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Ki sorto di Reino/What kind of Kingdom? : Antillean and Aruban views and expectations of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Article, based on the research report *Ki sorto di Reino / What kind of Kingdom* (1998), presents the outcome of an opinion poll carried out on the 6 Dutch Caribbean islands in 1997-98. The survey covers the views and expectations of the Antilleans and Arubans with regard to the Kingdom, and in particular the Netherlands. Themes covered include the constitutional structure; residence and passport; protection of national territory, democracy, and constitutional rule; economic support; respect; and education.

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GERT OOSTINDIE & PETER VERTON

KI SORTO DI REINO / WHAT KIND OF KINGDOM?
ANTILLEAN AND ARUBAN VIEWS AND EXPECTATIONS OF
THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS

More than forty years ago the Statute of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (1954) classified Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles as autonomous partners in the Kingdom. Two decades later, in 1975, Suriname gained independence. In 1986 Aruba was given a separate status within the Kingdom that proved not to be a step on the way to independence, as the Netherlands had anticipated, but was ultimately changed to the status of an autonomous country within the Kingdom (1996).¹ Neither the Netherlands Antilles nor Aruba wants independence. In the 1990s the Netherlands accepted that the six islands with their 300,000-plus inhabitants will continue to belong to the Kingdom for an indefinite period of time.² At the same time, the Netherlands initiated a policy of close involvement in the administration of the islands. This new policy, as well as the question of mutual relations between the islands, is the subject of heated debates among politicians and administrators on both sides of the ocean.

The views of the island populations on these matters are often taken for granted in these debates, even though there is little knowledge of what these views actually are. In view of this insufficient knowledge, a large-scale opinion poll was carried out on the six islands between September 1997 and January 1998. The survey covered the views and expectations of the Antilleans and Arubans with regard to the Kingdom, and in particular the Netherlands. Attention was also paid to opinions about mutual relations between the islands. It is the first time ever that an inquiry into the question of post-colonial relations has been carried out on this scale in the Caribbean.

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In this article we first outline the regional context and the pattern of previous opinion polls in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. We then present the findings of our own investigation, and conclude with several remarks on their significance.³

REFERENDA ON CONSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS IN THE CARIBBEAN

An estimated 15 percent of the 35 million inhabitants of the Caribbean live in countries or islands that still have a direct constitutional link with the former colonizer: Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, the French *Départements d'Outre-Mer* (DOMs), a handful of British Dependent Territories (BDTs), and the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. Contrary to previous expectations, there is nothing to suggest that these remaining "not yet" independent Caribbean territories and islands will opt for constitutional independence in the near future. Generally speaking, the inhabitants of these territories enjoy a higher standard of living and better constitutional and legal guarantees than the populations of the independent countries; the democracies in these areas are relatively stable, and in most cases the residents of these non-independent islands are entitled to settle in the (former) mother country.⁴ The constitutional design of the post-colonial relationship is not the same for all territories, and so the question as to which construction is the most effective and the most appreciated by the population concerned is not a foregone conclusion.

Over the years various referenda on the constitutional status and development have been held in the Caribbean. It is striking that this has almost never been the case in colonies or territories that were preparing for a rapid independence. Official referenda have been held only in Puerto Rico, Bermuda, Aruba, and the Netherlands Antilles. Aside from these, opinion polls have been regularly conducted on a smaller scale. The outcome of these referenda and opinion polls have always been and remain the same: where the population is given the option, a vast majority choose to maintain non-independent status. However, what never emerges clearly from these inquiries is precisely what motivates people to speak out the way they do. Nor do the research results offer any insight into the question as to whether the decision to maintain a non-independent status implies that citizens are in favor of continuing the chosen constitutional structure.

In the case of the DOMs and the majority of the BDTs, decisions on constitutional status were made exclusively by politicians and civil servants, on both sides of the ocean. In practice this means a strong European voice in local government, which may provoke resentment and

political reaction, but not widely supported fundamental opposition to the status quo. In the case of the DOMs, despite a cautious decentralization in the 1980s, on balance apprehension concerning the consequences of European unification seems to have strengthened the relation of the DOMs with France (Burton & Reno 1994, Davies 1995, Hintjens 1995).

Elsewhere the local population was, however, directly consulted by means of referenda. Independence never achieved significant support. The referendum on the Netherlands Antilles (1993-94) provided clear proof of this (Table 1). Only 0.5 percent of the people of Curaçao opted for independence, and the corresponding percentage on Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius was even lower; 6.3 percent of the population on St. Maarten was in favor of independence.

Despite the fact that proponents of independence in Bermuda pressed for a referendum, opponents of independence there were in a clear majority (73.6 percent) while the turnout was low (59 percent) (Thorndike 1996).

In the meantime these referenda have hardly provided any insight into the views and expectations of the people of the islands regarding the specific form of the post-colonial relationship. This question was not addressed in the Bermuda referendum, and in the case of the Netherlands Antilles only in so far as the Antilleans could also express their views on mutual relations between the islands.

Puerto Ricans were asked for their views on their island's constitutional status on three occasions (1951, 1967, 1993). In the latter two referenda the Puerto Ricans were actually offered a choice in which qualitative differences in the relationship with the United States were made explicit. Besides independence, they were also given the option of full statehood, and of (maintaining or broadening) the status of *Estado Libre Asociado* (ELA). The latter option entailed a considerable degree of autonomy for the island. In the course of time support for the ELA status declined (from 76.5 percent in 1951 and 60.4 percent in 1967 to 48.6 percent in 1993), while the option of full incorporation as a state into the United States gained in popularity (from 39 percent in 1967 to 46.4 percent in 1993).

The problem, however, as is generally recognized by now, is that the way in which party politics colored the three options made the questions in the 1993 referendum suggestive and insufficiently clear. For this reason a new referendum is being drawn up in which questions are formulated so as to offer the voter more clarity on the pros and cons of each option. The extent to which the various elements of the three or four options (statehood, ELA status, possibly an enhanced ELA status, and independence) are viable within U.S. political relations will also be explicitly involved.

The U.S. Congress will thus have the last word on the choices to be put to the people of Puerto Rico. It is expected that the choice will in fact be between continuation of the present status, possibly in a slightly more fleshed-out form, and full incorporation into the United States. The actual choice therefore revolves around the question whether Washington's involvement will increase or remain more or less the same. This does not alter the fact that a referendum along these lines would be the first in which a more refined set of questions is put to a Caribbean people – which *could* then lead to far-reaching constitutional decisions.⁵

THE CONTINUATION OF THE TRANSATLANTIC KINGDOM

The possibility of independence for the Netherlands Antilles and the question as to whether the six (and later five) Antillean islands should stay together or not dominated the political agenda of the Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s. In the 1990s the question of independence was shelved indefinitely in consultation with the parties concerned. The internal structure of the Netherlands Antilles, however, remained a point of discussion. Aruba became a separate country within the Kingdom. The discussion on the Netherlands Antilles centers not only on the extent to which decentralization is functional, but increasingly on the option of a further fragmentation of the Antilles.

Recognition by the Dutch that they could not *force* independence upon the islands meant that a major issue was off the agenda. On the other hand, there is an increasing amount of debate, irritation, and conflict between the partners regarding authority and competence within the transatlantic Kingdom, the main cause of which is problems in the public administration of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

On the basis of article 43, section 2 of the Statute, the Kingdom is responsible for guaranteeing human rights, legal security, and good government. However, this article is formulated too vaguely to be of use as a practical tool in policy-making. Questions are also raised regarding the institutional design of the Kingdom, which includes the government of the Kingdom not being accountable to a corresponding Kingdom parliament. There is therefore much discussion about the need to “modernize” relations within the Kingdom. Another reason to revise these relations is the increasing internationalization and globalization of national policy issues. On the basis of international agreements, responsibilities that previously belonged to individual countries are now being transferred to the Kingdom in an increasing number of policy areas. In this context, updating

these relations also means searching for a new balance between the autonomy of the countries concerned and cooperation within the larger association of the Kingdom. Relations with the European Union will also increasingly have to be taken into account in policy-making.

