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Chinese Presence and Geopolitical Resilience in the Caribbean Parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

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Table of Contents

Prologue 4

Executive Summary 5

1. Introduction 7

1.1 Background and analytical framework 8
1.2 Methodology 11

2. Mapping Chinese Presence in the CPKNL 12

2.1 The Chinese diaspora 12
2.2 Official Chinese policy towards the LAC 15
2.3 Consulate and Chinese political influence 17
2.4 Chinese (state-owned) enterprises 18
2.5 A Whole-of-Society Approach? 20

3. Geopolitical resilience and economic security of the CPKNL 22

3.1 High degree of import dependency 23
3.2 Insufficient renewable energy infrastructure 24
3.3 Digital infrastructure dependencies and resilience gaps 26
3.4 Regulatory divergence and strategic safeguards 28
3.5 Vulnerabilities in security cooperation 29
3.6 Cross-border financial vulnerabilities 32

4. Policy options 35

4.1 Reduce concentrated external dependencies 35
4.2 Expand renewable energy production to reduce external dependency 36
4.3 Modernize digital infrastructure 37
4.4 Strengthen coordination and safeguards in strategic sectors 38
4.5 Improve resilience in security cooperation 39
4.6 Counter illicit cross-border financial flows 40

5. Conclusion 42

5.1 Presence, but limited Chinese influence 42
5.2 Need to boost resilience, reduce dependencies 42
5.3 Reconsider security arrangements 43

Prologue

This report was commissioned by the Dutch China Knowledge Network (CKN) and funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands. It was written between April and August 2026. The fieldwork, interviews and data collection on which the analysis is based took place primarily in the first months of 2026 across the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The report was produced during a period of rapidly evolving geopolitical developments in the Caribbean region and beyond, including renewed tensions surrounding Venezuela, changing United States foreign policy under the Trump administration, and increasing international debate on economic security, critical infrastructure and foreign influence.

Given the speed at which geopolitical developments continue to evolve, the findings and analysis should be understood within the context of the information and regional dynamics present during the period January–May 2026.

Executive Summary

Political and policy attention in the Netherlands for China's role in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (CPKNL) has increased in recent years. Questions have emerged regarding foreign influence, critical infrastructure, economic dependency and geopolitical vulnerability in the region. Global geopolitical tensions, particularly between the United States and China, have contributed to growing concern about the strategic position of small island economies in the Caribbean basin.

This report examines the extent to which Chinese economic and political influence in the CPKNL has developed and how these developments relate to the geopolitical resilience and economic security of the islands. The research is based on qualitative fieldwork, interviews and desk research conducted between January and May 2026 across Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao and Sint Maarten.

The report distinguishes explicitly between *Chinese presence* and *Chinese state influence*. Chinese presence refers broadly to the activities of diaspora communities, private entrepreneurs, companies, diplomatic representatives and state-linked actors. Chinese state influence refers specifically to the ability of the Chinese state and affiliated actors to shape political decision-making, governance practices or strategic economic choices within the CPKNL.

Chinese presence in the CPKNL has expanded over the past decades, primarily through migration, diaspora networks and private economic activity. Chinese-owned businesses have become more visible in the local economies, particularly in retail, supermarkets, restaurants, hospitality and small-scale commerce. More recently, Chinese companies have also participated in selected infrastructure, telecommunications and renewable energy projects.

At the same time, the report finds little evidence that Chinese state-led political influence in the CPKNL has increased substantially. Chinese state-linked investments and diplomatic activities in the CPKNL appear modest compared to other Caribbean countries. Political engagement by local Chinese communities also appears limited, while the islands themselves possess relatively limited strategic value for China in formal diplomatic terms.

Concerns regarding growing Chinese state influence in the CPKNL may currently be overstated. Chinese presence on the islands is predominantly economic in nature and largely driven by local commercial dynamics rather than by a coordinated geopolitical strategy directed from China's political centre Beijing.

The CPKNL nevertheless face substantial structural vulnerabilities in an increasingly volatile geopolitical environment. These stem less from direct Chinese influence than from economic and geopolitical dependency. The islands are highly dependent on external actors for imports, food security, fuel, tourism, digital infrastructure, logistics and security cooperation. In many of these sectors, dependencies on the United States and the Netherlands are substantially greater than dependencies on China. Political and economic instability in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), together with the growing effects of climate change, creates additional

uncertainties and vulnerabilities for the Dutch Caribbean countries and public entities. Combined with the small scale of the island economies, these dependencies can result in highly concentrated markets and (de facto) monopolies. This means that foreign state actors and companies can potentially gain a disproportionate foothold in strategically important sectors through procurement or aggressive market entry.

Criminal investigations and risk assessments have also identified cases of underground banking and other cross-border financial arrangements involving individual Chinese actors. These cases expose vulnerabilities in detecting and investigating illicit financial flows, but do not provide evidence of involvement or direction by the Chinese state.

The report identifies six interrelated structural factors that shape the geopolitical resilience and economic security of the CPKNL:

1. High dependence on imports and external supply chains;
2. Continued reliance on imported energy and limited domestic renewable energy capacity;
3. Dependence on external digital and telecommunications infrastructure;
4. Regulatory fragmentation and divergence across strategic sectors within the Kingdom;
5. Dependence on external actors and partnerships in the field of security cooperation;
6. Vulnerabilities related to illicit cross-border financial flows and informal financial arrangements.

In this context, even relatively limited foreign involvement in strategic sectors such as energy, digital infrastructure or logistics may acquire geopolitical significance. The report therefore argues that discussions on foreign influence should not focus exclusively on China but should instead be embedded within a broader assessment of economic security, strategic dependency and geopolitical resilience in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. With geopolitical resilience, we refer to the capacity of states and societies to withstand, adapt to and recover from external geopolitical pressures and disruptions while maintaining their essential functions and strategic autonomy.[1]

Strengthening resilience in the CPKNL requires closer cooperation between the countries and public entities within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, while respecting their respective constitutional responsibilities and autonomy. This includes improving coordination on economic security, reducing concentrated external dependencies, modernising digital and energy infrastructure, strengthening regulatory alignment and improving information-sharing on geopolitical risks and critical infrastructure. It also requires sufficient capacity to identify and investigate illicit cross-border financial flows, including access to specialist expertise and information held in other jurisdictions.

Rather than approaching the region primarily through the lens of geopolitical competition, the report argues for a long-term resilience-oriented approach that balances security concerns with local autonomy, economic development and the constitutional relations within the Kingdom.

[1] Pol Bargués, Jonathan Joseph, Ana E Juncos, "Rescuing the liberal international order: crisis, resilience and EU security policy", November 2023.

1. Introduction

China's role in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (CPKNL) has received greater political and policy attention in the Netherlands in recent years. Chinese presence in the CPKNL has grown, mainly through migration and private economic activity linked to diaspora networks. Questions have been raised about Chinese investments, critical infrastructure, economic influence and geopolitical risks on the islands. There is still relatively little research into the actual scale and nature of Chinese involvement.

The Dutch House of Representatives has also shown greater interest in the subject. On 5 November 2024, the House adopted a parliamentary motion calling for greater insight into China's influence in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom.[2] This report was written in light of that call for insight and the political discussion surrounding geopolitical dependence, economic security and foreign influence in the region.



[2] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Motie van het lid Ceder c.s. over een strategie ontwikkelen om de groeiende Chinese invloed op de CAS-landen te mitigeren en daarover jaarlijks de Kamer rapporteren (36600-IV-22)" October 23, 2024.; Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal, "Moties ingediend bij de Vaststelling van de begrotingstaten van Koninkrijkrelaties (IV) en het BES-fonds (H) voor het jaar 2025", 5 november 2024.

The CPKNL consist of the autonomous countries Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten, as well as the Dutch public entities Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, also called the BES islands.[3] This report examines to what extent China's economic and political presence and influence in the CPKNL has increased since the publication of the 2022 CEDLA report,[4] and how these developments relate to questions of geopolitical resilience and economic security. The research distinguishes between Chinese presence and Chinese influence. Presence includes economic activity by private entrepreneurs, diaspora networks, companies, diplomatic representatives and state-linked actors. Influence refers to the ability of the Chinese state or affiliated actors to shape political decision-making, economic choices or governance on the islands

The report also examines economic and geopolitical dependencies in the CPKNL. The islands rely heavily on imports, tourism, foreign investment and external infrastructure. Those dependencies relate more strongly to the United States and the Netherlands than to China. Political concern about foreign influence has nevertheless grown due to geopolitical tensions, debates about digital security and concerns about critical infrastructure.

Chapter 1 introduces the background, analytical framework and methodology of the report. Chapter 2 maps Chinese presence in the CPKNL, with sections on the Chinese diaspora, official Chinese policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean, the Chinese consulate, Chinese state-owned enterprises and the whole-of-society approach. Chapter 3 examines geopolitical resilience and economic security in the CPKNL, focusing on import dependency, renewable energy infrastructure, digital infrastructure, regulatory gaps, security cooperation and cross-border financial vulnerabilities. Chapter 4 discusses policy options on import and tourism diversification, renewable energy, telecommunications infrastructure, regulatory convergence, security cooperation and illicit cross-border financial flows. The report ends with a conclusion.

1.1 Background and analytical framework

Since the 2019 policy document, 'Netherlands-China: a new balance',[5] considerable knowledge has been developed in the Netherlands regarding the political and economic relations between the Netherlands and China. The CPKNL have, however, received comparatively little attention in this regard. To address this gap, this report examines the following central question: *to what extent has China's economic and political influence within the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom increased?* The analysis focuses on three areas:

- First, the report maps Chinese (state and non-state) presence and influence in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

[3] The Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, signed in 1954 between the three countries the Netherlands, Suriname, and the Netherlands Antilles, is the leading document of the Kingdom. The Constitution of the Netherlands and the Basic Laws are legally subordinate to it. In 1986 Aruba became an autonomous constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
[4] Michiel Baud, Barbara Hogenboom, Ruben Gonzalez-Vicente, Renske Pin and Diego Steinhöfel, *China's Economic and Political Role in the Caribbean and Central America, Universiteit* van Amsterdam and CEDLA, September 2022. Also: S.F.C. Römer (2024) *Implicaties van de geopolitieke ontwikkelingen rondom het Caribisch deel van het Koninkrijk van de dreigingsbeelden met als aandachtspunten veiligheid, economie en buitenlandse inmenging*. (Bijdrage d.d. 3 april 2024 aan de Tweede Kamer van S.F.C.Römer).
[5] S.A. Blok, "Beleidsnotitie 'Nederland-China: een nieuwe balans'" letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, May 15, 2019, Kamerstuk 35 207, no. 1.

- Second, the report assesses the geostrategic relevance of Chinese presence in the CPKNL by examining it in relation to the broader economic and geopolitical dependencies of the islands.
- Third, the report provides concrete policy actions to decrease dependencies and strengthen resilience mechanisms in the CPKNL through cooperation between partners within the Kingdom, against an increasingly tense geostrategic background.

'Presence', 'influence', 'dependencies' and 'threats' are contested concepts in geopolitical and policy discussions. Their meaning partly depends on how governments and other actors use and interpret them. Distinctions between presence and influence, direct and indirect influence, and influence and interference are not always clear-cut.

Foreign influence is not inherently problematic. Concern arises where external actors are able to create or exploit dependencies in ways that may reduce local policy autonomy, compromise critical infrastructure or data security, or enable political or economic coercion. These risks are assessed irrespective of the country from which such influence originates.

This report starts by mapping presence by Chinese actors within an intentionally very broad scope, taking on both non-state and state actors, mainland-based actors as well as the Chinese diaspora communities in the CPKNL. It then considers to what extent presence translates into influence, either directly or indirectly. Although the presence of Chinese actors in the CPKNL has grown within this broad definition, no substantial increase is identified in influence by the Chinese state, the CCP or state-linked enterprises.

Presence does not constitute influence - nor is influence always unwanted, nor does influence equal interference. With Chinese **political influence** in the CPKNL, the report refers to the capacity of the People's Republic of China (PRC), through state institutions and affiliated actors, to shape governmental decision-making, diplomatic alignment, and governance practices in Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten and the Dutch Caribbean municipalities, primarily via diplomatic engagement, conditional cooperation, and strategic use of economic relations. With Chinese **economic influence** in the CPKNL, the report refers to the ability of the PRC and its state-linked enterprises and financial institutions to shape local economic structures, policy choices, and development trajectories through trade relations, foreign direct investment, infrastructure financing, and development loans. Based on the qualitative evidence collected for this study, there are indications of a growing Chinese presence, but limited evidence of a corresponding increase in Chinese state influence.

Although the Chinese presence in the CPKNL has grown, it is predominantly economic and stems mainly from the local Chinese diaspora rather than from China's political centre, Beijing. Attempts to shape local policies in favour of Beijing appear modest, both because local Chinese communities tend not to be politically engaged, and because the islands offer Beijing little formal diplomatic leverage. None of the autonomous countries within the CPKNL possess an independent vote in the United Nations (UN) and participation in regional fora and organisations is limited.

Consequently, the findings indicate that the extent of Chinese state influence appears less pronounced than public and policy debates sometimes suggest. At the same time, real economic dependencies and vulnerabilities do provide for a context in which Chinese presence is becoming more contested and strategically relevant. Addressing these underlying vulnerabilities therefore remains important.

Interest in China's presence and influence in the region has intensified amid greater securitisation of economic and technological relations and heightened military activity in the region. These factors expand the Dutch government's political and legal rationale to engage with both external and internal affairs of the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. While such involvement may be justified from a national security perspective as well as through economic security rationale, it simultaneously exposes the structural asymmetries embedded in the Kingdom's constitutional framework.[6] Security considerations may lead to greater shared Kingdom responsibility and involvement in areas that are politically sensitive for the autonomous countries. Discussions about foreign influence and economic security therefore require careful coordination between the four countries of the Kingdom, while taking into account constitutional relations and historical sensitivities.

