost interest of the US and European nations. During the Cold War, the Caribbean was an important strategic region for its proximity to the US, its economic value of specific commodities and sea lanes.<sup>79</sup> The US highlighted this importance by close interaction with the territories of European countries and by preventing - and after the Cuban Revolution, limiting- the influence of the USSR. The close involvement of the US with its immediate neighbouring region seem to come to a halt with the conclusion of the Cold War. This is also why some scholars define this development as the end of the Monroe-doctrine.<sup>80</sup> The position of the Caribbean in the eyes of the US has been discussed extensively since. For instance, some suggested quickly after the Cold War that “the Caribbean runs an acute risk of irrelevance”.<sup>81</sup> The engagement of the US and the Netherlands with the Western hemisphere, and the Caribbean in particular, seemed to be fading in the aftermath of the Cold War. The argument here is that this may have been true for the whole of the region, but that the Dutch-American relationship with respect to the Caribbean (territories) was gaining more traction, especially in the strategic domain.

If that is the case, than it is relevant how this process took form within the Dutch-American relationship. Did it led to a diminishment of the larger bilateral relationship, or were there factors that contributed to an continuation or even intensification of this relationship? This chapter firstly addresses the immediate years following the end of the Cold War into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the second part, the change in the global security landscape as a result of the terrorist attacks on 9-11 will be central in the assessment of the Dutch-American relationship with respect to the Dutch Caribbean territories.

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<sup>79</sup> A. Serbin, “The Caribbean: Myths and Realities for the 1990s” in *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 32, Issue 2 (1990): page 122-123.

<sup>80</sup> See both: R.A. Pastor, *Whirlpool: US Foreign Policy toward Latin-American and the Caribbean*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1992): page 221 and G. Smith, *The Last Years of the Monroe Doctrine 1945-1993*, New York: Hill and Wang (1994): page 213.

<sup>81</sup> M. B. Rosenberg, “Whither the Caribbean? Whither Florida?” in *Western Hemisphere*, Issue 5, No. 2 (1993): page 9.



### 3.1 DEVELOPMENT AND DEMAND OF STRATEGIC VALUE IN THE CARIBBEAN

The end of the Cold War appeared to be a large change in the policy of the US towards the Caribbean. Although the ideological enemy was defeated and its (communist) influence in the Caribbean therewith significantly lowered, the US was still irritated by the presence of ‘socialist’ Cuba.<sup>82</sup> The US also invaded the country of Panama days after the fall of the Berlin wall. The Americans were convinced that its president was a suspected drug smuggler.<sup>83</sup> These actions mark a sentiment that the US was still seeing the Caribbean, and to a larger extend, the Western hemisphere, as an area where it could unilaterally interfere despite the ideological argument having become less relevant. The earlier mentioned ‘end of the Monroe doctrine’ can therefore be subjected to discussion. The start of the CBI in the eighties should have been a start of a changing relationship between the US and the Caribbean, in which matters of security would be secondary to (forms of economic) cooperation. These examples, however, show that this relationship had not altered that much. That the Caribbean was apparently losing, though actually gaining interest by the Dutch and the US after the Cold War was the result of two developments. These developments commenced in the eighties, but started to yield serious results in the nineties and thereafter.

The end of the Cold War led to an adjustment of foreign policy by both the US and the Netherlands. Consequently, they focussed more on international cooperation through blocks. This resulted in the forming of economic treaties and integrational blocks, respectively the NAFTA-treaty and the European Community. The Caribbean became an outsider as a result from the Dutch and American preference to prefer trade with immediate, land-related neighbours.<sup>84</sup> Being less interesting as an economic partner can also contribute to being less interesting as a security partner. Another example of more block-focused attention by the Netherlands and the US was the reorientation of the NATO-cooperation. With the loss of the USSR as the enemy it was constituted for, the Atlantic alliance had to reinvent its purpose to stay relevant. As NATO was a pillar of the Dutch foreign strategic policy, the Netherlands devoted serious attention to its upholding and reform after the end of the Cold War.<sup>85</sup> For the

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<sup>82</sup> Although the withdrawal of Soviet forces in September 1991 did furtherly reduce the strategic importance of Cuba.

<sup>83</sup> J. I. Domínguez, *From Pirates to Drug Lords: The Post-Cold War Caribbean Security Environment*, Albany: State University of New York Press (1998): page 1-2.

<sup>84</sup> I.L. Griffith, “Caribbean Security: Retrospect and Prospect” in *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 30, Issue 2 (1995): page 17-18.

<sup>85</sup> T. Lansford, “The Triumph of Transatlanticism: NATO and the Evolution of European Security after the Cold War” in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 30, Issue 1 (1999): page 12.

Caribbean, involvement in these economic and security blocs was often not an option. This would constitute to a loss of utility by the Caribbean islands for the US. Either their economies were not robust enough to handle the trade disciplines or their military capabilities were not sufficient that were needed to go with these blocs.<sup>86</sup>

However, the end of the Cold War and the abovementioned developments did not result in the end of American interest in the Caribbean region. The serious strategic build-up in the Caribbean that was initialized in the eighties continued throughout the nineties. The significance of these developments in relation to the deepening Dutch-American relation is that the strategic vulnerability of the Caribbean region was still beyond doubt.<sup>87</sup> In other words, the cooperation between the US and the Netherlands was still deemed necessary by both parties, even without the looming danger of communist aggression. This deepening of the strategic relationship can be illustrated by the agreement on the installation of two so-called 'Forward Operating Locations' (FOL's) in the Dutch Caribbean. This was the result of a long expressed wish of the Dutch government to directly involve the Caribbean islands in the American cooperation, dating back to the early sixties.<sup>88</sup> Partly due to the expected negative reactions of neighbouring countries such as Venezuela, the US did not pursue an actual military base but opted for (in)formal agreements to enhance Dutch-American cooperation at the time.<sup>89</sup> That the bases in the Dutch Caribbean were realized at the end of the 1990s was the result of the increased American reorientation to combat illicit trafficking. The US sought reliable partners to stop the flow of drugs towards its country and needed military outposts in the transit zones.<sup>90</sup> The Netherlands offered the locations in Aruba and Curacao as these were already developed airports and could easily be adjusted for military use.<sup>91</sup> Eventually signed in 2000, the agreement provided increased surveillance capacity for the combined actions against illicit trafficking.

So why did the US and the Netherlands intensified their cooperation in this region, while many others were focussing on countries in the Middle East (Gulf War; 1990-1991) and Eastern Europe (Bosnian War; 1992-1995)? Firstly, the concept of security for both the Netherlands

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<sup>86</sup> A.T. Bryan, "The New Clinton Administration and the Caribbean: Trade, Security and Regional Politics" in *Journal of Inter-American Studies & World Affairs*, Vol. 39, Issue 1, (1997): page 103.

<sup>87</sup> Griffith, *Caribbean Security: Retrospect and Prospect*, page 15.

<sup>88</sup> "Secret Telegram from the American Embassy in the Hague to the Secretary of State", Department of State: Central Decimal Files 1960-1963: Documents related to the relations between the US and the Netherlands, October 28 1960, National Archives and Records Administration, Doc. No.: 756B.56311/10-2860.

<sup>89</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>90</sup> See: <http://www.southcom.mil/Media/Special-Coverage/Cooperative-Security-Locations/> (Assessed on

<sup>91</sup> Eventually, U.S. Congress rejected a proposal for funds to install a FOL in Aruba.

and the US had changed. Although the strategic value of the Caribbean itself had not been changed, the perception and focus of security in the Caribbean domain had shifted for both countries.<sup>92</sup> The Caribbean had been developing one particular problem for both the Netherlands and the US: the illicit flow of narcotics. Both countries developed programs in the eighties to combat the problems, but the nineties showed rapid growth in the amount of drugs that were flowing through the Caribbean basin. Some think that this could have been the result of the Dutch and American trade policies to primarily go with larger, economic blocks.<sup>93</sup> This would facilitate the argument that these, mostly economic, policy decisions had far-reaching consequences in the strategic domain. Arguably, the forming of these blocks led to a decreased amount of foreign investment and assistance in the Caribbean and subsequently leading to a rise of problems that could have been tackled with the CBI.<sup>94</sup> Although it is not probable that this supposed 'economic neglect' by the Netherlands and US directly led to these problems, but it is arguable that it contributed. Moreover, the intensified cooperation between the US and the Netherlands heightened by the rise of tourism and financial institutions in this part of the world. The Netherlands Antilles, together with primarily the British colonies, manifested themselves into successful financial centres that revolved around the offshore industry. This process also started in the eighties, but this development became more relevant for the US as a result of its intertwinement of these offshore industries with the drug trafficking.<sup>95</sup> This resulted in the Caribbean, and certainly the Dutch territories, becoming strategic hubs for the US and the region as a whole. This justifies an increased importance of the Caribbean islands and the expanded cooperation between these two countries. The US and the Netherlands were not only cooperating to stop the drugs from transferring, but also collaborated to counter the financial scene behind it that manifested in the Dutch Caribbean.

The earlier stated danger of 'irrelevance' for the Caribbean did not demonstrate itself after the end of the Cold War. This maintained the relevance of the Dutch Caribbean territories right after the end of the Cold War, contributing to a rise in the utility factor. More specifically, the cooperation between the Netherlands and the US increased due to new security threats and therewith related side effects. Both policy viewpoints aligned, so in the first decade after the Cold War, the compatibility indicator also increased positively.

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<sup>92</sup> Griffith, *Caribbean Security: Retrospect and Prospect*, page 15-16.

<sup>93</sup> A.T. Bryan, *The New Clinton Administration and the Caribbean*, page 108.

<sup>94</sup> Griffith, *Caribbean Security: Retrospect and Prospect*, page 18.

<sup>95</sup> P. Sutton and A. Payne, "The Off-Limits Caribbean: The United States and the European Dependent Territories in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol 533 (May 1994): Page 92.

### 3.2 CARIBBEAN STRATEGIC RELATIONS AFTER 9/11

The terrorist attacks in Washington and New York on September 9<sup>th</sup> in 2001 were a ground-breaking event which put terrorism in the heart of the security reality in the post-Cold War era. It changed the way Americans would look at their borders, and moreover, at the countries neighbouring the US.<sup>96</sup> Many Caribbean countries were therefore expecting an immediate regional reaction from the US, even while the supposed threat came from the Middle East. Despite this, the Caribbean connection between the US and the Netherlands showed a continuing relevance and increased policy alignment, although the new ‘War on Terror’ ultimately gained more attention from the US than the continuing ‘War on Drugs’ in the Caribbean.<sup>97</sup>

That the importance and need for cooperation between the US and the Netherlands was still relevant is shown by the assessments of the Dutch government in the use of the FOL’s in the Caribbean territories. Over the course of various years, there has been a steady increase in the amount of flights and interceptions (See Table I, Annexes) from the FOL’s in the Dutch Caribbean territories. This evidence highlights that, particularly after the start of the ‘War on Terror’, the ‘War on Drugs’ was intensified greatly in the Caribbean Basin. The cooperation between the Dutch and American military yields results. This has certainly contributed to the fact that the arrangement with regard to the FOL has unanimously been renewed by both parties in 2011 (five years) and 2016 (another five years).<sup>98</sup> This signals a clear determination by both administrations that the cooperation has been beneficial and the shows a continued strategic relevance of the Dutch Caribbean territories.

A particular interesting development has been the dissolution of the Netherlands Antilles during the late 2000s. After a plebiscite and constitutional reform, the Antilles were dissolved in favour of two more autonomous countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands (adding Curacao and St. Maarten to Aruba). At first glance, this was a purely cosmetic change

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<sup>96</sup> R.C. Crandall, *The United States and Latin America After the Cold War*, New York: Cambridge University Press (2008): page 46-47.