Attempts to revise constitutional relations have not been successful to date. The Netherlands almost always takes the initiative in the name of the Kingdom. In practice, the growing number of cases in which the Kingdom acts on behalf of the individual countries entails an increasing influence of the Netherlands in matters which were previously the preserve of Antillean and/or Aruban policy. Antillean and Aruban administrators, civil servants, and representatives of interest groups regularly express resentment at the growing influence of the Netherlands on administrative affairs. Dutch standpoints on the one hand and Aruban/Antillean on the other are divergent to such a degree that it hampers successful dialogue on modernization.

So far discussions of renewal within the Kingdom have overlooked citizenries on both sides of the ocean. In fact, there is no clarity on their views and expectations; hardly any in-depth research has been carried out. This is a remarkable lacuna. After all, knowledge of and insight into those views and expectations can be regarded as a cornerstone of new relations within the Kingdom. Citizens must not only provide the basis of support for these new relations, but their views and expectations offer an opportunity to reach a mutual understanding.

The objective of the research project "Ki sorto di Reino / What kind of Kingdom?" was to contribute to harmonization and to a meaningful debate on a new-style Kingdom. The present research was carried out among the population of the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom, on the assumption that any changes in the structure of the Kingdom would in all likelihood have more real importance for Antilleans and Arubans than for the European Dutch. As a consequence we may also expect that more intensive discussions on these issues will take place in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom.

OPINION POLLS AND REFERENDA IN THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES AND ARUBA, 1944-94

Only two referenda have been held in the history of the Antilles and Aruba: the 1977 referendum on Aruba and the 1993-94 referendum on the Netherlands Antilles. In addition, various opinion polls with a reasonable scope and coverage were held between 1944 and 1994.⁶ Opinion polls

conducted in 1944 and 1946 were limited to a faction of the elite of Curaçao who expressed the desire to have more say in their own administration, without wanting to sever ties with the Netherlands.

It was not until 1971 that the next inquiry was held. In the meantime there had been serious rioting on Curaçao on May 30, 1969. This was seen both in the Antilles and in the Netherlands as a turning point in the history of the Antilles, and as a caesura in their relations with the Netherlands.⁷ A survey conducted by Verton among the readers of the Dutch-language newspaper *Amigoe*, which is circulated on the Leeward Islands, revealed that the vast majority of the respondents preferred a continuation of the constitutional association with the Netherlands. However, when given the choice between the status quo, tighter links, or looser ones, most of them opted for looser ties. The majority of respondents on Bonaire and Curaçao were in favor of the continuation of the Netherlands Antilles as a group; a majority of Arubans, however, opted for a separate status for their island.⁸

Verton's survey was the first of a modest series of scientific surveys of the association with the Netherlands and the internal relations within the Netherlands Antilles. These studies documented several patterns. The low level of enthusiasm for independence in 1971 was to be confirmed with increasing obviousness from the 1980s onwards; the desire for looser ties with the Netherlands was to become less prominent over the years. An inquiry conducted by Koot in 1974 revealed that three-fourths of the respondents on the two islands indicated that they viewed the prospect of independence with some anxiety.⁹ However, opinions on the mutual relations between the islands fluctuated considerably over time.

A consultative referendum was held on Aruba in 1977, when the Arubans were given the choice of continuing the status quo within the Netherlands Antilles or independence. The referendum was held in a very tense political climate, in which opponents of a break with the Netherlands Antilles called for a boycott. With a turnout of 70 percent, 82 percent opted for independence as against a mere 4 percent for continuation of the status quo. This result was generally interpreted as a sign of the Aruban desire to become separate from the Netherlands Antilles rather than of a desire for full independence.

Research by Ten Napel and Verton in 1985 confirmed that the option of independence was growing less popular on Curaçao; a large majority of Arubans still opted for a separate position for their island, but they were certainly not in favor of independence from the Netherlands.¹⁰ An inquiry by Koot, Tempel-Schoorl, and Marcha in 1988 confirmed once again the low level of support for independence. In the meantime Aruba had achieved its separate status. Clear majorities on four of the five remaining

islands were in favor of the Netherlands Antilles staying together; St. Maarten was the only exception.¹¹ A few months later opinions on relations with the Netherlands proved to have remained constant, although in terms of the internal structure a shift had occurred in favor of the five-member Antilles.¹²

An inquiry held on Curaçao in April 1993 indicated that 6 percent of the respondents were in favor of independence while 86 percent were opposed to it.¹³ The results of the referendum held in November 1993 suggest even less support for independence (Table 1). With the exception of St. Maarten, the option of independence appeared to have been shelved completely; with the exception of a small minority on Curaçao, the status of province seemed to have virtually no backing either. The support for maintaining a five-island Antilles was still considerable, while support for a separate status was much lower than previous inquiries and the leading political parties had suggested.

One methodological problem raised by these results, however, was the fact that the voters only had one choice with which not only to state their view on a favored option but also to indicate a priority in replies that were not mutually exclusive. Theoretically, the choice of the overwhelming majority in favor of the status quo could be combined with both province and independence. The same theoretical possibility was open for the combination of a separate status with a province. This is the reason why the questions on the relationship with the Netherlands were kept separate from those on mutual relations between the islands in the present survey.

Table 1. Results of Referendum Held in the Netherlands Antilles in 1993-94 (in %)

	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Continuation of Netherlands Antilles	89.7	73.6	86.3	90.6	59.4
Separate status	8.9	17.9	9.6	2.5	33.2
Province	1.3	7.7	3.6	2.5	1.1
Independence	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.0	6.3

KINGDOM AND CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE NETHERLANDS ANTILLES

Before presenting the main findings of the survey, we should point out that virtually no distinction was made in the survey between the Kingdom and the Netherlands. Of course, this is not correct in formal terms; after all, the Kingdom consists of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles, and

Aruba. The decision to narrow things down was made on the basis of test interviews that confirmed the supposition that Antilleans and Arubans rarely distinguish between the Kingdom and the Netherlands. The use of the term "Kingdom" in the questionnaire would therefore only have created unnecessary confusion. In interpreting the results, the question of the distinction between Antillean and Aruban views and expectations with regard to "the Netherlands" and with regard to the relationship with the Kingdom in a general sense was of course taken into account.

Significant differences between the islands are pointed out where necessary in the following presentation of the general results. In most cases the figures have been rounded off; for more detailed statistics and analyses we refer to the complete publication (Oostindie & Verton 1998).

The first question concerns the preferences regarding the future of the five islands of the Netherlands Antilles, the second the desired relationship with the Netherlands (of course, the first question was not put to the Aruban respondents). The Antillean responses to these very general questions reveal a change of opinion compared with the results of the 1993-94 referendum. However, it should be noted that the refinement of the questions in the present survey means that the results are not directly comparable with those of the referendum. Nonetheless, the answers to the first question indicate that support for the present construction of the five islands of the Antilles has lost some ground to the option in favor of a separate status. Still, a large majority on four of the five Antillean islands are still for maintaining the association of the five islands. This is even the case on Curaçao where there is a good deal of support for a separate status. The results on St. Maarten, however, indicate a dramatic deviation from this pattern: the majority of the respondents are now in favor of a separate status (Table 2). This picture was confirmed by a control question that was later administered. The option of a separate status for their island is rejected by the vast majority of Antilleans with the exception of St. Maarten; there were substantially more supporters on Curaçao than on the other islands.

Table 2. Preferences Regarding Status of Island (in %)

	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Continuation of Netherlands Antilles	83.0	66.6	82.5	78.8	40.9
Separate status	14.9	29.3	9.5	17.2	47.6
Don't know / No answer	2.1	4.0	7.9	4.0	11.5

Table 3. Preferences with Respect to the Relation with the Netherlands (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Independence	5.2	1.8	6.6	0.0	1.5	15.3
Status quo	65.2	36.6	50.4	39.7	25.8	40.9
Closer ties	26.8	59.9	40.9	58.2	72.2	34.5
Don't know /	2.8	1.6	2.1	2.1	0.5	9.3
No answer						

When asked about the preferred relationship with the Netherlands, the preferences vary considerably from one island to another (Table 3). The Arubans are the most satisfied with the present status of their island, which acquired a separate status in 1986 and the permanent status of a country within the Kingdom in 1996. Half of the people of Curaçao are also in favor of existing relations with the Netherlands. Opinions are more divided on St. Maarten. The majority of the population of the three smallest islands¹⁴ opted for closer ties with the Netherlands; this option was by far the least popular on Aruba. Independence received little backing although the figures for Curaçao and especially for St. Maarten were appreciably higher than the results of the 1993-94 referendum would lead one to expect. This option was equally unpopular on Aruba. One respondent commented in this connection: "Si nos mester di ayudo, Hulanda tey. Ku independencia ken lo yuda nos?" (If we need help, the Netherlands is there. Who will help us if we are independent?).