These dynamics are particularly relevant in the context of intensifying US military presence and geopolitical competition in the Caribbean basin. The region has increasingly become an arena in which global powers – including China and the United States – seek to expand their economic, political and diplomatic presence.[7] For the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, this creates a complex strategic environment. On the one hand, the islands maintain close political, security and economic ties with the Netherlands and the United States; on the other hand, they face incentives to engage with external partners offering investment, infrastructure development and financial cooperation. Understanding how these dynamics interact is essential for assessing both opportunities and potential vulnerabilities for the Kingdom as a whole.

These concerns have also gained greater prominence in the Dutch political debate. On 23 October 2024, the Dutch House of Representatives adopted a parliamentary motion submitted by members of Dutch Parliament Don Ceder, Mpanzu Bamenga, and Faith White calling for greater insight into China's influence in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom.[8] The motion reflects growing political attention in The Hague to the potential strategic implications of foreign economic engagement in the region, particularly in areas such as infrastructure, digital networks and critical supply chains. This also raises the question of how such external engagement is perceived locally on the islands and how these perceptions relate to the views in The Hague and the constitutional division of responsibilities within the Kingdom.

Concerns about growing Chinese state influence appear to be greater than the available evidence would support, but, paradoxically, the changing geostrategic environment surrounding the CPKNL demands a renewed focus by different partners within the Kingdom on strengthening geopolitical resilience and economic security in the region.

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[6] R. Candelaria (2026). *Divergent Understandings of Undermining Crime: Kingdom Cooperation on Venezuelan-Linked Influence in Aruba.* University of Aruba (Masters thesis).

[7] R. Evan Ellis, "Chinese Engagement in Latin America: New Patterns and Challenges", 2026

[8] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Kamerstuk 36600-IV, nr. 22, Vaststelling van de begrotingsstaten van Koninkrijksrelaties (IV) en het BES-fonds (H) voor het jaar 2025" October 23, 2024.

1.2 Methodology

The research is based on a combination of qualitative field research and desk-based analysis and draws on both open-source (unclassified) and non-public (classified or confidential) information. Data collection included research visits to Aruba, Bonaire, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten, where 43 semi-structured interviews were conducted with a broad range of local stakeholders, including policymakers, business owners, members of the Chinese diaspora and representatives of public and private institutions. Although Saba and Sint Eustatius were not visited, several stakeholders, including some interviewed online, operate across multiple islands or at Caribbean or Kingdom level, providing insights relevant to these islands as well. The public and private institutions included but were not limited to Financial Intelligence Units (FIUs), Central Banks, judges in local courts, ministers and former ministers, Ministries of General Affairs, local Police Forces, Foreign Relations Offices (DBBs), Chinese Business and Cultural Associations, Public Prosecutor's Offices, Representations of the Netherlands, Law Enforcement Councils, the Detective Cooperation Team (RST), Boards of Financial Supervision, Netherlands Naval Command Caribbean and various intelligence units. These local perspectives were essential in contextualising formal data and identifying dynamics not captured in official statistics.

Due to the small scale of the island economies, reliable and disaggregated data on issues such as foreign direct investment (FDI), diaspora composition, demographic breakdowns and sectoral ownership structures is often scarce or unavailable. Given the sensitivity of certain information, and to protect the anonymity of respondents, not all sources can be disclosed or traced in this report. The analysis therefore combines publicly attributable sources with confidential and anonymised information, balancing transparency with confidentiality; where possible, findings are supported by publicly available data, while insights derived from confidential sources are presented in aggregated or anonymised form.

2. Mapping Chinese Presence in the CPKNL

Chinese presence in the CPKNL does not exist in a vacuum. Local policies interact, complement, collide, and sometimes even clash with the policies stemming from the Netherlands, the US, and China. It is amidst this amalgam of agencies that a multitude of "Chinese" actors are active in the CPKNL. The most important ones are the Chinese diaspora, the Chinese consulate, and Chinese (State-Owned) Enterprises (SOEs). A list with definitions follows below.

Table 1: Definitions regarding Chinese presence and influence in the CPKNL

Concept	**Definition**
Chinese presence	The observable footprint of Chinese actors in the CPKNL, including diaspora communities, businesses, diplomatic missions, and (state-linked) companies, regardless of whether these actors exert deliberate political influence.
Chinese political influence	The capacity of the People's Republic of China (PRC), through state institutions and affiliated actors, to shape or influence governmental decision-making, diplomatic alignment, and governance practices in Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, and the Caribbean Netherlands, primarily via diplomatic engagement, lobbying, conditional cooperation and strategic use of economic relations.
Chinese economic influence	The ability of the PRC and its state-linked enterprises and financial institutions to shape local economic structures, policy choices and development trajectories through trade relations, foreign direct investment, infrastructure financing and development cooperation.
Chinese diaspora (economic actors)	Individuals and family-based entrepreneurs of Chinese origin engaged in local economic activity (e.g. supermarkets, restaurants, retail), often with long-standing roots on the islands and without direct ties to the Chinese state.
Chinese diaspora (associations)	Formal or informal organisations representing Chinese business owners or community members, primarily focused on cultural activities and representation.
Chinese consulate	The official diplomatic representation of the PRC in Curaçao, responsible for consular services, diaspora engagement, and facilitating economic and political relations.
Chinese SOEs (state-owned enterprises)	Companies owned or controlled by the Chinese state, operating abroad in sectors such as energy, infrastructure and construction, often aligned with broader state economic objectives.

2.1 The Chinese diaspora

Each of the four larger islands, namely the countries Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten, plus public entity Bonaire, have a relatively visible Chinese diaspora – albeit small compared to the diaspora from other LAC countries such as Venezuela, Colombia and the Dominican Republic. Yet, the category 'Chinese' encompasses persons with different nationalities, historical and cultural backgrounds. Since there are no official data on ethnic demographic compositions, the precise percentage of the total population cannot be stated. Nevertheless, the number of inhabitants with a Chinese nationality in Curaçao was 398 or 0.3% of the overall population, both

in 2011 and 2023. According to CBS data from 2020, the number of China-born residents of Aruba was 1.122 (as compared to 4.883 Dominican Republic born, 7.085 Venezuela born, 10.250 Colombia born migrants.)[9]

In the Caribbean Netherlands, the number of China-born residents rose from 216 in 2011 to 543 in 2026, while their share of the total population increased from 1.0% to 1.6%. Growth was particularly pronounced on Bonaire, where the number rose from 156 to 459.[10]

Chinese Business Associations and Cultural Unions do tend to record their own statistics. For instance, according to the Chinese Business Association on Curaçao, between 6.000-7.000 ethnic Chinese are present on Curaçao, who run between 300-400 Chinese supermarkets on a total population of roughly 156.115 people (2025). They have traditionally been visible through local entrepreneurship in restaurants, supermarkets and laundries, with hardware and stationery stores becoming more common in recent years.

The first Chinese migrants arrived in Curaçao in 1870, travelling by boat from the Qing Dynasty en route to the United States or Venezuela.[11] The first Chinese family settled in 1902 to work in shipyard construction. The first large-scale influx of Chinese immigrants arrived in Curaçao and Aruba in the second quarter of the 20th century to find employment in the Shell refinery (Curaçao, 1915) and the Lago Oil and Transport Company (Aruba, 1924, later Exxon), and these companies' restaurants, laundries and the oil fleets, before establishing themselves as independent shop owners. Chinese immigrants were successful in running supermarkets, rum shops, laundromats and in agriculture. Despite an endogamous marriage tradition, this immigrant Chinese community gradually integrated in the larger Curacaoan and Aruban societies, obtaining Dutch citizenship. According to respondents, the first Chinese arrived on Bonaire in 1966 and on Sint Eustatius and Saba only within the last one or two decades.[12]

A new influx of Chinese immigrants in CPKNL commenced in the 1980s in Sint Maarten and in the 1990s in Aruba. Tourism expansion created new commercial opportunities. Chinese migrants, again either from the PRC and the Asian and Caribbean Chinese diasporas, established neighbourhood-based supermarkets, restaurants, hardware stores and other small businesses on all islands with a more recent expansion into real estate.[13]

The current composition of Chinese diaspora in CPKNL does not form a single homogeneous community. While many of the second- and third-generation members hold Dutch passports, more recent migrants may hold Chinese passports, with or without permanent residency. Some ethnic Chinese also have passports from other, mostly LAC, countries. Newcomers tend to be related or come from the same hometown as the ethnic Chinese already on the islands. Most members of the diaspora trace their origins to Guangdong province, particularly Jiangmen County

[9] Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Curaçao) (2025) *Migranten in Curaçao. Een onderzoek naar de demografische en sociaal-economische kenmerken van migranten in 2011 en 2023.* (p.21); Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek Aruba (2021) *Census table P-C.6. Foreign Born Population by country of origin or region of birth-age-group and sex.* (assessed August 2026).
[10] CBS, "Caribisch Nederland; bevolking, geslacht, leeftijd en geboorteland", 27 May 2026.
[11] Roy Lie Tjam, "The Dragon in the Caribbean," Diplomat Magazine, 2 November 2014; Caribbean Atlas, "The Chinese in the Caribbean during the colonial era," 2013.
[12] Interview 37, Bonaire, 22.01.2026.
[13] Staatscommissie Demografische Ontwikkelingen Caribisch Nederland, "Gerichte Groei", 4 July 2024, p. 58.

(Taishan, Kaiping, Enping, and Heshan), while some also come from Hong Kong.[14] Often, they make it to the islands in pursuit of better economic opportunities. For instance, Interviewee 37 pointed out that the wages in Enping, Guangdong would only constitute 500 USD per month, whereas the minimum wage in Bonaire is 1800 USD.[15]

The Chinese diaspora in the CPKNL is a transnational, trade minority with an endogamous social, economic and kinship orientation. Chinese families are loosely organised into different networks and associations at each of the (larger) islands. Chinese individuals tend to form family- and community-based business networks with economic, financial and marital ties to the Chinese communities in the region (especially Venezuela) and China. Marriages outside the Chinese diaspora appear to be less common. Economic activities rely heavily on kinship- and hometown-based networks that provide informal introductions, loans and labour, which helps give these businesses a competitive advantage. New Chinese immigrants are often attracted by greater market opportunities in the CPKNL and higher wages in comparison to China, with employers often even covering housing and living expenses.

Table 2: Estimates of Chinese community members, Chinese businesses, and Chinese associations in the CPKNL.

Country/ municipality	**Chinese community**	**Chinese supermarkets / business**	**Association members**
Curaçao	6000-7000	300-400	N/A
Aruba	5000+	700 (Aruba Chinese Union) + Chinese Business Association (more important)	N/A
St. Maarten	1000+	N/A	Only Chinese Cooperative Association
Bonaire	500+	60 restaurants 40 supermarkets	Only Chinese Association Bonaire (used to be a Business Association too), supermarkets part of the Supermarket Business Association
St. Eustatius/ Saba	handful	N/A	N/A

Source: Compiled by the authors based on interviews with Chinese business and cultural communities

By nature, the islands' small size creates market structures in which monopolies or dominant players can easily emerge. This allows politics and business to influence each other more strongly than in larger economies. In theory, Chinese business associations could aim to leverage their collective economic weight to influence politics. On the one hand, Chinese interlocutors on the islands argue that the opposite occurs: associations tend to be defensive and inward-focused, formed not to exert influence but to compensate for what is perceived as marginalization and weak political commitment to their security and economic well-being.[16] On the other hand, Chinese business and cultural associations do organise all kinds of activities – e.g. Chinese New Year celebrations, Chinese language courses – for which they invite both local political and economic elites as well as people generally interested in Chinese culture. Such events do facilitate relationship building as well as goodwill, which could potentially be translated

[14] Interview 1, Rotterdam, 08.01.2026.
[15] Interview Bonaire, 22.01.2026; Rijksdienst Caribisch Nederland, "New Minimum Wage, Child Benefit, and Social Security Benefit Amounts in the Caribbean Netherlands as of 1 January 2026", December 2025; People's Government of Guangzhou Municipality, "最新标准！你的工资不能低于这个数 - 广州市人民政府门户网站", July 2025
[16] Interview 1, Rotterdam, 08.01.2026; Interview 29, Curaçao, 19.01.2026.

into political influence. However, so far, it appears that neither the Chinese community organisations nor the Chinese consulate has overtly interfered with political life and democracy on the islands.

2.2 Official Chinese policy towards the LAC

The primary regional platforms through which China structures its engagements with Latin America and the Caribbean are the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), established in 1973, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), founded in 2011, and followed up by the creation of the China-CELAC forum in 2014. From the three Caribbean countries in the Kingdom of the Netherlands (KNL), only Curaçao has been an associate member of CARICOM since 2024, while Aruba and Sint Maarten would like to become associate members.[17] None of the three are members of CELAC. The reason is, simply, the fact that the 1954 Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands mandates that these countries manage their own affairs while jointly handling Kingdom affairs—such as defence, foreign relations, and nationality—under a shared crown. This institutional positioning already places the CPKNL at the margins of China's formal regional diplomacy.

In its third and most recent official Chinese Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC),[18] published in 2025 following earlier editions in 2008 and 2016, China outlines an affirmative agenda aimed at institutionalising, expanding, and deepening its relations with LAC countries. Central to this agenda are the "Five Programs for Building a China–LAC Community with a Shared Future."

