

Coconut Diplomacy: Mexico's Foreign Policy in the Caribbean

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ABSTRACT

This piece examines Mexico's foreign policy in the Caribbean within the EU-CELAC framework, aiming to comprehensively analyse Mexico's historical ties, economic interests, and regional dynamics in the Caribbean. The study explores strategic partnerships, economic ties, and security cooperation, shedding light on Mexico's potential role in the geopolitical landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean. Additionally, it examines Mexico's engagement with indigenous communities in the Caribbean, focusing on environmental diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, resource management, and human rights advocacy. The research also investigates the interests of France and the Netherlands in the Caribbean, emphasizing cultural cooperation, economic partnerships, environmental collaboration, and security cooperation. The research uncovers Mexico's multifaceted engagement in the Caribbean, highlighting strategic partnerships, economic interests, and security cooperation. It also reveals the significance of environmental diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and human rights advocacy in Mexico's interactions with indigenous communities in the Caribbean. Furthermore, the study identifies potential areas for enhanced cooperation between the EU and the Caribbean within the EU-CELAC framework, emphasizing the benefits of cultural, economic, and security collaboration. The research employs a comprehensive analysis of historical and contemporary diplomatic interactions, economic engagements, and security cooperation between Mexico and the Caribbean. It utilizes a qualitative approach to examine Mexico's foreign policy strategies, historical ties, and economic interests in the Caribbean. Additionally, the study incorporates insights from cultural, economic, and security perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of Mexico's role in the Caribbean within the EU-CELAC framework. The overall conclusion is the significance of Mexico's diplomatic and economic engagements in the Caribbean, offering valuable insights into regional dynamics, strategic partnerships, and potential areas for enhanced cooperation. It also emphasizes the interests of France and the Netherlands in the Caribbean region, highlighting the importance of cultural, economic, and security cooperation. The study contributes to a better understanding of the geopolitical landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the potential for collaborative initiatives within the EU-CELAC framework. Disengagement and Tolerance are not unconditionally a good thing. It can also be an expression of carelessness.

Keywords: Mexico-Caribbean-Brazil, EU & Caricom, EU-CELAC.

1. INTRODUCTION

Mexico, with its unique and deeply rooted historical connections to the Caribbean, its economic interests, and regional dynamics, emerges as a pivotal player in the complex geopolitical landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean. Its foreign policy significantly shapes the contours of cooperation and conflict, making it a key focus of our intellectual journey. Strategic Association, aha. A semantic device to address each other's anxieties.

With its unique challenges and opportunities, this sub-region is a crucial part of the EU-CELAC partnership from the perspective of Mexico, a Strategic Partner of the EU. Mexico could bridge these regions in its unique role, infusing new viewpoints and setting fresh accents within this framework.

Diplomacy: Like a seasoned diplomat, Mexico employs rhetorical devices to convey its stance. From the passionate crescendo of solidarity to the measured cadence of pragmatism, its discourse resonates across borders. Mexico crafts its narrative with finesse, invoking historical ties or envisioning a harmonious future.

Regional Perspectives: Mexico gazes outward from its Caribbean shores, contemplating who "we" are in this vast tapestry. It recognises shared challenges—climate change, security threats, and economic disparities—while asserting its unique identity. With its kaleidoscope of cultures, the Caribbean beckons Mexico to listen, learn, and collaborate.

Who Gets What and Why: Power dynamics ebb and flow beneath the surface currents. Mexico, as a regional player,

seeks to secure its interests. Access to markets, energy resources, and strategic alliances becomes the currency of diplomacy. Who benefits? Why? These questions echo in the halls of negotiation.

Vectors of Influence: Mexico's compass points toward key vectors: Brazil, the United States, and the EU. Each holds sway over Mexico's foreign policy. With Brazil, it dances a samba of economic ties and shared aspirations. The US, a neighbor and partner, shapes Mexico's security calculus. The Tren Maya allows the development of long-neglected southern Mexico, the hinterland to the air-conditioned beaches on the Yucatan peninsula, CDMX's gateway to Mesoamerica.

And Mexico, along with Colombia¹, are both observers of Caricom, a signal of distress and a point for further analysis of Mexico's struggle to remain competitive and broaden its commercial opportunities, a shared concern by the EU-CELAC members². It is not only Brazil that is interested in Mexico assuming more of a role as a regional power in the equation between China, the US and the EU. So is, in principle, also the European Union. The EU's overall line of international cooperation also pertains to the Caribbean: Green transition, economic resilience and trade, governance, security and human development, and shared values and goals. These objectives are part of a broader effort to strengthen partnerships and cooperation between the EU and the Caribbean. In more detail, this piece will explore how Mexico's policies towards the Caribbean fit into the giant puzzle from within Eu-Celac.

But what about the Caribbean? How to get strategic about the Caribbean?

The Caribbean region holds a strategically significant position in both geopolitical and geoeconomic terms. Its location, resources, and historical context contribute to its importance in international relations, trade, and security. The Caribbean's geopolitical position is central to global shipping routes, including those linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the Panama Canal. The region also serves as a crucial link between North America, Latin America, Europe, and Asia. Control or access to these maritime routes is vital for international trade, making the Caribbean a key player in global commerce. Additionally, the Caribbean's proximity to major powers, particularly the United States, is another factor that enhances its geopolitical importance. Historically, the U.S. has considered the Caribbean within the scope of the Monroe Doctrine, aimed at preventing European colonialism in the Western Hemisphere. This policy has influenced U.S. foreign policy toward the region and its strategic interests.

The Caribbean is also positioned between the U.S. and Latin America, creating a space for political and economic interaction between these two regions. In recent years, the Caribbean has seen an increase in diplomatic and economic competition, particularly with China's growing presence in the region. Through investments, loans, and infrastructure projects, China has sought to expand its influence, leading to a response from the U.S. and other Western powers. In addition to these international dynamics, the U.S. maintains significant military and security interests in the Caribbean, with several bases, including the one in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The region's importance for U.S. defense is further emphasized by cooperation on counter-narcotics operations and maintaining regional stability.

The Caribbean is also an area of political instability, as various nations have experienced shifts in government, regime changes, and ideological transformations. Cuba's revolution in 1959, for example, became a focal point for U.S.-Cuba tensions and Cold War rivalry. The influence of external powers, particularly China and Russia, has added new layers of complexity to the region's geopolitics. These nations have reasserted themselves diplomatically in certain Caribbean countries, seeking to establish alliances that counterbalance U.S. influence.

Geoeconomically, the Caribbean is highly dependent on tourism, which is one of the region's largest and most important sectors. The Caribbean is a popular destination for millions of tourists each year, and tourism revenue significantly impacts the region's GDP, employment, and foreign exchange earnings. Destinations such as the Bahamas, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic contribute substantially to global tourism, and changes in global economic conditions, natural disasters, or pandemics like COVID-19 can deeply affect the economic stability of the region.

In addition to tourism, the Caribbean possesses important energy resources, particularly in countries like Trinidad and Tobago, which have significant reserves of natural gas and oil. However, much of the region still relies on imported energy, making energy security a critical concern. There is also increasing interest in renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar power, as the world moves toward greener energy solutions. The Caribbean's energy resources are of interest not only to the U.S. and Latin American nations but also to global powers like China, which has sought to invest in energy infrastructure in the region.

Agriculture and natural resources have historically played a central role in the Caribbean economy. While the significance of these sectors has declined over time, some

¹ Polack (2023)

² Hammet (2019)

nations continue to export products like sugar, coffee, and tobacco. The region is also rich in other natural resources, such as bauxite and marine resources. Fishing and related industries remain important economic drivers for many Caribbean nations, which rely on these industries for both domestic consumption and international export.

Foreign investment is another key element of the Caribbean's geoeconomics. The region attracts substantial foreign capital from the U.S., Europe, and increasingly from China. Chinese investment in the Caribbean has grown through loans, infrastructure projects, and trade agreements, though this has raised concerns about the long-term economic sustainability of some nations, given the large amounts of sovereign debt accumulated. Many Caribbean nations are heavily reliant on foreign capital, making them vulnerable to changes in global financial conditions.

Economic integration within the Caribbean has been a central aim of regional organizations such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). These efforts seek to foster cooperation and trade among Caribbean nations while strengthening their collective bargaining power in the global economy. The region is also involved in several international trade agreements, including the EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement and trade relations with the U.S. These agreements provide access to larger markets and promote regional economic development, though challenges such as uneven development and economic dependence remain.

Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges for the Caribbean. The region is highly vulnerable to rising sea levels, more intense hurricanes, and extended periods of drought. These environmental threats not only pose risks to the region's population and infrastructure but also jeopardize its key economic sectors, including tourism and agriculture. The Caribbean's vulnerability to climate change has prompted increasing international attention, with global powers such as the U.S. and the EU investing in projects to support environmental resilience in the region.

Migration and remittances are also vital aspects of the Caribbean's geoeconomics. Many Caribbean nations, including Haiti, Jamaica, and the Dominican Republic, have significant diaspora populations, especially in the U.S. These emigrants send substantial remittances back to their home countries, which are a crucial source of income for many families and contribute to the overall economic health of the region. Migration flows and the Caribbean's relationships with migrant-receiving countries, especially the U.S., are an integral part of the region's economic and geopolitical landscape.

The Caribbean's geopolitical stakes are shaped by the interplay of these factors. The U.S. maintains significant influence in the region, often exerting economic and

diplomatic pressure to shape the political landscape. Policies such as economic sanctions and foreign aid are tools used by the U.S. to maintain its geopolitical dominance. Meanwhile, the region's engagement with China represents a shift in the balance of power, as Chinese investment in infrastructure, energy, and loans grows. The Caribbean also faces challenges related to political instability, as some countries experience internal conflicts or ideological shifts that may attract external intervention. In conclusion, the Caribbean is a region of considerable geopolitical and geoeconomic importance. Its location at the crossroads of major global trade routes, its economic reliance on tourism and natural resources, and its vulnerability to climate change make it a focal point for international competition and cooperation. The region's relationships with major powers, particularly the U.S. and China, will continue to shape its future, as will the economic and environmental challenges it faces. As such, the Caribbean will remain a critical area of focus for global powers in the coming decades."

The Caribbean views Mexico as a multifaceted neighbour—one that straddles the realms of history, culture, and commerce. They value the beaches and tourist resorts, and the geographical proximity implies economic ties. The Caribbean sees Mexico as a gateway connecting Latin America, North America, and Europe. Shared markets, investments, and supply chains intertwine their destinies. The Caribbean and Mexico share historical bonds—colonial legacies, indigenous roots, and vibrant traditions. Music, dance, and cuisine flow across borders—the rhythms of **salsa**³, **merengue**⁴, and **reggaeton**⁵ echo in both regions, celebrating life and resilience. Challenges persist.

The Caribbean observes Mexico's efforts in combating drug trafficking, securing borders, and addressing migration. Cooperation is essential to tackle transnational threats and ensure stability. In the grand ballroom of international relations, Mexico waltzes with Caribbean nations. It seeks mutual respect, solidarity, and a harmonious melody. Yet, divergent interests occasionally lead to missteps—a delicate balance to maintain. In sum, the Caribbean views Mexico as a partner, a fellow voyager navigating the currents of globalisation. Together, they chart a course toward prosperity, understanding, and shared horizons.

The recently modernized EU-Mexico Global Agreement, finalized after nearly eight years of negotiations, represents a significant enhancement of the bilateral

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Df9GrBwgYjQ>

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amuqoK53QVU>

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoSp5IWrpJw>

relationship between the European Union and Mexico⁶. It's conclusion was timed with the publication of Mexico's development plan. This comprehensive agreement aims to promote and protect human rights, multilateralism, and international peace and security through several key initiatives:

Strengthened Political Dialogue and Cooperation

The agreement establishes a more systematic and results-oriented political dialogue, including summits and enhanced inter-parliamentary exchanges. This framework facilitates discussions on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, ensuring that both parties can collaboratively address these critical issues.

Commitments to Sustainable Development and Social Inclusion

A central component of the agreement is its dedication to sustainable development and social inclusion.

Both the EU and Mexico have pledged to:

- Promote the sustainable management of fisheries and forests.
- Conserve biodiversity.
- Combat the illegal wildlife trade.

These commitments are reinforced by a dispute settlement mechanism that includes external review by an independent panel of experts and a role for civil society, ensuring accountability and effective implementation.

Advancement of Multilateralism and International Peace

The agreement underscores the shared commitment to multilateralism and international peace and security. It provides a platform for both parties to collaborate on global challenges, including climate change, migration, and the promotion of democratic values, thereby contributing to a more stable and peaceful international order.

Enhanced Trade and Investment Framework

While the agreement's primary focus is on political and social cooperation, it also modernizes the trade and investment framework between the EU and Mexico. This includes:

- Eliminating high tariffs on European food and drinks.
- Allowing EU firms to offer more services in Mexico.

⁶https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/mexico/eu-mexico-agreement_en

- Protecting workers' rights and the environment.

These measures aim to create a more balanced and mutually beneficial economic relationship, supporting sustainable development and social inclusion.

In summary, the modernized EU-Mexico Global Agreement represents a comprehensive effort to strengthen bilateral relations through enhanced political dialogue, commitments to sustainable development, and a shared dedication to multilateralism and international peace and security. These initiatives are designed to foster a more inclusive and cooperative partnership between the EU and Mexico.