The small group of supporters of constitutional independence mainly adduce arguments like "we must learn to stand on our own," indicating that the present situation is not running smoothly, and resentment over Dutch involvement ("Hulanda kier tin mucha di bisa" – The Netherlands wants too much of a say). On Bonaire and St. Maarten the choice of some respondents for "independence" seems to have actually meant independence from Curaçao, not the Netherlands.

Those in favor of maintaining the status quo are content with present relations and with Dutch financial aid, which provides security that many consider essential. "Pa nos haña tur sorto di yudansa. Kòrsou no para riba su mes. Falta hopi." (So that we can get all kinds of help. Curaçao cannot stand on its own. There is a shortage of everything.) They also brought up arguments relating to education.

Proponents of closer ties with the Netherlands emphasize factors such as security, more financial aid, the hope of progress, and better government. On Aruba a relatively large number of respondents mention more control for their own government, the achievement of progress, and the endeavor to obtain an equal partnership with the Netherlands. The smaller

islands once again refer to what they experience as domination by Curaçao. "Nos no tin kompania di Antia mes; pa Ulanda para na nos fabor" (The Antilles are no use to us; let the Netherlands stand up for us), was how one respondent put it. Another, on the Windward Islands, remarked: "We should deal directly with Holland, instead of doing everything through Curaçao."

Later in the questionnaire the respondents were explicitly asked about the possibility of a status as an overseas province, comparable to that of the French DOMs. Only the respondents on St. Eustatius are in favor of this option, while it enjoys least popularity on Aruba (Table 4). Apparently the Arubans considered that as an autonomous country within the Kingdom the island has attained the ideal constitutional situation. It should be noted that a preference for "closer ties" with the Netherlands is not the same as a preference for the status of an overseas province. The respondents who had indicated that they wanted closer ties with the Netherlands, but who now indicated that they were not opting for the status of a province, were asked exactly what they understood by closer ties. Once again there were high scores for arguments such as financial and economic aid and the expectation that the Netherlands would do more for the islands. In the words of one resident of St. Eustatius: "From the time I was born, I always knew that Holland was taking care of us for we are so small. It did a good job, so I want to be and stay close."

Arubans in particular indicated that by "closer ties" they meant a situation of mutual trust that should strengthen relations. Many respondents stated that they were in favor of stronger relations and more Dutch aid, but that they still wanted the government of their country to be in their own hands. Opponents were afraid that the clock would be turned back.

Table 4. Opinion on Province Status (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Positive	11.6	37.4	24.4	40.2	54.5	19.0
Negative	78.8	59.7	68.4	49.2	40.4	68.6
Don't know /	9.6	2.9	7.2	10.6	5.1	12.4
No answer						

Questions put later in the questionnaire indicated further nuances as well as mild contradictions, but without altering the general picture. An overwhelming majority consider that the islands cannot manage by themselves. This is the view of 78 percent of the respondents on Aruba, of 81 percent on Curaçao, and of even higher percentages on the other islands; only St. Maarten has a lower percentage (58 percent). The question as to what

people think of the idea of direct, separate ties between the Netherlands and each of the islands met with a strong positive response by Antilleans, and also by Arubans (53 percent), who already are in this position. The majority in favor is smaller on St. Maarten and Curaçao (45 percent and 46 percent respectively), but is still appreciably larger than the group of opponents (7 percent and 17 percent respectively).

The contrast with the earlier questions on separate status, which is preferred by a minority of the Antilleans with the exception of the people of St. Maarten, is striking (Table 2). The same is true of the fairly general objections to province status that were raised earlier (Table 4). Perhaps the explicit choice of separate status and certainly province status is psychologically one step too far. Be that as it may, a significant proportion of the Antillean respondents apparently believe that a construction in which the Netherlands maintains direct relations with each of the islands could still be combined with the continuation of the association of five islands.

Responses to a later question as to whether the Netherlands interferes too much in the running of their country confirm the picture of a fairly high degree of satisfaction on the one hand, and with strong reservations on the other (Table 5). A majority of the Antilleans and Arubans answered that the Netherlands does not interfere too much in the running of their country. Substantial minorities on the Leeward Islands and St. Maarten take a very different view.

Table 5. Is the Netherlands Too Much Involved in Running Our Country? (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Yes	40.9	38.0	37.6	12.7	18.7	40.4
No	48.7	52.4	50.7	73.5	75.8	47.9
Don't know /	10.3	9.7	11.7	13.8	5.6	11.7
No answer						

RESIDENCE AND PASSPORT

Questions concerning free access to the Netherlands reveal that this right has a high priority for four-fifths of the respondents, and the percentage is even higher (86 to 93 percent) in response to the question as to whether this right should be maintained in the future as well. Only one-tenth of the respondents consider these to be matters of secondary importance. Only on St. Maarten is somewhat less importance attached to them (69 and 81 percent respectively).

A quarter of the respondents show some understanding of the desire

often expressed these days in the Netherlands, which will indeed lead to full legislation, to attach conditions to the right of Antillean and Aruban migrants, especially those with few prospects, to reside in the Netherlands. All the same, a considerable majority (66 to 76 percent) on all the islands reject the possibility of the Netherlands refusing access to immigrants with a poor command of the Dutch language and low levels of schooling or professional training and prospects. A majority (56 to 70 percent) oppose the idea that Antillean and Aruban migrants should have to pass a Dutch-language examination before settling in the Netherlands, although the group in favor is remarkably large (30 to 34 percent, as high as 43 percent on Curaçao). It is striking that most respondents on the five islands (68 to 90 percent) oppose current legislation excluding the right of metropolitan Dutch citizens without a work permit to reside in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom. This percentage is only significantly lower on St. Maarten (51 percent).

The answers to questions concerning the preferred passport are in line with the preceding ones. The number of respondents who consider a Dutch passport unimportant is very small (1 to 2 percent, 4 percent on St. Maarten), although the responses to the following question show that, depending on the island, between 10 and 20 percent of the Antilleans and 23 percent of the Arubans would still opt for an Antillean or Aruban passport instead of a Dutch one. Given a free choice, the overwhelming majority of the respondents (83 to 93 percent) opt for a Dutch passport. Once again the percentage is lower among Arubans (80 percent) and on St. Maarten (68 percent). The possibility of a U.S. passport was mentioned relatively often on Curaçao (7 percent) and St. Maarten (10 percent). A relatively high proportion (12 percent) of the respondents on St. Maarten would prefer a "different" passport, especially a French or English one.

PROTECTION OF NATIONAL TERRITORY, DEMOCRACY, AND CONSTITUTIONAL RULE

The vast majority of Antilleans and Arubans (90 to 96 percent) find it important that the Netherlands protect their country against other countries. A majority (61 to 64 percent) on Curaçao, Saba, and St. Eustatius would be afraid of domination by another country should their country become independent. The percentages on Aruba and Bonaire are considerably higher (81 and 80 percent respectively), while the percentage on St. Maarten is much lower (48 percent).

Majorities feel that Dutch involvement in protecting territorial integrity

and fighting international crime is important (76 to 97 percent), though opposition is somewhat higher on the two largest islands, Curaçao (10 percent) and especially Aruba (17 percent), where a Kingdom coastal guard has indeed been operational these last years. Only a small percentage of the respondents (6 to 16 percent) consider their own country able to protect itself against international crime. The vast majority (83 to 92 percent) believe that Dutch assistance on this point is indispensable.