The first, the *Solidarity Program*, emphasises cooperation among Global South countries. The *Development Program* states that China will "share development opportunities of Chinese modernization"[19] and continue providing development assistance. The *Civilization Program* seeks to "uphold the vision of equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness between civilizations." The *Peace Program* focuses on implementing the Global Security Initiative and promoting "exchanges and cooperation in the fields of peace and security" in support of regional and global stability. Compared to the 2016 policy paper—which security dimensions focused largely on military, judicial, and police cooperation—the 2025 Peace Program adopts a broader scope, incorporating cybersecurity, non-proliferation export controls, as well as anticorruption and fugitive repatriation measures. Finally, the *People-to-People Connectivity Program* emphasises mutual learning and aims to "share and learn from each other's governance experience[s]."

These policy ambitions are embedded within a broader institutional framework for China–LAC engagement. Established in 2014, the China–CELAC Forum held its first ministerial meeting in January 2015 and has since become a central platform for political and economic coordination between China and the region. Economically, the 2025 policy paper places strong emphasis on trade diversification, "high-quality" Belt and Road Initiative cooperation, financial integration, and supply-chain connectivity, while explicitly opposing unilateralism, protectionism, and

[17] Central Bank Curaçao, "CARICOM AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION: EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CURAÇAO AND SINT MAARTEN", December 2024; Caribbean Broadcasting Company, "Territories Pursuing CARICOM Membership", 12 May 2026.
[18] Global Times, "China's Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean," 10 December 2025.
[19] All direct quotations in this paragraph are drawn from the 2025 policy paper, see note 8.

economic "decoupling."[20] The document further states that China will expand imports from LAC countries and support their participation in major Chinese trade fairs, reflecting Beijing's effort to strengthen South–South economic integration.

At the diplomatic level, China's growing engagement has also translated into increased support for Beijing's One China policy. Several countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have shifted diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China in recent years, including Panama (2017), the Dominican Republic (2018), El Salvador (2018), Nicaragua (2021), Honduras (2023). Beyond the LAC, countries like Burkina Faso (2018), the Solomon Islands (2019), the Republic of Kiribati (2019) and Nauru (2024) have made similar moves in the last decade. This has significantly diminished Taiwan's already narrow diplomatic space. These diplomatic realignments show how China's expanding economic and political presence in the LAC region and beyond is becoming more closely connected to its wider geopolitical objectives.

Official Policy Towards the CPKNL

China's policy towards the CAS-countries and BES-islands (referred to collectively in Chinese as 荷属加勒比 *Heshu Jialebi* or, literally translated, "the Caribbean belonging to the Netherlands") is part of its wider policy towards Latin America and the Caribbean. The most recent Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean[21] highlights the following: Chinese foreign policy is either directed towards the Netherlands, the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a whole, or towards the Caribbean region. No Chinese (public) policy exists towards the CPKNL specifically.

Partly as a result, previous reports, conducted by CEDLA and coordinated by the China Knowledge Network, have found that the Chinese economic and political presence in the Dutch Caribbean has been less extensive compared to Chinese involvement in other Caribbean nations such as Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica.[22]

Despite the attractiveness of Curaçao and Aruba as potential logistical hubs for processing and/or redirecting/transporting Venezuelan oil towards China, Chinese investment is lower than in Jamaica and Suriname.[23] The relatively small political and economic presence can be partly explained by the fact that the CPKNL, as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, already adheres to the One China Policy.[24]

Without a seat in the UN, they can offer no diplomatic support for the PRC and are therefore of little strategic value in this regard. This also partially explains why Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten are not part of the Belt and Road Initiative, in contrast to most countries in the LAC region. Another factor is the political constraint associated with investing in territories that are part of a larger economic and political entity. Such embeddedness reduces their susceptibility to

[20] Eduardo Tzili-Apango, "Time to rebalance, not dismantle," *China Daily Global*, 30 December 2025.
[21] State Council of the People's Republic of China, *China's Policy Paper on Latin America and the Caribbean*, Xinhua, 10 December 2025.
[22] Baud et al., *China's Economic and Political Role in the Caribbean and Central America*, September 2022.
[23] Elena Kiryakova, Karen Jackson, Rebecca Nadin, *China's economic footprint in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ODI Global, 3 March 2026.
[24] The Netherlands follows a "One China policy," recognising the PRC as the sole legal government of China and maintaining only unofficial relations with Taiwan. Government of the Netherlands, "Statement on the One China Policy of the Netherlands," September 13, 2025.

direct diplomatic influence, while leaving them more exposed to potential repercussions stemming from relations between China and the Netherlands as a whole.

2.3 Consulate and Chinese political influence

The Chinese Consulate in Curaçao was officially opened in 2016. According to several Chinese interlocutors spoken to during the research, the motivation to establish a consulate in Curaçao at the time was because Curaçao then sought to profile itself as a regional economic hub. China saw opportunities in terms of energy and logistics, partly because of the natural deepwater Bullenbaai harbour and partly due to the proximity to Venezuela. Nevertheless, the current Chinese Consul General reportedly seemed disappointed that Curaçao later decided to focus mostly on tourism.[25]

The timing of 2016 was key because in September 2016 the government of Curaçao had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Chinese company Guangdong Zhenrong Energy, which pledged to invest US$10bn in the modernisation of the refinery, which was leased by PdVSA and would end 31 December 2019.[26] In January 2019 the US put sanctions on Venezuela's state oil company PDVSA, after which Venezuela closed its sea border with Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire in 2019.[27] Curaçao at the time also stated that it could serve as a humanitarian hub to receive refugees/evacuees from Venezuela if needed.

As a result, the timing of 2016 is also interesting because in 2014-15 the US imposed the first major sanctions on Venezuela. These sanctions exacerbated Venezuela's crisis, leading to severe shortages of food and medicine, a skyrocketing of inflation, and massive outward flows of migration.[28] In this light, having a Consulate nearby in a safe location could also be perceived as a strategic choice to keep an eye on regional developments – particularly in the light of massive Chinese investments in Venezuela and a Chinese diaspora of around 300.000 ethnic Chinese in the country.[29]

The Consulate essentially has two main goals: establishing and maintaining good relationships with the local Chinese communities and working on an economic relationship with the CPKNL. Political relations are primarily the responsibility of the Chinese Embassy in The Hague.[30] The Consulate had a rough start in Curaçao, mainly due to the inexperience and limited English and Cantonese language skills of the staff. As stated before, most of the Chinese immigrants in the CPKNL came from Guangdong province – a province where Cantonese, not Mandarin, is the primary language. This made communication with both the Chinese diaspora and the local community challenging as well as with the local governments.

While today the Consulate remains a small mission of roughly six members, it has gradually positioned itself within the local landscape. Most of its activities are centred around Curaçao, with occasional visits and activities in the wider CPKNL. Current consul general, Zhang Kaibin,

[25] Interview 43, Curaçao, 5 March 2026.
[26] Enerdata, "China company and Curaçao Gvt signed US$10bn MoU refinery investment," 21 September 2016.
[27] NL Times, "Venezuela closes sea border with Dutch islands," 20 February 2019.
[28] Marium Ali, "Timeline: 26 years of fraught US-Venezuela relations," *Al Jazeera*, 25 November 2025.
[29] Interview 37, Bonaire, 22.01.2026; Interview 42, Caracas/digitally, 10.02.2026.
[30] Interview 43, Curaçao, 05.03.2026.

who assumed office in July 2025, speaks Cantonese. Consul Zhang has taken an active approach in shaping narratives about China, for example by publishing opinion pieces in local newspapers outlining China's positions and organising public events such as the August 2025 ceremony commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression.[31]

The Consulate has also collaborated with the Dutch Caribbean Securities Exchange (DCSX) to encourage Chinese investment. However, the local Chinese community has generally shown limited interest in the Consulate. Several respondents indicated that many members of the community were initially not enthusiastic about its arrival, except for the practical advantages it offered to Chinese passport holders, such as visa applications and passport renewals. The Consulate as well as newly arrived SOEs are also perceived as disconnected and insufficiently integrated by locals as well as members of the Chinese diaspora themselves.[32]

The Consulate has participated in a few instances of public diplomacy such as a $105.000 donation after the hurricane on Sint Maarten.[33] Yet, for other instances often perceived as public diplomacy, such as the goods provided to Sint Maarten after the 2017 hurricane,[34] as well as the provisions of masks during the pandemic,[35] members of the Curaçaoan community have argued that these were initiated by the community itself, not the Consulate. While these deeds of goodwill were by some seen as politically motivated, it is important to mention that this was not steered by Beijing, nor the Consulate itself. What they do show is that local Chinese communities are deeply embedded in – and care for – local societies.

2.4 Chinese (state-owned) enterprises

Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) have maintained only a small presence in the CPKNL. There are no major PRC initiated investments in Dutch Caribbean physical or digital infrastructure, trade or industry. SOEs are predominantly Large-Scale Enterprises (LSEs) in nature. Most Chinese economic activities occur through locally established Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) without state affiliation, so rather from the diaspora than from a top-down approach.

The small scale of the economies and the limited potential for commercial returns are amongst the explanatory factors why major SOEs have not established a lasting footprint. Interviewees also pointed to the role of established local business networks. As several interlocutors mentioned: "the pie is only this big, if we go around sharing pieces of the pie, our part gets smaller".[36] This suggests that established local businesses may have limited incentive to support the entry of new Chinese state-owned enterprises into these small markets.

[31] Consulate-General of the People's Republic of China in Willemstad, "Consul General Zhang Kaibin Attends the Event Held by Chinese Community in Dutch Caribbean to Commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Victory of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War", 16 August 2025; Zhang Kaibin, "Five-Year Plan: The Secret to China's Successful Development", 28 November 2025.
[32] Interview 14, Sint Maarten, 14.01.2026; Interview 34, Curacao, 21.01.2026.
[33] The Daily Herald, "Chinese Consul donates $105,000 to St. Maarten", 17 August 2018.
[34] Nieuwsblad Transport, "Schip met particuliere hulp naar Sint Maarten", 21 September 2017.
[35] Antiliaans Dagblad, "Chinese gemeenschap op Aruba doneert mondkapjes", 17 April 2020.
[36] Interview 14, Sint Maarten, 14.01.2026.

Oil Refinery Sector: Aruba and Curaçao

Despite this limited presence, Chinese companies have shown episodic interest in the region's oil refinery sector. Aruba's refinery in San Nicolas changed ownership several times before closing permanently in 2012. Although negotiations with PetroChina led to a memorandum of understanding in 2012, plans to restart operations never materialised.[37]

Curaçao's Isla refinery followed a similar trajectory. Established by Shell in 1915 and later leased to PDVSA, it played an important role in regional oil logistics until sanctions against Venezuela in 2019 disrupted operations. As the government searched for new partners, the Chinese firm Guangdong Zhenrong Energy (GZE) signed a memorandum of understanding in 2016 promising major investments. However, concerns over GZE's credibility, both locally and from Beijing, led the government to cancel the agreement in 2017.[38]

CMEC and Renewable Energy Projects

Another example of attempted SOE involvement is China Machinery Engineering Corporation (CMEC), a subsidiary of the state-owned Sinomach conglomerate. In 2019, CMEC was awarded memoranda of understanding for a solar farm and for rooftop solar installations on schools and Aqualectra facilities in Curaçao.[39] The company established a subsidiary, CMEC Dutch Caribbean B.V., in Curaçao, which has also built a solar installation for a resort in Sint Maarten. Legal challenges and contract complications eventually led Aqualectra to terminate the tender.[40] CMEC subsequently withdrew from the islands after failing to secure enough contracts, illustrating the low economic viability of Chinese SOEs in such small markets.

Chinese Companies in the Reconstruction of Sint Maarten

After Hurricane Irma devastated Sint Maarten in 2017, the island's reconstruction relied on Dutch funds administered by the World Bank.[41] Procurement for publicly funded projects followed price-based selection criteria; as a result, large companies with economies of scale had a competitive advantage over local businesses. Chinese companies compete on both delivery and price. A Chinese SOE, Zhenjiang #2 Construction Engineering Co. Ltd, was awarded multiple contracts, some of which were won at the expense of local companies.[42] Other bids were won because there was simply no competition. Members of the Parliament of Sint Maarten have criticized the National Recovery Program Bureau for its procedures with concerns over the "abnormally low financial bid", "lack of local experience" and "the potential devastating impact for our (Sint Maarten) economy" being cited.[43] Although some were won by Chinese firms, it must be noted that most of the tenders within the National Recovery Program Bureau were awarded to local companies, as well as to European and American ones.

[37] Baud et al., *China's Economic and Political Role in the Caribbean and Central America*, September 2022.
[38] Baud et al., *China's Economic and Political Role in the Caribbean and Central America*, September 2022.
[39] Antilliaans Dagblad, "Plan voor zonnepark | Antilliaans Dagblad" 4 December 2021.
[40] Edwin van Gastel, "Rechtbank Curaçao: Aqualectra mocht aanbesteding voor zonnepanelen stopzetten," *Solar Storage Magazine*, 29 April 2024.
[41] World Bank Group, "Sint Maarten", accessed 10 April 2026.
[42] National Recovery Program Bureau (NRPB), "Renovation of School Gyms" 20 August 2024; National Recovery Program Bureau (NRPB), "Expansion of the EOC Building", 12 September 2024.
[43] Soualiga News, "MP Ottley calls on NRPB to prioritize local inclusion in all tender and award processes", 4 July 2026.

Nonetheless, the Sint Maarten government has acknowledged concerns about Chinese firms gaining a disproportionate foothold and the implications for local businesses.[44] In response, the World Bank and local authorities have since adjusted procurement criteria to emphasise quality and local content inclusion alongside price.[45] As of today, the promised projects by Zhenjiang #2 Construction Engineering Co. Ltd have not materialised and the construction contracts have been cancelled by the Sint Maarten government.[46] The projects were cancelled due to performance concerns and the tenders are reissued. This has resulted in an ongoing legal dispute.