<sup>97</sup> J. Francis & G, Mauser, “Collateral Damage: the ‘War on Drugs’, and the Latin America and Caribbean Region: Policy Recommendations for the Obama Administration” in *Policy Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (March 2011): page 160. (159-177)

<sup>98</sup> Via:

<https://verdragen.nl/nl/Verdrag/ZoekUitgebreidResultaat?phrase=inzake%20drugsbestrijding&party=Verenigde%20Staten%20van%20Amerika&isNLDepositary=False&isNLCurrent=True&pagina=1> (Assessed on 02-06-2018).

from the perspective of the US. After all, it was still the Hague that was the lead on foreign policy and defence for the Dutch Caribbean islands. However, as will be more evident in the last part of this study, the autonomous countries could still influence the Dutch-American relationship in the strategic domain. The autonomous islands of Curacao and Sint Maarten became responsible for their internal security, putting the protection of vital economic assets in the country under control of unexperienced political leaders. This led to some unforeseen, but important consequences for the US-Dutch security relationship. For instance, there have been signals that the internal security service of the island of Curacao was compromised by transnational criminal organisations.<sup>99</sup> This resulted in the loss of data that was shared by the FBI and DEA with the Dutch/Curacao intelligence community. The recently attained autonomous authorities of the islands were also problematic as these island communities are small and rely to a large degree on personal contacts. Communities like these are more susceptible to organized crime networks and corruption. This becomes apparent with the key role Sint Maarten played as a centre for regional narcotic distribution in the run-up to its autonomy.<sup>100</sup> Consequently, the acquirement of more autonomy for the islands has, to some degree, negatively influenced the Dutch-American relation in the Caribbean. Nevertheless, this development displays a necessary rise in the urgency and need for closer cooperation between the Netherlands and the US in the strategic sphere.

The Dutch-American partnership in the Caribbean region has seen some interesting developments since the end of the Cold War. The level of strategic relevance of the islands started to show a relative decline as other regions in the world asked more attention. Consequently, the Caribbean region and the Dutch islands in particular, saw their utility negatively influenced. From an American point of view, these islands became a hub in the regional drug issue and facilitated the expansion of transnational crime networks. Next to being actual transit points for narcotics, there have been signals that the financial institutions of the Caribbean were used to funnel drug money. In spite of the events on 9-11 and the refocussing of the US unto other areas in the world, the Caribbean did not lose strategic relevance. However, it is arguable that other regions in the world relatively gained more strategic relevance, thereby lessening the utility factor of the Dutch Caribbean. The utility of the islands was further

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<sup>99</sup> Via: <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/informatie-avond-in-handen-criminelen-na-gegevensroof~be8cf2eb/> (Assessed on 03-06-2018)

<sup>100</sup> "Organized Crime and Maintenance of Law and Order on Sint Maarten" (Dutch), *Scientific Research and Documentation Centre*, Dutch Ministry of Justice (2007): page 98 & 154. Accessible via: <https://www.wodc.nl/onderzoeksdatabase/onderzoek-naar-georganiseerde-criminaliteit-op-de-bovenwindse-eilanden-van-de-nederlandse-antillen-fase-ii.aspx> (Assessed on 03-06-2018).

negatively influenced after the new constitutional division of the Dutch Kingdom. This led to a less trustable local government, exemplified by data leaks of the local intelligence service of Curacao and infiltration of Sint Maartens' government by transnational criminal networks.

### *3.3 CONFIGURATION OF THE POST-COLD WAR CARIBBEAN*

Some scholars expected the Caribbean to show a decline in (strategic) relevance for the US with the end of the Cold War. The end of an era would also prove the end of Caribbean relevance for the US. As has been shown in this part of the research, this decline has been demonstrated from a relative point of view. In absolute terms, it is arguable that the Dutch Caribbean islands have shown an increase in strategic relevance for the US. Illicit trafficking, mainly drugs, became the main strategic threat for the US coming from this region. And although the 9-11 attacks pivoted the American foreign policy focus, the Dutch Caribbean islands still proved to be a relevant factor in the bilateral dealings of these governments.

The instalment of the FOLs and subsequent extension of these strategic posts not only shows the strategic relevance of these islands, but also portrays a strong policy alignment between the governments of the US and the Netherlands. The Dutch Caribbean islands gained new, more autonomous, responsibilities in relation to both the Netherlands and the US. The autonomous powers that came along with this higher level of autonomy were not used in a positively. These liberties, however, also caused the American government to increase political-military cooperation with the Dutch government. The rising drug issue drove both countries towards increased utility and compatibility. Coming back to the central question in this study, it is observable that the political and strategic relevance of the Caribbean has shown a relative decline. However, it is arguable that against this relative decline, an absolute increase of relevance can be deduced. The results of this altered relationship will become more apparent in the next part of this study. In this final chapter, both indicators will be used more extensively with the use of recent sources. The current situation in the Caribbean region, displaying tension a result of Venezuelan chaos and natural disasters, questions the relevance of these small islands while also testing the alignment of policies by the US and the Netherlands.

## **CHAPTER IV – THE CONTEMPORARY COMPOSITION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE STRATEGIC DUTCH-AMERICAN COOPERATION (2010-2018)**

The fourth part of this thesis deals with the contemporary state of the Dutch-American security nexus in the Caribbean. In a recent study by the The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS), Dutch international relationships were assessed on six different themes while using two indicators (utility and compatibility).<sup>101</sup> This *Dutch Foreign Relations Index* (DFRI) uses these last two variables to assess the prioritization of themes and issues of Dutch partners. The chapter will dissolve into two parts that each assess one of the indicators in the political and the military spectrum for both countries evenly. When applied this way, this framework will show the current political and strategic relevance of the Dutch Caribbean territories for the US. Furthermore, it can point towards valuable conclusions regarding the position of both countries with respect to the Caribbean and the Dutch territories herein.

The utility indicator revolves around the importance of interests. Therefore, in the first part of this chapter, the current problems of the Caribbean region will be assessed and the efforts that the Netherlands and the US, respectively, are undertaking to counter these problems. The respective amount of influence and power of the Netherlands and the US will be determined. The compatibility indicator displays the extent and scope of similar values. It looks at the alignment of strategic policies between the US and the Netherlands. Consequently, the second part of this chapter assesses the combined efforts of the Dutch-American cooperation in this area and sees whether the intentions and endeavors are actually working together and are not counter-productive or even incompatible. For this indicator, the membership of International Governmental Organizations (IGO's), alliances, agreements and its subsequent policies by the Netherlands and the US will be analyzed.

As we go deeper into this method, it is worthwhile to see limitations, especially in the scope of the assessment. The scope has been limited to the political and military domain in order to facilitate a discussion that fits the size of this study. Secondly, the current problems in the Caribbean region are highly actual, especially the Venezuelan crisis situation that is still ongoing. The analysis of these actual topics is to a certain extent limited as the information

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<sup>101</sup> The Dutch Foreign Relations Index, The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. Accessible via: <https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2017/10/19/monthly-alert-october-2017---european-and-dutch-security-interests> (Assessed on 22-11-2017)

might still be classified, unknown or taken over by reality. This particular relationship is nevertheless a topic that should be considered of high importance by both countries, although the administrations of the Netherlands and the US often see this region of secondary interest.<sup>102</sup> Application of the DFRI-model and analysis of the regional context of the Dutch-American relationship shows that the utility of this relation is considerably high, signifying the importance of the Caribbean within the larger bilateral relationship. The compatibility is showing some differences, but is still in strong harmony with each other. This implicates the harmony of US-Dutch policy in the Caribbean relationship.

The region can only rely on (regional/global) interest in the instance of political instability (Venezuela) or natural disasters (recently exemplified by hurricane Irma). However, there are structural problems at hand which have been dealt with for a considerate amount of time without gaining the interest it deserves to bring a lasting solution. Therefore this analysis will also bring recommendations forward to address these problems, but also to enhance the Caribbean connection between the US and the Netherlands.

#### *4.1 UTILIZING THE DUTCH-AMERICAN PARTNERSHIP IN THE CARIBBEAN REGION*

The Dutch-American cooperation in the region dates back to the point where the US was still to become a country. Via one of the Dutch Caribbean islands, weapons were provided to the American revolutionaries to fight the Brits.<sup>103</sup> Sint Eustatius is also known as the first foreign port that saluted an American flag. Nowadays, both countries possess territories in the Caribbean which substantially contributes to the importance and relevance of this area in the Dutch-American relationship.

#### *Political Dimensions of the Cooperation*

##### **Netherlands**

From the perspective of the Netherlands, the Caribbean region is an area where it has direct and vital interests as three of the four countries of the Kingdom are situated here. The differences with its largest territory, the Netherlands, are mainly rooted in the contrasts by size, problems and economical capabilities. The way politics are organized and materialized are also a cultural divergence with the Netherlands. The Caribbean islands of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

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<sup>102</sup> G. Fariol, D. Lewis and N. Ghazarian, “*The Relevance of U.S.-Caribbean Relations*” (Editor. M. Matera) by Centre for Strategic and International Studies, June 2017, page 1. Via: <https://www.csis.org/analysis/relevance-us-caribbean-relations> (Assessed on 23-11-2017)

<sup>103</sup> J. Jameson, “St. Eustatius in the American Revolution”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1903): page 690-691.



(KoN) can be politically characterized by small, entangled communities that to a large extent rely on personal connections. The islands of Curacao and Sint Maarten are to a large extent troubled by cross-border criminality. These criminal problems are mainly rooted in the illicit trade of drugs, weapons and persons and result in subversive effects on the governmental organization of the islands. Besides these institutional problems, the north-eastern part of the Caribbean often deals with the damage of hurricanes, which cripple the small and tourist-dependent economies of the Caribbean.

The aftermath of hurricane Irma in 2017 showed that there are a lot of negative Dutch opinions about the status of local politics on Sint Maarten, but also that there was no improvement in the development of rule of law on the island.<sup>104</sup> Against the instructions of the Kingdom government, Sint Maarten did not install a Integrity Chamber which would monitor the development of rule of law on the island. The discussion on the reconstruction of the island focused mostly on the corrupt character of the ruling prime minister and governmental institutions. The corruption and nepotism that has troubled the island is also considered to damage the regional relations of the KoN which has been confirmed in multiple reports.<sup>105</sup> Corruption is not the only problem of Sint Maarten: the island is considered as a regional hub for human trafficking. The American State Department mentioned in the 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report the following: "... St. Maarten as a source, transit, and destination country for women, children, and men subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor".<sup>106</sup> This problematic situation on Sint Maarten is hereby also a problem for the region as a whole and influence the Dutch-American relationship. It must be noted that the report indicated that all parties involved are working to solve this problem, resulting in a combined Dutch-American approach involving law-enforcement cooperation on multiple governmental levels.

In Curacao, the transition to a autonomous country within the KoN initially proved problematic results in the government of the island. The new status of Curacao made it autonomous on a large number of policies, except for areas like defense and foreign policy, amongst others. The first prime minister of Curacao, Gerrit Schotte, had problematic relations

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<sup>104</sup> Policy Assessment by the Ministry of Interior and Kingdom Relations, Chapter IV, Article I, page 31. Via: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-823700> (Assessed on 24-11-2017)

<sup>105</sup> For instance, a study by PricewaterhouseCoopers in 2014 [http://gracao.com/docs/Integrity\\_Inquiry\\_into\\_the\\_Functioning\\_of\\_the\\_Government\\_of\\_Sint\\_Maarten.pdf](http://gracao.com/docs/Integrity_Inquiry_into_the_Functioning_of_the_Government_of_Sint_Maarten.pdf) (Assessed on 26-11-2017) or the report of Transparency International in 2015 [https://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/transparency\\_internationals\\_st.\\_maarten\\_study\\_highlights\\_lack\\_of\\_enforcemen](https://www.transparency.org/news/pressrelease/transparency_internationals_st._maarten_study_highlights_lack_of_enforcemen) (Assessed on 26-11-2018)

<sup>106</sup> 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report, U.S. Department of State, page 343. Via: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/271339.pdf> (Assessed on 28-11-2017)

with Italian gambling kings and Venezuela. As a result, he was sentenced for corruption, money laundering and forgery in 2017.<sup>107</sup> Given that Schotte attempted to release froze bank accounts for a business partner in the gambling industry by directly contacting then US Secretary of State Clinton, it can be concluded that these issues can also damage the US-Dutch relationship.<sup>108</sup> In these circumstances, ‘The Hague’ is often held responsible for the actions of the autonomous countries within the KoN. The regional influence of the KoN is being expressed in multiple regional forums, such as the Organisation of American States (OAS). Dutch foreign policy in these regional/international bodies is formulated by the *Rijkministerraad* (RMR), which constitutes of all Dutch ministers and one representative for each of the Caribbean countries of the Kingdom. The RMR discusses the topics which are designated as ‘Kingdomaffairs’ under the Statute of the KoN.<sup>109</sup>