The Dutch contribution to the functioning of justice is also generally appreciated. Between 83 and 91 percent of the respondents on all five islands indicate that it is important that the Netherlands provide assistance in this area. The score on St. Maarten (77 percent) is somewhat lower and thus once again divergent. The same is true for the following question concerning the deployment of Dutch marines on one's own island to guard prisoners. It is only on St. Maarten that the opponents were in the majority (49 percent), while such deployment receives wide support on Aruba (72 percent) and Curaçao (74 percent), where there have been serious problems in the local prisons over the past years. The fact that this percentage is lower on the smaller islands (54 to 68 percent) is probably connected with the fact that there are no prisons there. The possibility of deploying Dutch police is viewed positively on Curaçao (53 percent), Aruba (58 percent), St. Maarten (59 percent) and above all St. Eustatius (73 percent) and Saba (90 percent). Bonaire is the only island where a majority of respondents (58 percent) oppose this.

With the exception of St. Maarten (47 percent), a sizeable majority on all the Antillean islands (59 to 69 percent) feel that local magistrates need not all be of Antillean origin. On Aruba 53 percent of the respondents do not think that all the magistrates must be Arubans. Whether Dutch deployment in the struggle against crime should increase evoked varied responses, even though there was a majority in favor on all islands. The lowest support is registered on Aruba, Bonaire, and St. Maarten (48 to 52 percent), the greatest support on the smaller Windward Islands (71 to 73 percent), with Curaçao occupying an intermediate position (56 percent).

Responses to questions on the functioning of democracy and constitutional rule suggest that, on the one hand, most Antilleans and Arubans consider assistance by the Netherlands indispensable. On the other hand, many at times take exception to the attitude of the Dutch. More than two-thirds of the respondents on five islands think that during the next twenty years the Netherlands will be necessary to guarantee democracy and human rights. Once again St. Maarten differs: only one-third of the respondents there subscribe to this view, while almost half of them believe that the Netherlands is not necessary in this respect. A sizeable majority of

Antilleans and Arubans (71 percent on St. Maarten, 85 to 92 percent on the other islands) felt that the Netherlands should continue to guarantee constitutional rule and democracy in their country.

ECONOMIC SUPPORT

It is obvious that Antilleans and Arubans consider Dutch economic support and cooperation indispensable. Approximately 95 percent of the population think that the Netherlands should continue to offer financial support, while a similar percentage believes that the islands would be worse off without Dutch development aid. These percentages are somewhat lower for economically prosperous Aruba (92 and 89 percent) and above all for St. Maarten (82 and 80 percent). A large majority (61 to 83 percent) on four of the five Antillean islands think that it would be beneficial if more Dutch companies were to locate on the islands. This percentage is lower on Aruba (51 percent), while a majority on St. Maarten (58 percent) answered this question in the negative.

Opinions vary as to whether the Netherlands is adequately promoting the economic interests of the Antilles and Aruba at the moment. This question was most frequently answered in the affirmative on Aruba (44 percent) and Saba (47 percent), but the majority on the other islands answered in the negative (44 to 52 percent, as high as 70 percent on St. Maarten). The number of respondents who were unable to answer this question is remarkably high (13 to 23 percent). A large majority on the Leeward Antilles and Aruba think that the Netherlands should supervise the financial policy of their administrations. Here too this opinion is shared by a strikingly lower number of residents on Aruba (61 percent), Saba (55 percent), and St. Eustatius (62 percent), while a diametrically opposed standpoint is taken on St. Maarten (68 percent rejected such supervision).

OVERALL OPINION, RESPECT, ACCEPTANCE

A considerable majority view the present situation in a relatively favorable light. Among the alternatives, the option of closer ties with the Netherlands scores higher than independence. All the same, there are clear reservations about Dutch attitudes and positions (Tables 6 to 9). The largest group of respondents (45 to 76 percent) regard Dutch involvement in the affairs of their country as having both advantages and disadvantages (Table 6). Only on St. Eustatius is this involvement viewed in a predomi-

nantly positive light. However, the percentage of those who voiced a clear-cut negative opinion was small everywhere.

Table 6. Overall Opinion on Dutch Involvement (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Positive	23.8	42.9	35.9	36.5	51.0	10.6
Neutral	67.2	48.8	55.4	50.8	44.9	75.6
Negative	5.2	5.0	3.1	2.1	2.5	7.4
Don't know / No answer	3.8	3.7	5.5	10.6	1.5	6.3

The question as to whether the Netherlands show Antilleans and Arubans sufficient respect evoked a very wide range of responses. The majority on Saba and St. Eustatius answered in the affirmative, opinions are divided on Bonaire and Curaçao, and the majority of the respondents on St. Maarten and Aruba feel that the Netherlands do not show them enough respect (Table 7). A relatively large number of respondents were unable to answer this question. A similar pattern of division and doubt emerges from the answers to the question whether the Netherlands sufficiently accepts that Antilleans and Arubans are "different," although the answers to this question were more often in the negative than in the affirmative on every island (Table 8). Once again St. Maarten is the most critical.

Table 7. Opinion on Dutch Respect (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Sufficient	41.1	45.3	42.8	63.0	50.5	21.4
Insufficient	49.5	43.7	44.2	23.8	39.4	62.3
Don't know / No answer	9.4	11.0	13.0	13.2	10.1	16.3

Table 8. Opinion on Degree of Dutch Acceptance of Difference (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Sufficient	37.5	36.9	39.7	36.0	42.9	24.4
Insufficient	49.8	47.6	43.4	48.7	45.5	63.9
Don't know / No answer	12.7	15.4	16.9	15.3	11.6	11.7

The question as to whether Dutch administrators and politicians have a sufficient general understanding of the local culture elicited similar hesitations (Table 9). The majority of the respondents replied in the negative. This feeling is strongest on St. Maarten, followed by the small English-

speaking islands – which is all the more remarkable since the latter are generally very positive on relations with the Kingdom. Perhaps this is due to the awareness that Saba and St. Eustatius are very far removed from the world of the Dutch.

Table 9. Opinion on Dutch Understanding of the Local Culture (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Sufficient	26.5	25.9	29.9	18.5	15.7	6.5
Insufficient	59.6	55.8	53.4	70.4	79.3	87.1
Don't know /	13.9	18.3	16.6	11.1	5.1	6.3
No answer						

CONFIDENCE IN OWN GOVERNMENT, AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NETHERLANDS

Probably reflecting their clear preference for closer ties between their country and the Netherlands, the majority of respondents do not have a very good impression of the ability of their politicians and administrators (Table 10), and only a small minority claim to have a lot of confidence in them (Table 11). These opinions are somewhat less negative on Aruba and St. Maarten. It is therefore hardly surprising that only a very small minority of the respondents (2 to 9 percent) feel that independence would help their island to get ahead; this percentage is higher on St. Maarten (23 percent).

Table 10. Opinion on the Ability of Antillean/Aruban Politicians (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
Positive	23.2	22.5	14.2	26.5	19.7	17.4
Neutral	58.8	32.7	46.7	36.5	36.4	58.9
Negative	15.2	42.47	36.7	30.2	42.4	20.3
Don't know /	2.8	2.4	2.4	6.9	1.5	3.4
No answer						

Table 11. Confidence in Antillean/Aruban Politicians (in %)

	Aruba	Bonaire	Curaçao	Saba	St. Eustatius	St. Maarten
A lot	16.0	10.2	6.1	27.0	18.2	18.5
Little /some	63.9	61.3	57.0	53.4	44.9	59.1
None	15.5	25.7	33.2	11.1	35.9	15.8
Don't know /	4.5	2.9	3.6	8.5	1.0	6.5
No answer						

Should foreigners perhaps be recruited for certain managerial functions? St. Eustatius is the only island where a majority consider this necessary. There is a clear majority against it on the other islands, particularly on Aruba (77 percent). When “foreigners” is replaced by “Dutch,” the number of supporters rose considerably. The number of supporters and opponents on Bonaire and Curaçao is more or less balanced; supporters form a large majority on the two small Windward Islands; only Aruba (64 percent) and St. Maarten (56 percent) have a large majority of opponents.

EDUCATION

It has been stated repeatedly in various quarters on all islands during the last years that education is a major problem. The number of those who repeat grades or drop out is high, and the level of education is often considered inadequate. The current problem in the Netherlands of uneducated and thus disadvantaged migrants from Curaçao is attributed, among other causes, to the inadequacy of the educational system on the island. Education has come under fire on the other islands as well.