The Dutch Caribbean Securities Exchange and Chinese Listings

Beyond physical infrastructure projects, Chinese involvement has also appeared in Curaçao's financial sector through the Dutch Caribbean Securities Exchange (DCSX). It was founded in 2009 to facilitate listings and trading for domestic and international companies, with a focus on small-to-medium enterprises and is the only authorised Securities Exchange in the Dutch Caribbean, licensed by the Minister of Finance of the Government of Curaçao.

Originally intended to attract Latin American firms, the exchange instead saw a wave of Chinese companies seeking low-cost international listings. Between 2017 and 2021, at least 68 Chinese firms initiated the listing process, though most listings were non-tradable and primarily aimed at boosting visibility. The DCSX has been described as the only stock exchange outside China whose listed-company base was majority Chinese.[47] Many were later suspended for non-compliance or unpaid fees. While interest has since declined, Chinese companies still represent a notable share of the few tradable equities on the exchange.

2.5 A Whole-of-Society Approach?

As stated in the 2025 public Military Intelligence and Security (MIVD) report, when it comes to espionage, China operates according to a whole-of-society approach.[48] This means that all parts of society, both individually and in organised forms, can be mobilised for intelligence activities. Because all Chinese citizens, companies, and organisations are legally required to cooperate, this whole-of-society approach has a statutory basis. This form of intelligence activity has been punishable in the Netherlands since 2025 under the amended national espionage law.[49] Nevertheless, this is not the case yet in Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten.

In contrast to the European Netherlands, the individual CPKNL countries and public entities operate with smaller public administrations and fewer specialised resources to detect foreign intelligence. Conversely, the structural characteristics of the islands reduce their attractiveness for this whole-of-society intelligence framework.

[44] Parliament of Sint Maarten, "National Ordinance stipulating the Budget of Country Sint Maarten for the service year 2025 (National Ordinance Budget 2025): Note following the Final Report, No. 6,", 13 January 2025.
[45] Interview 17, Sint Maarten, 15.01.2026.
[46] The Peoples Tribune, SXM Talks, "Minister Gumbs: Cancelled contracts to be rendered, library, Charles Leopard Bell projects move forward", 5 August 2025.
[47] The Wire China, "Red Curaçao", 14 March 2021.
[48] Dutch Ministry of Defence, "Openbaar jaarverslag 2025 Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst", 21 April 2026.
[49] Ibid.

Given that this approach heavily relies on the presence of strategic sectors such as advanced technology industries, research institutions and knowledge-intensive companies, as well as dense networks of students, academics and business actors, the relative absence of such ecosystems in the CPKNL constrains both the opportunity and utility of (Chinese) intelligence collection. The islands also lack the large-scale Chinese student or professional networks – with strong affiliations to the Chinese government – that are often embedded in wider intelligence-gathering networks.

This does not eliminate risk. It does suggest that the scope and intensity of potential activities is structurally limited. Nonetheless, concerns regarding espionage, foreign interference through and vulnerabilities related to critical infrastructure or private-sector operators within the CPKNL should be taken seriously. Most importantly, it should be assessed both at the autonomous country domestic level as well as through Kingdom-level coordination – meaning all four governments should be actively involved. While the 2024 Council of State report on the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands does not address foreign interference explicitly, its emphasis on stronger country and Kingdom-level governance that prioritizes knowledge sharing, coordination and effective cooperation is directly relevant.[50] Close cooperation, information sharing and early-warning mechanisms through intra-Kingdom coordination may support earlier identification of unwanted influence and potential interference.

Bottom up, rather than top down

This chapter has shown that Chinese state-coordinated presence in the CPKNL is modest, fragmented and largely non-strategic, but not entirely irrelevant. Chinese presence on the islands is primarily rooted in diaspora communities and private economic activity rather than coordinated state-led expansion. Chinese entrepreneurship is generally commercially oriented and mostly focused on local business activities rather than political engagement, which limits opportunities for direct political influence from Beijing.

Formal Chinese state presence via the consulate and SOEs is modest in scale and impact. SOE involvement has been episodic and largely commercially driven, with several projects failing to establish a lasting foothold. Structural constraints such as market size, relative regulatory rigidness compared to other Caribbean countries and low strategic return reduce the incentive for sustained Chinese investments.

[50] Raad van State, "Advies over 70 jaar Statuut voor het Koninkrijk", 2 October 2024.

3. Geopolitical resilience and economic security of the CPKNL

Whereas Chapter 2 mapped the presence and activities of Chinese actors in the CPKNL, this chapter shifts the focus to the structural dependencies that shape the region's resilience and economic security. Although Chinese influence remains relatively limited, underlying vulnerabilities may increase the strategic significance of external involvement. This is especially relevant to small island economies that depend heavily on imported goods and (digital) infrastructure. Such dependencies create opportunities for external actors, including Chinese enterprises, whose activities are shaped by both state policies and commercial incentives, particularly the prospect of higher profit margins than in China.[51]

Small island economies such as those of the CPKNL face specific structural vulnerabilities due to their limited domestic resource base, narrow economic structure and strong reliance on external trade and supply chains. These structural characteristics make the islands more susceptible to geopolitical disruptions, including supply chain shocks, economic coercion and external political influence. In a recent example, the collapse of the rule of law under the Maduro regime in Venezuela and the subsequent humanitarian crisis resulted in large-scale, partially irregular migration to Curaçao and Aruba. Washington's intervention to remove Maduro from power on January 3, 2026, demonstrated how quickly disruptions in energy, food and logistics chains can translate into acute vulnerabilities for island economies.[52] In addition, climate change and intensified hurricane seasons threaten the security of islands, especially in Sint Maarten.

Moreover, sectoral vulnerabilities and regulatory fragmentation create entry points for external actors to exert influence. This report identifies six interrelated factors that shape the geopolitical resilience and economic security of the CPKNL:

1. ***High degree of import dependency***
   A structural reliance on imported goods, ranging from food to fuel, creates exposure to external supply disruptions and price volatility.
2. ***Limited development of renewable energy infrastructure***
   Continued dependence on imported fossil fuels heightens both economic vulnerability and geopolitical exposure. Renewable energy can strengthen energy security, reduce long-term exposure to fuel-price volatility and decrease dependency on imported fuels.
3. ***Digital infrastructure dependencies and resilience gaps***
   Gaps in digital capacity and cybersecurity frameworks heighten risks of external interference and systemic disruption.
4. ***Regulatory divergence***
   Differences in procurement rules, data governance and technical standards within the Kingdom may create vulnerabilities in strategic sectors and lead to greater dependence on external suppliers.
5. ***Vulnerabilities arising from concentrated security dependencies***

[51] Xiaoyang Tang, *Coevolutionary Pragmatism: Approaches and Impacts of China-Africa Economic Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[52] Floor Boon, "Geopolitieke storm toont de kwetsbaarheid van de Caribische eilanden 'Als het erop aankomt hebben ze Nederland hard nodig'," *NRC*, 6 January 2026.

External security partnerships, while necessary, may introduce strategic dependencies or vulnerabilities if not carefully managed.

6. ***Cross-border financial vulnerabilities***
   The small and open economies of the CPKNL depend on substantial cross-border financial flows. Informal financial channels and differences in supervision and enforcement can make these flows vulnerable to misuse for underground banking and money laundering.

3.1 High degree of import dependency

The CPKNL are small, import-dependent economies with almost no domestic production. As a result, nearly all essential goods must be imported, leaving a wide range of sectors vulnerable to trade disruptions and dependent on non-local suppliers. This section analyses import data for Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten, and compares their trade reliance on China, the United States, and the Netherlands.

The trade profiles of the Dutch Caribbean islands differ sharply, reflecting their different political status and economic structures. This becomes most evident when comparing Bonaire, Sint Eustatius / Statia and Saba (public entities) with the CAS countries (Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten).

Across the Dutch Caribbean, Chinese imports cover a wide range of product categories. This gives China a broad footprint, but import values remain modest. For Aruba (US$64 million) and Curaçao (US$87 million), Chinese goods consist mainly of consumer goods, electronics, and manufactured items, with virtually no export flows back to China. China, therefore, provides breadth, not depth: it is present across many sectors, but plays a relatively small role in the most strategic areas.

By contrast, the United States remains the principal trading partner for all CAS countries. Between 2019 and 2023, the US supplied 50.6% of Curaçao's merchandise imports and 45.1% of Sint Maarten's, well ahead of the Netherlands which accounted for 18.4% and 3.8% respectively.[53] This pattern is also reflected in Aruba where imports from the US are more than six times higher than imports from China.[54]

Bonaire, conversely, imports food products primarily from Canada and Colombia.[55] Because almost all foodstuff has to be imported, supermarket prices on the islands are very high. This includes supermarket prices in Chinese-owned and run supermarkets, which tend to buy jointly from Curaçaoan, Dutch or American wholesale importers. In fact, as several Chinese interlocutors on the islands pointed out,[56] the ability to lower prices through buying jointly from these wholesalers was a prime motivation for the Chinese to establish Chinese Business Associations.

[53] Central Bank Curaçao and Sint Maarten, "Macroeconomic implications of the announced U.S. tariff measures for the monetary union", April 2025.
[54] Trade Economic, "Aruba Imports Annual", last updated May 2026.
[55] Statistics Netherlands (CBS), "Caribbean Netherlands; import value, export value and trade balance by island", last modified 8 November 2022.
[56] Interview 1, Rotterdam, 08.01.2026.

The Netherlands plays a distinct role due to historical and institutional ties. Aruba and Curaçao source 20–44% of their import categories from the Netherlands, particularly pharmaceuticals and medical supplies. For Bonaire, dependence on the Netherlands is overwhelming: in nearly every category – food, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and medical instruments – the Netherlands is the main supplier.[57] There are no significant imports from the US or China in these sectors. This does not mean that the products are not of Chinese or American origin since commodities such as pharmaceuticals are likely to be re-exported.

Despite differences in their trade profiles, all islands share a common vulnerability: heavy dependence on a small number of external suppliers, primarily the US and the Netherlands for essential and strategic goods. China's presence is relatively broad but mostly non-strategic, all while the US and the Netherlands dominate the sectors that matter most for national and economic security: food, medicine, machinery, and fuels.

This heavy reliance on imports makes the CPKNL extremely vulnerable during crises. A recent report by the Netherlands Court of Audit has also flagged the prominent issue of the absence of stockpiled commodities on Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba in case of such an event.[58] The interdependence among the CPKNL islands exacerbates the risk. For instance, most goods shipped to Bonaire, Saba or Sint Eustatius pass through Curaçao, meaning that any disruption to Curaçao's port could effectively cut off multiple islands from imports in the first place. In case of such an emergency, the islands that have small storage and distribution facilities for foodstuff, medicine and energy, will face the most severe crisis due to low stockpile of essential commodities. Within this context, fuel is a risk-multiplier. Absence or shortages of fuel affects, for example, electricity generation, transportation, refrigeration, and emergency response capabilities.

Stockpiling commodities seems logical to combat the dangers of disruption. In practice, persuading commodity importers, distributors and warehouses to store commodities without (financial) incentive is difficult. The costs to do so are extremely high and supermarkets already operate on thin margins due to the intense competition (also amongst Chinese supermarkets themselves). The central policy challenge is therefore to determine which essential commodities require public stockpiling, which can be secured through private-sector reserves, and where hybrid arrangements or complete government responsibility are needed.

3.2 Insufficient renewable energy infrastructure

In November 2025, the Aruban government announced the permanent closure of the Lago refinery and outlined its intention to redevelop the site in line with a more sustainable spatial plan.[59] Earlier, in 2023, the Aruban government signed an MoU with the Spanish energy company ACCIONA Energía to develop a green-hydrogen project on the former refinery site.[60]

[57] Netherlands Court of Audit, "No Strategic Stocks for a Crisis in the Caribbean Netherlands," 12 May 2026.
[58] Netherlands Court of Audit, "No safety net for the Caribbean Netherlands - No strategic stocks on Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba", 12 April 2026.
[59] NOS Nieuws, "Raffinaderij op Aruba gaat definitief dicht, Nederland helpt bij ontmanteling", 9 November 2025.
[60] Acciona Energía, "ACCIONA Energía and Aruba sign deal for Green Hydrogen Valley", 29 August 2023.

In Curaçao, the refinery operator Vigor ceased paying its lease after June 2025, creating a dispute with the government and accumulating USD 12 million in debt, leading to the termination of their contract.

Geopolitical turmoil and US intervention in Venezuela have introduced new dynamics. Under US direction, several previously sanctioned Venezuelan oil tankers have recently docked in Curaçao. These are part of a renewed continuation of the debt-repayment arrangement between Curaçao and PDVSA, which, after the termination of their contract in 2019, still owed Curaçao 100 million dollars in debt. Prime Minister Pisas is reportedly open to the return of PDVSA as the operator of the refinery.[61]

A reopening of Venezuelan oil markets[62] could renew interest in Chinese, US or other foreign investment in Dutch Caribbean refineries. This could also become more economically attractive with local renewable energy generation as currently the US Gulf Coast outcompetes the Dutch Caribbean as a refinery hub because of their cheaper gas prices. Affordable renewable energy generation is especially important because Venezuelan heavy, impure crude requires energy-intensive operations before it can be exported.[63] Hence, expanded renewable energy generation could partially offset the CPKNLs energy cost disadvantages.