The OAS is an organization in which the KoN takes a seat to discuss Caribbean topics and uses its influence to promote favorable policies. It consists of 35 members and 70 permanent observers (including the KoN). In comparison with other European countries, the KoN subsidizes the OAS more than the UK or France.<sup>110</sup> This does not directly entail more regional influence in this body, but shows a significant difference in the importance between the KoN and other European countries regard in this region. The contribution by the KoN has also risen after 2010, which shows that with the increased presence of the Kingdom in the Caribbean, the funding and interest in this region also rose.<sup>111</sup>

The Dutch foreign policy designates the US as the biggest economic and political superpower in the region, but foresees that other countries are gaining influence.<sup>112</sup> Besides Brazil, China is also recognized as a potential influential player in the Caribbean. With the more American centered foreign policy by US president Trump (‘America First’), it is to be expected

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<sup>107</sup> Via: <https://www.volkscrant.nl/buitenland/oud-premier-schotte-van-curacao-veroordeeld-tot-drie-jaar-celwegens-corruptie-en-witwassen~a4507640/> (Dutch, Assessed on 28-11-2017)

<sup>108</sup> Via: <https://nos.nl/artikel/2091330-loterijkoning-van-curacao-voor-de-rechter-na-acht-jaar-onderzoek.html> (Assessed on 28-11-2018)

<sup>109</sup> Examples of these affairs are defense, international relations and the upholding of good governance. For all affairs: see Article 3 of the Statute of the Kingdom of the Netherlands via:

<http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0002154/2017-11-17> (Assessed on 02-12-2017)

<sup>110</sup> Comparison made through the information on the member pages on the OAS-website. Total contribution in dollars up until 2016: KoN; +40 million, UK; 9,7 million, France; 3,8 million. Via:

[http://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/perm\\_observers/countries.asp](http://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/perm_observers/countries.asp) (Assessed on 03-12-2017)

<sup>111</sup> Via the Dutch profilepage at the OAS:

[http://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/perm\\_observers/Documents/Profiles/Profile%20Netherlands.doc](http://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/perm_observers/Documents/Profiles/Profile%20Netherlands.doc) (Assessed on 03-12-2017)

<sup>112</sup> ‘The Dutch Foreign Policy with regard to Latin-America and the Caribbean’/ ‘Het Nederlands buitenlands beleid ten aanzien van Latijns-Amerika en de Cariben’, *Letter by the Minister of Foreign Affairs*, Second Chamber Year 2010-2011, 29 653, The Hague: 26 August 2011, page 2 (Dutch). Via: <https://zoek.officieelebekendmakingen.nl/dossier/33750-IX/kst-29653-11.html> (Assessed on 04-12-2017)

that countries such as China could step into the void that can be left by the US. The KoN can also benefit of declining American influence by stepping up his presence and policies in this region. For instance, it could expand its presence by increasing the amount or importance of its embassies in the region (for an overview of Dutch embassies in the Caribbean region, see Picture I in Annexes). Venezuela was expanding its influence in the region by setting up an extensive oil-program dubbed PetroCaribe. It provided many countries in the Caribbean region with cheap raw oil and fuels, for which it received considerable support in organizations such as the OAS. The collapse of the Venezuelan economy and political system has strongly reduced this influence, but it shows that the countries in the Caribbean region are sensitive to these kind of policies.<sup>113</sup>

For the KoN, the influence in the Caribbean region is of considerable importance. In contrast to countries such as France or the UK, it does not have any other territories or regions where it can wield influence. Subsequently, the political importance is greater than for similar European partners. The islands represent a strategic asset of the KoN, because the combined representation yields more regional and global influence than any of the entities by themselves. They represent a self-strengthening network that can address multiple international factions, which, for instance, can be derived from the successful UNSC-seat bid.<sup>114</sup> The proximity of (instable) regimes like Venezuela and Cuba makes the strategic importance even more relevant, especially for the US. The Caribbean islands therefore give the KoN a role in the world theatre, although it is difficult to quantify this role. This substantially contributes to the utility that it produces, as it provides importance to the US-Dutch relationship. The KoN sees this region thus as strategically important in its foreign policy, as it yields relevance to its international role and an outstanding position to the US. It therefore possesses political utility for the Kingdom. This is not the result of economic or cultural ties, but the political value this region yields for the KoN as a whole.

## **United States**

Seeing that the Caribbean is considered the ‘third border’ of the US, it is to be expected that the region can count on sufficient attention by the American administration.<sup>115</sup> Unfortunately, the

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<sup>113</sup> S. Ellner, “Toward a ‘Multipolar World’: Using Oil Diplomacy to Sever Venezuela’s Dependence”, *NACLA Report on the Americas*, Vol. 46, Issue 1 (Sept/Oct 2007): page 18.

<sup>114</sup> The Caribbean countries of the Kingdom were considered a ‘trump card’ in the UNSC bid. See for instance: <https://www.trouw.nl/home/nederland-aast-op-plek-in-veiligheidsraad~a55b3729/> (Dutch, Assessed on 02-01-2018).

<sup>115</sup> As said by G.W. President Bush at the Summit of the Americas (2001). Via: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/04/20010423-1.html> (Assessed on 02-01-2018)

Caribbean region often succumbing to the unrest in the Middle East or tensions in Asia. The American influence on the Caribbean region and nations is nevertheless strong. For almost every Caribbean country, the US is the biggest economic partner and every country has an embassy in Washington D.C.. For the US, the Caribbean as a whole is the sixth biggest trading partner with a value of 15 billion dollar.<sup>116</sup> Although the Caribbean is not very often on the priority list of the American administration, Congress did pass the US-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act (USCSEA) in 2016 with a large majority (386-6), showing some interest and conformity in American politics.<sup>117</sup> Despite a certain extent of economic utility, the region does not seem to possess a lot of political utility for the US in relation to allied countries. In a response to the pass of the USCSEA, the *Centre for Strategic and International Studies* (CSIS) manufactured a report that identified three essential themes for the American relationship with the Caribbean: energy, security and economy.<sup>118</sup> This showed that the Caribbean provided some political utility nonetheless: it is a relative stable region without any conflicts between states, but it is characterized by violent problems that have international repercussions that also hit the US.

From numerous South-American countries, mainly Colombia, drugs are being transported to the US. The US is the biggest global market for drugs, predominantly for cocaine, marihuana and opioids.<sup>119</sup> These drugs are mainly transported through Central-American, but a portion of it also goes via the Caribbean region. The US Department of State currently estimates that the Caribbean transits about 10-15% of the total transport to the US.<sup>120</sup> This transport leaves significant problems along the way, which the US is trying to counter before it reaches the US. Besides the drug-related problems, there are also issues with illicit weapon transports and human trafficking. The US (still) has a strong appeal for poor people in the Western hemisphere. The journey onto the US is often facilitated by criminal organizations who exploit the vulnerable status of these people. Not uncommonly, they are forced into illegal prostitution or into smuggling drugs.<sup>121</sup> This shows that these problems are often intertwined with each other and are present on multiple levels in society. The significant implications ask for a

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<sup>116</sup> Via: <https://www.fas.usda.gov/data/central-america-and-caribbean-prospects-us-agricultural-exports> (Assessed on 18-12-2017)

<sup>117</sup> Via: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/4939> (Assessed on 18-12-2018)

<sup>118</sup> M. Matera (ed.), 'The Relevance of U.S.-Caribbean Relations: Three Views', page 1.

<sup>119</sup> Although marihuana has shown a decrease, as more American state legalize the (medical) use of it. The *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* sees the American cocaine and opioid market as the largest. Via: <https://data.unodc.org/> → 'Annual prevalence, adults', by region. (Assessed on 18-12-2017)

<sup>120</sup> Presentation by M. Schena, U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, 09-11-2017.

<sup>121</sup> S.A. Haughton, "The US-Caribbean Border: An Important Security Border in the 21st Century" in *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, Vol. 24, Issue 3 (2009): page 8.

comprehensive approach that does not only challenges these problems on a political and military level, but also in social and cultural domains.<sup>122</sup>

Besides criminal organizations, there is also the danger of ideological extremists in the Caribbean region. Organizations such as Hezbollah and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are also recruiting and look for financial opportunities in this area.<sup>123</sup> This often results in the linking of criminal and ideological networks, making the issue even more complex to understand and tackle. They do not only operate in the violent spectrum, but also function into the cyber, financial and social domains to exert influence or oppose American interests. The US tries to handle the problems by executing the *Caribbean Basin Security Initiative* (CBSI). This program is a collection of individual bilateral agreements to realize a safer Caribbean region. Three themes are central in the CBSI: (1) countering illicit trade (drugs, people, weapons), (2) grow public safety by strengthening police and law enforcement and (3) the promotion of prevention, anti-corruption programs and social programs.<sup>124</sup> An extensive program, in which the US already invested almost half a billion dollars. It shows that, despite the presence of many Small Island Development States (SIDS) and the problems that come with that, the US does want to invest in this region. However, looking at the global picture, the Caribbean is not considered an interesting topic and cannot count on a lot of attention by other countries. The US spends more money, time and attention to regions like Europe (defense cooperation, Russia), the Middle East (Israel-Palestine, Iran, Iraq) and Asia (China, North-Korea). Also, at the UN Security Council, for instance, way more attention is given to other regions when looked at the amount of resolutions for Africa (150 resolutions), Middle East (54 resolutions) and Europe (19 resolutions).<sup>125</sup> Given these numbers, it could be concluded that the utility of the world and the Caribbean is not so high. The aforementioned shows, however, that the US is certainly dedicating serious amount of resources and efforts into the region, but does not use international political capital. The utility is therefore still considerate in relation to the bilateral relationship with the Netherlands.

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<sup>122</sup> "The U.S. Military's Presence in the Greater Caribbean Basin: More A Matter of Trade Strategy and Ideology than Drugs", *Council on Hemispheric Affairs* via: <http://www.coha.org/the-u-s-militarys-presence-in-the-greater-caribbean-basin-more-a-matter-of-trade-strategy-and-ideology-than-drugs/> (Assessed on 05-01-2018)

<sup>123</sup> Posture Statement of Admiral K.W. Tidd (USSOUTHCOM Commander), *U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee*, 6 April 2017 via: <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/17-04-06-united-states-southern-command-and-united-states-northern-command> (Assessed on 06-01-2018)

<sup>124</sup> Explanation of the CBSI-program via: <https://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/cbsi/index.htm> (Assessed on 06-01-2018)

<sup>125</sup> Tally via: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/> (Assessed on 19-12-2018)

## Caribbean: The Backyard of the US?

In many articles and still today, the Caribbean is considered to be the backyard of the US.<sup>126</sup> This has been the case since the exclamation of the ‘Monroe-doctrine’: the statement in 1823 which declared the Caribbean, Central- and Southern America part of the American hemisphere and thus not accessible for the European colonizers.<sup>127</sup> Looking at the American relationship with the rest of the hemisphere, some perspectives arise. The political, economic, military and cultural hegemony has been present in the hemisphere since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the US has shown a cyclic approach in its interest and activities in this region, in which periods of coercive influence, short interventions and insignificance alternate.<sup>128</sup> A sphere of influence can be described as ‘a setting in which a country (the influencer) to a certain degree has superiority over a country or a set of countries in its vicinity.’<sup>129</sup> Interestingly, the concept of sphere of influence is often connected to the American hemisphere as the Monroe doctrine is one of the concrete examples of it. Often the term is used to describe the use of international pressure, for instance by the USSR during the Cold War on its ‘satellite states’ in Eastern Europe.<sup>130</sup> The Caribbean basin can certainly be accounted to the US sphere of influence and thus, portrays utility for the US. This can, for instance, be deduced from the fact that many Caribbean countries (Curacao, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago) have the US as its biggest trading partner.<sup>131</sup> This would lead to the assumption that these countries also follow the lead of the US in international forums such as the UN. Surprisingly, this is not the case: the Latin-American/Caribbean group votes along with the US in 58.4% of resolutions the latter deemed important.<sup>132</sup> If just the Caribbean countries (including Venezuela and Columbia) and all UN resolutions are considered, this number drops to just over half of the decisions of this body.<sup>133</sup> This shows that, despite the profound connections between the US and the Caribbean countries, there is no very strong political influence or leverage the US uses in this region. This is not

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<sup>126</sup> See for instance: L. Yu, “China’s Strategic Partnership with Latin America: A Fulcrum in China’s Rise” in *International Affairs*, Volume 91, Issue 5 (September 2015):page 1047 or K. Mehta, “China in Latin America: A Rising Power Forays into US Backyard” in *ORF Occasional Paper*, No. 141 (January 2018): page 2.