Should the Netherlands intervene in this issue? A large majority, varying from 61 percent on St. Maarten to 86 percent on St. Eustatius, find that the Netherlands should have some say in education, even though, according to the Statute, it is a matter for the autonomous country alone. The question of the deployment of Dutch teachers produced a less clear picture. While the majority of respondents on Curaçao, Saba, and St. Eustatius are in favor (41, 48, and 46 percent respectively), the majority on Bonaire, St. Maarten, and Aruba think just the opposite (50, 38, and 41 percent respectively).

In answer to the hotly debated issue of the language(s) in which primary education should be taught, by far the largest number of respondents choose Dutch (91 to 94 percent), with the exception of St. Maarten and St. Eustatius, where English is the preferred language. Papiamentu is also mentioned on the Leeward Islands (73 percent on Aruba, 63 percent on Bonaire, 67 percent on Curaçao), while there is a greater preference for English on the Windward Islands. Spanish does not enjoy much popularity in the Leeward Islands (15 to 24 percent). When the respondents were asked to choose only one language, two-thirds on the Leeward Islands chose Dutch and one-quarter Papiamentu. On Saba 61 percent chose English and 38 percent Dutch. The corresponding percentages on St. Maarten (where many Curaçaoans live) are 50 and 47 percent. The fact that St. Eustatius presents almost the reverse situation is no doubt

linked to the fact that education there, unlike on Saba and St. Maarten, is still in Dutch.

The question as to whether Dutch is important for secondary education is answered in the affirmative by an overwhelming majority (91 to 96 percent); the percentages are lower on St. Maarten and Saba (70 and 73 percent respectively), where English as a medium predominates. Once again, an overwhelming majority (87 to 98 percent) consider it important that their children be able to obtain grants from the Netherlands.

ARUBA AND THE SEPARATE STATUS, COOPERATION BETWEEN ARUBA AND THE ANTILLES AND IN THE KINGDOM

The secession of Aruba from the Netherlands Antilles became a reality in 1986. The island was given a separate status on the condition of full independence ten years later. Eventually, however, to the great satisfaction of the Arubans, the separate status was changed to the status of an autonomous country within the Kingdom in 1996. The vast majority of Arubans (86 percent) believe that this secession has been beneficial for their island. On four of the five other islands, the view that the separate status has been good for Aruba is much less common (44 to 54 percent). St. Maarten, where a comparable status is rather popular at the moment, occupies an intermediate position (66 percent). A relatively large number of respondents did not answer this question.

The question as to whether the secession of Aruba has been beneficial to the remaining five islands was most often answered in the negative. The percentage of those responding negatively is lowest on St. Maarten and Curaçao (42 and 49 percent), and somewhat higher on the smaller islands, with Bonaire scoring the highest (68 percent). Fifty-five percent of the Arubans believe that the secession of their island has been harmful to the Netherlands Antilles. Incidentally, many respondents did not answer this question (20 to 39 percent). The possibility of a return of Aruba to the Netherlands Antilles is generally opposed by Arubans (92 percent).¹⁵

The vast majority of respondents (91 to 96 percent) are in agreement on the importance of closer cooperation between Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles in such domains as health care, education, and the fight against crime. A majority are also in favor of a parliament in which delegates from the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles, and Aruba make joint decisions on matters of common concern. The percentage is significantly lower on Aruba (61 percent) than on the Antilles (71 to 87 percent).

ROYAL FAMILY, LANGUAGE AND CULTURE, AFFINITY

The question of the extent to which the Dutch Royal Family is a symbol of the Kingdom remains open. Be that as it may, most of the respondents think that their fellow citizens like the Queen. Strikingly, this percentage is highest on the small Windward Islands (86 to 89 percent) and lowest on Bonaire and St. Maarten (62 percent) and Curaçao (56 percent), where in addition the proportion of those who did not respond to this question was high (21 to 26 percent). Aruba occupies an intermediate position (72 percent).

Interest in the Dutch language is remarkably high (83 to 94 percent). The responses to the question on interest in Dutch culture, however, are much more mixed. Saba and St. Eustatius show the strongest orientation toward the Netherlands (61 and 65 percent). Opinions are more or less equally divided on Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao. On St. Maarten a larger number of respondents claims not to be interested in Dutch culture (50 percent) than those who are (42 percent).

Very few Dutch programs are broadcast on Antillean and Aruban television at the moment. A large majority believe that more Dutch programs should be aired. The English-language islands Saba and St. Eustatius (75 and 86 percent) score significantly higher than the three Leewards (68 to 71 percent) and St. Maarten (56 percent). Only a small minority (12 to 14 percent) view the Dutch language and culture as a threat to their own culture. All the same, there is some apprehension here and there: "I would not like for us to lose our heritage."

A strikingly high number of respondents stated that their own young people should help the Netherlands in the event of war. The percentages on St. Maarten (70 percent) and Aruba (75 percent) are lower than elsewhere (83 to 87 percent). Half of the respondents on St. Maarten feel an affinity with the Netherlands, but a significant percentage (46 percent) do not. More than three-fourths of all the other respondents said that they feel an affinity with the Netherlands. This sentiment is not as strong on Curaçao and Aruba as on the smaller islands.

Substantial minorities (25 to 31 percent), and on St. Maarten as many as half of the respondents, feel that the Netherlands only wants to keep their country in the Kingdom out of self-interest. This percentage is appreciably lower on Saba (14 percent). A significantly large number of respondents did not answer this question (12 to 21 percent). One-fourth of the people of Bonaire, Curaçao, and St. Eustatius feel that the Netherlands would prefer to drop the islands as soon as possible. This percentage is lower on Saba and St. Maarten (15 and 21 percent) and higher on Aruba (29 per-

cent), while here too a large number of respondents did not answer (11 to 20 percent).

ARGUMENTS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE

Each respondent was asked to select the five most important statements from a list of fifteen on the importance of the Netherlands for the Antilles or Aruba, and then to arrange them in order of importance. Relatively clear patterns emerge from this part of the questionnaire. The Dutch passport is the most important element on every island, followed by affordable facilities to study in the Netherlands, the right to settle in the Netherlands and the European Union, Dutch economic aid, and military protection. On Aruba and St. Eustatius the argument that the Netherlands offers protection against international crime was included, and surprisingly, on St. Eustatius also the claim that the Netherlands helps them to retain their own culture.

It is striking that three of the five most popular arguments (passport, residence rights, and affordable study facilities) are directly connected with the possibility of settling in the Netherlands. It should be noted, however, that the Dutch passport probably stands for a broader notion of security. The remaining principal arguments concern economic and military protection, which on Aruba and St. Eustatius also include protection against international crime.

Arguments associated with Dutch safeguarding of good governance, human rights, and public order were often mentioned, but these are apparently are no top priorities. No priority is attached to immaterial arguments such as the link with the Dutch Royal Family and contact with the Dutch language and culture, even though the majority of the respondents had already stated that they viewed these aspects in a positive light.

ARUBA

A comparison of the results from the six islands reveals that they are in agreement on a number of essentials, but that there are differences of emphasis – sometimes remarkable ones – on each island.

Aruba is distinguished by greater self-confidence and a corresponding, though not exaggerated measure of independence with regard to the Netherlands. The great majority of Arubans are satisfied with the present relationship with the Netherlands and are significantly less often in favor of closer ties. All the same, the vast majority argue that “Aruba is much too

small to be independent" ("Aruba ta mucho chikito pa ta zelfstandig"). The percentage of those who believe that independence is possible, however, is relatively high (one-fifth).

While the Arubans do not differ essentially from the Antilleans on their view of the importance of a Dutch passport and the right to reside in the Netherlands, they are somewhat less supportive of the right of Dutch citizens without a work permit to settle on their island and opt somewhat more often for their own passport over a Dutch one. The prospect of a stronger Dutch economic presence was opposed quite often on the flourishing island of Aruba. Positive answers were less frequently given to the questions as to whether Dutch economic support is necessary and valuable, whether the Netherlands should supervise financial policy, and whether more Dutch companies should be brought in, as well as the question as to whether more foreigners, and specifically Dutch citizens, should be recruited for managerial positions. Incidentally, that a large number of Arubans at the same time believe that the Netherlands represents the economic interests of their country well may be more a reflection of the fact that the island economy is prospering rather than of the actual Dutch contribution to that prosperity.