Political actors and US firms have not prioritised renewable energy, and concerns about greenhouse gas emissions tend to be overshadowed by short-term economic interests. Yet the Curaçaoan Isla refinery cannot be restarted without billions in new investment to address maintenance deficiencies, upgrade environmental standards and modernise refinery technology, making its revival highly uncertain.[64]

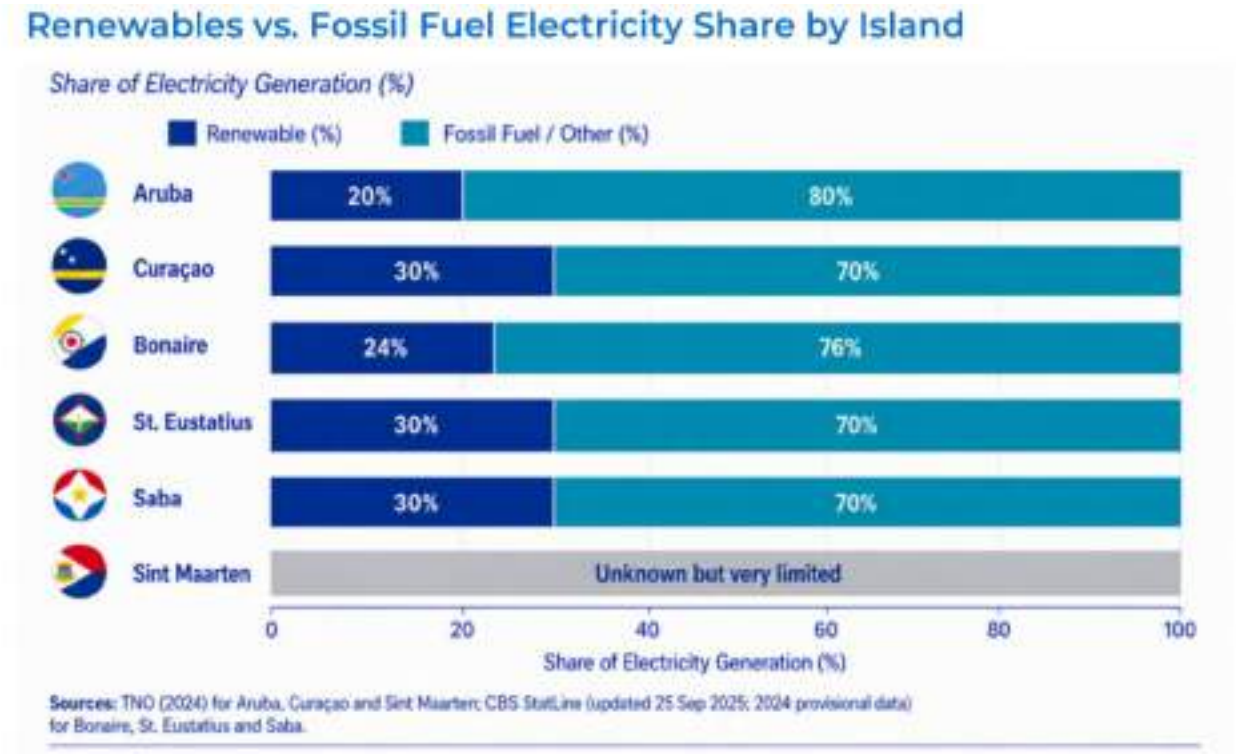
Nevertheless, volatile oil prices and supply disruptions caused by regional instability in the Middle East have meant that energy investment opportunities previously considered uneconomic are becoming viable again. Countries with a strong dependence on Middle Eastern oil imports, such as South Korea, are seeking to diversify their energy supply chains, and Curaçao's refinery has therefore received renewed attention. The Isla refinery presents an interesting opportunity because it is one of the relatively few refineries configured to process the heavy, impure 'Merey' crude sourced from Venezuela. Most recently, a consortium led by Korea Heavy Industry and Development Co. Ltd. has attempted to secure both Venezuelan oil supplies and the rights to operate the Isla refinery. [65] If realised, such developments could bring economic opportunities, while also introducing new political and security considerations.

Even where non-Chinese actors lead investment initiatives in the Isla Refinery, renewed refinery activity could increase Chinese commercial interests and economic involvement in Curaçao. An operational Isla Refinery could attract Chinese involvement in several areas, including oil tankers transporting crude oil from Venezuela or the wider region as well as refined petroleum to China or other markets. It could also encourage the participation of Chinese companies assisting in

[61] Dick Drayer, "Per direct einde contract Vigor op Isla en Bullenbaai," Curaçao.nu, 9 January 2026.
[62] Argus Media, "Venezuela Reopening", 15 April 2026.
[63] Sarah Chea, "Why is Korea returning to Venezuelan oil after 23-year hiatus?" *Korea JoongAng Daily*, 11 May 2026.
[64] NOS Nieuws, "Tanker met Venezolaanse olie meert aan op Curaçao," 15 January 2026.
[65] Curaçao Chronicle, "Proposal Links Curaçao Refinery Future to Venezuelan Oil Supply," 15 April 2026; Sarah Chea, "Why is Korea returning to Venezuelan oil after 23-year hiatus?" *Korea JoongAng Daily*, 11 May 2026.

refinery renovation and potentially stimulate further Chinese investment in Curaçao's harbour and associated logistics infrastructure. It is therefore advisable to carefully monitor the potential growth of Chinese involvement associated with such large-scale industrial infrastructure investments.

As CAS-economies grow, ensuring a stable and sustainable energy supply will be essential to meet rising demand. For example, Curaçao's multimillion-dollar plan to build an AI data centre and position itself as a regional digital hub will require substantial and reliable energy resources.[66] Investments in renewable energy and other sustainable projects are important steps for strengthening the country's self-reliance and resilience. A strategic decision will eventually be required: whether CPKNL continues to prioritise green energy development or pivots back toward oil. Since China is a global leader in green technologies, a rapid expansion of renewable energy in the CPKNL would likely involve closer cooperation with Chinese suppliers. Chinese suppliers may also offer the most cost-effective option.



3.3 Digital infrastructure dependencies and resilience gaps

Digital infrastructure and connectivity differ considerably across the CPKNL. Consumer connectivity is high on several islands, while small market size, dependence on submarine cables, low redundancy and reliance on a small number of providers create structural vulnerabilities. On some islands, parts of public and telecommunications infrastructure are also ageing or particularly exposed to extreme weather.

Internet connectivity

[66] Rick Hart, "Curaçao investeert miljoenen in AI-datacenter om digitale regiohub te worden," *NU.cw*, 31 July 2025.

A stable and high-speed internet connection has become indispensable for businesses, government services and communication. Internet infrastructure and connectivity in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands differs significantly from the European Netherlands[67] and the cost of internet usage is considerably higher than in the European Netherlands.

At present, there is no direct internet connection between the Netherlands and the Caribbean part of the Kingdom. Existing connectivity is routed via the United States. This creates a geopolitical vulnerability, as it allows the United States, in principle, to intercept data flows. While most internet traffic is now encrypted, so-called metadata – as the origin and destination of data packets – can still be sensitive and is typically not encrypted.[68] Moreover, it cannot be excluded that encrypted data is stored today with the expectation that future quantum computing capabilities may enable its decryption.[69]

This complicates the secure exchange of sensitive information between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and its Caribbean territories. Additionally, the United States could, in theory, unilaterally disrupt connectivity - for instance as part of a sanction regime. Although there is no direct precedent for a full disconnection, similar dynamics have been observed in the context of digital services, such as restrictions affecting cloud provider Microsoft, which supplies office software.[70]

Telecom

In 2025, the government of Sint Maarten confirmed that TelEm, the state-owned operator, is cooperating with Huawei under an MoU, creating a direct Chinese supplier footprint in critical digital infrastructure. The use of Huawei equipment in TelEm's networks may introduce supply-chain and data-security risks that are often restricted or phased out under European and Dutch 4G/5G policy frameworks, thereby widening policy divergence within the Kingdom and necessitating compensatory safeguards such as network segmentation, audits, encryption requirements, and exit options. More broadly, the growing reliance on foreign cloud and network infrastructure, including Huawei and Hikvision, has intensified debates on digital sovereignty and data governance, particularly regarding data access, compliance with European standards, and control over public and private data flows. These concerns are compounded by contractual transparency in some procurement processes, where insufficient insight into subcontractors, ownership structures, or data ownership complicates risk assessments of infrastructure projects involving Chinese companies, whether directly or through multilateral institutions.

The primary consideration for local governments is that Chinese providers are often more affordable than their Western counterparts. In this context, Interviewee 23 (Sint Maarten, 16 January 2026) noted that "Chinese telecom providers, such as Huawei, have increasingly moved towards open-weight solutions and therefore represent an attractive option for small island economies like Sint Maarten that seek to avoid dependency on particular nations." The question

[67] Ministry of Economic Affairs, "Research into Data Subsea Cables: Enabling Caribbean Netherlands Digitally," Pioneer Consulting, August 19, 2024.
[68] Interview van auteurs met Marijn van Vliet, Directeur Stichting Digitale Infrastructuur Netherlands, The Hague, 30 October 2025.
[69] Marin Ivezic, "Harvest Now, Decrypt Later (HNDL) Risk," *PostQuantum*, 8 June 2023.
[70] Zie bijvoorbeeld: NOS, "Russische Amsterdam Trade Bank failliet, spaarders gecompenseerd," 22 April 2022; Stijn Van Gijs, "Rechter: Microsoft 'speelde verstoppertje' bij faillissementsafwikkeling Amsterdam Trade Bank," *Financieel Dagblad*, 9 August 2022.

is whether Chinese open-weight technology can really provide autonomy or creates alternative dependencies.

Regardless, the issue ultimately reflects a political and governance dilemma: when does an autonomous country's decision to work with a Chinese technology provider become a security concern for the Kingdom as a whole? And what degree of coordination on such decisions/ what role for setting common safeguards is appropriate within the Kingdom?

3.4 Regulatory divergence and strategic safeguards

Regulatory divergence, by design, is a structural feature of the CPKNL. The CAS countries have autonomous regulatory systems, while the BES islands, although part of the Netherlands, remain outside the EU single market. All six Dutch Caribbean territories are considered Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) under EU law, which means that they are associated with the EU but are not part of the EU territory, customs union or single market.[71] Regulatory divergence should not in itself be equated with regulatory weakness. Different regulatory choices may reflect the constitutional autonomy, scale and market conditions of the individual countries and public entities. From an economic-security perspective, the relevant question is whether adequate safeguards exist regarding data security, transparency, interoperability and long-term supplier dependence. In practice, EU import duties, trade-defence measures, quota regimes, product standards and market-surveillance rules do not automatically apply in the same way as in the European Netherlands.[72] Although this flexibility can lower costs, different or less stringent requirements in some areas may also allow foreign hardware, software and ecosystems to become embedded without equivalent safeguards, potentially creating long-term supplier, data-access and interoperability risks.

The CPKNL have recently experienced a surge of Chinese cars – both electric and combustion engine vehicles. Their appeal is often price driven: Chinese SUVs and EVs are often much cheaper than American, Japanese or European models. Curaçao has recently procured two ambulances from China, citing considerations of availability and cost-efficiency.[73] While such decisions can be understood in the context of immediate budgetary and supply constraints, they may also carry long-term implications. If Chinese suppliers become prominent in the early stages of fleet electrification and public-service procurement, this could gradually introduce forms of path dependency in areas such as hardware ecosystems, maintenance networks and technical standards.

Unlike the EU mainland where battery-electric cars from China face the EU's 10% common car tariff plus definitive countervailing duties (e.g., ~17% for BYD, ~18.8% for Geely, ~35% for SAIC, applied since 30 October 2024 for five years),[74] the CPKNL sit outside the EU customs territory and single market as Overseas Countries and Territories.[75] This means EU import duties do not apply there. Consequently, this makes Chinese (electric) vehicles cheaper than in the

[71] European Commission, "Overseas Countries and Territories - International Partnerships," accessed May 22, 2026.
[72] European Commission, "Overseas Countries and Territories (OCTs) - Taxation and Customs Union," accessed May 22, 2026.
[73] NU.cw, "Twijfels over ambulance-aankoop: Silvania wil uitleg van FKAK en lijkt zich niet verantwoordelijk te voelen," June 3, 2025.
[74] European Commission, "EU Commission Imposes Countervailing Duties on Imports of Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) from China," *Access2Markets*, 12 December 2024.
[75] European Commission, "Overseas Countries and Territories," accessed May 22, 2026.

Netherlands, which explains the surge of (often grey-import) China-only electric vehicles (EVs) in the CPKNL at prices the EU cannot match under its trade defence regime.[76]

In Europe, EV policy is a coordinated bundle: binding CO_2 standards for cars that ramp to a 100% reduction for new vehicles by 2035, the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Regulation (AFIR) that mandates a dense charging network across member states,[77] and the new EU Battery Regulation introducing carbon-footprint declarations, due-diligence requirements, and a digital 'battery passport' system for traceability.[78]

By contrast, in the Caribbean territories, the non-applications of EU tariffs and regulatory requirements can deliver short-term benefits such as cheaper consumer prices and faster electrification. As a result, there are both risks and opportunities. The relevance of the risks mentioned earlier will ultimately depend on the scale of market penetration and the safeguards applied locally.

It must be noted that available evidence does not prove that Chinese EVs placed on the European market are inherently less secure than vehicles produced elsewhere. [79] Research shows that Chinese EVs comply with EU requirements, and identified vulnerabilities tend to be product-specific rather than the result of malicious design. In regard to electric vehicles in the CPKNL, the concern is therefore primarily of regulatory nature. Vehicles enter local markets without the same EU enforced safeguards that ensure data security. This makes the security concerns – when it comes to Chinese hardware and software – more prominent in the CPKNL than in the Netherlands.