<sup>127</sup> See: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Monroe-Doctrine> (Assessed on 21-12-2018)

<sup>128</sup> J. León-Manriquez & F.F. Alvarez, “Mao’s Steps in Monroe’s Backyard: Towards A United States-China Hegemonic Struggle in Latin-America?” in *Rev Bras Polit*, No. 27, Issue 9, (2014): page 10.

<sup>129</sup> A. Etzioni, “Spheres of Influence: A Reconceptualization” in *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 39, Issue 2 (2015): page 117.

<sup>130</sup> Ibidem, 118.

<sup>131</sup> Via: [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region\\_cam.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_cam.html) (Assessed on 20-12-2018)

<sup>132</sup> Voting Practices in the United Nations 2016, *Department of State*, Chapter V. Via: <https://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2016/practices/index.htm> (Assessed on 20-12-2018)

<sup>133</sup> Ibidem.



surprising when it is considered that the UN is the sole international body these countries can use to influence the US themselves. The results in Table I (see Annexes) show that it is apparent that other international bodies do not have the same international importance factor as the UN.

The OAS is considered as the biggest hemispheric player in the region when the UN is not considered. It was originally founded by the US to counter communist forces in the Western hemisphere, but evolved into a strong voice for democratic empowerment of the region after the end of the Cold War.<sup>134</sup> Resulting from the rise of new, democratic leaders and the increased welfare of many OAS member states, they make more (inter)national decisions in which US has lost influence.<sup>135</sup> An example of this is seen in the recent deadlock in the OAS, where countries cannot agree on a resolution on the situation in Venezuela.<sup>136</sup> This deadlock is often attributed to a combination of the disinterested US stance and the earlier mentioned PetroCaribe program of Venezuela. However, other signs show that the US still has considerable influence in the OAS. For instance, Venezuela has announced to end its membership partly due to the American influence in this body.<sup>137</sup> Besides Venezuela, also Cuba directly challenges the American influence in the Caribbean region. The expected handover of power in Cuba and the strong anti-Cuban rhetoric by president Trump have contributed to regional tensions on this topic.<sup>138</sup> The aforementioned leads to the conclusion that it is difficult to measure American influence in the body, and therefore the real value it contributes to its utility. It is nevertheless arguable that the Netherlands and the US still have a strong and influential position in the Caribbean as a result of their economic and military power. This influence is under pressure by countries in the Caribbean, such as Cuba and Venezuela, but also from countries outside the Caribbean, such as the Russian Federation and China. These countries are also named in the American 2018 National Defense Strategy, although the Caribbean region is not named.<sup>139</sup> The document shows therewith that this region is not high on the American priority list, but can

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<sup>134</sup> The Council of Foreign Relations on the OAS: <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/organization-american-states> (Assessed on 18-01-2018)

<sup>135</sup> P. J. Meyer, "Organization of American States: Background and Issues for Congress" in *Congressional Research Service*, No. 7-5700 (22 August 2016) page 1.

<sup>136</sup> Via: <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/andres-oppenheimer/article157463039.html> (Assessed on 20-01-2018)

<sup>137</sup> New York Times, "Venezuela Says It Will Leave Pro-Democracy Organization", 26 April 2017. Via: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/26/world/americas/venezuela-maduro-organization-of-american-states-protests.html> (Assessed on 20-01-2018)

<sup>138</sup> See for instance: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/22/five-things-you-need-to-know-about-trumps-cuba-policy-and-who-it-will-hurt/?utm\\_term=.db21613f21fb](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/06/22/five-things-you-need-to-know-about-trumps-cuba-policy-and-who-it-will-hurt/?utm_term=.db21613f21fb) (Assessed 20-01-2018)

<sup>139</sup> The 2018 National Defense Strategy can be found at: <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1419045/dod-official-national-defense-strategy-will-rebuild-dominance-enhance-deterrence/> (Assessed on 21-01-2018)

count on global attention from other countries. Is there a gradual change in the amount of influence and, thus, utility of the Caribbean on American policy?

The analysis shows that for both the Netherlands and the US their influence in this region has been subject to change. This also means that the utility for the Caribbean region for these countries has changed. Whereas for the Netherlands there has been a more positive change in political influence, the US has seen a diminishment of its influence in the Caribbean region. Nevertheless, the American posture in the Western hemisphere is still considered as one of great influence that is decisive in major subjects that are relevant in the Caribbean region, making its utility for the Dutch-American relationship strong and certain.

### *The Power of Military Partnership*

Both the Netherlands and the US have a military presence in the Caribbean region. This part of the thesis delves into these capacities and the military utility that is presented in the region. This refers to the coercive abilities both countries can display in this region, but also looks at the importance of this aspect in the region.

#### **Netherlands**

The Dutch military presence in the Caribbean region is demanded by Article 97 of the Dutch Constitution.<sup>140</sup> The permanent military presence is a dual constitutional task: one of territory defense and also one of supporting civil government.<sup>141</sup> The Netherlands has formulated readiness-targets, which stipulate the requirements for the Caribbean tasks. For this task, the Netherlands has assigned two rotating companies of infantry of the Army and/or Marines. These are complemented with boat-platoon, a large surface vessel, a combat support ship and a brigade of the Military Police. The basis for this presence is largely derived on historical circumstances rather than updated requirements.<sup>142</sup> The Navy Commander for the Caribbean (CZMCARIB) executes the main tasks for the Dutch Defense Department in the Caribbean. To fulfill his/her tasks, the CZMCARIB is supported by a staff and also has the militias of Curacao and Aruba at its disposal.<sup>143</sup> Since a few years, a detachment of Marines has also been stationed on the island of Sint Maarten. The Dutch Coast Guard of the Caribbean is a part of the Ministry of

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<sup>140</sup> For Article 97 of the Dutch Constitution, see:

<https://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl/9353000/1/j9vviHlf299q0sr/vkaj9cxqpwX> (Assessed on 02-01-2018)

<sup>141</sup> Via: <http://www.rijksbegroting.nl/system/files/12/ibo-gereedstelling-2017.pdf> page 21 (Dutch). Assessed on 02-01-2018.

<sup>142</sup> Ibidem, page 56.

<sup>143</sup> Via the Introduction Document of the Department of Defense, page 62:

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/publicaties/2017/10/27/introductiebundel-defensie> (Assessed on 02-01-2018)



Defense and is therefore a Kingdom affairs.

Since the end of WWII, the Netherlands has not engaged in military combat in the Caribbean region. The region has gone through some conflictual periods of time, but there has not been a moment in which the Netherlands has endured any actual threat with another state entity. The region does not pose any countries that are an immediate threat for the Netherlands. Table II (see Annexes) shows that, especially if the traditional allies of the Netherlands are taken into account, there are no countries that pose urgent dangers. There are two countries who can, to some degree, go along with the Netherlands according to the military indicators displayed here. However, if one of the traditional allies weighs in, the advantage is definitely with the Netherlands. Many Caribbean countries do not have the financial capabilities or the will to uphold a military apparatus. This is also part due to different perspective towards security in these islands. Their views on security are shaped by other interests and risks, most dominantly hurricanes.<sup>144</sup> This leads to the design of military institutions that are focused on relief efforts or support for the authorities rather than actual military combat. Many of these countries also rely to a certain degree on their colonial relations for their protection.

Seeing that Venezuela is publically seeking to challenge the Netherlands and the US in the Western hemisphere [Hugo Chavez has threatened with military intervention in the Dutch Caribbean<sup>145</sup>], it is worth to briefly look at the current situation. The military expenditure by Venezuela is almost as high as the Netherlands, but this can illustrate a wrong idea. This expenditure has been very irregular over the course of the last fifteen years. This holds a significant trend with the oil prices, on which the Venezuelan economy is heavily dependent. This price has known a fluctuated tendency, which leads to the conclusion that the expenditures to the Venezuelan military have been uncertain and unreliable for an extended period of time (Graph 1, Annexes). An effective and capable military apparatus needs consistency in its funding to properly train, prepare and fund its personal and have the material it needs. The trend of the past years gives reason to believe that the current military readiness of the Venezuelan armed forces is reliable and competent. This would lead to the conclusion that the immediate military utility for both the US and the Netherlands is relatively low, as opponents are underfunded, comparably weaker or not suited for combat. However, a significant military utility between both countries is still shown and strong for other reasons. Military

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<sup>144</sup> R. Ellis, "Strategic Insights: Caribbean Security Issues" in *Strategic Studies Institute*, 16 March 2017. Via: <http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/index.cfm/articles/CSIS-Caribbean-Forum/2017/05/16> (Assessed on 10-03-2018).

<sup>145</sup> Regarding Chavez his threat: <https://nos.nl/artikel/213026-nederland-vreesde-invasie-antillen.html> (Dutch, Assessed on 08-01-2018).

cooperation between the Netherlands and other countries (besides the US) is mostly present through multilateral institutions and organizations. An interesting example of this cooperation is the *Joint Inter-Agency Taskforce South* (JIATF-South). This is an interesting cooperation between countries in the Caribbean region and American government entities, such as the FBI and the DEA.<sup>146</sup> The Dutch commitment to this program is notable, as it is responsible for the monitoring of a part of the Caribbean basin (together with the US and France). Next to this extended multilateral program, the Netherlands military also has a cooperation agreement with Venezuela for Search and Rescue operation in certain agreed waters. These agreements are tested yearly and show that political relations are not always the same as military relations.<sup>147</sup> The Netherlands also holds a cooperation agreement with the Americans regarding the Forward Operating Locations (FOLs) on Curacao and Aruba. On these locations, directly attached to the respective airports of these islands, the American armed forces have stationed airplanes to aid in the monitoring of the Caribbean basin.<sup>148</sup> This capacity is also used to map the criminal networks in surrounding countries.

## **United States**

The US has its global strategic command divided into geographic regions. The Caribbean region falls into the Southern Command (SOUTHCOM). This command is responsible for the area depicted in Picture II (see Annexes). It shows that the Caribbean basin is just a small part of the large area SOUTHCOM is responsible for. In contrast to the Netherlands, it is not possible to retrieve the readiness-targets for SOUTHCOM or the American forces as a whole. The commander of SOUTHCOM has indicated that this part of the American forces has been subject to readiness problems and a shortage in financial support.<sup>149</sup> This makes it not possible to fulfill its capability targets and necessitates the use of private companies to reach some targets. These problems stretch to all divisions of the armed forces in this region: Navy, Marines, Army, Air Force and Special Forces. For instance, the Marine presence in the SOUTHCOM area has been under half of its target since 2015 and the requirements for

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<sup>146</sup> Via: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/task-force-works-to-stem-flow-of-illicit-drug-trafficking> (Assessed on 10-03-2018)

<sup>147</sup> Last test was in October 2017: <http://curacaochronicle.com/local/venezuela-and-the-dutch-kingdom-strengthen-bilateral-relations-through-a-joint-exercise-in-the-caribbean-sea/> (Assessed on 02-02-2018)

<sup>148</sup> See: <http://www.southcom.mil/Media/Special-Coverage/Cooperative-Security-Locations/> It must be noted that the location on Aruba is only present in name as there is no American personal stationed there. (Assessed on 08-01-2018)

<sup>149</sup> Via the US-SOUTHCOM Posture Statement: [http://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM\\_2017\\_posture\\_statement\\_FINAL.pdf?ver=2017-04-06-105819-923](http://www.southcom.mil/Portals/7/Documents/Posture%20Statements/SOUTHCOM_2017_posture_statement_FINAL.pdf?ver=2017-04-06-105819-923) (Assessed on 03-01-2018)

intelligence-gathering have not been met for several years.<sup>150</sup> The earlier-mentioned JIATF-South is also part of the SOUTHCOM command structure. This international civil-military cooperation is often seen as a ‘golden standard’ of inter-agency cooperation, but does not get the funding it needs to operate more efficiently.<sup>151</sup> These examples undermine the utility of the US as a partner for the Netherlands. Although the capabilities of these countries are not really comparable, the way it is used is comparable.