Yet, scant studies exist on Mexico's foreign policy vis-à-vis the Caribbean. I aim to contribute to this vacuum by addressing how the international community services this subregion and why Mexico is interested in taking the initiative vis-à-vis Caricom in cooperation with the EU from within EU-CELAC.

We argue the broader geopolitical landscape of the Caribbean, emphasizing the interconnectedness of regional nations and their collective challenges in addressing climate resilience and sustainable development. Mexican deployment to Haiti will be a notable opener for the region and improvement of security in the nuanced manner only region-owed countries are capable of. The Caribbean faces multifaceted challenges that extend beyond bilateral relations. The region's strategic location, economic diversification needs, and vulnerabilities to climate change necessitate unified actions among member states and partnerships with larger powers. Recent trends indicate that regional cooperation is crucial for effective economic strategies and disaster preparedness. Engagement with nations such as Mexico and Brazil can enhance technical assistance and regional integration, fostering resilience across the Caribbean. It is imperative for CARICOM and other regional organizations to adopt a holistic view that encompasses all member states, focusing on collective action and resource sharing to address overarching issues that threaten the region's stability and growth. In conclusion, the path forward for Caribbean nations lies in building robust partnerships and fostering regional collaboration that leverages shared strengths and resources, ultimately enhancing resilience and promoting sustainable development across the entire region.

The scope of my research is focused on Mexico's foreign policy in the Caribbean within the EU-CELAC framework from a global perspective. The document delves into Mexico's historical ties, economic interests, and regional dynamics in the Caribbean, emphasizing strategic partnerships, economic ties, and security cooperation. The scope also extends to the interests of France and the Netherlands in the Caribbean, highlighting cultural cooperation, economic partnerships, environmental collaboration, and security cooperation.

Research Questions:

1. What is Mexico's role in the geopolitical landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean?
2. How does Mexico engage with indigenous communities in the Caribbean, particularly in terms of environmental diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, resource management, and human rights advocacy?
3. What are the potential areas for enhanced cooperation between the EU and the Caribbean within the EU-CELAC framework?
4. What are the economic, cultural, and security interests of France and the Netherlands in the Caribbean region?

To address these research questions, the document provides insights into Mexico's foreign policy strategies, historical ties, and economic interests in the Caribbean. It also explores the interactions within the EU-CELAC framework, emphasizing strategic partnerships, economic ties, and security cooperation. Additionally, the document delves into Mexico's engagement with indigenous communities in the Caribbean, focusing on environmental diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, resource management, and human rights advocacy. Furthermore, it discusses the interests of France and the Netherlands in the Caribbean, highlighting cultural cooperation, economic partnerships, environmental collaboration, and security cooperation.

The research is significant as it sheds light on Mexico's diplomatic and economic engagements in the Caribbean, providing valuable insights into regional dynamics, strategic partnerships, and potential areas for enhanced cooperation. It also highlights the interests of other European nations, such as France and the Netherlands, in the Caribbean region, emphasizing the importance of cultural, economic, and security cooperation. The research contributes to a better understanding of the geopolitical landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the potential for collaborative initiatives within the EU-CELAC framework.

Situating the approach in the literature

José Llanes' scholarly approach in *El Interregionalismo* emphasizes the strategic use of **inter-regionalism** in Mexican foreign policy, focusing on economic, political, and security

cooperation across Latin America, North America, and beyond. His analysis highlights **regional integration**, **global governance**, and **multilateralism** as key elements of Mexico's foreign strategy. While advocating for deeper engagement in international institutions, Llanes critiques Mexico's reliance on traditional powers and calls for a more proactive role in global affairs. He suggests Mexico should assert its influence beyond its regional confines. **Interregionalism** refers to the strategic cooperation between distinct regions or groupings of countries to address shared challenges and enhance mutual benefits. It involves building ties across different regional organizations or countries, beyond traditional bilateral or multilateral relations. For Mexico, interregionalism focuses on fostering stronger economic, political, and security cooperation with Latin America, North America, and other global partners. This approach aims to expand Mexico's influence, promote regional integration, and ensure sustainable development by leveraging partnerships in a globalized world.

Building on the work of **José Luis Llanes**, we can address the difficulties of theorizing sub-regional integration in Latin America and the Caribbean by focusing on Mexico's specific experiences. Here's an elaboration that ties Llanes's insights into the broader theoretical challenges and nuances of sub-regional integration:

Llanes's study of Mexico's engagement with sub-regional integration highlights the **complex and often contradictory nature** of regionalism in Latin America, particularly when looking beyond economic agreements toward political and social cohesion. His work underscores several difficulties that challenge existing theoretical frameworks:

Mexico's role in regional integration is marked by its position as both a middle power and a highly integrated economy with the United States through USMCA. Llanes emphasizes how this dual positioning complicates Mexico's engagement with Latin American and Caribbean integration projects like CELAC or with more Caribbean-focused bodies like CARICOM. The multiplicity of overlapping regional organizations, each with different memberships, priorities, and degrees of institutionalization, creates a fragmented regional landscape that is hard to theorize with single-dimensional models.

This fragmentation challenges neofunctionalist assumptions about smooth spillovers and institutional deepening and complicates intergovernmentalist expectations of coherent state-led decision-making, since Mexico must juggle multiple, sometimes competing, regional affiliations.

Llanes points out the **tension between Mexico's deep economic integration with the US and its political**

aspirations within Latin American integration. Mexico often promotes economic liberalization and market-friendly policies within regional frameworks while also expressing solidarity with Latin American political causes and social agendas through CELAC.

This tension highlights how integration cannot be understood purely as economic or political; instead, theorizing must incorporate the **dual and sometimes contradictory goals** of member states. Mexico's case shows how states may simultaneously pursue economic pragmatism and normative political solidarity, a challenge for frameworks that separate economic integration (neofunctionalism) from political sovereignty concerns (intergovernmentalism).

Llanes's analysis stresses how Mexico's regional integration experience is heavily shaped by **external actors and power asymmetries**, especially the influence of the US but also the EU and increasingly China. This creates a "multi-level governance" problem where regional integration efforts intersect with global geopolitics, trade dependencies, and security concerns.

Traditional regional integration theories often assume regional autonomy and internal dynamics, but Mexico's reality reveals a complex web of **external dependencies and pressures** that influence how integration is pursued and theorized.

Mexico's integration trajectory also reflects its unique socio-cultural and historical context—its colonial legacy, its mixed identity as part of North America and Latin America, and domestic political dynamics. Llanes argues these factors influence Mexico's approach to integration in ways that standard theories, which often prioritize economic or institutional analysis, may overlook.

This suggests a need for more **context-sensitive and historically grounded frameworks**, such as critical regionalism or postcolonial theory, to better capture the lived realities and identity politics embedded in regional integration processes:

Hybrid Frameworks Are Needed: Theorizing sub-regional integration in Mexico's context demands combining elements of neofunctionalism (institutional processes), intergovernmentalism (state sovereignty and interests), and postcolonial/critical approaches (historical legacies and identity).

Multi-Level Governance Lens: Mexico's experience illustrates the importance of understanding how global, regional, and national levels intersect, requiring frameworks attentive to external power dynamics and global governance.

Acknowledging Contradictions: Theorizing must embrace the coexistence of contradictory goals—economic liberalization and political solidarity, integration and sovereignty—which shape the fluid and uneven nature of sub-regionalism.

Contextual Sensitivity: Mexico's specific socio-political history and geopolitical position underscore that integration theories must be adaptable to the particularities of each sub-region and actor.

In sum, building on Llanes's work helps address the "trouble" of theorizing sub-regional integration by showing the limits of singular theoretical models and the need for nuanced, multi-dimensional approaches that reflect Mexico's complex regional realities. This also offers broader lessons for theorizing integration in Latin America and the Caribbean more generally.

A central tenet of Mexico's foreign policy is the EU-CELAC framework. This interregional alliance between the European Union (EU) and Latin American and Caribbean nations serves as a platform for dialogue, cooperation, and shared goals. It plays an increasingly important role in Mexican foreign policy, "establishing a separate layer of international institution-building within a multi-layered system of global governance between the regional and global levels".⁷ Llanes emphasises that formal cooperation between regional organisations significantly impacts regionalism, especially in asymmetric settings. Civil society also has a more significant role in interregional settings.

The ordering principles of US-led regionalism, EU-CELAC, and subregional integration differ in their underlying structures and goals:

1. **US-led regionalism** (e.g., **USMCA**) focuses on economic liberalization and political alignment, often with a hierarchical dynamic, prioritizing U.S. interest.
2. **EU-CELAC** emphasizes mutual cooperation and shared values like democracy and human rights, fostering more egalitarian relationships.
3. **Subregional integration** (e.g., **Mercosur, CARICOM**) is focused on regional economic cooperation, often with a focus on enhancing intra-regional trade and solidarity.

These frameworks intertwine through diplomacy, trade relations, and shared security concerns, influencing Mexico's foreign policy strategy and regional positioning.

⁷ José Pena Llanes (2024).

It then seems opportune to explore the potential how best to mutualize in the Caribbean between the EU and Mexico.

Academic Contribution

This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by exploring the intricate relationships between Caribbean nations, particularly emphasizing the socio-economic and political dynamics between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. By analyzing the historical context and its implications for contemporary policy frameworks, this study builds upon previous research that has largely focused on individual nation-state challenges, thereby offering a more comprehensive view of regional interdependencies. Employing a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates historical analysis, economic data, and policy evaluation, this work provides a nuanced understanding of how past injustices and current vulnerabilities shape the responses to climate change and social instability in the Caribbean. The findings reveal that the socio-economic disparities between Haiti and the Dominican Republic are deeply rooted in colonial histories, which continue to affect their current development strategies and resilience to climate impacts. This contribution not only informs academic discussions but also has practical implications for policymakers in the Caribbean, suggesting that collaborative frameworks and regional partnerships are essential for addressing shared challenges. Further research is needed to explore the roles of regional organizations like CARICOM in mediating these complex relationships and fostering sustainable development practices across the Caribbean.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is guided by clearly defined objectives that focus on analyzing Mexico's Caribbean foreign policy within CELAC, ensuring a targeted exploration of Mexico's role and contributions to regional cooperation. A rigorous literature review underpins this research, encompassing a wide array of prior studies that contextualize Mexico's Caribbean foreign policy, while identifying gaps that this analysis aims to address, thus setting the stage for original contributions to the analysis. We also examine the stakeholder's perspective on the region combining quantitative and qualitative research methodology.

This study makes use of an explorative research methodology. Explorative research methodology is primarily used when the objective is to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon that is not well defined. This approach is characterized by its flexibility, allowing researchers to adapt their methods as they uncover new information. It often relies on qualitative techniques, such as interviews and focus groups, facilitating

rich insights that quantitative methods may overlook. The methodology employs open-ended questions that encourage participants to share their thoughts and experiences in detail. By emphasizing contextual understanding, researchers consider cultural, historical, and social factors that impact the subject. Additionally, the iterative nature of explorative research enables researchers to refine their focus and follow new lines of inquiry as unexpected insights arise. Without rigid protocols, the methodology promotes a less structured approach, allowing for spontaneous discovery. Researchers leverage a variety of information sources, including literature reviews and expert consultations, enriching the overall analysis. The insights gained from explorative research can lead to the formulation of hypotheses for future studies, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge. Overall, explorative research is essential across various fields, allowing for the examination of complex issues that require a nuanced understanding.

Utilizing a well-structured analytical framework, this tour de force effectively dissects the complexities of Mexico's foreign policy decisions, applying analytical tools that reveal the motivations and outcomes of Mexico's actions within the CELAC context. The research employs an iterative design, where insights from preliminary analyses inform further explorations of Mexico's foreign policy, allowing for continuous refinement and an adaptive approach to emerging trends within CELAC. The methodological clarity throughout this study enhances transparency, ensuring that other researchers can replicate the findings, thereby providing a solid framework for future inquiries into Mexico's engagements within CARICOM and CELAC. Adopting a holistic view, this study considers various elements influencing Mexico's Caribbean foreign policy—such as historical contexts, geopolitical dynamics, and socio-economic factors—culminating in a nuanced understanding of its strategies within CELAC.

Overall, the methodology is characterized by its rigor and innovative concepts, contributing valuable insights into the field by employing diverse methodological tools to analyze Mexico's Caribbean foreign policy, while offering actionable recommendations for enhancing regional cooperation in CELAC.

We now proceed by presenting the Caribbean as a geopolitical region from a historical perspective. Second, I present on the multifaceted Caribbean region before examining various aspects of Mexico and European nations engagement pattern, addressing France's and Holland's interests, Mexico's objectives, and how the Caribbean perceives the EU-CELAC framework. This sets the stage for an outline of the case for a strengthened

engagement by the international community in the Caribbean. We also address the relationship between Caricom and Mexico, the sub-regional object of study chosen in this piece. We want to examine how the opportunity to develop CARICOM's relationship with associate members and Caribbean observers, as well as Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Puerto Rico. A major effort is made to understand Hispaniola and how Mexico could come in an effort to assert a greater foreign policy role and equivocate with Washington. The global analysis touches on the role of Brazil and Trinidad & Tobago in the ensemble. We examine the renewed interest in the Caribbean by the OECD and IDB and how it could enhance the EU-CELAC partnership without excluding a better organization of the region, even as France and Holland's interest are brought to bear more coherently into EU, a topic moving up the political agenda. This leads us to Rastaman Safari's interests, and China's inroads before we cap our tour de force with an examination of relevant Global Gateway projects in the Caribbean and how to strengthen governance of the EU-Celac policy framework. In the conclusions we sum up our findings on Mexico's putative contribution to stabilization and the games of interest being played out in that region.