Comparable data and cybersecurity concerns have already shaped EU telecommunications policy. Under the EU 5G Cybersecurity Toolbox, member states are encouraged to assess suppliers on both technical and non-technical risk factors and to restrict high-risk suppliers from critical and sensitive network functions.[80] In 2023, the European Commission stated that Huawei and ZTE, two Chinese tech giants, presented materially higher risks than other 5G suppliers and recommended member states exclude them.[81]

3.5 Vulnerabilities in security cooperation

Cooperation with US intelligence agencies within the CPKNL dates back to the early 2000s, when a combination of global – such as 9/11 – and regional security concerns – such as Venezuelan claims under Hugo Chávez – made close alignment necessary.[82] For years, this partnership was seen as professional and politically neutral. That perception has shifted. Since 2025, Dutch services have become more cautious in sharing intelligence with the United States due to

[76] Tycho de Feijter, "Chinese EV's Stromen Binnen in Caribisch Nederland – Zonder Importheffingen," *e-Drivers*, October 26, 2024.
[77] European Commission, Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, "Alternative Fuels Infrastructure,", accessed 22 May 2026.
[78] Council of the European Union, "Council adopts new regulation on batteries and waste batteries," 10 July 2023.
[79] Rogier Creemers & John Lee, "Evaluating Data Security in Chinese Drones and Smart Vehicles", China Knowledge Network, April 2025.
[80] European Commission, "Implementation of the 5G cybersecurity Toolbox", 15 June 2023.
[81] Reuters, EU recommends member states to not use Huwaei, ZTE in connectivity infrastructure", 4 May 2026.
[82] NRC, "Onmin en onbehagen in het Koninkrijk," 11 June 2005.

concerns about politicisation and reliability, marking an unprecedented strain in a historically close relationship.[83]

In practice, this has led to partial intelligence disengagement: cooperation continues, but sensitive information is increasingly withheld, creating operational friction – even requiring counterparts to leave the room during certain discussions. Structural change is difficult, however. As oversight bodies note, while partnerships can be vetted at the outset, reassessing them later is constrained by deep institutional dependencies, trust relations, and operational entanglement.

This rigidity is reinforced by asymmetric power dynamics. US agencies operate on strict reciprocity and can quickly exert political pressure if intelligence flows decline, discouraging allies like the Netherlands from fundamentally altering cooperation. As a result, meaningful recalibration is slow and politically costly.

Fragmentation exists within the Kingdom itself since Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten and the Netherlands all have their own intelligence services. In recent years, intra-Kingdom collaboration in the CPKNL has become stronger.[84] Yet Dutch services (AIVD/MIVD) still consider (and treat) Caribbean intelligence bodies in Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten as "foreign", limiting internal trust and integration. Since 2010, the security monitoring of the Caribbean Netherlands is in limbo. The security services of the Netherlands Antilles were decentralized to the Curaçaoan and St. Maarten governments, while the Caribbean Netherlands – a Dutch responsibility - has no clear and responsible security institution. Regional collaboration between the security services in the CAS-countries – amongst others concerning the monitoring of Chinese presence – does not include the Caribbean Netherlands.[85] De facto, national and Kingdom obligations have become blurred.

This complicates coordination in a region already marked by overlapping structures – military intelligence, police-based regional units (RID), and the transnational Special Police Taskforce (Recherchesamenwerkingsteam: RST), which operate across the Kingdom to counter organised crime. Taken together, these pressures are pushing the Kingdom toward greater intelligence collaboration and independence. Investments in satellites, drones, and independent reconnaissance capabilities reflect a strategic shift: reducing reliance not only on the United States, but also on fragile and fragmented cooperation structures within the Kingdom itself.

No security cooperation with Chinese actors exists, and hence no dependency in this regard. Yet, close cooperation with US counterparts has the potential to lead to a situation in which all Chinese presence is put under the looking glass of US-China geopolitical competition. In many ways, this contributes to a bias perception of Chinese presence and reinforces existing assumptions about Chinese influence in the CPKNL.

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[83] NRC, "Voor AIVD en MIVD was samenwerking met de Amerikanen altijd de hoeksteen, 'Het kan niet anders dat ontwikkelingen van tijd gevolgen gaan hebben'," 29 July 2025.

[84] Relevant actors in CPKNL are Actiecentrum Ondermijning Curaçao (ACOC), the Ondermijningsplatform Caribisch Deel van het Koninkrijk of the Board of Police Chiefs of the Dutch Caribbean, the Public Prosecutor's Offices in Aruba and Curaçao, and the Taskforce Ondermijning Aruba (Candelaria, 2026).

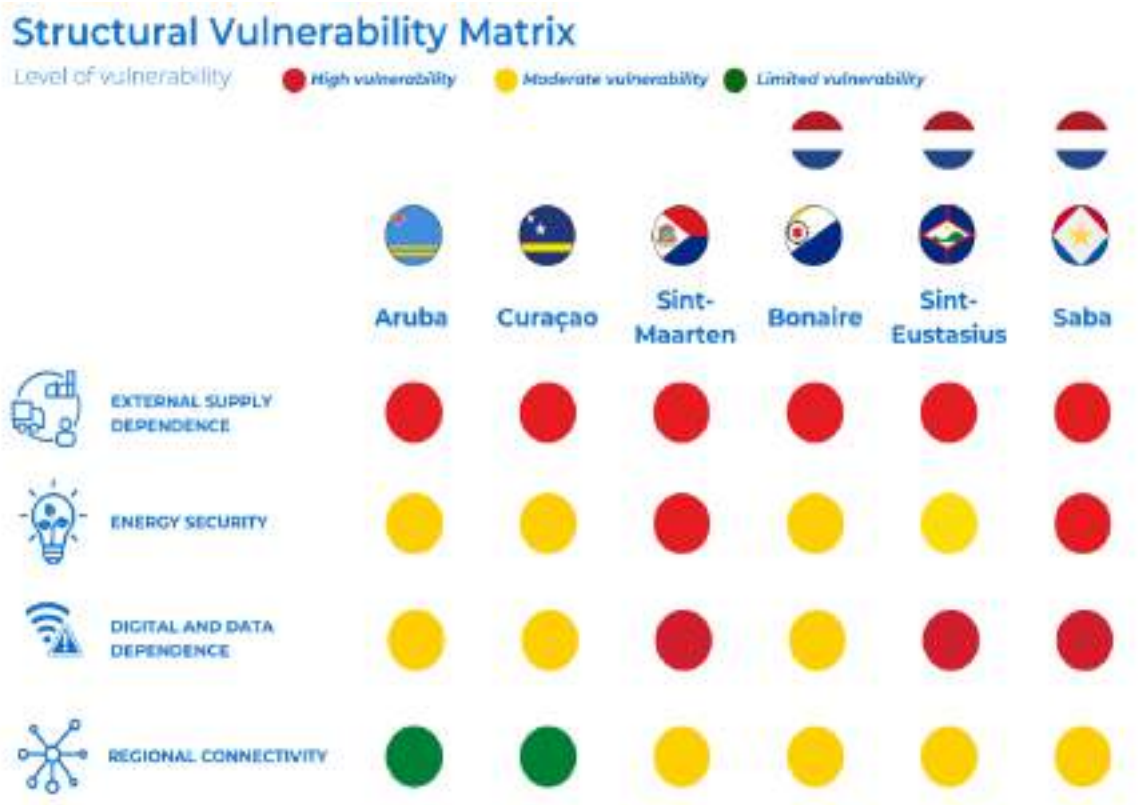
[85] Veiligheidsdienst Aruba, "*Jaarverslag 2024*", *2025*: p. 3, 10-11. 'Met de zusterdiensten is dit onderwerp aangekaart als zijn van gemeenschappelijk belang om in kaart te brengen.' (p. 11).

Dependencies are high, but are not primarily linked to Chinese presence

This chapter has assessed the CPKNL's resilience and economic security by analysing structural dependencies and exposure to external shocks. The islands are heavily dependent on imports, foreign infrastructure and external supply chains. These dependencies relate mainly to the United States and the Netherlands rather than to China.

Chinese economic presence is modest in terms of trade volume, strategic investments and political influence. Chinese actors are mainly active in retail, procurement, telecommunications and parts of the renewable energy sector. The vulnerabilities identified in this chapter stem primarily from the structural characteristics of small island economies, including their small domestic production capacity and dependence on external suppliers. When it comes to renewable energy infrastructure, the research shows that the islands remain dependent on imported fossil fuels and foreign technology. Expanding renewable energy production could reduce some external dependencies over time. At the same time, renewable energy systems often rely on imported solar panels, battery systems and technical components, including products supplied by Chinese companies.

Geopolitical tensions have nevertheless resulted in more political attention for foreign involvement in sectors such as telecommunications, energy infrastructure and security cooperation. Even limited foreign involvement in these sectors may therefore acquire strategic significance.



Note: The matrix provides an indicative qualitative assessment of structural exposure, it should not be interpreted as a quantitative risk score or confirmed threats. Ratings reflect the available evidence on external supplier dependence, energy security, digital and

data dependence, redundancy and regional connectivity. Differences in available evidence between island should be taken into account when interpreting the ratings.

The matrix suggests that Saba and Sint Maarten face the highest overall structural exposure across the four dimensions assessed. Both are rated as highly vulnerable in three of the four areas, although the underlying vulnerabilities differ between the islands. Sint Eustatius also shows substantial exposure, particularly in external supply dependence and digital and data dependence. Aruba and Curaçao show comparatively greater resilience, especially in regional connectivity. These patterns should be interpreted as indicative rather than as a ranking, given differences in the available evidence and the absence of a quantitative composite score.

3.6 Cross-border financial vulnerabilities

The small and open economies of the CPKNL depend on international financial flows. Most of these flows take place through regular channels and are essential to the islands' economies. Money can also be moved between jurisdictions outside the regular banking system. Such arrangements can form part of wider transnational financial networks, involving jurisdictions within and beyond the Caribbean. Differences in legislation, supervision, access to financial information and investigative capacity can make such financial arrangements difficult to detect and investigate.

One potential vulnerability concerns underground banking and other informal value-transfer arrangements. These involve the transfer of money or value partly outside the regular banking system. Money may be provided to an intermediary in one country and a corresponding amount paid to the intended recipient by another person within the network elsewhere. Transactions can later be settled within the network through cash, trade or net settlement. As a result, the transfer of value between countries does not necessarily involve a corresponding international transaction through the formal banking system.[86]

Underground banking is not specific to Chinese communities. However, official assessments in parts of the CPKNL have raised concerns about informal financial flows involving Chinese communities and China. The Aruban National Risk Assessment notes that the absence or limited number of transactions to China through money transfer companies may indicate the existence of an underground market.[87] The 2021 National Risk Assessment for the Caribbean Netherlands notes that underground banking may occur within Chinese communities on the three BES islands, although hard evidence is lacking and it is unclear whether such activities are actually linked to money laundering.[88]

In Aruba, by contrast, underground banking involving financial transfers between Aruba and China has been established in criminal proceedings. In one case, the Court of First Instance found that customers in Aruba provided US dollars to the defendant, after which corresponding amounts were paid to recipients in China in Chinese currency. The defendant received a commission for these transactions. The court found that the transactions were conducted on a

[86] Financial Action Task Force (FATF), "The Role of Hawala and Other Similar Service Providers in Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing," October 2013.
[87] Government of Aruba, "Money Laundering Report: National Risk Assessment Aruba", February 21, 2021.
[88] Research and Documentation Centre (WODC), "National Risk Assessment on Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing 2021 – Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba, Cahier 2021-14a," 2021, p. 79.

commercial basis and convicted the defendant of operating an unlicensed money-transfer business, habitual money laundering and failure to conduct customer due diligence.[89]

A second criminal case in Aruba concerned a broader range of underground banking activities. On appeal, the Joint Court of Justice concluded that the defendant and a co-defendant had engaged in underground banking, including transferring money for third parties, exchanging and lending money and making cash payments. Proceeds from these activities were used to acquire real estate and other assets. The defendant was convicted of habitual money laundering and violations of anti-money-laundering requirements.[90]

Aruba's National Risk Assessment also describes a scheme identified in the Hamburg investigation in which money was transferred from Aruba through Sint Maarten and Anguilla to China. Funds subsequently returned to an Aruban bank account in the form of apparently legitimate loans and were used to purchase real estate in Aruba.[91]

The Avior investigation in Curaçao concerned suspected money laundering, underground banking and the provision of financial services without a licence. In 2020, the Public Prosecutor's Office reached a settlement with one of the suspects. According to the Public Prosecutor's Office, the investigation supported suspicions that intentional money laundering had taken place and that an international credit institution and money-transfer business had been operated without a licence between 2011 and 2017. The suspect paid ANG 250,000 and relinquished several properties, bank balances and seized cash.[92]

Information from Avior was later used in a criminal case in the Netherlands. The District Court of Noord-Holland described a system in which large amounts of cash could be delivered to a business operated by a Chinese man in the Netherlands. Corresponding amounts, minus a commission, were then paid out through another Chinese-operated business in Curaçao. The court found that this method was used to transfer money from the Netherlands to Curaçao to finance cocaine trafficking.[93]

Another Chinese businessman investigated in Avior was acquitted of all charges in August 2026. The Public Prosecutor's Office had also requested his acquittal. Although the investigation had raised suspicions of money laundering, the available evidence was insufficient to prove the allegations. Part of the investigation concerned money transferred to Curaçao through different bank accounts in China. The investigation also concerned substantial investments in real estate on Curaçao. Attempts to question the account holders in China about the origin and purpose of the transfers were unsuccessful.[94]

Sint Maarten provides another example. The 2025 Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) Mutual Evaluation Report includes a case study entitled “The Chinese Connection”. The case started with unusual international transfers reported by a financial institution. Information

[89] Gerecht in Eerste Aanleg van Aruba, 6 March 2018, ECLI:NL:OGEAA:2018:128.
[90] Gemeenschappelijk Hof van Justitie, 3 June 2019, ECLI:NL:OGHACMB:2019:195.
[91] Government of Aruba, “Money Laundering Report: National Risk Assessment Aruba”, February 21, 2021.
[92] Curaçao Chronicle, “Agreement between Public Prosecution and criminal business owner”, 11 March 2020.
[93] Rechtbank Noord-Holland, 3 February 2022, ECLI:NL:RBNHO:2022:766.
[94] Dick Drayer, “Rechter spreekt Chinese zakenman vrij na negen jaar witwasonderzoek op Curaçao”, Curaçao.nu, 6 August 2026.

obtained from foreign FIUs showed that the person concerned had previously been linked to suspicious cash transactions through money-remittance companies, held ten bank accounts at three banks and was a shareholder in three property investment companies. The FIU referred the case to the Public Prosecutor's Office. According to the CFATF, no further investigation took place because of insufficient financial investigative capacity.[95]

Risk assessments in Aruba and the Caribbean Netherlands point to the possible existence of underground banking. Criminal investigations and court proceedings provide more concrete examples, including cases involving financial flows between the CPKNL and China. Some of these involved several jurisdictions and operated partly outside the regular banking system. Investigating such financial flows therefore requires access to financial information from other jurisdictions and cooperation with foreign authorities.