One of the military programs the US executes in the Caribbean is the State Partnership Program (SSP). This effort connects the National Guards of US states with partnering countries to give them civil-military aid.<sup>152</sup> A globally active program, the SSP gets the most of its partner countries from the SOUTHCOM area. The utility for the KoN in this program is promising. Curacao has shown interest to join this program in order to grow as a regional and stable partner. USSOUTHCOM also sees this program as a way to fulfill its requirements, since it calls these relations ‘an instrument to promote civil-military cooperation’.<sup>153</sup> The SSP helps to build up local law enforcement, fight corruption and train military allies in the Caribbean region. The fight against illicit transportation of drugs, people and weapons is also being named as one of the prime goals of the SSP-program.<sup>154</sup>

For both the Netherlands and the US, there is no significant and direct threat for its national security found in the Caribbean region. Next to that, there are no countries -except a further escalating Venezuela- that justify an enhanced military presence in the region. Military efforts by both the US and the Netherlands focus primarily on combatting criminal networks, contra-terrorism (mainly information sharing) and military support after disasters. Both countries feature regularly in training exercises, for instance the Caribbean exercise ‘TRADEWINDS’.<sup>155</sup> These show the focus points of the countries more in detail, as the last training was focused on anti-drug cooperation and capacity build-up with other countries. For the Netherlands, these exercises pose interesting opportunities to train with non-NATO countries such as Belize, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.

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<sup>150</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>151</sup> E. Munsing & C. Lamb, *Joint Interagency Task Force South: The Best Known, Least Understood Interagency Success*, Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press (June 2011): page 1-2.

<sup>152</sup> <http://www.nationalguard.mil/Leadership/Joint-Staff/J-5/International-Affairs-Division/State-Partnership-Program/> (Assessed on 03-01-2018)

<sup>153</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>154</sup> Via a presentation about the SSP: <http://www.nationalguard.mil/Leadership/Joint-Staff/J5/International-Affairs-Division/State-Partnership-Program/> (Assessed on 03-01-2018)

<sup>155</sup> See: <http://www.southcom.mil/Media/Special-Coverage/Tradewinds-2017/> (Assessed on 03-01-2018)

### *Utilizing the Caribbean Connection*

The largest problems in the Caribbean can be summarized by analyzing two problems. Organized crime; from which drugs, weapons and human trafficking arise and unstable regimes; such as Cuba and Venezuela who cause regional insecurity and fragmentation. Most of these problems manifest in a small group of countries, but have a rippling effect onto the whole region. Organized crime often has a subversive effect on fragile governments. Many countries depend on one or two sources of income, like fossil fuels or tourism, which makes their economies and their security situation highly instable.

These problems are identified and prioritized by the Netherlands and the US. In case of the Netherlands, the problems in Venezuela can have spillover effects to the Kingdom-islands. The islands are located just 40 kilometers away from the Venezuelan mainland. These effects are to some degree already visible, as many people from Venezuela have fled from the economic problems towards the Dutch islands.<sup>156</sup> For the US, one of the biggest problems is the flow of drugs that comes towards it. That is the reason it has established programs like the CBSI and a cooperation like JIATF-South. The problems in this region are often very visible when a natural disaster occurs. The technical knowhow, military possibilities and financial aid of the US are generally indispensable for these countries when these events happen. This is also the case for the Netherlands, as this country also needed the assistance and largescale possibilities of the US after one of the most recent storms (Irma) for the island of Sint-Maarten.

But would an enhanced cooperation between the US and the Netherlands aid to address the problems of themselves and the Caribbean region as a whole? Looking from both the political and military perspective and based on the analysis of utility in the region, the answer should be yes. Furthermore, there is more than one state active in this region to undermine the influence of the Netherlands and the US, such as Russia, China and Venezuela. These countries are opposing the enhancement of democratic institution building and development of rule of law. This shows the importance of concerted actions by the US and the KoN to further develop the region into a stable and trustworthy partner.

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<sup>156</sup> See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/25/world/americas/hungry-venezuelans-flee-in-boats-to-escape-economic-collapse.html> (Assessed on 03-03-2018)

## 4.2 – A COMPATIBLE CARIBBEAN CONTACT?

In the second part of this contemporary analysis, the compatibility of the Dutch-American relation in the Caribbean region will be discussed. The degree into whether the political and military policies of these both countries are proportionate will be decisive in the compatibility. The goal is to analyze the distance between the values and actions of both partners in their approach of the problems which have been set out in the previous chapter. For this, the declarations and policies which are set out in intergovernmental organizations (IGO's) and by the respective governments will be assessed. For the military perspective, a number of cooperation initiatives will be analyzed, such as the treaty of San Jose (dated 2002), and will be compared with the intensity and cooperation with other (European) countries. The current situation with Venezuela offers for both the political as the military context a practical background for the Dutch-American relationship. The assessment of the compatibility will show the nuances in the political and military handling of these issues in the Caribbean domain with respect to the US-Dutch relationship. It offers relevant and practical handles to judge this connection by concordance, for which it will feature regularly in this chapter. The military angle will assess the harmony of the cooperation on the basis of the alliances and cooperation agreements which are agreed upon by the Netherlands and the US.

### *Political Goals of the Netherlands and the US*

The previous chapter concluded that the Netherlands and the US are mostly on one page regarding their political alignment and therefore constitute a strong utility in their Caribbean relationship. The problems which occur in the Caribbean area affect both countries. But is, next to the utility alignment, also a mutual adjustment visible in the way they address these problems in the Caribbean? Are their political and military actions coordinated and expressed, so that they do not interfere in a negative way? Notwithstanding a distinct harmony in the Dutch-American strategic approach towards the Caribbean, the analysis here will show evidence that this is not always the case.

The Dutch position in this region is best described by the foreign Caribbean policy of the KoN. In this policy, a number of cornerstones are described which support this policy: good neighborliness, enhancing ties on economic, political and military terrain and, if necessary, de-escalation.<sup>157</sup> These cornerstones are worked out in four themes: enhancing trade and economic

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<sup>157</sup> *The Dutch Foreign Policy Concerning Latin-America and the Caribbean* (Dutch), Note of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Hague, August 26, 2011, File no.: 29 653, nr. 11, page 2.

interests, constitutional responsibilities of the Kingdom, international stability and the advancement of international justice. The Dutch position concerning these last three themes will guide most of the issues in this chapter, as these will be in touch with most of the concordance with the political-military relationship of the US in the Caribbean region.

### **International Organizations**

Two organizations in which both the Netherlands and the US hold seats are relevant for this analysis and the Caribbean region: the Organization of American States (OAS) and the United Nations. The Netherlands sees the OAS as relevant, as it is one of the few highly international organizations who give a voice to the Caribbean countries.<sup>158</sup> Next to the OAS, there are a number of more regionally focused organizations who are in the scope of the Dutch policy. These are the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). Both the KoN and the US are no member of these two forums, but the four countries within the Kingdom are associated members of the ACS.<sup>159</sup> It is important to see the difference here: the Netherlands sees this as an important regional forum, but the US does not participate in this community. This aligns with the Netherlands value of importance of regional cohesion in the Caribbean area. The US, as will be demonstrated later on, often opt for a more unilateral approach. The CARICOM-forum is a cooperation between fifteen island-states, who voice an important message about SIDS. The Netherlands and the US are no (associate) members of CARICOM.

### **OAS**

As being noted in the previous part of this chapter, the influence of the US in the OAS has seen a decrease, especially since the end of the Cold War. And despite that this organization houses in Washington, D.C. and America pays for more than half of its budget, the member states are pursuing a more independent foreign policy course. The cuts in the State Department budget also have consequences for the influence and stance of the US within the OAS.<sup>160</sup> The decreased influence in the OAS is also the cause of a policy shift of the US in this body. Many members of Congress have spoken out in a negative sense about the OAS, because they do not see how the organization benefits the interests of the US.<sup>161</sup> This shows that the American focus has been redirected to direct interests, also known as 'America First'. A factor of increased

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<sup>158</sup> Ibidem, page 3.

<sup>159</sup> <http://www.acs-aec.org/index.php?q=about/members-and-associate-members> (Assessed on 15-01-2018)

<sup>160</sup> See: <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/andres-oppenheimer/article138719758.html> (assessed on 15-01-2018)

<sup>161</sup> CRS Report *OAS: Background and Issues for Congress*, August 2016, page 16-17

difficulty for the US is that the region has shown more splintering in terms of international organizations. Newer forums such as Caricom have made it more difficult for the US to exert its influence through one table at the OAS. This results in a more unilateral approach in which America pushes through on its own interests without notion of other concerns, showing some discrepancy with the more multilateral point of view held by the Netherlands.<sup>162</sup>

The Dutch policy is aimed to focus, for instance in the case of Venezuela, on a solution that can count on regional support. In practice, this results in the Dutch efforts to talk about the Venezuelan problems in the OAS despite resistance by Venezuela and close allies.<sup>163</sup> The KoN uses, to more extend than the US, the OAS as a platform to gain and utilize support for its point of view on these matters. It handles a more multinational perspective and approach than its American ally. Also, the KoN often seeks cooperation with non-traditional partners in the OAS such as Chile and Jamaica. Often the earlier mentioned pillar of international stability and justice is enacted when the Netherlands shields with the use of widely signed charters within these organizations, for instance the Democratic Charter of the OAS.<sup>164</sup> From what has been stated above the difference between the Netherlands and the US in policy regarding regional forums is distinct. It must be noted that the Netherlands is ‘just’ an Observing member, while the US is a full member of the OAS. Nevertheless, the Dutch approach focusses more on cooperation within the OAS than the US. The KoN tries to find a widely supported line, for which it uses the charters and declarations signed by the countries. The US is primarily focused on its own interests and does not shy away from forcing or acting on a unilateral basis. The ambivalence in US politics further decreases the utility for the US in this international body, also making it more difficult for the Netherlands to cooperate with the US in the Caribbean.

## **United Nations**

When regarding voting behavior in the UN, the Netherlands proves to be a ‘better ally’ for the US than many of the Caribbean states. It votes along with the US or abstains, but never votes against the US on topics the latter deems of high interest.<sup>165</sup> In the previous chapter it was noted that the Caribbean was not high on the UN-agenda, seeing that region-related topics were only

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<sup>162</sup> Ibidem, page 18.

<sup>163</sup> Letter to the Second Chamber of Dutch Parliament on the current situation in Venezuela and the consequences for the Kingdom-islands (Dutch), 4 sept 2017. via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2017/09/04/kamerbrief-over-actuele-situatie-in-venezuela-en-gevolgen-caribische-koninkrijkseilanden> (assessed on 20-01-2018) .

<sup>164</sup> See: [www.oas.org/en/democratic-charter/](http://www.oas.org/en/democratic-charter/) (Assessed on 20-01-2018)

<sup>165</sup> See: <https://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2016/practices/index.htm> (Assessed on 20-01-2018)



on the agenda 20 times in the past five years.<sup>166</sup> In all of these instances, no voting was required making it difficult to actually see the position of other member states on Caribbean issues. In the UN Security Council, the same trend can be recognized. In the last five years, there have been four resolutions (all about Haiti) and 22 talking points about the Caribbean.<sup>167</sup> The situation in Venezuela is not discussed in the UNSC, because e.g. Bolivia and China block any discussion on this topic.<sup>168</sup> The scarce amount and specific topicality of this data (Haiti is not of significance for the US-Dutch relation) makes it difficult to assess the relationship in the UN on the Caribbean topic. In the Human Rights Council (HRC), both the Netherlands and the US take a seat and Venezuela is discussed here. Although this UN-body does not have the same weight as the UNSC, it does show that the US and the KoN have their policies lined up.<sup>169</sup> The Netherlands speaks out via the EU-delegation, for which unanimity is required. The recent US withdrawal from the HRC, however, marks another compatibility distinction with the Dutch preference for international cooperation in multilateral forums.<sup>170</sup> It does show that the Netherlands does not always follow the US policy line in these circumstances, and still follows a policy in which dialogue and consideration are prioritized.

### **Treaty of San Jose**

The treaty of San Jose is a comprehensive legal document that stipulates the cooperation between a number of Caribbean, European and American countries in order to effectively combat illicit tradings, mainly drugs.<sup>171</sup> Both the KoN and the US have signed this treaty, which contributes to an important signal from these countries. With this, they underline their commitment to combatting these activities and support countries in the Caribbean Basin. A number of elements in this treaty are of interest, because they touch upon the territorial integrity of the signatories. For instance article 8.2:

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<sup>166</sup> Via: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/documents/general-assembly-resolutions/index.html> Search terms that were used: 'Caribbean', 'Venezuela', 'Haiti', 'Antilles' and 'Netherlands'. (Assessed on 20-01-2018)

<sup>167</sup> Via: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/> and <http://www.un.org/en/sc/meetings/> Same search terms as in footnote 72. (Assessed on 20-01-2018).