2. HOW TO THINK ABOUT MEXICAN FOREIGN POLICY?

When analysing Mexico's foreign policy about the Caribbean, different factors are relevant to broach:

Historical Context: Historically, Mexican diplomacy foreign policy has been used as a central instrument for creating and consolidating the Mexican national sovereign state.

Mexico's historical interactions with Caribbean nations have shaped its current approach.

Multilateralism and Sovereignty: third-state domestic affairs, which influences its engagement with Caribbean

countries.

Regional Integration and Cooperation: Mexico's participation in regional organisations (e.g., CARICOM) and bilateral agreements with Caribbean nations.

An Analysis of how Mexico balances its national interests with regional cooperation.

Security and Economic Interests: Mexico's security concerns in the Caribbean (e.g., drug trafficking, organised crime).

An Assessment of economic ties, trade relations, and investment opportunities are apposite.

Geopolitical Dynamics: Explore Mexico's role as a bridge between North America and Latin America.

Consider how Mexico's Caribbean policy aligns with broader geopolitical interests.

This points to an analytical focus on the Caribbean dimension of Mexico's foreign policy⁸.

According to Marxian approaches, state formation and consolidation of democracy were undertaken in Central America and the Caribbean in the shadow of post-colonial heritage, latifundia, and large non-white populations on the one hand and Fidelistas and Sandinistas on the other.⁹

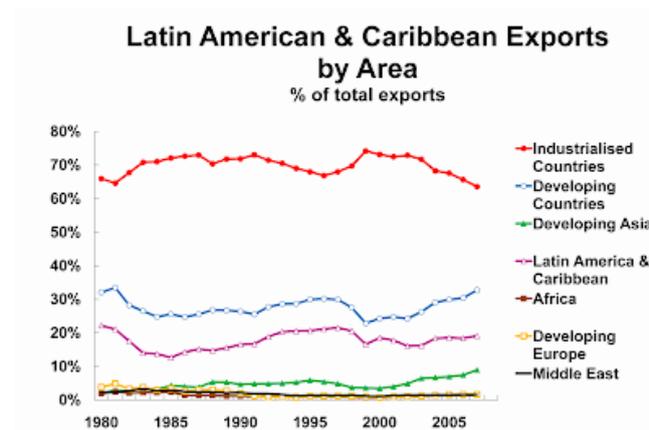
The strategic context is increased US-China tensions—establishing a listening station on Cuba—and Beijing's inroads into Latin America, where it anticipates being the largest trading partner of all Latin American countries by 2035. China is already Brazil's largest trading partner.

The two-way trade between the European Union and Latin America has grown by 40% during the last decade and stood at a combined worth of €369 Billion in 2022. The EEAS agenda-setting powers are harnessed to the effect of strengthening political dialogue, enhancement of engagement with individual countries and sub-regional organisations, and further engagement in the UN as well as of the strengthening of the EU-CELAC Partnership towards trade-creation¹⁰.

⁸ <https://revistadigital.sre.gob.mx/index.php/rmpe>

⁹ https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-77170-0_1

¹⁰ <https://www.eucelac-platform.eu/news-and-events/news/new-agenda-strengthen-eus-partnership-latin-america-and-caribbean>



Inter-regionalism and multilateralism are EU-led, while Washington tends to bilateralize relations within US-led International organisations. Increasingly, the EU tends to rely on its two Strategic Partners, Mexico and Brazil, to develop regional integration from within EU-CELAC. In many ways, this recenters the analytical focus on Mexico's foreign policies towards the Caribbean and how the interaction between Mexico, the Caribbean CARICOM, the EU and Brazil might unfold as a fulcrum for geopolitical dynamics, security, and economic interests.

Mexican foreign policy is formulated and implemented within the executive branch of the Mexican government outside of the Presidential office. The Foreign Ministry, led by the able, and the Minister of Defence are the principal policy institutions responsible for shaping and executing foreign policy decisions. The Congress of the Union provides oversight, approves treaties, and allocates resources. The Senate of the Republic ratifies international agreements and treaties.

Mexican foreign policy aims to balance national interests, strengthen regional ties, and engage with the international community.

The interaction between different types of regionalism has gained importance and impacts the structuring effect of the EU-CELAC interregional pact. An integration gap exists between Latin America and the Caribbean, and various approaches have been tried.¹¹ Subregions are often motivated by the need for nation-building, nationalism, and the development of their members' economies. Caribbean nations are generally very laid-back and need to improve the coordination of their foreign policies. We should examine Mexico's Coconut diplomacy towards the Caribbean and its interaction with broader interregional ordering.

3. Expanded Analysis of Mexico's Engagement with the Caribbean in Comparative Perspective

The geopolitical position and economic state of the Caribbean play crucial roles in shaping the region's contemporary challenges and opportunities. The Caribbean occupies a significant spot on the world stage due to its location, resources, and role in global trade, but its economy faces various complexities, including the legacy of colonialism, reliance on certain industries, and vulnerability to external factors.

1. Geopolitical Position:

Strategic Location: The Caribbean is positioned between North and South America, serving as a crossroads between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico. Its geographic location has historically made it a key hub for trade, military influence, and geopolitical maneuvering. It is often seen as a gateway for maritime traffic, connecting North America, Latin America, and Europe.

Political and Economic Relations:

The Caribbean has strong ties with both the United States and Latin America. Countries like Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic have particularly close ties with the U.S., while other nations like Jamaica and Barbados have connections to Latin American political movements.

The Caribbean is also part of various international organizations, including the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a regional organization that seeks economic integration and cooperation among its member states. The region is also a member of the Organization of American States (OAS), and many Caribbean nations participate in

¹¹ <https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/36326/chapter-abstract/318694311?redirectedFrom=fulltext&login=false>

the Association of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Security and Natural Resources: The Caribbean is an important region for global security due to its proximity to the United States and its role in international shipping lanes. The discovery of oil and natural gas reserves in some parts of the Caribbean (e.g., Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana) has made the region a focal point of energy interests, attracting both foreign investment and geopolitical attention from larger powers like the U.S. and China.

Climate Vulnerability: Due to its location, the Caribbean is highly susceptible to climate change, especially hurricanes, rising sea levels, and extreme weather patterns. This makes the region vulnerable to natural disasters, which can disrupt both the local and global economy, especially tourism and agriculture.

2. Economic State of the Caribbean:

The Caribbean's economic state is diverse and dynamic, shaped by historical factors like colonialism, modern-day global economic trends, and its strategic position. Several key aspects of the region's economy include:

Tourism:

Tourism is one of the most important drivers of the Caribbean economy. Many nations in the region are heavily reliant on visitors, especially from North America and Europe. The idyllic beaches, cultural heritage, and tropical climate make the Caribbean a top vacation destination. However, this dependence also makes the region vulnerable to global economic downturns, pandemics (like COVID-19), and climate-related events (like hurricanes).

In 2020, the tourism industry in the Caribbean was severely impacted by the global pandemic, with major losses in revenue. However, there are signs of recovery as global travel resumes.

Agriculture and Trade:

Historically, the Caribbean economy has been dependent on agricultural exports like sugar, bananas, coffee, and tobacco. Many countries in the region still rely on these sectors, though they have become more diversified over the years.

For example, countries like Trinidad and Tobago are major exporters of oil and natural gas, while Jamaica is known for its bauxite and aluminum production. This energy and mineral sector has brought wealth but also exposes these nations to fluctuations in global commodity prices.

Debt and Economic Inequality:

Many Caribbean countries face high levels of public debt, partly due to the need to finance development,

infrastructure projects, and recovery from natural disasters. The economic impact of debt is felt particularly in smaller economies, where resources are limited and the public sector often has to bear the brunt of social welfare programs. Economic inequality is also a significant challenge. While some areas (such as Barbados and the Bahamas) have relatively high standards of living, many other islands suffer from high unemployment rates, especially among young people, and limited access to education and healthcare.

Energy and Natural Resources:

Oil and natural gas resources have become an important source of revenue, especially for countries like Trinidad and Tobago. In recent years, the Caribbean has also seen a shift toward renewable energy as part of efforts to diversify the energy mix and reduce dependence on fossil fuels. Countries like the Dominican Republic and Jamaica are making strides in solar and wind energy.

Foreign Investment and International Aid:

Foreign investment plays a significant role in Caribbean economies, especially from countries like the U.S., Canada, and China. Investment often flows into sectors like infrastructure, real estate (e.g., tourism resorts), and energy. However, there is concern about the growing influence of China in the region, which has led to both opportunities and concerns over debt dependency.

Many Caribbean nations also rely on foreign aid, particularly from international organizations like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and regional development banks. This assistance is critical in times of crisis, such as after hurricanes or economic downturns.

Resilience and Adaptation:

The Caribbean is working on building resilience to climate change and diversifying its economies beyond tourism and agriculture. There is a growing focus on blue economy initiatives, which include sustainable fisheries, ocean conservation, and marine-based industries.

Many countries are also looking to digital transformation and innovation in sectors such as fintech, technology, and education to diversify their economies and create new jobs.

3. How the Caribbean Is Developing

The Caribbean is undergoing a gradual but meaningful

structural transformation aimed at reducing its long-standing dependence on mono-export economies, particularly those centered on tourism. Increasingly, countries in the region are diversifying into services such as information and communication technologies (ICT), creative industries, green energy, and niche manufacturing. This transition reflects a strategic effort to build more resilient and sustainable economic models.

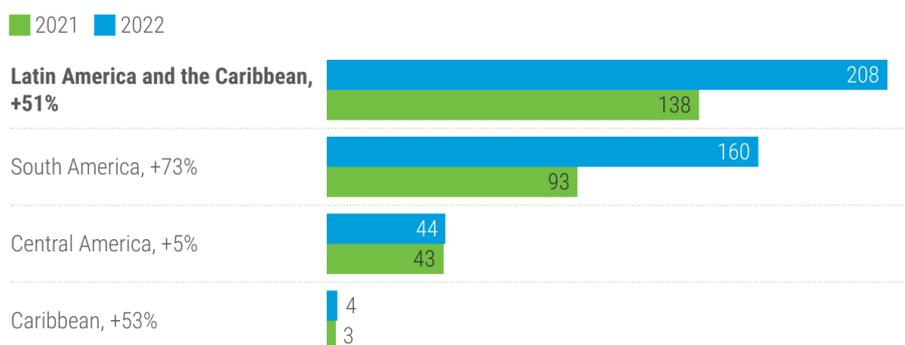
Digital transformation is a central pillar of this evolution. Countries like Barbados and Jamaica are making concerted investments in digital governance frameworks, financial

technology (fintech) infrastructure, and business process outsourcing (BPO) industries. These sectors are not only attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) but also providing employment opportunities and fostering knowledge-based economies. Complementing these efforts are large-scale logistics and maritime projects. The expansion of key ports, including the Kingston Freeport Terminal in Jamaica, positions select Caribbean states as strategic logistics hubs, particularly in light of increased maritime traffic following the expansion of the Panama Canal.



Foreign direct investment grows in Latin America and the Caribbean

By subregion, billions of dollars, per cent, 2021–2022



Source: UNCTAD, FDI/MNE database (<https://unctad.org/fdistatistics>).

Policy and regional integration mechanisms are playing a crucial role in reinforcing this developmental trajectory. The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has launched initiatives aimed at promoting investment facilitation, improving customs harmonization, and supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and innovation systems. These efforts are bolstered by international development partners such as UNCTAD, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the European Union, which provide financial and technical assistance to enhance climate resilience and develop emerging sectors of the blue economy, including marine biotechnology and fisheries.

However, the region continues to face persistent challenges. The Caribbean’s high vulnerability to climate shocks not only threatens livelihoods and infrastructure but also undermines investor confidence. Market fragmentation and small population sizes constrain economies of scale, while over-dependence on volatile sectors such as tourism and remittances renders the region susceptible to external fluctuations. Moreover, infrastructure gaps, particularly in energy and transportation, and a mismatch between education systems and the skills demanded by high-growth

sectors, limit the region’s capacity to capitalize on its emerging opportunities.

In sum, while the Caribbean’s economic outlook remains constrained by structural vulnerabilities, ongoing diversification, digital upgrading, and regional policy coordination are creating a foundation for more sustainable and resilient growth.

5. History of the Caribbean

The history of the Caribbean is deeply intertwined with the history of Latin America, especially through colonialism, slavery, independence movements, and cultural exchange. While the Caribbean is often seen as distinct due to its island geography and English, French, Spanish, and Dutch colonial legacies, it shares significant historical and social ties with mainland Latin America.

1. Connection Between the Caribbean and Latin America:

Colonialism and Slavery: Both Latin America and the Caribbean were shaped by Spanish, Portuguese, and other European colonial powers. The Caribbean was a crucial part of the transatlantic slave trade, with millions of Africans brought to work on sugar plantations. This common history of colonial exploitation and slavery links the experiences of Caribbean nations with Latin American countries.

Independence Movements: Throughout the 19th century, the desire for independence from European powers unified both the Caribbean and Latin America. While places like Cuba, Haiti, and Venezuela led revolutionary struggles, they were influenced by shared ideals of freedom and anti-colonialism seen across the Americas, with prominent figures such as Simón Bolívar (Venezuela) and Toussaint Louverture (Haiti) marking key moments.