[95] Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF), "Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures – Sint Maarten, Fourth Round Mutual Evaluation Report," July 2025, Box 3.2, 'Case Study: The Chinese Connection', p. 66.

4. Policy options

The report finds little evidence of growing Chinese political influence in the CPKNL. Geopolitical tensions nevertheless heighten the importance of economic security and coordination between partners within the Kingdom. The overarching goal of this cooperation should be two-fold: first, to reduce structural vulnerabilities that could create openings for unwanted foreign influence; and second, to strengthen the collective capacity of the Kingdom to identify, assess and respond to risks at an early stage.

Chapter 3 identified six main factors in the CPKNL's geopolitical resilience and economic security, namely: 1) high degree of import dependency; 2) insufficient renewable energy infrastructure; 3) outdated digital infrastructure; 4) regulatory divergence; 5) vulnerabilities in security cooperation; and 6) cross-border financial vulnerabilities. On these six factors, partners within the Kingdom can work together to strengthening the CPKNL's geopolitical resilience and economic security in a changing geopolitical environment. The following policy options aim to reduce structural dependencies and improve the geopolitical resilience of the CPKNL:

1. Reduce concentrated external dependencies
2. Expand renewable energy capacity
3. Modernize digital infrastructure
4. Strengthen coordination and safeguards in strategic sectors
5. Improve resilience in security cooperation
6. Counter illicit cross-border financial flows

Implementation of these policy options differs by constitutional level. Some measures fall primarily within the responsibilities of the individual countries or public entities, others require voluntary cooperation within the Kingdom, while some may concern Kingdom affairs. These responsibilities should be made explicit when translating the recommendations into action.

4.1 Reduce concentrated external dependencies

The economies of the CPKNL are highly dependent on imports, tourism and external supply chains. These dependencies are concentrated around a limited number of external partners, particularly the United States. Economic downturns, disruptions in logistics, changes in trade flows or fluctuations in tourism may therefore have a disproportionate impact on local economies, government revenues and the availability of essential goods.

Kingdom governments should identify which essential goods require minimum strategic stocks and clarify who is responsible for maintaining them. Depending on the product and island context, this may involve public stocks, minimum private reserves or hybrid arrangements. Special attention is needed for fuel, medicines and food, as well as for inter-island dependencies in transport and distribution.

This dependence is partly linked to the structural characteristics of small island economies. Low domestic production capacity, small internal markets and geographic distance make these

economies more reliant on imported food, fuel, consumer goods and construction materials. The tourism sector shows similar vulnerabilities, as the different island economies depend heavily on a small number of visitor markets and air connections.

Reducing these vulnerabilities requires greater diversification of import routes, tourism markets and economic partnerships. Expanding tourism connections with South American and European markets may reduce excessive dependence on a small number of visitor markets. Strengthening regional trade relations and improving local storage capacity for essential goods may also strengthen resilience during disruptions in international supply chains.

Local private-sector actors form an important part of the islands' economic resilience. Supermarkets, wholesalers and distribution networks operated by members of the Chinese diaspora play an important role in the supply of essential goods on several islands. Closer cooperation between governments and these private-sector actors may improve preparedness during periods of shortages, natural disasters or disruptions in international logistics.

4.2 Expand renewable energy production to reduce external dependency

The CPKNL rely heavily on imported fossil fuels. This reinforces reliance on external actors. In an increasingly volatile geopolitical context, energy is a strategic vulnerability: supply chains can be disrupted, politicised, or leveraged for coercion, with immediate consequences for stability.

Fuel shortages are a risk multiplier: shortages in fuel can quickly lead to disruptions in logistics, (inter-island) aviation, storage, refrigeration, telecommunications and crisis response.

Recent developments illustrate this exposure. Rising global fuel prices due the US/Israel-Iran war have already put pressure on inter-island aviation, with small airlines heavily dependent on a single supplier (Curoil) and lacking pricing transparency.[96] As fuel costs surged, ticket prices rose immediately, threatening the inter-island air connectivity that underpins healthcare access, economic activity, and regional mobility. This demonstrates how fuel dependency can translate directly into systemic instability. Energy security should therefore be treated as national security, especially for small islands like the CPKNL that are heavily interconnected. This requires a more integrated approach to resilience, ensuring redundancy across energy systems and reducing exposure to single suppliers.

A dual-track strategy is recommended. First, renewable energy capacity – particularly solar and wind – should be rapidly expanded, supported by investments in storage and grid infrastructure, with the long-term objective of maximising energy autonomy. Second, short-term vulnerabilities should be mitigated through the diversification of oil and LNG suppliers as well as with strategic reserves. A further constraint may lie in incentives embedded in existing fossil-fuel systems and utility arrangements, which can slow renewable-energy deployment. Policy design should therefore consider how existing actors and infrastructure can be incorporated into the transition.

[96] Dick Drayer, "Luchtbrug ABC-eilanden onder druk door brandstofprijzen," *Curaçao.nu,* 20 March 2026.

The pace and scope of this transition may also depend on the extent to which countries within the Kingdom are willing to cooperate with Chinese suppliers, whose technologies could accelerate the modernisation of energy infrastructure. Such cooperation raises strategic and political questions regarding whether such partnerships should be considered solely a national decision of the autonomous countries, or a Kingdom-wide matter given the potential implications for security and geopolitical alignment.

4.3 Modernize digital infrastructure

Reliable and affordable digital infrastructure is important for the economic resilience and security of the CPKNL. Government services, financial transactions and international communication depend heavily on stable digital connectivity. The current telecommunications infrastructure of the islands relies heavily on foreign providers and external routing through the United States. This makes the islands more vulnerable to service disruptions, high costs and data security concerns.

Policy options include working with European, American, or Chinese suppliers. The key policy question is not simply which supplier to choose, but when dependence on a foreign provider becomes a national security concern and at what level within the Kingdom such decisions should be taken. Modernising digital infrastructure through closer cooperation with European suppliers could reduce specific dependencies but would require sustained investment and coordination within the Kingdom.

A potential solution to these challenges is the construction of new subsea data cables connecting the Netherlands directly to the Caribbean territories. France could be a potential partner in such an initiative, given its own overseas territories in the region and its interest in establishing a fully European connection. The estimated cost of a direct cable between the Netherlands and Sint Eustatius is approximately €237 million, while a route via the Azores is estimated at €171 million. From Sint Eustatius, an additional cable to Bonaire would cost approximately €55 million.[97]

These estimated costs are modest compared to the potential benefits. In addition to reducing the geopolitical vulnerabilities outlined above, improved and more affordable connectivity would strengthen the digital business environment.[98] End users would also benefit from more competitive pricing, closer to the lower internet costs in the Netherlands. This is partly because each ‘internet exchange’ along the route—such as the AMS-IX in Amsterdam—charges IP transit fees. A direct connection would reduce these costs compared to the current routing via hubs such as Miami. Furthermore, users in the Caribbean territories currently face little competition in the telecommunications market, which further drives up prices.[99]

A new subsea connection could reduce some of these dependencies, contribute to data security and strengthen redundancy. Its costs and benefits should be assessed against alternative options for improving regional connectivity and resilience. A fully sovereign, direct subsea connection would be preferable from a strategic perspective. However, a cost saving of

[97] Ministry of Economic Affairs, “*Research into Data Subsea Cables*,” p. 10.
[98] Interview van auteurs met Marijn van Vliet, Directeur Stichting Digitale Infrastructuur Netherlands, The Hague, 30 October 2025.
[99] Ministry of Economic Affairs, “*Research into Data Subsea Cables*,” p. 6.

approximately €66 million could be achieved by opting for a route via the Azores. This saving could increase further if additional partners, such as France, were to participate in the project.

4.4 Strengthen coordination and safeguards in strategic sectors

Differences in regulatory frameworks, procurement standards and technical requirements across the countries and public entities within the Kingdom may create practical challenges in strategically sensitive sectors such as telecommunications, digital infrastructure, procurement and data governance. In some cases, these differences may unintentionally create opportunities for external actors to establish strong market positions or introduce technologies that diverge from European regulatory and cybersecurity standards.

This is particularly relevant in small island economies where the limited size of markets and administrative capacity can deepen long-term dependence on individual suppliers or external service providers. Such dependencies do not automatically constitute security risks, but they may reduce flexibility, interoperability and strategic autonomy over time. Where data and cybersecurity risks are present, careful consideration must be made, especially since this could have consequences for communication and information exchange within the Kingdom.

To address these challenges, the countries and public entities within the Kingdom could explore closer voluntary coordination on economic security issues in sectors such as procurement, digital infrastructure, data governance and investment screening. Rather than pursuing full regulatory harmonisation, cooperation could focus on the development of shared minimum standards, greater transparency and the exchange of expertise regarding ownership structures, cybersecurity risks and long-term supplier dependencies.

Given differences in scale and institutional capacity, Caribbean countries and public entities may benefit from additional technical support, knowledge sharing and administrative cooperation within the Kingdom. Closer coordination may strengthen the ability of governments to independently assess long-term strategic risks while preserving local decision-making autonomy.

Public procurement processes in strategically sensitive sectors may also benefit from assessment criteria that include not only short-term costs, but also considerations related to cybersecurity, interoperability, long-term maintenance dependencies and market concentration.

The reconstruction efforts in Sint Maarten after Hurricane Irma illustrate some of these challenges. In practice, procurement processes that prioritised short-term cost efficiency created advantages for large external contractors over smaller local companies. This highlights the importance of balancing affordability, market access and resilience considerations in future procurement frameworks, particularly in strategically sensitive sectors.

4.5 Improve resilience in security cooperation

Security cooperation in the Caribbean region increasingly takes place within a context of geopolitical competition and economic security concerns. In this environment, international developments – particularly tensions between major powers – may affect both the risks associated with foreign involvement and strategic dependencies and how these risks are perceived within the CPKNL.

The fact that the AIVD and MIVD consider the security bodies of Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten foreign institutions hinders trust and collaboration within the Kingdom. In light of geopolitical and demographic dynamics in the public entities, evaluation of legal embedding and the institutional strength and weaknesses of security monitoring in Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba as well as the collaboration with the Dutch Caribbean countries seems appropriate.

External partnerships are essential to the security capacity of the CPKNL, particularly given the scale of the individual islands. Vulnerability arises not from external cooperation itself, but where critical capabilities become highly dependent on a single partner, alternatives are limited, or local capacity to assess and manage risks is insufficient. Diversified partnerships can therefore strengthen, rather than reduce, resilience.

Comparative research on the three Guianas (French Guiana, Suriname and Guyana) suggests that differences in institutional strength, constitutional position and the scale of Chinese presence may affect vulnerability to Chinese influence.[100] Cooperation within the Kingdom and with partners in the Caribbean region can support the early identification and assessment of foreign state activities that may affect national or economic security. Information exchange between the countries and public entities can also strengthen their collective ability to assess geopolitical risks, economic dependencies and foreign influence in strategically sensitive sectors.

Strengthening institutional cooperation and information exchange between the countries and public entities within the Kingdom will strengthen the collective ability to assess geopolitical risks, economic dependencies and foreign influence in strategically sensitive sectors. Increased investment in local analytical, technical and cybersecurity capacity could further support more independent and context-specific assessments within the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom.

Given the constitutional structure of the Kingdom, continued dialogue regarding information-sharing, coordination mechanisms and economic security governance may help improve operational cooperation and mutual understanding while respecting the autonomy of the individual countries. Rather than framing security cooperation primarily through the lens of geopolitical rivalry, a resilience-oriented approach that focuses on institutional capacity, transparency and long-term strategic coordination may contribute more effectively to the stability and security of the Kingdom as a whole.

[100] Tjon Sie Fat, P.B., Abhelakha, R., & Troon, E., *Migrants, Money and Might: the image of China in the Guianas*. In: R. Hoefte, M.L. Bishop and P. Clegg (eds.) *Post-Colonial Trajectories in the Caribbean, the Three Guianas*. London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2017.