In the area of education too, the Arubans have more reservations about increased Dutch involvement. The Arubans attach more importance to Dutch protection against other powers (Venezuela) and especially against international crime, but they have very serious reservations about granting the Netherlands too much scope in this area. A small but relatively significant minority do not consider it necessary whether or not the Netherlands should guard the coast and believe that Aruba is capable of defending itself against international crime. The scepticism regarding the deployment of more Dutch police and magistrates is higher here than elsewhere, with the exception of St. Maarten.

The general opinion on Dutch involvement in the country is more neutral on Aruba than elsewhere. While it is true that the number of respondents who answered this question positively was lower than elsewhere, this is compensated to some extent by the category that passed a neutral opinion on Dutch involvement. Obviously, and not without reason, many Arubans regard the role of the Netherlands as less crucial than the majority of Antilleans do. Perhaps partly because of the relative success of their young country and probably stimulated by recent tension between the Netherlands and Aruba on the functioning of democracy and administration of justice on the island, a striking number of Arubans think that the Netherlands does not display enough respect and does not fully accept that Arubans are different from metropolitan Dutch citizens.

It is not surprising that the Arubans express a somewhat more positive, or at least more neutral view of the capability of their own administrators than on most of the Antillean islands. This does not alter the fact that confidence in their own politicians and administrators is not very high. As one respondent even stated: "Administratief Aruba ta un chaos, pesey tin tambe mal gobernashon pasobra ningun hende no sa kiko ta kiko." (In administrative terms Aruba is a chaos, it is poorly governed, and no one knows what is going on.) This limited confidence does not, however, lead to substantial support for the option of the status of province. The present status of an independent country within the Kingdom is viewed positively by an overwhelming majority. A good 50 percent of the respondents, incidentally, believe that the secession of their island has been detrimental to the rest of the Antilles.

Like the Antilleans, almost all of the Aruban respondents opt for more cooperation between Aruba and the Antilles; however, interest in a parliament of the Kingdom is clearly lower. As concerns themes like attachment to the Queen, interest in the Dutch language and culture, the deployment of their own citizens in the event of a war in the Netherlands, and affinity with the Netherlands, the opinion of the Arubans is predominantly positive, yet also somewhat more reserved than elsewhere. Arubans are also somewhat more suspicious of Dutch intentions in the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom.

ST. MAARTEN

The patterns that emerge from the survey on the five Antillean islands indicate a clear-cut distinction between St. Maarten and the other four islands. St. Maarten seems to be more outspoken than Aruba in a number of respects. A separate status is viewed in a predominantly positive light on St. Maarten ("I want to get rid of Curaçao and deal directly with Holland"), and the islanders are also somewhat less dismissive of the option of independence. At the same time confidence in their own government is stronger and the attitude towards the Netherlands is noticeably more critical than elsewhere.

Matters such as the Dutch passport and the right to reside in the Netherlands are regarded positively on St. Maarten, though to a lesser extent than elsewhere. The people of St. Maarten take a more negative view of the right of Dutch citizens to reside there. They also feel that Dutch protection against foreign aggression is necessary, although they are clearly less afraid of domination by other countries. Dutch involvement in com-

batting crime is widely supported, although the people of St. Maarten are more ambivalent than elsewhere regarding its concrete implementation in the form of deployment of Dutch magistrates, marines, and police.

St. Maarten is the only island where those who think that democracy would remain intact for the next twenty years without Dutch involvement outnumbers the sceptics, even though at the same time a large majority think that the Netherlands should continue to safeguard constitutional rule and democracy. A relatively large number of people believe that the Netherlands interferes too much in local administration and that the Dutch have an insufficient understanding of the local situation. The large majority who considers continuation of economic aid necessary is slightly smaller here than elsewhere. This is the only island where a large majority oppose the setting-up of more Dutch companies, believe that the Netherlands does not represent the island's interests adequately, and claim that Dutch supervision of financial policy is unnecessary.

St. Maarten islanders are the least enthusiastic about Dutch involvement. More so than the other islands, they feel that the Netherlands does not show enough respect and does not properly accept that other people are different. Consonant with these opinions, the view taken of the island's own administrators is less negative, more of the respondents associate independence with progress, and their confidence in their own potential is not as low as elsewhere. The province option scores correspondingly low, and so does the recruitment of foreign or specifically Dutch executives for managerial functions. In the areas of education, language, culture, and affinity, the people of St. Maarten give evidence of having maintained more distance from the Netherlands than the other respondents. Their positive assessment of Aruba's separate status reflects their own wishes and expectations regarding the achievement of a comparable status. It also reveals a frequently expressed irritation at Curaçao, which is often accused of dominating the Antilles to the detriment of St. Maarten. One respondent captured this resentment in a nutshell, sighing "Pourier [the Antillean prime minister] takin' all the money."

BONAIRE

The results of the other four islands suggest, in comparison to St. Maarten and Aruba, an even stronger sense of dependency and less confidence in their own strength and their own administrators. The respondents from the different islands are largely in agreement on the significance of matters such as the passport, the right to reside in the Netherlands and the right

of Dutch citizens to reside in the Dutch Caribbean, the importance of economic aid and Dutch guarantees for defense, safeguarding democracy, and constitutional rule. These issues will be dealt with in the following remarks where significant differences can be indicated. With respect to matters such as affinity with the Netherlands, the results are somewhat divergent.

Bonaire presents a picture of cautious conservatism, but also a certain ambivalence toward the Netherlands. Most of the people of Bonaire would prefer to see the five islands of the Antilles stay together, while at the same time desiring closer ties with the Netherlands. Their views on an overseas province vary widely, though a majority are against it; at the same time, however, a large majority opt for direct links with the Netherlands. Almost no one expects independence to entail progress. A relatively large number of Bonaireans, if given a free choice, would opt for an Antillean passport; yet they only make up one-tenth. A very large majority would welcome more cooperation between the Antilles and Aruba as well as the establishment of a parliament of the Kingdom.

Like the Arubans, the people of Bonaire are clearly more apprehensive of domination by other countries (Venezuela) than the other Antilleans. While they are strongly in favor of Dutch support in combatting crime and in maintaining constitutional rule, in contrast to other Antilleans a majority object to the direct deployment of Dutch police. More than half of the respondents do not think that the Netherlands interferes excessively in administrative matters. On the other hand, however, in the eyes of a slightly larger group Dutch administrators and politicians do not have sufficient understanding of their culture. Opinions are sharply divided on the questions concerning the extent of Dutch respect and Dutch acceptance of their own identity. The importance of Dutch support for the economy was unanimously confirmed, and Dutch companies and Dutch supervision of financial policy would be welcomed. Half of the respondents think that the Netherlands does not represent the economic interests of the island adequately. Despite this, the general opinion on Dutch involvement is positive.

The people of Bonaire do not have much confidence in their own politicians and administrators. Nevertheless, they were not generally in favor of recruiting foreigners for managerial positions; only if Dutch citizens were brought in to do the job would a small majority be in favor. Although it is felt that the Netherlands should have a say in education, and Dutch is considered the most important language in schools, half of the people of Bonaire – a higher percentage than anywhere else – find that fewer Dutch teachers should be employed. Such matters as sympathy for the Dutch

Queen, affinity with the Netherlands, interest in the Dutch language, and support for the Netherlands in the event of war are broadly endorsed; but opinions are divided with respect to interest in Dutch culture.

CURAÇAO

The results for Curaçao, the largest island, mostly coincide with those for Bonaire. However, it is undeniable that nowhere else is the opinion of the competence of the country's own politicians and administrators and the confidence that they inspire so low. It is striking that, all the same, the minority on Curaçao who believe that independence would spell progress is not negligible. A province status and direct ties between each island and the Netherlands are relatively unpopular. A separate status appeals to almost one-third of the respondents; the only island with a higher percentage is St. Maarten. The option of independence is slightly less unpopular than is usually supposed.

A majority still regret the secession of Aruba. Given a free choice of passport, the second choice on Curaçao is not an Antillean but a U.S. passport. In comparison to Bonaire, fear of foreign domination is somewhat less, while opposition to Dutch involvement in the coastal guard, the importance attached to Dutch assistance in courts of justice, and the confidence that the island can defend itself against international crime are slightly higher; the findings on these counts are closer to those of Aruba. Support for the employment of Dutch officials in combatting crime is relatively strong; probably this is connected with the fact that the current crime rate on the island is high and is the subject of vigorous debate.