Cultural and Political Exchange: The Caribbean and Latin America have historically exchanged cultural, political, and intellectual influences. For instance, Caribbean writers like Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon were significant figures in Pan-African and post-colonial movements, which resonated with Latin American revolutionary thought. On the other hand, Cuba's 1959 revolution had widespread influence across Latin America, helping to shape the region's left-wing politics for decades.

6. Malleable Yet Enduring Identity Elements in the Caribbean:

The Caribbean's identity is both resilient and flexible, shaped by a history of colonization, slavery, migration, and cultural blending. Several elements of Caribbean identity are malleable, yet they remain enduring:

Cultural Hybridity: The Caribbean's identity is often described as a blend of African, Indigenous, European, and Asian influences, creating a rich tapestry of music, dance, language, and religion. This hybridity is malleable, constantly evolving through contemporary migration, globalization, and cultural exchange. Yet, it remains a vital part of the Caribbean's distinct identity, with examples like reggae music, which combines African rhythms with European influences, or the blending of Christianity with African spiritual practices.

Language: Language in the Caribbean is often a key marker of identity, with a variety of languages spoken across the region, including Spanish, English, French, Dutch, Creole, and Patois. While these languages may change and evolve over time, the languages are a testament to the region's colonial past and serve as a reminder of resilience and continuity.

Community and Kinship: Caribbean societies have been forged through a strong sense of community, often rooted in

extended families and collective action. This communal aspect remains enduring, as people in the Caribbean continue to emphasize collective cultural expressions, like festivals (Carnival, for instance), and the importance of solidarity in times of struggle.

Resistance and Autonomy: The struggle for freedom from colonial rule, and the continued fight for social, economic, and political equality, are deeply embedded in Caribbean identity. The resilience of the people, as seen in the independence of countries like Haiti or the civil rights movements in the Caribbean, represents an enduring link to the past while adapting to contemporary realities.

Thus, the Caribbean's identity is both flexible in response to external influences but rooted in a history of survival, resistance, and cultural blending that remains core to its sense of self.

7. Regions compared

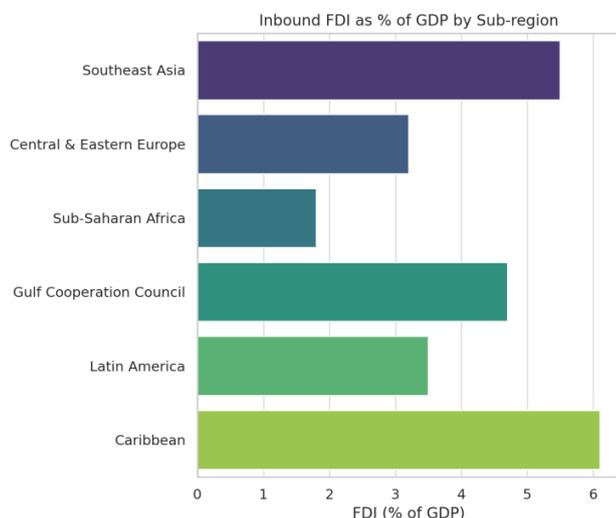
Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and trade volumes vary significantly across global sub-regions, reflecting differences in economic integration, sectoral specialization, and institutional development. Southeast Asia has emerged as a major hub for inbound FDI, especially in countries like Vietnam, where FDI accounts for a high proportion of GDP. This trend is driven by the region's integration into global manufacturing and electronics value chains, further reinforced by regional agreements such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). The volume of trade in the ASEAN region is also substantial, with intra-Asian trade playing a prominent role.

Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) display a moderately high level of inbound FDI, benefiting from their EU membership and the resulting economic convergence. Countries like Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic attract investment in advanced manufacturing and automotive sectors, supported by stable regulatory environments and proximity to Western European markets. Their trade volume remains high and is closely tied to the dynamics of the broader EU single market.

Sub-Saharan Africa presents a more mixed picture. FDI inflows are generally low to moderate and are often concentrated in a handful of economies, such as Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya. These flows are typically directed toward extractive industries, telecommunications, and agriculture. However, overall trade volumes remain limited relative to the region's potential, hindered by underdeveloped infrastructure, weak regional integration,

and regulatory inconsistencies.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, by contrast, report high levels of FDI in selected sectors such as logistics, tourism, and increasingly, renewable energy. Driven by long-term diversification strategies such as Saudi Arabia’s Vision

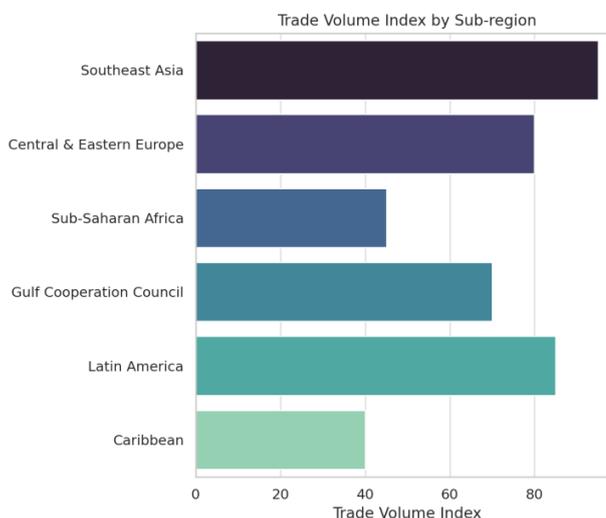


In Latin America, excluding the Caribbean, FDI is moderate to high in countries like Brazil and Mexico. These economies attract investment in natural resources, agro-industrial production, and, in the case of Mexico, manufacturing supported by proximity to the U.S. market under the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA). The volume of trade is significant, especially in resource-rich and trade-oriented economies such as Chile and Peru.

The Caribbean stands out for its relatively high FDI inflows as a percentage of GDP, although absolute volumes remain modest due to small market sizes. FDI is concentrated in tourism infrastructure, offshore financial services, and special economic zones. The Dominican Republic is a regional leader, attracting diversified investments in manufacturing, business process outsourcing (BPO), mining, and renewable energy. Trade volumes in the Caribbean are generally modest and largely service-oriented, dominated by tourism exports and a narrow range of agricultural and manufactured goods. Despite efforts by CARICOM to foster regional integration and intra-Caribbean trade, fragmentation and logistical bottlenecks limit scale efficiencies.

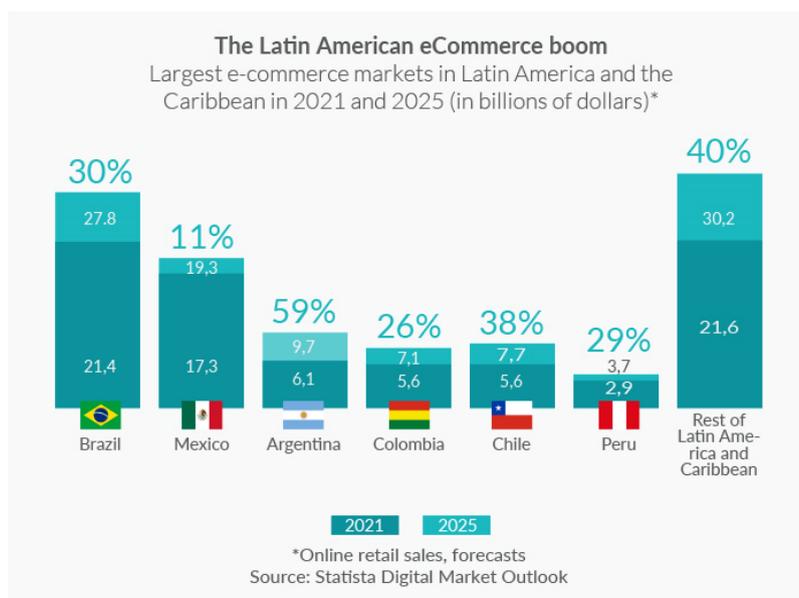
The Caribbean’s development trajectory is characterized by

2030, these economies are gradually shifting from hydrocarbon dependency toward more diversified, service-based models. Their trade volumes, historically dominated by oil exports, are undergoing structural transformation as new sectors are integrated into the export basket.



an ongoing shift from mono-export dependence toward greater service diversification. Economies such as Barbados and Jamaica are advancing digital transformation through investments in fintech, digital governance, and call center operations. At the same time, countries are investing in logistics infrastructure, such as the modernization of the Kingston Freeport Terminal in Jamaica, to position themselves as regional maritime hubs. Policy frameworks under CARICOM are supporting investment facilitation, customs harmonization, and SME development. International organizations have also provided support to build climate resilience, develop the blue economy, and stimulate innovation ecosystems.

Nevertheless, challenges persist. Caribbean economies remain vulnerable to external shocks, including climate-related disasters and global downturns in tourism. The small size of most markets limits scalability, and overdependence on volatile income sources such as tourism and remittances constrains fiscal resilience. Additionally, infrastructure gaps and labor market mismatches hinder the transition to a more diversified and competitive economic base.



In conclusion, while the Caribbean trails other sub-regions in total trade volumes and FDI amounts, it demonstrates a notable capacity for adaptation through service-sector upgrading, targeted investment strategies, and regional cooperation. Its future economic development will depend on its ability to deepen integration, leverage digital and green technologies, and build resilience to external shocks.

Summary

The Caribbean is progressing through **strategic diversification, regional cooperation, and selective sectoral upgrading**. Compared to other sub-regions, it may lag in volume but punches above its weight in service-led FDI attraction. The next phase of development hinges on **digital, green, and regional synergies**, which require structural reforms and targeted investments.

The Caribbean occupies a unique geopolitical position that connects key regions like the Americas and Europe, with strategic significance in global trade, energy, and security. However, its economy remains vulnerable to external influences, especially climate change, global economic shifts, and debt. While the region is working on diversifying its economy and increasing resilience, challenges persist, and a balancing act between sustainable growth, innovation, and adaptation remains critical to its future. The Caribbean is progressing through **strategic diversification, regional cooperation, and selective sectoral upgrading**. Compared to other sub-regions, it may lag in volume but punches above its weight in service-led FDI attraction. The next phase of development hinges on **digital, green, and regional synergies**, which require structural reforms and targeted investments.

4. CASE STUDIES OF MEXICO'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Mexico’s engagement with the Caribbean is shaped by historical, cultural, and economic factors that have long connected the region. However, in comparison to other regional and global actors such as the United States, China, Venezuela, and Brazil, Mexico's approach offers distinct opportunities and challenges

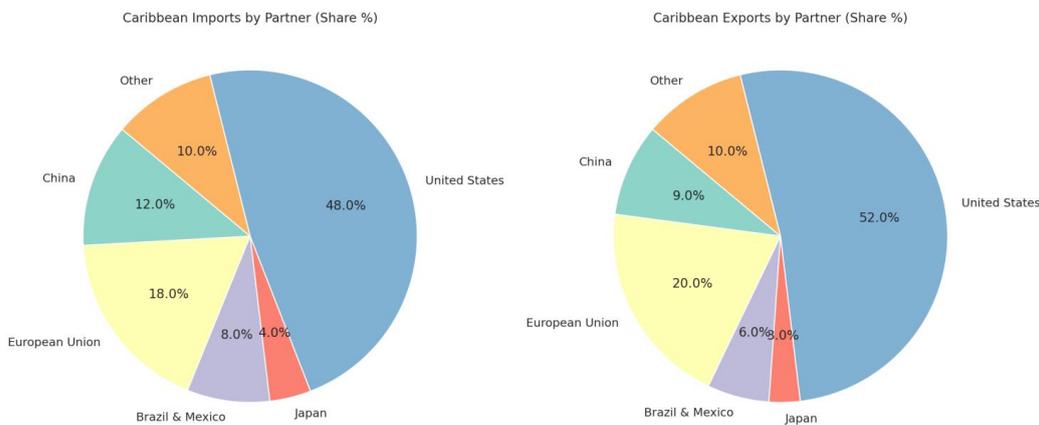
Comparative Perspectives

Mexico vs. the United States: The United States has been a dominant force in the Caribbean for centuries, both economically and diplomatically. U.S. trade with the region is substantial, accounting for 43% of total Caribbean exports in 2021. The U.S. has a robust military and strategic presence, with strong interests in countering drug trafficking, migration, and maintaining stability in its sphere of influence. Mexico, by contrast, shares similar interests but focuses more on regional cooperation, social development, and diplomacy, with a greater emphasis on regional integration through bodies like CELAC and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC).

Mexico vs. China: China has been expanding its presence in the Caribbean, particularly through investments in infrastructure, trade, and loans. In 2020, China became the second-largest trading partner for the Caribbean after the U.S., with growing investments in ports, energy, and telecommunications. Unlike China’s often transactional approach, Mexico has emphasized cooperation and mutual development, with fewer dependencies on loans and more

focus on building sustainable, culturally-embedded partnerships. The rise of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Caribbean further challenges Mexico's traditional leadership role, as Caribbean countries increasingly look to China for infrastructure development and financing. The charts above illustrate the distribution of the Caribbean region's imports and exports by major trading partners. The

United States dominates both import and export flows, followed by the European Union and China. Brazil, Mexico, and Japan account for more modest shares, while the "Other" category includes regional and smaller global partners. These trade patterns reflect historical ties, geographic proximity, and sectoral dependencies—especially the strong orientation toward U.S. markets.