4.6 Counter illicit cross-border financial flows

Underground banking and other informal financial arrangements can operate across several jurisdictions and partly outside the regular banking system. In Section 3.6, such arrangements or indications of such arrangements have been identified in different parts of the CPKNL, but the available information does not provide a complete picture of their nature and scale or establish whether individual cases are connected. This makes it more difficult to assess whether these cases reflect isolated criminal activity or point to broader cross-border financial vulnerabilities.

A more comprehensive picture requires information from separate investigations to be analysed across cases and jurisdictions. This can be supported by better information sharing and access to specialised financial expertise across the Kingdom. The same financial facilitators may appear in different investigations, and combining information from different cases may help identify recurring facilitators, methods and wider networks.[101] Building on this analysis, relevant organisations, such as FIUs and law-enforcement agencies, could periodically produce a Kingdom-wide assessment of illicit cross-border financial flows. Such flows can facilitate organised crime, undermine financial integrity and create opportunities for external influence. A joint assessment could identify patterns, connections and emerging risks that remain obscured within individual investigations, thereby strengthening the Kingdom's capacity to address cross-border vulnerabilities.

The cases discussed in Section 3.6 show that funds transferred through underground banking can be used to acquire real estate and other assets. Financial investigations should therefore examine not only the transfer of funds, but also how these funds enter the regular economy and which actors facilitate this process. Local risk assessments and investigations should determine which sectors and actors warrant closer examination.

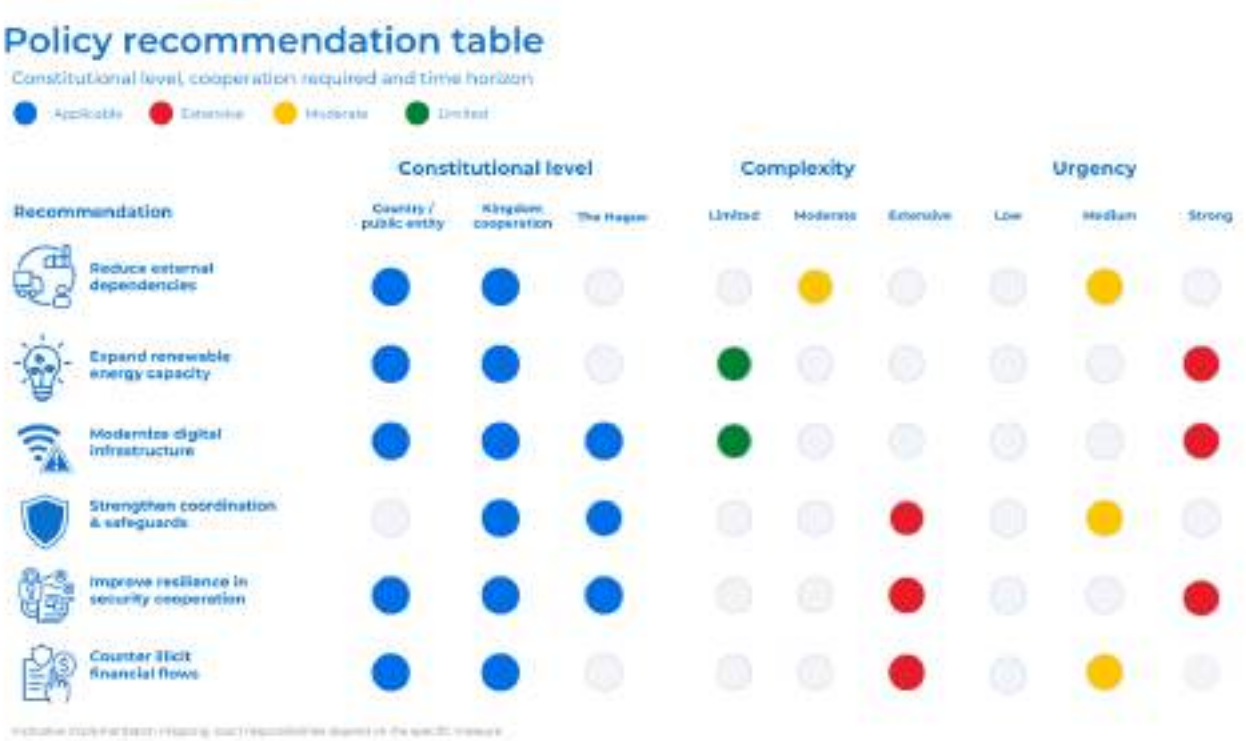
Financial investigative capacity differs between the islands. The CFATF evaluation of Aruba describes established arrangements for the analysis and exchange of financial intelligence and cooperation between the FIU, law-enforcement agencies and the Public Prosecutor's Office.[102] In Sint Maarten, the CFATF identified limitations in financial investigative capacity, staffing and specialised training, as well as in the use of financial intelligence and the conduct of parallel financial investigations.[103] Given the scale of the islands, maintaining all specialist expertise separately in each jurisdiction may not always be feasible. When specialist expertise is not available locally, authorities could draw on expertise available elsewhere within the Kingdom or through existing cooperation structures.

Cross-border investigations depend on timely access to information held in other jurisdictions. Existing international channels, including the Egmont Secure Web, INTERPOL and ARIN-CARIB, provide opportunities for information exchange.[104] Where investigations involve several

[101] Kramer, J.-A., Blokland, A. A. J., Kleemans, E. R., & Soudijn, M. R. J., *Money laundering as a service: Investigating business-like behavior in money laundering networks in the Netherlands*. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 2024, p. 27(3), 314–341.
[102] Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF), "Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures – Aruba: Fourth round mutual evaluation report," July 2022.
[103] Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF), "Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures – Sint Maarten: Fourth round mutual evaluation report," July 2025.
[104] Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF), "Anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing measures – Curaçao: Fourth round mutual evaluation report," July 2025.

jurisdictions, the need for financial, corporate or other evidence from abroad should be identified at an early stage. Difficulties in obtaining such information can otherwise limit the ability to establish the origin, destination and purpose of funds.

Not all informal financial activity is necessarily linked to criminal activity.[105] Investigative and supervisory measures should therefore be risk-based, with attention focused on activities and transactions that present higher money-laundering risks rather than on the use of informal financial channels itself.[106]



Note: This figure provides an indicative and simplified implementation mapping of the six policy options discussed in the above chapter. It is intended to show, at a high level, where primary responsibility is likely to lie within the constitutional structure of the Kingdom, the approximate degree of coordination required, and the relative urgency of implementation. In practice, individual measures within each policy option may involve different authorities, legal bases and forms of cooperation. Responsibilities may also differ between Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten, the Caribbean Netherlands and the Kingdom level. The classifications should therefore not be read as fixed constitutional or legal assignments, but as a visual aid for translating the broader recommendations into implementation priorities.

[105] Ercanbrack, J. G. (2024). Hawala in criminal court: The role of law and commercial culture in informal financial exchange. *Crime, Law and Social Change, 82*, 659–683.
[106] Financial Action Task Force (FATF), *Guidance for a Risk-Based Approach: Money or Value Transfer Services,* 2016.

5. Conclusion

This report examined the extent to which Chinese economic and political influence in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (CPKNL) has increased and how this relates to questions of geopolitical resilience and economic security.

5.1 Presence, but limited Chinese influence

The findings show that Chinese presence in the CPKNL has expanded over the past decades, primarily through migration, diaspora networks and private economic activity. Chinese-owned businesses have become more visible in local economies, particularly in retail, hospitality and small-scale commerce. More recently, Chinese companies have also participated in selected infrastructure, telecommunications and renewable energy projects.

However, the report finds limited evidence of a substantial increase in coordinated political influence by the Chinese state. Chinese state-linked investments and diplomatic activities remain modest compared to other parts of the Caribbean region, while political engagement by local Chinese communities appears modest. Chinese presence in the CPKNL is therefore predominantly economic in nature and largely shaped by local commercial dynamics rather than by a coordinated political strategy.

As geopolitical tensions between major powers continue to intensify, even relatively limited foreign involvement in strategically sensitive sectors may acquire significance. Discussions regarding foreign influence in the CPKNL should therefore not focus exclusively on China but should instead be embedded within an assessment of economic security, resilience and strategic dependency within the Kingdom.

Maintaining open and constructive communication with representative bodies of the PRC (the Chinese consulate in Curaçao), China-based private and state-owned enterprises, and local Chinese civil and economic organizations can contribute to transparency, mutual understanding and inclusive participation. The identification and mitigation of unwanted foreign interference should remain the responsibility of the competent public authorities and should be based on actors' activities and affiliations rather than community background.

5.2 Need to boost resilience, reduce dependencies

The CPKNL face structural dependencies and vulnerabilities in a geopolitical environment that has become more volatile. These vulnerabilities stem less from direct Chinese influence than from economic and geopolitical dependency. External actors play a major role in the islands' imports, logistics, fuel, digital infrastructure, tourism and security cooperation. Their open economies are also exposed to cross-border financial arrangements that can operate partly outside the regular banking system and across several jurisdictions. Criminal investigations and risk assessments have identified underground banking and related financial arrangements in several parts of the CPKNL, including cases involving individual Chinese actors. The available

evidence does not establish the scale of these activities, whether the cases are connected or any involvement by the Chinese state. Climate-related hazards, including hurricanes (Irma in 2017), sea level-rise, as well as earthquakes, the Covid 19-pandemic (2020-2022), regional instability and migration shocks have caused societal and economic disruptions across the CPKNL. Such shocks can strain public institutions, supply chains, critical infrastructure and crisis-response capacity, thereby exacerbating existing structural vulnerabilities and potentially creating opportunities for foreign or transnational criminal actors.

Rather than approaching the region primarily through the lens of geopolitical rivalry, this report argues for a Charter-based long-term resilience-oriented approach that balances security considerations with local autonomy, economic development and regional stability. This includes improving coordination on economic security, strengthening digital and energy infrastructure, increasing institutional and financial investigative capacity, improving the exchange and analysis of information on cross-border financial flows and reducing concentrated external dependencies where feasible. Risk assessments should be conducted at country and public-entity level rather than treating the CPKNL as a single exposure category.

5.3 Reconsider security arrangements

> *"A perennial and unresolved issue for governments around the world is how to delineate responsibilities between foreign policy, on the one hand, and policy areas that are primarily sector-specific but have a cross-border dimension, on the other."*[107]

The close interconnection between local, foreign and Kingdom affairs reflects broader challenges related to scale, administrative capacity, persistent asymmetries in Kingdom governance, and the fragmentation of knowledge, perspectives and positions across the Kingdom.[108] The issues examined in this report therefore cut across several provisions of the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands, particularly Articles 3 sub a and b, 11 b and c, and 38.

Under Article 3b of the Charter, foreign affairs are a Kingdom responsibility. At the same time, Articles 11b and c reflect the involvement and interests of the Caribbean countries in matters that affect them directly. Article 38 provides the broader basis for cooperation between the countries of the Kingdom. Taken together, these provisions illustrate why questions concerning Chinese influence cannot always be neatly separated into local, foreign-policy and broader Kingdom dimensions. When the independence and foreign policy matters concern the Caribbean (CAS) countries, they are to be involved in the political decision making through the Kingdom government (art 11, sub 6).[109] However, numerous aspects of economic security, digital and energy infrastructure primarily pertain to the jurisdiction of the autonomous Caribbean countries, as does the capacity of key institutions in the fight against international crime and state-based undermining such as Security Services, Police Forces, Public Prosecutors, Financial Intelligence Units and Central Banks. In this report, sections 3.5 and 4.5 describe the reality of a fragmented Kingdom security policy reality. Dutch Caribbean security services synchronize their activities

[107] Wehry, *Nederland en het Caraïbische bekken*. Den Haag: Clingendael, 1988, pp. 100.
[108] Candelaria 2026b. Candelaria offers a model for Kingdom cooperation on Venezuelan-linked undermining crime in Aruba which mitigates divergent understandings of the between Kingdom partners.
[109] Borman 2012: 22.

and cooperate in regional security networks, though the monitoring of the security situation of the Caribbean Netherlands leaves room for improvement. Meanwhile communication between the European and Caribbean security services is hampered by jurisdictional dividing lines within the Kingdom. Consequently, mitigating Caribbean vulnerabilities, fostering institutional resilience and Kingdom-wide collaboration require shared commitment and voluntary mutual agreements as outlined in the Charter's articles 36 and more specifically 38.[110]

To achieve this, geopolitical resilience of CPKNL must be positioned firmly on the Kingdom agenda – through the *Vierlandenoverleg* - Four-Country Consultation, at Prime-Minister level, and monitored during the regular consultations between the Ministries of Justice and Defence. In an increasingly unpredictable geopolitical and regional landscape Caribbean (in-)security should be brought to the attention of the four Parliaments with a clear role for the Interparliamentary Contact Plan (IPKO). Finally, given the interests of both regional and European allies, Caribbean security dynamics must be addressed on the appropriate regional Caribbean (e.g. CARICOM, CELAC, LAC) and European security platforms (e.g. Political and Security Committee (PSC) and the Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management (CivCom) and Europol).

The main finding of this report is therefore not that Chinese influence currently poses a major threat to the CPKNL. The more immediate concern lies in the structural vulnerabilities of small and open island economies. These include dependence on a small number of external actors for essential goods, energy, digital infrastructure and security, but also exposure to cross-border financial arrangements that can be difficult to detect and investigate. Such vulnerabilities become more significant when governments have few alternatives, relevant information is dispersed across jurisdictions or specialist capacity is limited. Reducing these vulnerabilities requires diversification of import sources, stronger local capacity, safeguards and information-sharing, and better coordination within the Kingdom, with clear respect for the responsibilities of the individual countries and public entities.

[110] As an example: The Coastguard in the CPKNL is based both on article 3 and 38. See Borman 2012.