<sup>168</sup> See: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-un/russia-china-others-boycott-u-s-meeting-at-u-non-venezuela-idUSKBN1DE056> (Assessed on 22-01-2018)

<sup>169</sup> See: *Letter by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Dutch)*, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25-10-2018, The Hague. Via: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-26150-166.odt> (Assessed on 22-01-2018)

<sup>170</sup> On the reasons for the American withdrawal: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-expected-to-back-away-from-un-human-rights-council/2018/06/19/a49c2d0c-733c-11e8-b4b7-308400242c2e\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.fefc3a737a4b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-expected-to-back-away-from-un-human-rights-council/2018/06/19/a49c2d0c-733c-11e8-b4b7-308400242c2e_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.fefc3a737a4b) (Assessed on 21-06-2018)

<sup>171</sup> <http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBV0004611/2010-08-28> and <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/10/02/un-human-rights-council-confronts-venezuela> (Assessed on 18-01-2018)



*“In order to carry out the objectives of this Agreement, each Party authorizes its designated law enforcement and aviation officials, or its competent national authority if notified to the Depositary, to permit the entry of law enforcement vessels, law enforcement aircraft and aircraft in support of law enforcement operations, under this Agreement into its waters and air space.”<sup>172</sup>*

This article herewith binds its signatories to give way to designated law enforcement, also in their own territorial areas. Countries also associated themselves with the assistance in planning and implementing combined actions, but also in boarding, searching and arresting ships.<sup>173</sup> This touches upon the sovereign integrity of a country, which enables foreign law enforcement officials to conduct affairs in its own territory. Another condition in the treaty of San Jose which expresses the will of the signatories to combat illicit trade is article 24:

*“Subject to its Constitution and its laws, the Party in question may consent to the exercise of jurisdiction by another State in accordance with international law and in conformity with any condition set by it.”<sup>174</sup>*

This clause enables countries to transfer jurisdiction from one country to another, but also to have foreign law enforcement officials with them on patrol. In practice, the Netherlands and the US cooperate using this article to have an American boarding team go along with Dutch ships in their patrols in the Caribbean Basin. The Dutch give the jurisdiction to board, search and arrest to the American, handling them over to the American system for judicial processing. The main point for doing this is to have them going into the American system, as the American judicial system has more opportunities to interrogate and make deals with suspects and convicts. The US has been using a lot of these so-called ‘Shiprider’-Agreements for some considerable time to get more information about criminal networks in the Caribbean region.<sup>175</sup>

The execution of this treaty demonstrates that the KoN and the US, together with other associated countries, cooperate intensively to combat (drugs-)trafficking in the Caribbean. In order to do so, they align their strategies while showing a flexibility in their sovereign integrity in order to see a multilateral approach work. Portraying a prolonged and dedicated strategic harmony in this, the Dutch-American relationship shows evidence of compatibility in the

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<sup>172</sup> Article 8 of the Treaty of San Jose. Via: <https://www.state.gov/s/l/2005/87198.htm> (Assessed on 24-03-2018)

<sup>173</sup> See Article 4 of the Treaty of San Jose

<sup>174</sup> See Article 24 of the Treaty of San Jose

<sup>175</sup> H. Watson, *Living on the Borderlines: Issues in Caribbean Sovereignty and Development*, ed. C. Barrow-Giles & D. Marshall, Ian Randle Publishers: 2003, p. 228-229.

Caribbean region. The alignment of interests and effective policy is apparent in this situation. Without the legal provision of the treaty of San Jose, the wish and ableness to execute cooperation in the Caribbean would have been more complicated.

### **Venezuela: Divisive Element of the Caribbean Connection?**

The troubles in Venezuela since 2014, which are a result of political mismanagement and a fall in global oil prices, are also a threat to the Caribbean stability of the KoN. The political unrest has changed into a humanitarian calamity which poses dangers for the whole region.<sup>176</sup> Many people flee the economic situation, which consists of high inflation, scarcity of food and medication and unemployment. The result is that the countries around Venezuela have to cope with large increases of migrants from this country, amounting over one million people (November 2017).<sup>177</sup> A number of people has also fled to the Caribbean islands: around 5,000 to Curacao and approximately 20,000 to Aruba. This has a destabilizing effect on these small island communities. However, it is the responsibility of the islands of Aruba and Curacao to deal with the migrant problem as this is an autonomous field of policy for the Caribbean countries within the KoN.

Although most of the Latin-American and Caribbean countries are democracies in name and practice, they are historically conditioned that the US does the most of the political and military action in the Caribbean area. It is not to be expected that any of these countries is going to intervene or impose heavier sanctions on Venezuela without America taking the first step or supporting the step.<sup>178</sup> The Dutch approach is herein different from the US approach. The KoN is promoting a multilateral approach with elements of regional cooperation to achieve stability or even a solution for the instability in Venezuela.<sup>179</sup> This multilateral approach has two shortcomings. First, the KoN must make choices between the interests of the Kingdomislands on the one hand and the interests of the Netherlands on the other hand. Sometimes, these interests conflict, especially in larger conflicts or crises which involve, for instance, the EU. In this situation, the sanctions which have been imposed by the members of the EU bring economic

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<sup>176</sup> Report by Human Rights Watch, *Venezuela's Humanitarian Crisis: Severe Medical and Food Shortages, Inadequate and Repressive Government Response*, 24 October 2016. Via: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/10/24/venezuelas-humanitarian-crisis/severe-medical-and-food-shortages-inadequate-and> (assessed on 20-03-2018)

<sup>177</sup> UNHCR Situation Update, *Venezuela Situation*, November 2017. Via : <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/61425> (Assessed on 20-03-2018)

<sup>178</sup> See: <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-02-26/venezuela-s-refugee-crisis-needs-a-regional-response> (Assessed 01-03-2018)

<sup>179</sup> *The Dutch Foreign Policy Concerning Latin-America and the Caribbean* (Dutch) via: <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-29653-11.html> (assessed on 20-03-2018)

damage the islands of the KoN, as they see their Venezuelan trade go down. Venezuelan leader Maduro also mentioned these sanctions when he imposed a blockade on the Dutch islands.<sup>180</sup> The US was not impacted by this blockade, but subsequently does not have to weigh off the interests of other autonomous parts of its territory in these matters. This results in a different and, more importantly, incompatible US-approach. Secondly, it is hard to continue the multilateral approach when the US imposes unilateral sanctions on its own, which often go further or are imposed faster than the EU. The strong ties between the Netherlands and the US result in Venezuela trying to pressure onto the KoN to discuss the economic sanctions within the EU or other international forums. The difficult position for the Netherlands results in situations that in international forums they speak *about* the Netherlands rather than *with* them. The governments of the autonomous countries of the Netherlands keep each other updated regularly on the topic of Venezuela.<sup>181</sup> This results in a KoN-policy that tries to steer a middle course between the interests of the EU, the US and the Kingdom-countries.

On most themes, the US holds decisive power and authority in the Caribbean region. The foreign policy of many Caribbean countries is also, direct or indirect, influenced by the decisions of the US. The foreign policy of the KoN is no different. Across the board, the foreign policy goals of the US and the Netherland align on most subjects and can be considered compatible. Firstly, this is the result of the cooperation in many multilateral forums such as the OAS, but also NATO and the bilateral contacts. Secondly, the treaties between the countries give the cooperation due form. A good example is the treaty of San Jose, which aligns the policy goals of the two countries and makes it practical. The Venezuelan casus shows that there can be friction in the Caribbean relationship. This is predominantly the result of the complex connection between the Dutch Caribbean islands, the geographical proximity of Venezuela to the position of the KoN and the direct motivations in US foreign policy. Occasionally, this culminates in a result that is difficult to combine with any the interests of the other parties.

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<sup>180</sup> See: <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/06/world/americas/maduro-venezuela-travel-shutdown.html> (Assessed on 20-01-2018)

<sup>181</sup> Request for a Letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs on the discussions with Venezuela in Aruba, *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, 20 January 2018. Via: <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten/kamerstukken/2018/01/20/kamerbrief-over-verzoek-om-verslag-van-het-overleg-met-venezuela> (Assessed on 01-02-2018)

## *Military Conjunction in the Caribbean*

The military compatibility between the Netherlands and the US is, at a quick glance, difficult to assess. The US spends over \$700 billion whereas the KoN spends just under \$9 billion.<sup>182</sup> This discussion focusses on the vision and mindset of the use of their military capacity and not the size of either military capability. According to the DFRI, the US is one of the military ‘anchors’ of the Netherlands.<sup>183</sup> This is partly the result of the military cooperation between the two countries, in which the US ranks the highest of all Dutch allies. The factor of ‘military compatibility will be analyzed by assessing the military relationship in the Caribbean with respect to treaties and joined exercises, but also in willingness to assist in the military domain.

The Netherlands and the US collaborate in the development of the Joint Strike Fighter and fought together in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the Caribbean, the military cooperation looks very different and is much more affiliated with civil-military cooperation. Both on Curacao and on Aruba, the US holds a ‘Forward Operating Location’ (FOL). These bases were effectuated in 2000, when a treaty was signed to facilitate counter-narcotic operations in the Caribbean Basin.<sup>184</sup> The only other FOL in the Western hemisphere lies in El Salvador, making the bases on the Kingdom-islands exceptional. The treaty is explicit in the notion that only *unarmed* aerial vehicles can be stationed at these FOL’s.<sup>185</sup> Although the economic benefits (*spill-over effects*) of the FOL are named explicitly in the treaty, the bases and its personnel are tax-exempted.<sup>186</sup> That the treaty is still appreciated by both sides, can be derived from the fact that it has been extended in 2016.<sup>187</sup> It shows that this counter-narcotic treaty is considered beneficial for both sides. That the military cooperation from Curacao and Aruba has not been perfected yet, can be derived from the fact that the Americans are negotiating access to the radar-intelligence that is gathered from Curacao.<sup>188</sup> The Americans already have collaborations in likewise manners with regional countries such as Costa Rica, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. This is clearly a point where the military capabilities between the US and the Netherlands could still be

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<sup>182</sup> See: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2018/02/28/447248/trumps-defense-budget/> (US expenditure) and <https://www.volkskrant.nl/politiek/nieuwe-coalitie-koerst-aan-op-1-5-miljard-extra-voor-defensie~a4520277/> (Assessed on 26-03-2018)

<sup>183</sup> Dutch Foreign Relations Index, *The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies*, page 11.

<sup>184</sup> Agreement of Cooperation Concerning Access to and Use of the Facilities in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba for Aerial Counter-Narcotics Activities, Article II. Via: <https://www.state.gov/s/l/treaty/tias/2000/125817.htm> (Assessed on 20-01-2018)

<sup>185</sup> *Ibidem*, Article II.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibidem*, Article VIII.

<sup>187</sup> Renewal of the treaty was documented via: <https://verdragen.nl/nl/Verdrag/Details/013285> (Dutch, Assessed on 20-1-2018)

<sup>188</sup> Presentation by the American Consul of Curacao to the Dutch Ministry of Defense, December 2017.

improved.

Another point where the regional compatibility between these two countries could be improved is the Status of Force Agreement (SOFA) concerning Curacao. SOFA's provide the mutual recognition of military forces. It offers the judicial harmony of the military units in a country. It is therefore very surprising that such an arrangement between the US and Curacao has not yet been formalized.<sup>189</sup> Although it is about defense, this judicial matter is of concern for the Curacao government, which has to ratify the agreement made by the Kingdom-government. The matter yields interest because there is a clause in the Dutch arrangement which has been named the 'Netherlands formula'. This is a clause that enables American jurisdiction over its troops in the KoN, *except* when the Netherlands sees particular importance in cases, where it can waive back the primary jurisdiction of the US.<sup>190</sup> That the KoN has negotiated this point, but failed to make an agreement on the SOFA regarding Curacao, is striking and has no clear clarification other than a failure to sign and ratify. Although the essential topic is maintenance of law and order (and therefore a matter for the government of Curacao), the KoN should make an effort to make sure that no problems arise from the absence of this treaty.