Mexico vs. Venezuela: Venezuela, due to its oil wealth, has historically had strong ties with Caribbean nations, especially through initiatives like Petrocaribe, which provided discounted oil to Caribbean countries. Venezuela's influence has waned due to its economic crisis, but it remains a key partner for certain countries in the region. Mexico, unlike Venezuela, focuses on democratization, human rights, and sustainable development, aligning with international standards, which gives it a diplomatic edge in certain contexts.

Mexico vs. Brazil: Brazil and Mexico both view the Caribbean as an important partner for regional integration, but Brazil's focus tends to be more on the expansion of trade, technical cooperation, and leadership within the BRICS framework. Brazil has a larger population and more economic heft in some areas like agribusiness, but Mexico's diplomatic approach through CELAC and the Pacific Alliance (PA) offers broader regional support. Brazil is also more active in development aid through initiatives like South-South cooperation, while Mexico's approach often involves direct partnerships on issues like migration and climate resilience.

Mexico and Brazil, Latin America's two largest economies, are actively deepening their trade relationship amid a shifting global economic landscape. Since Claudia Sheinbaum assumed Mexico's presidency in October 2024, informal discussions have progressed on modernizing a limited trade agreement dating back to the early 2000s, which currently covers approximately 800 product categories. Frequent high-level meetings between Sheinbaum and Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva have reinforced this momentum, with plans underway for Brazil's trade secretary to visit Mexico in

August 2025 to further examine possibilities for an expanded deal. The two leaders reiterated their commitment to enhancing economic cooperation during a regional summit in Honduras, positioning this partnership as a stabilizing response to increasing U.S. trade volatility and interventionist policies. Although the tone of engagement remains positive and constructive, the process is still in its early stages. Talks are progressing cautiously and incrementally, reflecting mutual sensitivities—particularly with respect to broader geopolitical dynamics involving the United States and China.

On the investment front, foreign direct investment (FDI) in Latin America increased by 7.1% in 2024, reaching nearly \$189 billion. Brazil captured the largest share of these inflows, accounting for 38% of the regional total, while Mexico followed with 24%. In the first half of 2024 alone, Brazil attracted approximately \$32 billion in FDI, narrowly ahead of Mexico's \$31 billion. Over the full year, Brazil's FDI inflows rose by 13.8%, while Mexico experienced an even sharper increase of nearly 48%. In the first quarter of 2025, Mexico secured \$21.4 billion in FDI, marking a 5.4% year-on-year growth. However, it is notable that between 80% and 92% of these inflows were reinvestments by firms already operating in the country, rather than greenfield or new investment projects. Manufacturing—particularly in the automotive sector—remains Mexico's largest recipient of FDI at 43%, followed by financial services at 24% and mining at 10%. Brazil, in contrast, continues to attract investment into its natural resource and industrial sectors, with developments such as

Komatsu's \$25 million expansion in São Paulo and Vale's \$12 billion plan through 2030 to increase iron ore and copper production. Nevertheless, external pressures are shaping investment decisions; for instance, U.S. steel tariffs prompted Brazilian firm Gerdaul to abandon a planned new mill in Mexico in favor of expanding production in Michigan and Arkansas.

Overall, both Mexico and Brazil are experiencing growing investor confidence, although Brazil remains slightly ahead in terms of absolute inflows. Mexico benefits from strong reinvestment activity and a thriving manufacturing base, while Brazil continues to attract long-term capital to its infrastructure and natural resource sectors. Crucially, the deepening bilateral engagement between these two economies is not only about commerce, but also about redefining Latin America's position in the global order. Their cooperation signals a strategic intent to diversify partnerships, strengthen regional integration, and contribute to long-term peace and development—particularly in Mesoamerica, where economic revitalization is seen as key to stability and social cohesion.

Trade Statistics and Trajectories

In terms of trade, Mexico's commercial relationships with the Caribbean have grown steadily over the past two decades. In 2020, Mexico's exports to the Caribbean totaled \$6.3 billion, primarily consisting of chemicals, machinery, vehicles, and agricultural products. The Caribbean's exports to Mexico amounted to \$2.3 billion, with the main products being petroleum, sugar, and metals.

The trajectory of Mexican trade with the Caribbean has been marked by significant expansion, especially since the launch of the Pacific Alliance (PA), a regional integration initiative involving Mexico, Chile, Colombia, and Peru. The PA aims to deepen economic ties with the Pacific Rim and expand trade with the Caribbean region. This economic framework

contrasts with the regional integration models of the EU and Brazil, offering Mexico a distinctive, less conditional approach to cooperation. Furthermore, the free trade agreements (FTAs) that Mexico has with several Caribbean countries allow for easier market access and stronger economic interdependence.

Mexico's key sectors of engagement with the Caribbean include tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy. It has made substantial strides in these areas, such as launching a solar energy cooperation project in the Dominican Republic and providing aid to countries like Haiti and Jamaica in response to natural disasters.

Mexico and CELAC

The Fourth EU–CELAC Summit will take place in Santa Marta, Colombia, on 9–10 November 2025. It will focus on strengthening trade and investment ties, particularly through Europe's Global Gateway initiative. Leaders are expected to announce new projects in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, and digital connectivity. For the Caribbean, the summit is a chance to secure investment in climate resilience, disaster preparedness, and sustainable tourism. The agenda will emphasize accelerating the green and digital transitions across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Security cooperation will be a priority, including tackling organized crime, maritime trafficking routes, and border security challenges that impact Caribbean states. Development financing linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals is set to feature prominently, with small island developing states (SIDS) pressing for tailored funding mechanisms. Pending trade agreements like EU–Mercosur and EU–Mexico may see renewed momentum, while Caribbean nations seek better market access for key exports.



Geopolitically, the summit is framed by China’s growing influence in the region and the EU’s bid to be a key partner for Caribbean economies. Civil society and private sector groups will play a role through forums and advocacy meetings ahead of the summit. Gender equality, blue economy development, and inclusive growth for small island states are expected to be highlighted in the outcomes.

Drug transshipment through the Caribbean is a major concern. The region—due to its many islands, vast sea lanes, and weak maritime governance—is still a prime corridor for cocaine bound for Europe and North America. Rising involvement of Mexican cartels in Caribbean logistics: cartels like Sinaloa and CJNG collaborate with local partners to move narcotics via Caribbean routes, posing regional security and judicial challenges. Fragmented law enforcement across jurisdictions: small Caribbean states often face judicial capacity limits, corruption, and weak state institutions, making transnational prosecutions difficult. Maritime insecurity and illicit arms flows: smuggling of firearms, precursor chemicals, money laundering, and human trafficking also use maritime routes, facilitated by fragmented port oversight and porous borders. Through multilateral forums like the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), Mexico has deepened ties, chairing key committees on disaster risk reduction and promoting Caribbean integration into broader Latin American initiatives. Mexico’s CELAC diplomacy emphasizes multilateral cooperation, human mobility, and shared development strategies, guided by principles like non-intervention and

sovereign equality (Estrada Doctrine). Security cooperation models like the U.S.-funded Mérida Initiative have long featured in Mexico’s regional policy, though critics argue it neglects human rights and national priorities and exhibits limited long-term success.

At the summit, Mexico can reinforce its role as a bridge between Latin American and Caribbean justice institutions—advocating for deeper EL PACCTO engagement and tailored support for small island developing states. **Security cooperation deliverables** could include joint maritime patrol frameworks, port control harmonization, intelligence-sharing, and collaborative training missions linking Caribbean, Mexican and EU agencies. Mexico is likely to call for **Capacity-building partnerships** targeting judicial systems, transparent prisons, cybercrime capabilities, forensics, and anti-corruption measures within Caribbean states.

Given domestic security pressures from cartels, Mexico may underscore the need for **South-South coordination**, sharing investigative experience and law enforcement logistics with Caribbean partners, rather than top-down external models. Strategically, Mexico’s participation positions it as a **regional security interlocutor** between EU and Caribbean governments, advancing its foreign policy vision of integration, sovereignty, and regional solidarity under the CELAC framework.

Summary Table

Theme	Summit Relevance
Organised Crime & Maritime Security	Major theme: drugs, arms, human trafficking via maritime routes.
Mexico’s Role	Key regional actor linking Latin America and the Caribbean.
Policy Focus	Expand EL PACCTO 2.0, capacity-building, judicial cooperation.
Diplomatic Angle	Promote South-South cooperation, respect sovereignty, advance CELAC integration.

The objective of this piece is to analyze the nature and extent of Mexico's trade relationships with Caribbean nations, focusing on the types of goods exchanged and the economic impact of these relationships. Additionally, the study aims to evaluate the efforts and challenges faced by Caribbean territories in diversifying their economies beyond tourism, particularly in sectors like renewable energy and agriculture. It also seeks to investigate the implications of Mexico's healthcare cooperation with Cuba and its effects on public health in the Caribbean region. Furthermore, the research will assess Mexico's role in disaster relief efforts in the Caribbean

and its contributions to climate resilience initiatives. Finally, the study intends to develop actionable recommendations for enhancing regional cooperation, addressing security challenges, and promoting sustainable development in the Caribbean.

Mexico’s approach—anchored in multilateral dialogue and support for Caribbean institutional strengthening—could play a pivotal role at the Summit in aligning EU-CELAC commitments on organised crime and maritime security with Caribbean realities.

Botero's voluptuous sculptures look like they've been fed a steady diet of EU structural funds and Caribbean rum. If EU-CELAC relations had a mascot, it would be one of his figures reclining lazily—symbolizing "strategic dialogue" with extra curves. Integration may be slow, but at least it's got flair, form, and fabulous proportions.

Summary

Mexico's engagement with the Caribbean is shaped by a mix of geographic proximity, historical ties, geopolitical strategy, and diplomatic ambition. Compared to other external actors like the United States, China, and the European Union, Mexico's approach is more regionally embedded and politically symbolic, though less resourced.

Mexico positions itself as a **bridge between Latin America, North America, and the Caribbean**, and it has consistently supported multilateral platforms such as **CELAC** and **CARICOM**, often advocating for South-South cooperation and regional solidarity. Its involvement emphasizes political dialogue, cultural ties, disaster relief, and technical cooperation, particularly in areas such as climate resilience, education, and health.

While not a major economic investor like China or the US, Mexico pursues **diplomatic and institutional leadership** to project regional influence. It has offered scholarships, medical brigades, and diplomatic support to Caribbean nations, while promoting collective positions in international forums, especially on development, debt relief, and climate change.

However, Mexico's Caribbean engagement remains **uneven** and sometimes **overshadowed by its deep economic and security entanglements with the United States**. As a result, its influence is often more symbolic than structural, but it plays a valuable role in amplifying Caribbean voices and fostering Latin American-Caribbean alignment on global issues.

In comparative terms, Mexico's engagement is regionally grounded and politically cooperative, but constrained by limited financial resources and competing geopolitical priorities. Its future role will depend on whether it can consolidate sustained, multidimensional ties and offer credible leadership that complements rather than competes with larger powers in the Caribbean.

5.CASE STUDIES OF MEXICO'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

Mexico's Support in Disaster Relief and Climate Resilience

(Hurricane Dorian, Bahamas, 2019): Mexico has been instrumental in responding to natural disasters in the Caribbean. Following Hurricane Dorian's devastation of the Bahamas, Mexico quickly mobilized aid, providing financial assistance, food, and medical supplies. The collaboration between Mexico's National Disaster Fund (FONDEN) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) exemplifies Mexico's role in regional disaster management.

In addition, Mexico is investing in long-term climate adaptation strategies in partnership with countries like Jamaica and Dominica, focusing on coastal resilience, water management, and disaster preparedness.

Mexico and Cuba's Collaborative Healthcare Projects:

Mexico's engagement with Cuba has been longstanding, particularly in the field of healthcare. Mexico has collaborated with Cuba on public health initiatives, such as the Mexico-Cuba Health Cooperation Program, which aims to reduce chronic diseases in both countries. This program demonstrates Mexico's commitment to healthcare development in the region and offers a model for other countries in the Caribbean.

Mexico's Diplomatic Role in Haiti:

Haiti, one of the poorest nations in the Caribbean, has received substantial support from Mexico. Through initiatives such as the Mexican Agency for International Development Cooperation (AMEXCID), Mexico has provided both emergency humanitarian aid and long-term development assistance in Haiti, focusing on healthcare, education, and infrastructure. This engagement shows Mexico's role as a diplomatic bridge between Haiti and the international community.

6.POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Regional Integration Frameworks:

Mexico should continue to enhance its role within CELAC, the Pacific Alliance, and CARICOM. It can play a pivotal role in fostering deeper economic and political integration in the Caribbean by facilitating free trade, improving infrastructure connectivity, and aligning environmental policies. Further integration can also reduce the region's dependency on external actors like the U.S. and China, while offering the Caribbean a unified voice on global platforms.

Expanding Climate Diplomacy and Resilience Projects:

Mexico has an opportunity to take a leading role in climate diplomacy in the Caribbean. Expanding initiatives such as solar energy and disaster-resilient infrastructure in

countries like the Bahamas, Cuba, and Jamaica can build stronger, more sustainable relationships. Mexico could also advocate for more targeted climate financing for the region from international organizations.

Diversifying Trade Relationships: While Mexico's trade with the Caribbean has grown, it can further diversify by expanding exports beyond traditional products. Mexico should focus on enhancing manufacturing and technology exports, offering more competitive products in sectors such as ICT, automotive, and consumer goods. Additionally, collaboration with the Caribbean on tourism innovation and cultural industries could further strengthen ties.