From an economic and administrative perspective too, Dutch presence is apparently considered to be important and of an acceptable scale. Public opinion is divided on the question as to whether to hire more Dutch teachers. In many respects the results for Curaçao resemble those for Bonaire, though Bonaire is somewhat more positively inclined toward the Dutch Queen and in a general sense expresses a somewhat stronger feeling of affinity with the Netherlands.

SABA AND ST. EUSTATIUS

In view of their size, the two smallest Windward Islands, Saba and St. Eustatius, are probably the most vulnerable and dependent islands. This is reflected in the great importance that they attach to their links with the

option of closer and direct links with the Netherlands receives great backing. On St. Eustatius there is even a majority in favor of province status. On the other hand, there is very strong support for the continuation of the association of the five Antillean islands.

St. Eustatius in particular scores very high on all questions concerning the importance of the Netherlands for its own society. Both islands are English-speaking, primarily oriented towards St. Maarten, the immediate Anglophone Caribbean environs, and the United States, and much less oriented towards the Netherlands than the Leeward Antilles are. Remarkably, they nevertheless evince a relatively strong emotional affinity with, and cultural interest in, the "mother country": "We've been together for so long."

Large majorities back the deployment of Dutch marines, police, and magistrates, even more so on Saba than on St. Eustatius. The importance of ties with the Kingdom for the maintenance of democracy and constitutional rule receives even more emphasis. The importance of Dutch financial aid is stressed on both islands, though the people of St. Eustatius indicated that they expect more aid; the latter clearly have a more positive view of the introduction of Dutch companies and the employment of foreign, especially Dutch, managers. The general opinion on Dutch involvement varies from neutral to positive on St. Eustatius, and is predominantly positive on Saba. Three-fourth of the respondents do not feel that the Netherlands interferes too much in their administration, and on Saba in particular a considerable majority feel sufficiently respected by the Netherlands. At the same time, however, a majority aver that Dutch administrators have an inadequate understanding of the situation and of the fact that the inhabitants of the islands are "different." The lack of confidence in the island's own politicians and administrators is greater than on the other islands.

The Dutch language is considered more important on St. Eustatius than on Saba, which switched to English in education more than ten years ago. Sabans therefore judge the importance of Dutch teachers and secondary education in the Netherlands to be slightly less important. In response to the questions on the popularity of the Dutch Queen, affinity with the Netherlands, support for the Netherlands in the event of war, and interest in Dutch culture, the people of both Saba and St. Eustatius express extremely pro-Dutch sentiments. The fact that it is precisely on these two English-speaking islands that by far the most interest in Dutch culture is expressed is striking. Perhaps the fact that no other island has so few respondents who feel that the Netherlands only keeps the islands in the Kingdom out of self-interest must be understood in this context. Appar-

ently the people of Saba and St. Eustatius regard all the alternatives as more threatening.

PERSONAL PROFILES

At the conclusion of the questionnaire, every respondent was asked a number of personal questions. The resulting data provide additional information on the socioeconomic situation, family and migration patterns, and voting behavior of the respondents. However, analysis of the relationship between these variables and views on the relations with the Netherlands and between the islands yielded few clear patterns.¹⁶

It should be noted in passing though that these data are evidence of high mobility both in the past and in the present. Eighty-three percent and 76 percent of the respondents on Curaçao and Aruba respectively were born on the island; appreciable minorities are from elsewhere. Migration is even more significant on St. Maarten. Only 35 percent of the respondents on St. Maarten are born there; an equal number originally come from the other islands in the Dutch Caribbean, and 30 percent from elsewhere. Roughly 40 percent of all Antilleans and Arubans have at least one brother or sister living in the Netherlands. More than half have visited the Netherlands, and more than 40 percent of the latter lived in the Netherlands for two or more years.

Data of this kind may not provide an unambiguous picture of public opinion regarding relations between the islands and their relationship with the Netherlands. They do illustrate though that these six communities are not in any literal sense isolated and inward-looking islands. However, this openness and strong migratory tradition apparently do not significantly affect views and expectations regarding the Netherlands or inter-island relations.

COMPARISON WITH PREVIOUS REFERENDA AND OPINION POLLS

In the present survey the people of the Antilles and Aruba were questioned about their views and expectations with regard to the Kingdom of the Netherlands in much greater detail than ever before. In this sense the results provide a unique picture, and thus can only be compared on a few main points with insights based on earlier research on these islands.

Independence has remained an unpopular option. On St. Maarten, where this option receives most support, it is often aimed against Curaçao

rather than against a continuation of the relationship with the Kingdom. Comparisons with the earlier Aruban quest for “independence” (from Curaçao) spring to mind. The option of incorporation into the Netherlands as a province received more support than might be expected on the basis of the referendum of 1993-94. Despite the fact that this is a minority option, it should not be ignored and is growing in strength. As in the 1980s, there is apparently broad support for a strengthening of ties with the Netherlands. In contrast to the findings of the survey conducted by Koot, Tempel-Schoorl, and Marcha (1988), the motives of the Antilleans and Arubans today do not seem to be primarily economic in nature. The security of the passport and the freedom of movement that goes with it are primary motives, while, in addition to economic aid, great importance is also attached to the safeguarding of democracy, constitutional rule, and security.

Support for the association of the five islands of the Antilles seems to have dwindled even further, while it is generally held that Aruba has benefitted from its secession from that association. Patterns in the responses of the five Antillean islands reveal clear mutual differences, once again illustrating the fact that the Antillean state is a fragile construction. The example of Aruba beckons, above all on St. Maarten, but also on Curaçao.

IMPLICATIONS

Given a choice, the peoples of the Caribbean, for largely pragmatic reasons, are not inclined to cut existing life-lines. This accounts for the lack of any serious support for the option of independence on those islands that have not yet broken with their former colonial ruler – even if this is accompanied by a gnawing and sometimes acute frustration at the awareness that they will always be less powerful than an overseas “benefactor” that considers its own interests and culture to be more important than those in the remote Caribbean.

The results of the present inquiry situate the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba in this postcolonial context, in which feelings of impotence appear to be as understandable as they are difficult to cope with. Once again it is obvious that the people of these six islands clearly opt for the link with the Netherlands; all alternatives seem less attractive. At the same time there are reservations about a mother country that, from the point of view of most Antilleans and Arubans, is unable to summon up enough respect and understanding for their island.

In the meantime the Netherlands has been forced to accept that independence cannot be forced upon the islands. In response, it has now adopted a policy of closer involvement in the administration of the islands. Concern about repercussions of Antillean and Aruban problems on Dutch society and on the image of the Kingdom played a decisive role in this respect. Geo-political considerations, particularly the readiness to play the role of a "middle power" in the region, are of secondary importance but by no means insignificant.

Now that we have a better picture of the views and expectations of the Antilleans and Arubans regarding the Kingdom and the relationship with the Netherlands, the ongoing debate on the structure of the Kingdom may proceed on a more solid basis. Large majorities on all the islands see the choice as one between the present relatively large degree of autonomy for the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom, and an intensification of relations with the Netherlands. At first sight the results of this survey would seem to confirm the idea that the citizens of the Antilles and Aruba would welcome closer ties with the Netherlands. This applies not only to administrative and financial matters, but also to issues related to education and culture. They clearly do not have the same opinion on these issues as their own politicians and administrators. This is tied to the limited confidence they have in their own power and the viability of their island societies, and to a low level of confidence in their own politicians and administrators. The Dutch policy of intensification of the relationship and closer supervision of government in the Dutch Caribbean thus seem to enjoy a measure of support.

On the other hand, the respondents indicate that they entertain clear reservations when it comes to intensification of Dutch involvement. Support for the extreme option of transforming the Caribbean islands into overseas provinces is very weak, although it would increase if the association of the five Antillean islands were to be dissolved. Concrete repercussions of an intensified policy, however, provoked mixed reactions, as can be seen from views on the deployment of Dutch executives in various sectors of society. It is precisely where Dutch involvement has been especially intensive over the last few years, as in St. Maarten and Aruba, that objections to it are the strongest.