Besides these small differences in compatibility, the military cooperation between the Netherlands and the US in the Caribbean is appreciated and considered complementary. The strategic location of the Dutch islands is highly appreciated by the military apparatus of the US, which is exemplified by the FOL-arrangement and their continuation. The Dutch, in return, see the military engagement of the US on their islands as a sign of their significance and regional importance. Both militaries frequently work together, for instance in sharing aerial anti-narcotic capacity from the Curacao airport. In the recent aftermath of the hurricanes which also struck the island of Sint Maarten, the American military cooperation was appreciated by the Netherlands.<sup>191</sup> The military compatibility is therefore assessed as high, because of the excellent cooperation within their bilateral relationship. The military concordance in the Caribbean region shows a determination to work together for a prolonged time.

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<sup>189</sup> See: <http://www.dutchcaribbeanlegalportal.com/news/latest-news/2540-us-and-netherlands-sign-sofa-for-caribbean-islands> (Assessed on 22-01-2018)

<sup>190</sup> Report on Status of Forces Agreements, Department of State: International Security Advisory Board, January 2015, page 25. Via: <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/236456.pdf> (assessed on 22-01-2018)

<sup>191</sup> See: <https://nos.nl/artikel/2192225-washington-evacueert-3000-amerikanen-van-sint-maarten.html> (Dutch, Assessed on 22-01-2018)

## CONCLUSION

The recent revelation by President Trump that his administration seriously considered to ‘invade’ Venezuela last August to bring back ‘regional stability’ shows that the US is still very committed to the strategic value and interests in the Caribbean hemisphere.<sup>192</sup> Combined with the Dutch efforts in the region, demonstrated by the continuous support for JIATF-South, the earlier mentioned comment in which the Caribbean would run a risk of ‘acute irrelevance’ can be dismissed: the region has kept its importance for both the Netherlands and the US. The strategic importance of the Dutch Caribbean islands within the Dutch-American relationship and has seen some times of lesser intensity, but has yet to display any irrelevance at all.

The strategic relevance of the Dutch territories was highly visible during WWII, when the Allied countries were to a large extent dependent on the resources that flowed from and through these islands. The Caribbean territories became an important part of the Dutch-American relationship as it elevated the Transatlantic partnership from a supply-partnership into a reciprocal relationship that also aligned the countries on a political level. This evolution showed an entanglement of economic, political and military interests which, after the loss of Indonesia, put the Dutch Caribbean territories at an important place in the bilateral relationship. The subsequent development of the Cold War emerged as a double-edged position for the Caribbean. On the one hand, it gained relevance due to the increased attention that was given to the security issues at hand in this part of the world. On the other hand, the Netherlands lost relevance on the global stage as other regions in the world gained more interest of the US. The Netherlands stayed an important US-partner in the Caribbean, especially with other European partners pulling away responsibilities (notably the French and Brits), but were not able to turn this over into a stronger transatlantic unity. However, as problems in the Caribbean mounted the importance of the Netherlands in this part of the world grew, also from an American perspective. Especially the drug problems elevated the importance of the Dutch territories as this was seen by the US as an important supporter. This was embodied in the foundation of the FOLs on Curacao and Aruba, although it was apparent that the end of the Cold War showed no lasting signs of a diminishing strategic importance of the Caribbean due to the continuous problems of drugs and regional Caribbean instability. This enhanced the Dutch-American

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<sup>192</sup> Via: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/trump-pressed-aides-on-venezuela-invasion-us-official-says/2018/07/04/0afc66b6-7fef-11e8-a63f-7b5d2aba7ac5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.1bbd4aa4b549](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/trump-pressed-aides-on-venezuela-invasion-us-official-says/2018/07/04/0afc66b6-7fef-11e8-a63f-7b5d2aba7ac5_story.html?utm_term=.1bbd4aa4b549)  
(Assessed on 05-07-2018)

cooperation in this region, but was also contributing to its bilateral relations as a whole. Although the terrorist threats after 9-11 gained more attention, the interest into the ‘War on Drugs’ in the Caribbean did not wane.

Assessing the contemporary US-Netherlands Caribbean relationship by using the utility and compatibility indicators show that the Caribbean still holds a valuable reference point in this reciprocal alliance. For the Netherlands, the Caribbean gives it more footing at the world stage, exemplified by the unified bid for the UNSC. Economically, the Caribbean has lost some of its relevancy in the Dutch-American relationship in favour of larger economic blocs. However, from a military-political point of view, the Dutch territories in the Caribbean Sea offer the Americans a stable and loyal partner in countering various regional problems. The policies by both countries serve the relevance they see in the Caribbean. Concerning the harmony of these policies, some improvement could still be achieved. Especially in the political domain, the US and the Netherlands do not always find a concerted compatibility. The more distinct unilateral approach by the US, also exemplified by the earlier mentioned plan of President Trump to invade Venezuela, often conflicts with the vision of both the Netherlands and regional partners alike. The Dutch approach to tackle regional issues in a more multilateral approach is often overlooked or ignored by the US, thereby losing opportunities to share costs and energy. There is a possibility that this approach also strains the bilateral relationship between the US and the Netherlands. The different approach regarding the Venezuelan problem embodies this policy deviation, but does not harm the prolonged harmony in Dutch-American vision in the region. The various political-military treaties and agreements underscore the long-term interests and dedication towards the Caribbean region.

Concluding, the American perspective on the strategic relevance of the Dutch Caribbean has changed considerably. It has changed accordingly with the slow but steady diminishment of utility of the islands. During and directly after WWII the islands were an important strategic factor and did not hold that position. Decolonisation was not applied to these islands, although it affected them directly. The focus of American strategic relevance changed to other parts of the world, although it never left the Caribbean basin completely. The rise of problems that were related to drugs gave new utility for the Dutch Caribbean, but eventually did not meet the WWII-levels. The Dutch-American policy-compatibility with regard to these islands show a different development. Here, the post-WWII alignment started troublesome. Decolonisation and the flying rights issue led to bilateral difficulties and diverging policy viewpoints. The compatibility was later restored with a combined mind-set on combatting illicit trading and the foundation of various treaties, such as the FOLs. To answer the question that

has been postulated in this study, the Dutch Caribbean has shown a relative decline of strategic and political relevance for the US. This is in line with US stance concerning the Caribbean as a whole. The Dutch played and still play a very relevant role for the US security policies in the Caribbean basin. It is therefore arguable that the Dutch position positively changed with regard to its Caribbean territory. The Netherlands has surfaced as a loyal US-ally in this region.

The specific Caribbean connection that binds the Netherlands and the US contributes to a durable bilateral relationship between these two allies. The extend of the Caribbean influence in the bilateral relationship has shown considerable importance in the dealings between these Transatlantic partners. However, this field has not yet been extensively researched and could use more understanding to acquire better insights in these special relationships. The impact could also be assessed in a comparative form, for instance by analysing the difference between European countries who have similar territories in the Caribbean region (France or the UK). Re-examining the US-Netherlands relationship through the specific Caribbean prism gives another view on the complications that go with ‘playing on another board’ besides the Transatlantic partnership. Keeping a relationship such as this one relevant and strategically valuable requires more than just talking: it asks for concerted work in action.



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  - Dutch profile page: [http://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/perm\\_observers/Documents/Profiles/Profile%20Netherlands.doc](http://www.oas.org/en/ser/dia/perm_observers/Documents/Profiles/Profile%20Netherlands.doc) (Assessed on 03-12-2017)
  - The democratic charter of the OAS: [www.oas.org/en/democratic-charter/](http://www.oas.org/en/democratic-charter/) (Assessed on 20-01-2018)
- Text of the speech by President George W. Bush at the Summit of the Americas in 2001. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2001/04/20010423-1.html> (Assessed on 02-01-2018)

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- Statement by SouthCOM Commander K.W. Tidd before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee: <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/hearings/17-04-06-united-states-southern-command-and-united-states-northern-command> (Assessed on 06-01-2018)
- State Department website on the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative: <https://www.state.gov/p/wha/rt/cbsi/index.htm> (Assessed on 06-01-2018)
- The website for the United Nations was consulted for:
  - Resolutions of the United Nations Security Council: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/> (Assessed on 19-12-2018)
  - Meetings of the United Nations Security Council: <http://www.un.org/en/sc/meetings/> (Assessed on 20-01-2018)
  - Resolution of the United Nations General Assembly: <http://www.un.org/en/sections/documents/general-assembly-resolutions/index.html> (Assessed on 20-01-2018)
- Britannica Encyclopedia Page on the Monroe-doctrine: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Monroe-Doctrine> (Assessed on 21-12-2018)
- The CIA World Fact Book: [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region\\_cam.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_cam.html) (Assessed on 20-12-2018)
- The U.S. Department of State produces a report on voting in the United Nations. The 2016 report can be found via: <https://www.state.gov/p/io/rls/rpt/2016/practices/index.htm> (Assessed on 20-12-2018)
- Thinktank ‘The Council on Foreign Relations’ produced a report on the Organization of American States: <https://www.cfr.org/background/organization-american-states> (Assessed on 18-01-2018)
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- Article by the New York Times:
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  - About refugees from Venezuela who have fled to the Dutch territories: <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/25/world/americas/hungry-venezuelans-flee-in-boats-to-escape-economic-collapse.html> (Assessed on 03-03-2018)
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- FBI News article on JIATF-South: <https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/task-force-works-to-stem-flow-of-illicit-drug-trafficking> (Assessed on 10-03-2018)
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  - the Forward Operating Locations on the Dutch Caribbean territories: <http://www.southcom.mil/Media/Special-Coverage/Cooperative-Security-Locations/> (Assessed on 08-01-2018)
  - the training exercise 'Tradewinds 2017': <http://www.southcom.mil/Media/Special-Coverage/Tradewinds-2017/> (Assessed on 03-01-2018)
- Infopage by the US National Guard about the State Partnership Program: <http://www.nationalguard.mil/Leadership/Joint-Staff/J-5/International-Affairs-Division/State-PartnershipProgram/> (Assessed on 03-01-2018)
- Information about the Association of Caribbean States: <http://www.acs-aec.org/index.php?q=about/members-and-associate-members> (Assessed on 15-01-2018)
- Article by press organization Reuters: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-venezuela-politics-un/russia-china-others-boycott-u-s-meeting-at-u-non-venezuela-idUSKBN1DE056> (Assessed on 22-01-2018)
- About the US withdrawal from the Human Rights Council: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-expected-to-back-away-from-un-human-rights-council/2018/06/19/a49c2d0c-733c-11e8-b4b7-308400242c2e\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.fetc3a737a4b](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-expected-to-back-away-from-un-human-rights-council/2018/06/19/a49c2d0c-733c-11e8-b4b7-308400242c2e_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.fetc3a737a4b) (Assessed on 21-06-2018)
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  - About the Venezuelan humanitarian crisis: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/10/24/venezuelas-humanitarian-crisis/severe-medical-and-food-shortages-inadequate-and> (assessed on 20-03-2018)



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- Bloomberg Article about the Venezuelan crisis: <https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2018-02-26/venezuela-s-refugee-crisis-needs-a-regional-response> (Assessed 01-03-2018)
- About American military expenditure: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2018/02/28/447248/trumps-defense-budget/> (Assessed on 26-03-2018)
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- About the Status of Force Agreement: <http://www.dutchcaribbeanlegalportal.com/news/latest-news/2540-us-and-netherlands-sign-sofa-for-caribbean-islands> (Assessed on 22-01-2018)
- Article by the Washington Post on the possibility of a American invasion of Venezuela by the Trump administration: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the\\_americas/trump-pressed-aides-on-venezuela-invasion-us-official-says/2018/07/04/0afc66b6-7fef-11e8-a63f-7b5d2aba7ac5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.1bbd4aa4b549](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/the_americas/trump-pressed-aides-on-venezuela-invasion-us-official-says/2018/07/04/0afc66b6-7fef-11e8-a63f-7b5d2aba7ac5_story.html?utm_term=.1bbd4aa4b549) (Assessed on 05-07-2018)

# ANNEXES

**TABLE I**

Year	# of Flights	Flight hours	Interceptions
2002-2003 <sup>193</sup>	740	4016	None noted
2004-2006 <sup>194</sup>	2613	15212	35.006 kg cocaine
2006-2007 <sup>195</sup>	562	2217	3.041 kg cocaine, 148 kg heroin
2008-2009 <sup>196</sup>	700	3583	234.000 kg cocaine, 36,5 kg heroin, 7.000 kg marijuana
2009-2010 <sup>197</sup>	765	3379	154.000 kg cocaine, 60,8 kg heroin, 3.000 kg marijuana
2010-2011 <sup>198</sup>	713	4602	117.000 kg cocaine, 29.0 kg heroin, 2.100 kg marijuana
2011-2012 <sup>199</sup>	524	4370	152.389 kg cocaine, 1.0 kg heroin, 9.747 kg marijuana
2012-2013 <sup>200</sup>	436	3293	321.000 kg cocaine, 4.0 kg heroin, 18.703 kg marijuana
2013-2014 <sup>201</sup>	563	5208	158.000 kg cocaine, 3.0kg heroin, 7.976 kg marijuana

**TABLE II**

International Organization	International Importance factor
UN	78.33
Nato	63.99
European Union	69.07
ASEAN	36.27
African Union	29.62
OAS	3.70
CARICOM	7.18

Source: Data in table II is derived from data via: <http://diplodash.pardee.du.edu> (Assessed on 03-01-2018).