Strengthening Humanitarian and Development Aid: Mexico should continue to provide development assistance to the Caribbean, particularly to nations like Haiti and Cuba, focusing on healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Mexico could set up a more formalized regional development fund to coordinate aid and attract international support for projects in the region.

Building Strategic Partnerships with China and the EU: Rather than viewing China's influence as a competitor, Mexico can strengthen its regional strategy by seeking strategic partnerships with China and the EU. This could include joint ventures in renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and sustainable tourism.

In summary, Mexico's diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagements with the Caribbean are vital for regional development, as it brings a unique combination of cultural ties, economic cooperation, and multilateral diplomacy. However, to remain influential amidst growing competition from global actors, Mexico must continue to deepen its regional integration efforts, expand its role in climate resilience, and diversify trade relationships with the Caribbean nations. By doing so, it can not only strengthen its position but also contribute meaningfully to the Caribbean's sustainable growth and prosperity.

7.PERSPECTIVES FROM DIVERSE STAKEHOLDERS

Mexico's diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagements in the Caribbean are shaped not only by state-level interactions but also by the perspectives of diplomats, government officials, local communities, and regional organizations. These stakeholders provide valuable insights into the successes, challenges, and opportunities within Mexico's engagement in the region. By incorporating these viewpoints, we gain a richer understanding of the nuanced dynamics that influence Mexico's strategies and their impact on Caribbean development.

Comparative Perspectives: Mexico and Global Actors

Mexico vs. the United States: "Mexico sees itself as a partner to the Caribbean, focusing on integration and mutual benefit rather than dominance," says Carlos González, Mexico's Ambassador to CARICOM. While the U.S. plays a dominant role in the Caribbean through trade, military presence, and security initiatives, Mexico's approach is rooted in "cooperation based on shared values of sovereignty and self-determination". Unlike the U.S., which emphasizes security cooperation and trade liberalization, Mexico engages in multilateral diplomacy through CELAC and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), emphasizing regional integration and sustainable development. As González explains, "Our role is to bridge gaps, particularly in areas of social development and disaster resilience."

Mexico vs. China: China has been increasing its influence in the Caribbean, largely through infrastructure development and financing initiatives, such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Diana Fernández, a regional development expert with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), notes that "China's investments in infrastructure have created opportunities for economic growth but have also introduced debt dependency in some cases." She highlights that while China offers quick, large-scale financial support, Mexico's engagement model is more focused on "sustainable, mutual development that balances economic needs with social equity." This contrast underscores Mexico's emphasis on long-term partnerships over short-term transactional deals.

Mexico vs. Venezuela: Venezuela, once a major energy partner through initiatives like Petrocaribe, has seen its influence in the Caribbean wane due to economic challenges. José Alberto Rodríguez, Mexico's Ambassador to Venezuela, explains, "While Venezuela's support for Caribbean nations through discounted oil was important, it also created a dependence that limited diversification. Mexico's role is to offer alternatives, not just in energy, but in strengthening the region's overall resilience." Mexico's diversified approach contrasts with Venezuela's more focused energy diplomacy, positioning it as a reliable, multi-faceted partner for Caribbean development.

Mexico vs. Brazil: Brazil, a major economic power in the region, shares many interests with Mexico, particularly in advancing regional integration and South-South cooperation. Ricardo Pimentel, a Brazilian diplomat in the Caribbean, states, "Mexico's approach to regional diplomacy is often more inclusive, while Brazil tends to focus on leadership within the BRICS framework." He points out that Brazil has been a key partner in areas such as agriculture and infrastructure, but Mexico's emphasis on cultural exchange and people-to-people ties through

programs like Mexican scholarships for Caribbean students offers a unique dimension to its relations with the region.

Trade Statistics, Trajectories, and Regional Stakeholder Perspectives

Mexico's trade with the Caribbean has expanded significantly over the last two decades. In 2020, Mexico's exports to the Caribbean amounted to \$6.3 billion, while imports from the region totaled \$2.3 billion. The Caribbean's primary exports to Mexico are petroleum, sugar, and metals, while Mexico exports chemicals, machinery, vehicles, and agricultural products. This trade is facilitated by Mexico's free trade agreements (FTAs) with several Caribbean countries, enhancing market access and encouraging economic diversification.

Maria Torres, a representative from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), emphasizes that "Mexico's trade expansion with the Caribbean is particularly significant because it offers smaller Caribbean countries access to Mexico's advanced manufacturing sectors. This promotes industrial development in areas such as technology and renewable energy." Mexico's growing role as a trade partner, especially in the sectors of renewable energy and agriculture, represents an opportunity for Caribbean economies to reduce dependency on traditional imports, fostering more sustainable local industries.

However, local communities in Caribbean nations sometimes face challenges regarding trade imbalances. Lilian Jones, a community leader in Jamaica, reflects, "While Mexico has brought economic opportunities, such as the expansion of renewable energy projects, we sometimes feel that smaller local businesses don't benefit as much from trade agreements as large corporations do." This feedback highlights the need for inclusive growth strategies that ensure local communities share in the benefits of Mexico's trade partnerships.

Case Studies of Mexico's Engagement in the Caribbean

Mexico's Role in Disaster Relief and Climate Resilience (Hurricane Dorian, Bahamas, 2019): In response to Hurricane Dorian's devastation of the Bahamas, Mexico was among the first countries to provide aid. The Mexican government, through its National Disaster Fund (FONDEN), sent medical supplies, food, and financial assistance to support recovery efforts. The partnership with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) exemplified Mexico's commitment to regional solidarity. Michelle Clarke, a CDEMA official, states, "Mexico's prompt response was critical. Their disaster relief efforts set a precedent for how the region can cooperate and respond quickly to natural disasters." Mexico has continued its involvement in climate resilience projects, such as promoting solar energy and disaster-

resistant infrastructure in the Caribbean. Carlos Medina, an energy consultant in Jamaica, explains, "Mexico's investment in renewable energy, particularly solar, is exactly what the Caribbean needs. It helps us reduce our reliance on fossil fuels while enhancing energy security and sustainability."

2. Mexico and Cuba's Collaborative Healthcare Projects: Mexico and Cuba have a long-standing partnership in the healthcare sector, particularly in public health cooperation. The Mexico-Cuba Health Cooperation Program has focused on reducing chronic diseases and enhancing healthcare infrastructure. Dr. Luis Hernández, a Mexican healthcare official, explains, "Our partnership with Cuba is based on shared expertise in public health and affordable medicine. We both understand the importance of community-driven healthcare models, which has strengthened our collaborative efforts in the Caribbean."

Mexico's healthcare cooperation with Cuba has also had significant regional impact, as many Caribbean countries, particularly in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), benefit from the shared knowledge and resources. Sandra Miles, a Caribbean health policymaker, states, "Cuba's medical expertise combined with Mexico's logistical and financial support has created a robust framework for tackling health crises in our region."

Policy Recommendations

1. **Strengthen Multilateral Frameworks for Regional Integration:** Mexico should continue to prioritize its role within CELAC and the Pacific Alliance, advocating for deeper economic integration and joint solutions to regional challenges. Carlos González, Mexico's Ambassador to CARICOM, suggests that "we need a more coordinated approach to free trade and regional infrastructure projects that involve all Caribbean countries, from the larger economies to the smallest island nations."
2. **Diversify Economic and Trade Partnerships:** Mexico should focus on diversifying trade relationships, especially by expanding exports in sectors such as ICT, renewable energy, and sustainable tourism. Diana Fernández from the IDB notes, "Mexico can take the lead in helping Caribbean nations diversify their economies, particularly in emerging sectors like technology and green energy."
3. **Enhance People-to-People Connections:** Building on cultural diplomacy, Mexico can expand scholarship programs, student exchanges, and cultural initiatives to strengthen ties with Caribbean communities. José Alberto Rodríguez, Mexico's Ambassador to Haiti,

affirms that “people-to-people ties are foundational for long-term cooperation. By investing in education and cultural exchange, Mexico strengthens its soft power in the region.”

4. **Focus on Localized Development Initiatives:** Incorporating community-driven development models in trade agreements and infrastructure projects will ensure that local populations directly benefit from Mexico’s regional engagements. Lilian Jones from Jamaica stresses, “We need to ensure that small businesses and local communities are not left behind in the pursuit of big trade deals and that there is genuine economic inclusion.”
5. **Support Regional Climate Action and Renewable Energy:** Mexico should continue to lead regional climate resilience projects, focusing on sustainable energy and disaster prevention initiatives. Carlos Medina from Jamaica suggests, “We need more partnerships in green energy that focus on local capacity-building and technology transfer to make the region less vulnerable to climate change.”

To sum-up: Mexico’s engagement with the Caribbean offers a compelling model of regional cooperation, informed by diverse stakeholders. Mexico’s diplomatic, economic, and cultural initiatives are making a significant impact, yet they can be further strengthened by fostering inclusive development, deepening regional integration, and expanding partnerships across trade, technology, and climate action. The perspectives of diplomats, government officials, and local communities enrich the dialogue, ensuring that Mexico’s engagement with the Caribbean remains mutually beneficial and responsive to the region’s needs.

8. AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE ON MEXICO’S ENGAGEMENT IN CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT

Mexico’s engagement in Caribbean development is a dynamic and multifaceted process that benefits from analysis through multiple disciplines. Drawing on political science, economics, environmental studies, and cultural studies provides a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities and challenges that characterize this relationship.

Political Science: Regional Diplomacy and Integration

From a political science perspective, Mexico’s engagement is deeply rooted in the promotion of regional integration and multilateralism. Through frameworks like CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), CARICOM (Caribbean Community), and the Pacific Alliance, Mexico seeks to position itself as a mediator and bridge between the Caribbean and broader Latin American interests.

This role reflects the “soft power” approach emphasized by political science theories of regionalism, where smaller states benefit from coordinated diplomacy and mutual representation on global platforms.

Political scientists highlight Mexico’s efforts in fostering a unified regional voice in addressing global challenges such as climate change and sustainable development. Mexico’s diplomatic initiatives, such as its leadership during CELAC summits, reflect its commitment to what Robert Keohane’s institutionalism terms “complex interdependence” — creating institutions that promote cooperation while balancing the asymmetries between larger economies and small island states.

Mexico’s political focus is distinct from the hegemonic strategies of powers like the United States and China. Diplomatic neutrality—avoiding coercion while emphasizing cooperation—positions Mexico as a credible partner for Caribbean nations, particularly in sensitive areas like migration and human rights. As Dr. Linda Davies, a political science scholar from the University of the West Indies, argues, “Mexico’s approach fosters trust because it respects Caribbean sovereignty while emphasizing the benefits of regional solutions.”

Economics: Trade, Investment, and Development Cooperation

From an economic standpoint, Mexico’s engagement in the Caribbean focuses on trade diversification, investment in critical sectors, and development aid. Mexico has built a robust trade relationship with the Caribbean, exporting goods worth \$6.3 billion in 2020, including chemicals, vehicles, and machinery, and importing petroleum, sugar, and metals worth \$2.3 billion. Mexico’s economic model emphasizes bilateral agreements and free trade frameworks, such as the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between CARICOM and the broader Latin American region.

Economic analysis also highlights Mexico’s investments in sectors like renewable energy and tourism infrastructure, which align with the Caribbean’s need for economic resilience. For example, Mexico’s collaboration with Jamaica on solar energy projects and partnerships in sustainable tourism development illustrate how Mexico leverages its technical expertise to stimulate economic growth in the region. These initiatives align with theories of comparative advantage in international trade, as Mexico provides technical and financial expertise while Caribbean nations offer strategic geographic and natural resource advantages.

However, challenges remain. Caribbean economies are heavily reliant on tourism, which is vulnerable to global shocks like pandemics or climate-related disasters. Mexico’s efforts to diversify Caribbean economies—including promoting small-scale manufacturing and

expanding agricultural exports—are critical for long-term resilience. Economist Dr. Antonio Morales from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) notes, “Mexico’s trade relations with the Caribbean are not just about numbers. They are about creating economic ecosystems that reduce vulnerability to external shocks while fostering equitable growth.”

Environmental Studies: Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development

The field of environmental studies provides crucial insights into Mexico’s engagement, as the Caribbean is one of the region’s most vulnerable to climate change. Rising sea levels, intensifying hurricanes, and biodiversity loss pose existential threats to small island nations. Mexico, as a regional leader in climate diplomacy, has positioned itself as a critical ally in advancing sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the Caribbean.

Mexico has implemented numerous initiatives aimed at disaster resilience, such as its cooperation with the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the Green Climate Fund. For instance, Mexico provided post-disaster aid to the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian in 2019 and has been actively involved in building hurricane-resistant infrastructure across the region. Environmental scholars highlight Mexico’s ability to export best practices, such as urban sustainability programs from cities like Mexico City, to Caribbean urban centers vulnerable to flooding and erosion. Moreover, Mexico has invested in renewable energy projects, such as the installation of solar farms in the Dominican Republic and Jamaica. These initiatives align with the principles of ecological modernization, which emphasize that economic growth and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive. Dr. Rachel Browne, an environmental studies researcher, asserts, “Mexico’s leadership in renewable energy in the Caribbean is a model of how regional cooperation can address global environmental challenges while fostering local development.”