An essential dimension to all this is the fact that there is a strong feeling on all the islands that the Netherlands does not have enough understanding of, and respect for, local society and culture. This grievance is expressed by both Antillean and Aruban citizens and their politicians and administrators. This is a crucial point at a time when the Netherlands is trying to implement a policy aimed at greater involvement. The combi-

nation of an intensification of relations and the islanders' feeling that they are insufficiently understood and respected carries the seeds of conflict.

It is remarkable that few Antilleans or Arubans view Dutch culture as threatening. Perhaps this is partly due to a certain naiveté; until recently the Netherlands was perceived as so distant that people have not yet fully realized how deeply the Caribbean communities could be affected by more intense Dutch involvement. On the other hand, we should not underestimate the capacity of the Antilleans and Arubans to evaluate the situation. After all, for these small island societies, the alternative to closer ties with the Netherlands is not so much some kind of abstract "independence," as subordination to countries like the United States or Venezuela. The devil or the deep blue sea? The Antilleans and Arubans are apparently deliberately opting for that small, but in their eyes large, European country which for the time being seems to be the most reliable, flexible, and generous on offer, even if it fails to understand them properly.

NOTES

1. This article is based on the research report *Ki sorto di Reino / What kind of Kingdom?* (Oostindie & Verton 1998). We should express our sincere thanks to Ken Bilby, Eithne Carlin, and Rosemarijn Hoefte for their help with the translation of this paper.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands consists of three nominally equal partners: the Netherlands (with a population of more than 15 million), the Netherlands Antilles (225,000), and Aruba (85,000). By virtue of the Statute, each of the countries governs itself autonomously. An exception is made for foreign relations, defense, and guaranteeing good government; responsibility for these affairs is borne by the Kingdom, i.e. the government of the Kingdom, consisting of the Dutch cabinet plus two plenipotentiary ministers from the two other countries. In practice the Netherlands dominates the government of the Kingdom. There is no overarching parliament to which the government of the Kingdom is accountable.

Dutch economic aid to the six islands amounts to approximately 150 million US dollars per annum, the equivalent of almost US\$ 500 per capita. Antilleans and Arubans are free to settle in the Netherlands; the reverse is not true. The vernacular language on the Leeward Islands is Papiamentu/o, and on the Windward Islands English. The language spoken in schools on the Leeward Islands is for the most part Dutch, although Papiamentu is gaining in importance. The language spoken predominantly in schools on the Windward Islands is English.

For a general introduction, see Oostindie 1996.

2. This number is based on the following population figures: Aruba 85,000; Bonaire 13,000; Curaçao 160,000; Saba 1,000; St. Eustatius 1,500; the Dutch part of Franco-Dutch St. Maarten approx. 50,000. The Antillean and Aruban population in the Netherlands is estimated at 90,000 of which the majority are migrants from Curaçao.

3. This research project *Ki sorto di Reino / What kind of Kingdom?* was carried out under the auspices of the University of Aruba, the University of the Netherlands Antilles, the University of St. Martin, and the KITLV/Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology in Leiden. Representatives of these four academic institutions formed an Advisory Board. We would like to thank the members of the board: Michiel Baud, Maria van Enckevort, Jandi Paula, Han J. Quick, Anco R.O. Ringeling, René A. Römer (chair), and Wycliffe Smith. The methodologist Henk ten Napel provided indispensable assistance in this research project. The Dutch-language report *Ki sorto di Reino / What kind of Kingdom?* contains summaries in English and Papiamentu, questionnaires and explanatory comments on the tables which contain the complete research findings. The sample amounted to 2,518 (Aruba 638; Bonaire 382; Curaçao 668; Saba 189; St. Eustatius 198; St. Maarten 443). The large size of this random sample guaranteed a high level of reliability. The questionnaire contained ninety-two questions, and could be completed in Papiamentu, English, or Dutch depending on the respondent's preference. In practice this meant that on Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao it was usually conducted in Papiamentu/o, while on the three Windward Islands it was mostly administered in English. We refer the reader to the report for further methodological and technical information.

4. This does not apply to the residents of the BDTs. A review of the status of the BDTs is currently in preparation.

5. Caban 1993, Morris 1995:47-65, *The San Juan Star*, May 7, 1996, "Carta del Congreso al Pueblo de Puerto Rico."

6. The chapter entitled "Context" in Oostindie & Verton 1998 presents a fuller picture of the successive opinion polls.

7. A survey conducted by the Netherlands market organizational research institute NIPO in 1969 revealed that 51 percent of the respondents in the Netherlands felt that the Netherlands Antilles should become independent; 24 percent opted for the status quo. A survey carried out in 1973 indicated that 63 percent of the respondents in the Netherlands were in favor of independence for Suriname, and 62 percent supported independence for the Netherlands Antilles.

8. Verton 1973:36. The questionnaire was exclusively circulated in a Dutch-language newspaper, and was filled out on a voluntary basis; of course, both factors can imply a bias. The response was: Aruba 868, Bonaire 115, and Curaçao 1,644.

9. Koot 1975:18, 22. n=446. Fourteen percent of the respondents on Curaçao favored independence, while 57 percent were opposed to it; the corresponding percentages on Aruba were 28 versus 43.

10. Their electoral research indicated that on Curaçao 12 percent of the respondents opted for independence, 36 percent for maintenance of the status quo, and no less than 47 percent for a closer relationship with the Netherlands. This pattern was even clearer on Aruba, where the corresponding percentages were 10, 37, and 50. Three-quarters of the Arubans were in favor of the separate status that was to take effect on January 1, 1986. This confirmed that the support of an overwhelming majority of Arubans for "independence" in 1977 had been a choice for secession from the Netherlands Antilles and was in fact motivated by opposition to Curaçao, not to relations with the Netherlands. See Ten Napel and Verton 1986:38, 40. n=1,097 on Curaçao, n=399 on Aruba.

11. On Curaçao 41 percent voted for maintenance of the status quo, 38 percent for looser ties with the Netherlands, and 21 percent for provincial status. The corresponding voting patterns on Bonaire and St. Maarten were 38, 27, and 37 percent and 40, 26, and 34 percent respectively. The corresponding percentages on St. Eustatius and Saba were 54 and 42 percent respectively in favor of the status quo, 36 and 52 percent respectively in favor of closer ties, and apparently practically no one was in favor of looser ties. The number of supporters of independence on the five islands was so small that it was referred to with such terms as a "handful." With respect to national structure, the voting percentages on Curaçao were 63 percent for the five-island Antilles, 23 percent for a separate status, and 14 percent for an association of four, three, or two Antillean islands; the corresponding percentages on the other islands were 71, 18, and 11 percent respectively on Bonaire, 83, 2, and 14 percent on St. Eustatius, and 83, 2, and 15 percent on Saba. Only St. Maarten displayed a substantially different pattern: 37 percent were in favor of a five-island Antilles, 32 percent a separate status, and 31 percent an association of four, three, or two Antillean islands. See Koot, Tempel-Schoorl, and Marcha 1989:63-68. n=755.

12. The voting percentages on Curaçao now were 63 percent for the five-island association, 23 percent for separate status, and 14 percent for an association of four, three, or two Antillean islands. The corresponding percentages for the other islands were: 89, 4, and 7 percent for Bonaire; 85, 0, and 15 percent for St. Eustatius; and 84, 2, and 14 percent for Saba. Support for a five-island Antilles had grown on St. Maarten as well, where the percentages were 45, 33, and 22 percent. As to the motives for wanting to maintain the relationship with the Netherlands, economic grounds were mentioned most frequently on every island, according to the researchers; St. Maarten was the only island where the argument of legal security was frequently advanced. See Koot, Tempel-Schoorl and Marcha 1989:75-82. n=638.

13. Survey commissioned by the Dutch weekly *Elsevier* and carried out by De Vos consultants. n=590.

14. From this point we use the terms 'larger' and 'smaller' islands to refer to the size of the population, not to territorial size; Bonaire is in fact larger than both Aruba and St. Maarten.

15. The Antilleans were asked once again whether they wanted a separate status. The answers correspond closely to the earlier answers to question 1.

16. This is discussed in detail in the separate reports on each of the islands (Oostindie & Verton 1998:101-72).

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