<sup>193</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/nds-buza040207-b1>

<sup>194</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-31200-V-64-b1>

<sup>195</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-31200-V-138-b1>

<sup>196</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32500-V-5>

<sup>197</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-179001>

<sup>198</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33750-V-38>

<sup>199</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33750-V-67>

<sup>200</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/blg-378076>

<sup>201</sup> <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-34300-V-8>

**TABLE III**

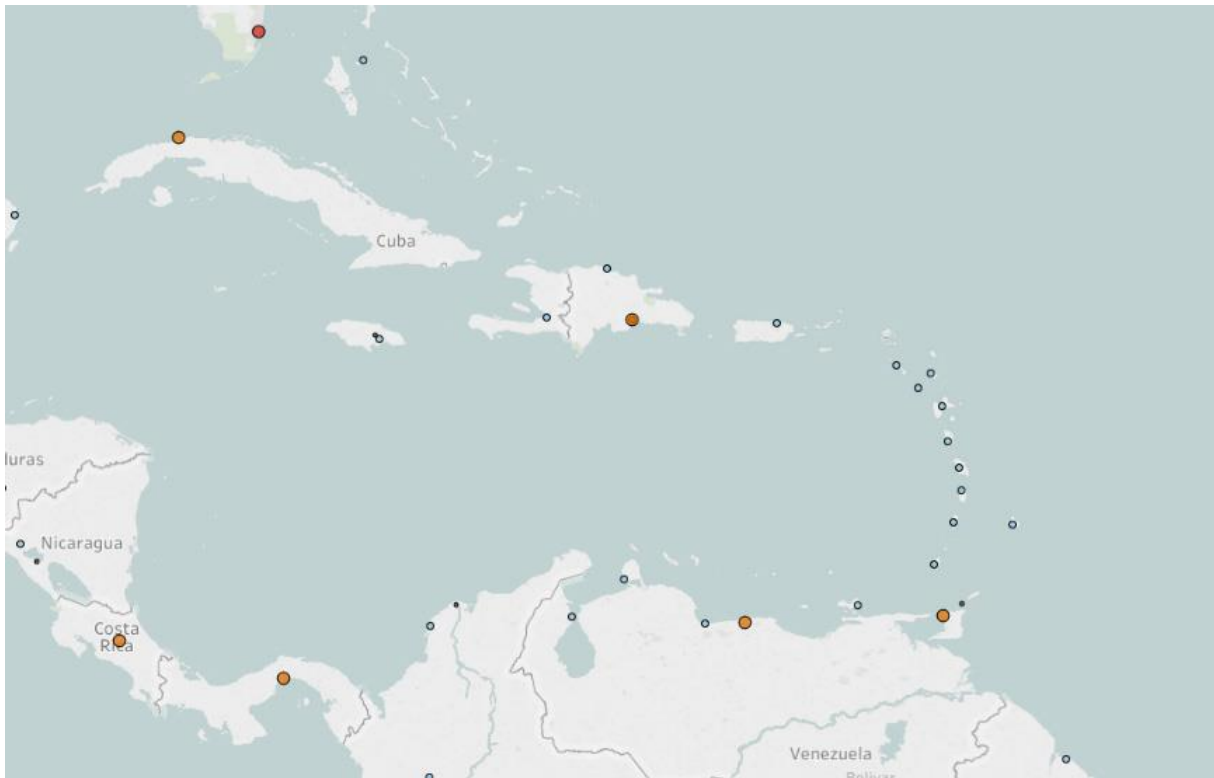
Country	Ranking GFP <sup>202</sup>	Military Expenditure in Billion \$ <sup>203</sup>	Powerindex <sup>204</sup>
<i>United States</i>	1	611.2 (2016)	0.0857
<i>Netherlands</i>	38	9.2 (2016)	0.7119
<i>France</i>	5	55.7 (2016)	0.1914
<i>United Kingdom</i>	6	48.3 (2016)	0.2131
<i>Cuba</i>	75	4.13 (2015)	1.3209
<i>Colombia</i>	40	9.9 (2016)	0.7281
<i>Dominican Republic</i>	123	1.00 (2015)	3.0511
<i>Venezuela</i>	45	9.22 (2016)	0.7641

<sup>202</sup> Data via: <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp> (Assessed on 03-01-2018)

<sup>203</sup> Data from 2016: <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/Trends-world-military-expenditure-2016.pdf> Data from 2015 via The World Fact Book: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (Assessed on 03-01-2018)

<sup>204</sup> Data via: <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.asp> (Assessed on 03-01-2018)

## PICTURE I



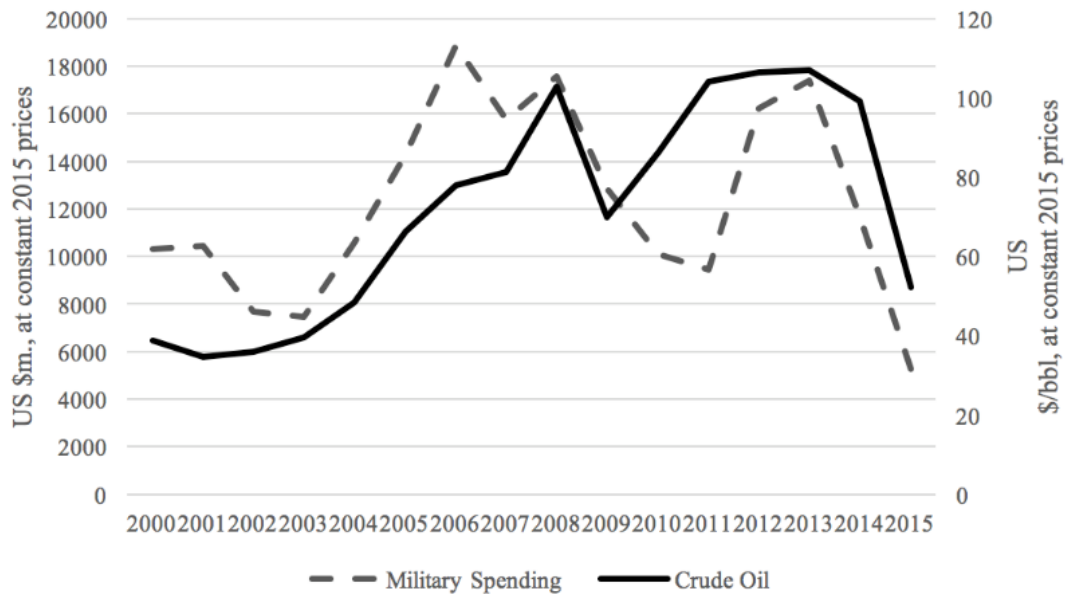
Embassies of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Caribbean region.

*Orange:* Embassy / *Red:* Consulate / *Blue:* Honorary Consul

Source:

[https://tableau.atos.buzaservices.nl/views/Wereldkaartpostennet/Wereldkaartpostennet?%3Aembed=y&%3Adisplay\\_count=no#1](https://tableau.atos.buzaservices.nl/views/Wereldkaartpostennet/Wereldkaartpostennet?%3Aembed=y&%3Adisplay_count=no#1) (Assessed on 05-02-2018)

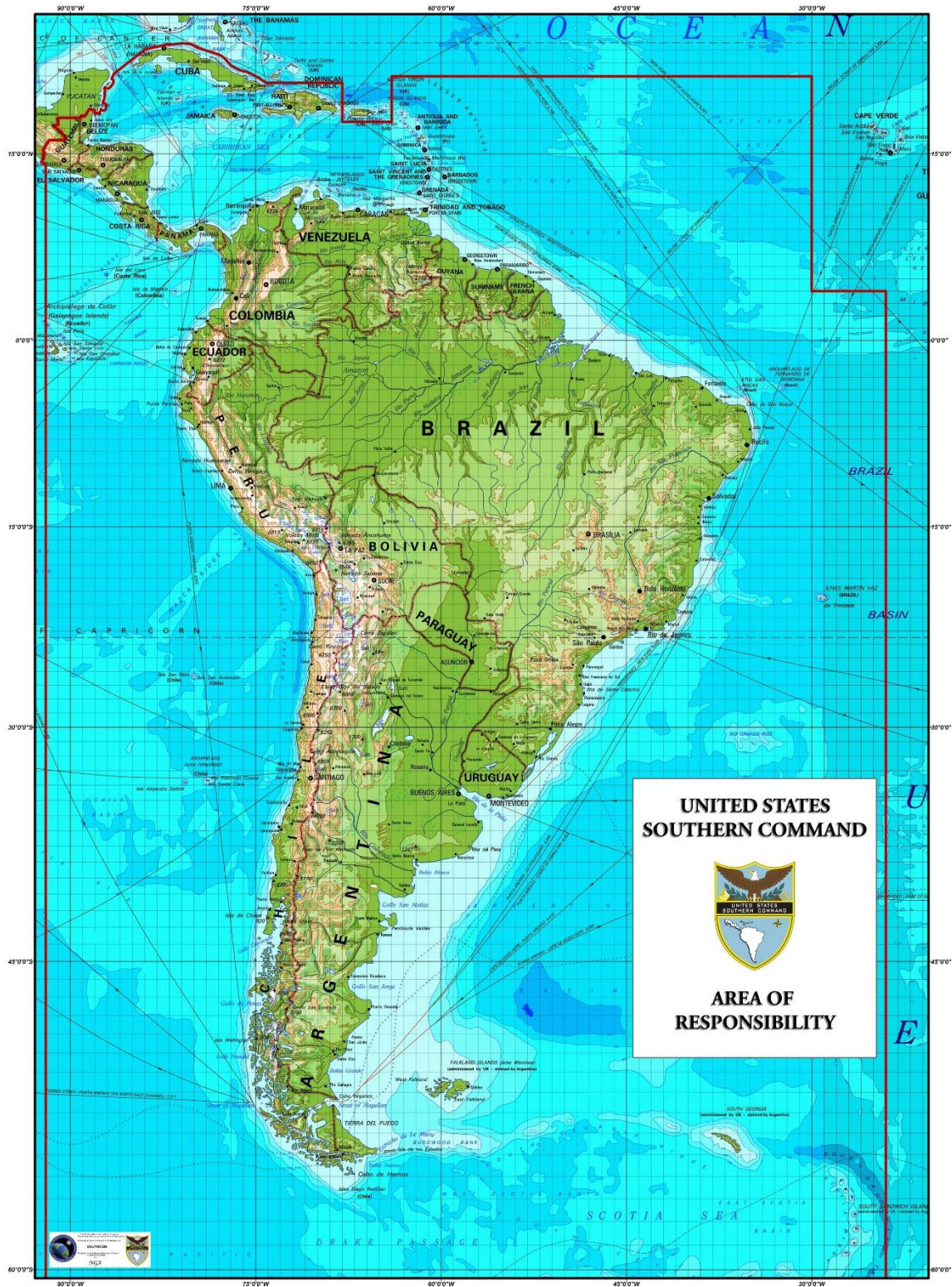
**GRAPH I**



Source: <https://www.sipri.org/commentary/topical-backgrounder/2017/improving-south-american-militaryexpenditure-data> (Assessed on 08-01-2018)



**PICTURE II**



Source: <http://www.southcom.mil/About/Area-of-Responsibility/> (Assessed on 10-03-2018)