Cultural Studies: People-to-People Engagement

Cultural studies offer a unique perspective on the soft power dynamics that shape Mexico’s influence in the Caribbean. The shared Afro-Caribbean heritage, along with linguistic and cultural exchanges, provides a foundation for Mexico’s cultural diplomacy. Programs such as Mexican scholarships for Caribbean students, the promotion of cultural festivals, and the restoration of shared historical landmarks create strong people-to-people connections.

For example, Mexico’s partnership with Cuba in healthcare diplomacy is not only a political or economic initiative but also a cultural one. By fostering collaborative efforts such as

medical exchanges and public health campaigns, Mexico reinforces its image as a partner that prioritizes well-being and equity. Similarly, cultural initiatives like the MEXCARIBE Festival, which celebrates Caribbean and Mexican art, music, and cuisine, promote mutual understanding and goodwill.

Cultural theorists emphasize that Mexico’s focus on cultural diplomacy stands out from the more transactional approaches of other global powers like China. Dr. Simone Grant, a cultural studies expert, explains, “Mexico’s cultural engagement fosters solidarity and a shared identity that goes beyond political and economic interests. This is crucial for creating lasting partnerships.”

Policy Recommendations: An Interdisciplinary Framework

1. **Integrate Regional Political Frameworks with Local Capacity Building:** Mexico should strengthen its role in CELAC and CARICOM, ensuring that political agreements translate into tangible benefits for local communities. Collaborative governance mechanisms that engage local governments and civil society organizations can enhance the impact of regional frameworks.
2. **Promote Economic Inclusivity and Diversification:** Policymakers should prioritize investments in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and agricultural cooperatives in the Caribbean. These initiatives should be paired with targeted trade policies that empower local businesses to compete in global markets.
3. **Expand Climate Resilience Programs:** Mexico should increase funding for climate adaptation projects, such as flood-resistant infrastructure and renewable energy systems, while advocating for greater international support for Caribbean nations under the Paris Agreement.
4. **Deepen Cultural and Educational Exchanges:** Mexico should expand scholarship programs and cultural festivals that highlight shared heritage. These initiatives should target youth and underserved communities, creating a new generation of leaders invested in regional cooperation.
5. **Leverage Science and Technology for Sustainable Development:** Investments in green technology and digital infrastructure can position Mexico and the Caribbean as leaders in sustainable innovation. Collaborative research centers focusing on climate science and marine ecosystems would enhance knowledge sharing.

Summary

An interdisciplinary lens reveals the complex interplay of political, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions in Mexico's engagement with the Caribbean. By fostering regional integration, supporting economic diversification, addressing climate challenges, and promoting cultural solidarity, Mexico plays a vital role in Caribbean development. However, its success depends on inclusive policies that engage diverse stakeholders, from government officials to local communities. Through this approach, Mexico can strengthen its partnerships, address regional challenges, and contribute to a more sustainable and equitable future for the Caribbean.

9. INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

The international community has recently disengaged somewhat from the Caribbean, while the United States seeks to prod greater coordination and collaboration and achieve the SDG by 2030. The former has led to south-south cooperation and triangulation, which may be defined as "collaboration in which traditional donor countries and multilateral organisations facilitate South-South initiatives through the provision of funding, training, and management and technological systems as well as other forms of support."¹² The latter is undertaken within the regional collaborative platform for Latin America and the Caribbean (RCP LAC) and involves 24 United Nations entities across the UN's three pillars.¹³ France has overseas territories in the Caribbean – Guadeloupe and Martinique – while Curacao, Sint Marteen and Aruba are constituent parts under the Dutch constitution.

Now, this doesn't exclude Mexico from taking the lead in proposing an action plan and presenting it at an EU-CELAC summit, focusing on strengthening institutional and regional cooperation in the Caribbean. Before proceeding, we need to understand the interests of the principal actors in the EU, the stakes of the Caribbean nations, and Mexico's interests in reciprocating Brazil.

Let's explore how the interests of France and the Netherlands in the Caribbean, mainly through their overseas territories, can be promoted within the framework of EU-CELAC (European Union–Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) relations:

1. France and Holland's interests

Cultural Cooperation:

France (with its overseas territories like Guadeloupe and Martinique) and the Netherlands (with

territories like Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten) have rich cultural heritage in the Caribbean.

Encourage cultural exchanges, joint artistic projects, and collaborations between European and Caribbean artists, writers, and institutions.

Leverage existing EU-CELAC cultural cooperation initiatives to strengthen ties and promote cultural diversity.

Economic Partnerships:

France and the Netherlands have economic interests in the Caribbean, including trade, investment, and tourism.

Foster economic partnerships by facilitating business forums, trade missions, and investment promotion.

Explore sustainable development projects that benefit both European and Caribbean communities.

Environmental Collaboration:

Address common environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity conservation, and disaster resilience.

Promote joint research, knowledge sharing, and capacity building in environmental protection.

Engage in regional initiatives within the EU-CELAC framework to enhance environmental sustainability.

Security and Maritime Cooperation:

Given the strategic importance of the Caribbean Sea, collaborate on maritime security, counter-narcotics efforts, and disaster response.

Enhance cooperation between naval forces and coastguards to ensure regional safety and stability.

Education and People-to-People Contacts:

Support student exchanges, academic partnerships, and educational programs.

Encourage mobility between European and Caribbean universities, researchers, and students.

Promote mutual understanding and cross-cultural learning.

Remember that EU-CELAC relations provide a platform for

¹² Better Together: Advancing south-south and Triangular Cooperation in the Greater Caribbean Region [online] <https://www.acs-aec.org/index.php?q=disaster-risk->

reduction/better-together-avancing-south-south-and-triangular-cooperation-in-the-gre?

¹³ <https://agenda2030lac.org/en/regional-collaborative-platform-latin-america-and-caribbean-united-nations?>

dialogue and cooperation, and France and the Netherlands can actively shape policies that benefit the entire region.

10. ADDED VALUE OF EU-CELAC FOR THE CARIBBEAN

The EU-CELAC framework offers several benefits for the Caribbean region:

1. Enhanced cooperation

It provides additional space for south-south cooperation, allowing the Caribbean to collaborate more effectively with Latin American countries.

2. Global Leverage

By coordinating LAC positions, the EU-CELAC partnership creates a window for increased global influence, amplifying the Caribbean’s voice on international stages.

3. Overcoming divisions

The framework helps overcome existing divisions between LAC sub-regions, fostering unity and collective action.

4. Access to Resources

The Caribbean can leverage Latin America’s high per capita income and technological advancements for mutual benefit.

5. Development objectives

It offers an avenue to advance special considerations for the Caribbean and align with its development goals.

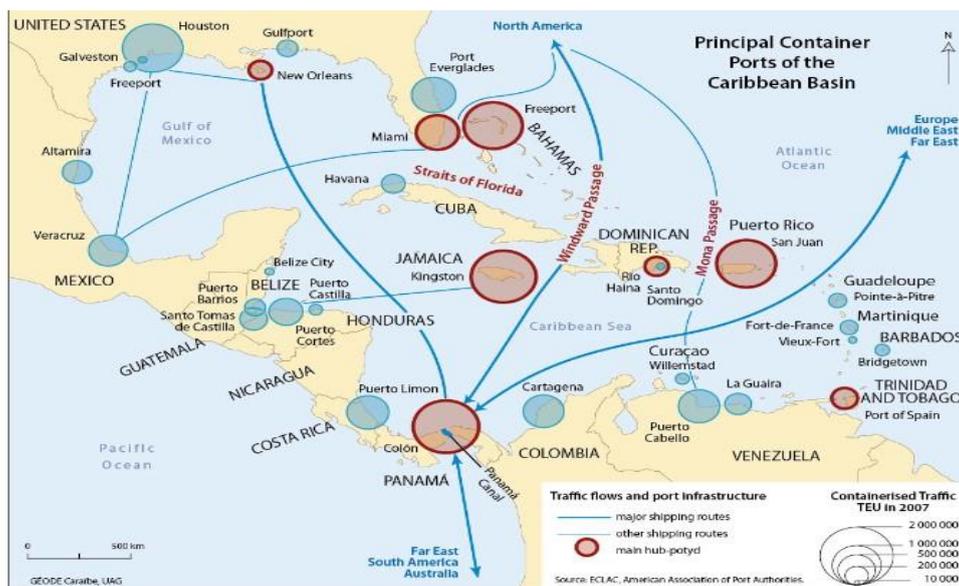
6. Weight in Eu relations

The Eu-CELAC partnership increases the Caribbean’s weight in its interactions with the EU.¹⁴

7. Triangular Cooperation

It opens up opportunities for triangular cooperation benefiting both regions.

Figure 1 – Gringo-centric trade networks



Source: <https://atlas-carai-be.certic.unicaen.fr/en/page-118.html>

To make the Eu-CELAC even more attractive, consider these 3x3 strategies:

1. Inclusive participation:

Engage more stakeholders, including civil society, youth, and local authorities, to ensure diverse perspectives and active involvement in shaping policies and initiatives.

2. Concrete Actions

Focus on tangible outcomes – implement joint projects, exchange best practices, and address pressing issues such as climate change, sustainable development, and resilience.

3. Visibility and Communication

¹⁴ Eu-Latin America and the Caribbean Forum: Partners in Change [online]https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/eu-latin-america-and-caribbean-forum-partners-change_en?

international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/eu-latin-america-and-caribbean-forum-partners-change_en?

Promote success stories, showcase impact, and raise awareness about the EU-CELAC partnership through targeted communication campaigns.¹⁵

Summary

The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), established in 2010, offers a distinctive regional platform that encompasses all Latin American and Caribbean countries except the United States and Canada. For Caribbean states, CELAC represents an opportunity to engage in a broader regional dialogue that extends beyond the traditional CARICOM framework, enabling them to assert their interests alongside larger Latin American economies such as Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. This wider multilateral forum enhances the Caribbean's diplomatic visibility and bargaining power on issues that transcend subregional boundaries, including climate change, sustainable development, trade diversification, and geopolitical security (Malamud and Gardini, 2018; Serbin, 2014).

CELAC's inclusive membership promotes political cohesion in the face of external pressures, offering Caribbean nations access to enhanced cooperation mechanisms with Latin American partners. This can amplify their voice in hemispheric negotiations, foster infrastructure connectivity, and facilitate integration into wider economic and social development initiatives. Furthermore, CELAC's emphasis on south-south cooperation aligns with Caribbean priorities around economic resilience, technological transfer, and cultural exchange, potentially attracting greater development financing and technical assistance from regional and global actors (Gardini, 2015; Marichal, 2010).

To maximize influence within CELAC, Caribbean states must adopt a proactive and coordinated diplomatic approach. Strengthening their collective presence by harmonizing policy positions on key thematic issues can help overcome the historical fragmentation that often dilutes small states' bargaining power. Leveraging their role as a bridge between Latin America and the wider Caribbean, these states can push for institutional reforms within CELAC that increase transparency, decision-making efficiency, and inclusive participation for smaller members. Strategic alliances with like-minded countries on issues such as climate action, trade liberalization, and regional security can further amplify Caribbean agendas (Serbin, 2014; Ortiz Mena et al., 2005).

Moreover, Caribbean states should invest in diplomatic capacity-building and enhanced engagement with CELAC's technical bodies and working groups to shape the framework's operational priorities. By advancing joint

projects in sustainable tourism, disaster risk management, and digital connectivity, the Caribbean can translate diplomatic influence into tangible development outcomes. Finally, aligning CELAC's agenda with global processes such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement can position the Caribbean as a key interlocutor in global governance, thus leveraging CELAC as a springboard for elevating regional priorities on the international stage.

The European Union–Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (EU-CELAC) partnership constitutes a strategic framework that fosters dialogue, cooperation, and integration between Europe and the broader Latin American and Caribbean region. For Caribbean states, the EU-CELAC dialogue offers a unique multilateral platform that links them directly with one of the world's most significant economic and political blocs. This connection provides access to financial resources, technical cooperation, and policy coordination on global challenges such as climate change, sustainable development, migration, and digital transformation (European External Action Service, 2021; Guzmán & de la Torre, 2019).

The EU-CELAC relationship adds value by promoting a collective voice in global governance forums and facilitating regional integration initiatives that transcend national borders. Through structured dialogues and bi-regional summits, Caribbean countries can influence the agenda-setting process, align their development priorities with EU frameworks such as the Green Deal and the Digital Strategy, and mobilize support for resilience-building projects. Moreover, EU-CELAC cooperation enables the Caribbean to benefit from knowledge sharing, capacity building, and access to innovation ecosystems, contributing to enhanced competitiveness and social inclusion (Vargas-Hernández, 2020; UN ECLAC, 2020).

To maximize their influence within the EU-CELAC framework, Caribbean states should strengthen internal coordination both within CARICOM and across CELAC to present unified and clear policy positions. Building strategic coalitions with Latin American partners on shared concerns—such as climate adaptation, trade facilitation, and cultural exchange—can increase bargaining power in negotiations with the EU. Additionally, Caribbean governments need to invest in diplomatic engagement with EU institutions and agencies to ensure effective representation in dialogue fora and funding programs (Ilcus, forthcoming).

Active participation in working groups and thematic committees of EU-CELAC is crucial to shaping technical

¹⁵ Strategic Keys of EU-CELAC partnership [online]
<https://eulacfoundation.org/en/strategic-keys-eu-celac-partnership>

cooperation priorities and ensuring that Caribbean interests are embedded in program design. Aligning proposals with EU strategic priorities, such as the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the EU's emphasis on a green and digital transition, can facilitate greater access to development finance and technical assistance. Lastly, enhancing people-to-people exchanges, academic partnerships, and civil society involvement can foster deeper mutual understanding and long-term cooperation foundations, ensuring that EU-CELAC relations translate into tangible benefits for Caribbean societies.

11. MEXICO'S TAKE

Several interests and objectives guide Mexico's foreign relations with the Caribbean region. Economically, Mexico seeks to strengthen trade and investment links with Caribbean nations, with the Dominican Republic on Hispaniola serving as its primary trading partner. Bilateral agreements and regional forums provide avenues for promoting economic cooperation, generating mutual benefits for Mexico and its Caribbean neighbors.

Tourism and cultural exchange form another cornerstone of Mexico's engagement. Its temperate climate, rich history, and distinctive cultural heritage make Mexico an attractive destination, while encouraging reciprocal tourism and cultural programs fosters understanding and reinforces regional ties.

Security and stability are also key priorities. Mexico collaborates with Caribbean countries on a range of security challenges, including maritime safety, counter-narcotics operations, and organized crime prevention. A stable and secure Caribbean not only benefits regional partners but also advances Mexico's own strategic interests.

Diplomatic engagement underpins all of these initiatives. Mexico actively participates in international organizations, advocating for collective security, conflict resolution, and broader regional cooperation. Strengthening diplomatic ties with Caribbean nations helps consolidate political relationships, enhance dialogue, and create a framework for sustainable partnership across multiple sectors.

Mexico's exports to Caribbean nations are diverse and contribute significantly to regional development. Petroleum and petroleum products are a major component, supporting the energy needs of Caribbean economies. The robust Mexican automotive industry provides vehicles and auto parts, enhancing transportation infrastructure and industrial capacity. Electronics and electrical machinery—from

¹⁶

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/frontpage/2024/March/agents-of-change-empower-indigenous-communities-to-eradicate-human-trafficking.html>

¹⁷ <https://carnegieendowment.org/2024/01/29/protecting-mexico-s-environmental-defenders-policy-imperative-pub-91471>

appliances to technical devices—facilitate technological development, while agricultural exports such as avocados, bananas, citrus, vegetables, and coffee bolster food security. Finally, Mexico supplies chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and medical equipment, supporting both healthcare systems and industrial sectors throughout the Caribbean.

12. THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AS A FACTOR IN MEXICO'S FOREIGN POLICY VIS-À-VIS THE CARIBBEAN

Mexico's Indigenous communities play a crucial role in environmental conservation and biodiversity protection in obstructing human trafficking.¹⁶ And they are upholding rights. However, they often lack formal recognition of their territories and face violence and legal threats.¹⁷ To harness their contributions in foreign policy, Mexico could:

1. **Environmental Diplomacy:** Engage Indigenous leaders in international environmental forums to advocate for sustainable practices and biodiversity protection¹⁸.
2. **Cultural Diplomacy:** Promote indigenous art, music, and traditions to foster cross-cultural understanding with Caribbean nations.
3. **Resource Management:** Collaborate with indigenous communities on sustainable resource extraction, ensuring their rights and environmental stewardship.
4. **Human Rights Advocacy:** Champion Indigenous rights globally, emphasizing their role as environmental defenders¹⁹.

Mexico can strengthen its foreign relations by empowering Indigenous communities while safeguarding the environment.

Remember that specific trade volumes and products may vary by country within the Caribbean region. In summary, Mexico aims to foster economic, cultural, and security cooperation with the Caribbean, contributing to stability and prosperity in the area.

To propose a project package for Indigenous rights, particularly for the Warao people in the Orinoco Delta (Venezuela), based on the **UN Declaration on the Rights**

¹⁸ <https://www.fao.org/policy-support/tools-and-publications/resources-details/en/c/1472651/>

¹⁹ <https://www.iucn.org/story/202212/violence-against-indigenous-groups-defending-environment-mexico>

of **Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)** and influenced by the work of Jessi Hohman and March Weller, we would need to center on biodiversity, sustainability, and Indigenous citizenship. Below is a comprehensive plan, including specific targets, division of labor, and actionable steps.

1. Project Overview:

Project Name: *Sustainable Citizenship for the Waraoa People: Biodiversity and Indigenous Rights in the Orinoco Delta*

Primary Objective: To empower the Waraoa people of the Orinoco Delta through the practical realization of their rights under **UNDRIP**, focusing on their biodiversity, land rights, sustainability, and participation in governance processes. The project will integrate these rights into a broader partnership with the Venezuelan government and the EU-CELAC (European Union–Community of Latin American and Caribbean States), ensuring long-term social, cultural, and environmental benefits.

2. UNDRIP Principles to be Addressed:

The project will be aligned with the key rights outlined in UNDRIP as identified by **Jessi Hohman** and **March Weller**, with a focus on:

- **Article 3:** Right to self-determination.
- **Article 26:** Right to lands, territories, and resources.
- **Article 29:** Right to the conservation and protection of the environment.
- **Article 32:** Right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).
- **Article 38:** Right to participate in decision-making processes.

This includes respect for Waraoa people's decision-making, resource stewardship, and preservation of their cultural practices.

3. Key Components of the Project:

Biodiversity and Sustainability Partnership:

The project will establish a **biodiversity and sustainability partnership** between the **Venezuelan government** and **EU-CELAC**, focusing on:

Conservation of ecosystems in the Orinoco Delta: Collaborate with environmental organizations and governmental agencies to develop and implement **sustainable practices** that preserve local flora and fauna.

Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA):

Utilize EbA strategies that integrate Indigenous knowledge, particularly from the Waraoa people, to adapt to climate change while preserving biodiversity.

Community-led eco-tourism initiatives:

Train local Waraoa people in **eco-tourism** as a sustainable development strategy to generate income without compromising the environment.

Land Rights and Indigenous Citizenship:

Formal Recognition of Indigenous Citizenship: Advocate for full legal recognition of the Waraoa people's citizenship, ensuring their inclusion in national and local political structures.

Land and Territory Title Mapping: Work with the Venezuelan government to officially demarcate and register Indigenous territories in the Orinoco Delta, protecting them from encroachment by outside interests.

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC): Create mechanisms for the Waraoa people to exercise their right to FPIC in all development, conservation, and governmental projects affecting their lands.

Educational and Capacity Building:

Indigenous Governance and Legal Education: Establish training programs to educate the Waraoa people in governance and the legal aspects of their rights under UNDRIP, including advocacy for their rights at local and international levels.

Sustainable Agriculture & Resource Management: Train the Waraoa people in sustainable agricultural techniques, water resource management, and agroforestry that preserve biodiversity and are aligned with traditional knowledge.

Health & Well-being:

Healthcare Infrastructure: Strengthen healthcare access in the Orinoco Delta by creating mobile clinics or community health initiatives, integrating traditional medicine with modern healthcare.

4. Action Plan:

Year 1: Preparation & Legal Framework

Target: Secure legal agreements with Venezuelan government and EU-CELAC for Indigenous recognition and biodiversity protection.

Tasks:

Organize workshops with Waraoa elders and leaders to document cultural practices and ecological knowledge.

Advocate for the formal recognition of Waraoa citizenship and land rights.

Begin the FPIC process for government and private sector projects in the region.

Year 2-3: Biodiversity Protection & Community

Engagement

Target: Implementation of community-driven conservation programs and local eco-tourism.

Tasks:

Develop conservation programs in collaboration with EU-CELAC.

Create educational programs for Waraoa youth on the value of biodiversity and environmental conservation.

Begin land registration and official demarcation of Waraoa territories.

Start eco-tourism initiatives and create local employment opportunities.

Year 4: Institutionalizing Indigenous Rights

Target: Institutionalizing Indigenous rights within national frameworks.

Tasks:

Secure full participation of Waraoa representatives in local governance and decision-making bodies.

Launch public awareness campaigns on the Waraoa people's rights and contributions to environmental sustainability.

Strengthen collaboration with EU-CELAC on regional biodiversity initiatives.

Year 5: Monitoring & Sustainability

Target: Ensure that the gains are sustainable and continue beyond the project timeline.

Tasks:

Establish a monitoring system to assess the impacts on biodiversity, land rights, and Waraoa cultural practices.

Finalize financial sustainability for eco-tourism and community health programs.

Host an international conference on Indigenous rights and environmental sustainability with a focus on lessons learned from the Waraoa case.

5. Division of Labor:

Project Manager: Oversee project implementation, reporting, and coordination between stakeholders.

Legal Experts: Work on land rights, citizenship, and policy advocacy for the Waraoa people.

Indigenous Leaders: Provide cultural insights and leadership in community mobilization.

Environmental Scientists & Ecologists: Support biodiversity monitoring, ecosystem restoration, and sustainable agriculture programs.

EU-CELAC Coordinators: Facilitate cross-border partnerships and funding channels for biodiversity programs.

Health & Education Experts: Develop training programs and health initiatives for the Waraoa people.



6. Funding Sources & Estimated Budget:

Venezuelan Government: Funded partially through national budget allocations for Indigenous affairs and environmental conservation.

EU-CELAC: Secure grants from EU's **Horizon Europe**, as well as from regional programs promoting Indigenous rights and environmental sustainability.

International NGOs: Organizations such as the **World Wildlife Fund (WWF)**, **UNDP**, and **The Nature Conservancy** may contribute funding or in-kind support.

Private Sector Contributions: Corporate social responsibility (CSR) funding from companies operating in Venezuela or Latin America.

Estimated Total Project Budget (5 Years):

\$10 million - \$12 million

Year 1: \$2 million (Legal frameworks, planning, initial conservation work)

Year 2-3: \$5 million (Land registration, eco-tourism, community engagement)

Year 4: \$2 million (Institutionalization, policy advocacy)

Year 5: \$1-2 million (Monitoring, sustainability, international conference)

This action plan aims to create a sustainable, culturally sensitive approach to securing the rights and livelihoods of the Waraoa people while supporting environmental sustainability in the Orinoco Delta. Through collaboration, respect for Indigenous knowledge, and strong partnerships with government and international bodies, this project can serve as a model for Indigenous rights and

biodiversity protection worldwide.

Summary

The subtle craft of Mexican diplomacy in the lead-up to the 2025 EU–CELAC summit may yet carry the potential for unexpected breakthroughs—especially if political chemistry and shared vision are allowed to flourish alongside formal agendas. Mexico, long practiced in the art of balancing North–South, East–West, and intra-regional dynamics, has positioned itself not just as a mediator but as a platform-builder. Its ability to listen across divides, bridge institutional languages, and move deftly between ideational ambition and pragmatic coordination makes it an actor to watch.

This moment carries a rare alignment: as Mexico recalibrates its regional and global posture, it finds itself well-placed to propose integrative frameworks that speak to both European strategic anxieties and Latin American aspirations. If key personalities on both sides establish genuine rapport—and if conversations move beyond scripted talking points into shared imagination—this summit could serve not merely as a forum for speeches, but as a laboratory of co-creation.

Much of this hinge on how ideas circulate: whether visionary proposals can take root, not just in joint declarations, but within the institutional architectures of both the EU and CELAC. The promise lies in turning goodwill and creativity into procedural follow-through—in ensuring that embassies, trade missions, and working groups translate summit insights into enduring mechanisms. If that trickle-down occurs—if civil servants, local authorities, and thematic clusters find new energy in a rearticulated partnership—then Mexico’s discreet, dialogical style may prove not just effective but transformative.

In short, the success of the 2025 summit may depend less on bold headlines than on Mexico’s quiet orchestration of trust, rhythm, and convergence—where the right people, in the right rooms, with the right tone, can let good ideas shape real strategies, and let strategy reshape the future.

13. CARICOM AND MEXICO

Now, given the asks of the EU from Mexico – deployment of troops to Haiti – and Mexico’s potential role as a Mesoamerican regional power balanced by the strategic rationale and widespread desire for greater Latin American integration as a balance against China, US and EU interests, it matters to understand the rationale for greater sub-regional integration in the Caribbean, and how Mexico could chip-in pace the absence of availability of Venezuelan petro-dollars to

invest in the Caribbean and lessen tension in the region. Mexico also trades with many Caribbean nations, and there are various options for integrating the Caribbean nations into the FTA, such as NAFTA and the Latin American single market.²⁰ Or an EU-CELAC FTA. This appendix studies the subregional option under Mexican tutelage from within EU-CELAC as one of several unknown building blocks to supplement the Mexican-Brazil FTA proposed earlier.

1. Rationale

Highlight the strategic importance of the Caribbean region as a bridge between Europe and Latin America.

Emphasise the need for enhanced cooperation to address shared challenges such as climate change, security, and sustainable development.

Acknowledge the potential for economic growth and social progress through regional integration.

2. Obstacles and Opportunities:

Obstacles:

Historical fragmentation: The Caribbean comprises diverse nations with varying levels of development and different languages: Spanish, French, English, and Dutch.

Limited infrastructure: Connectivity gaps hinder efficient trade and cooperation.

Vulnerability to climate change: Rising sea levels, natural disasters, and environmental degradation pose significant challenges.

Opportunities:

Cultural richness: Leverage the region’s cultural diversity for creative collaboration.

Blue Economy: Tap into marine resources, sustainable tourism, and maritime transport.

Renewable energy: Invest in solar, wind, and ocean energy to boost resilience and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

3. Action Steps:

A. Strengthen institutional mechanisms

Establish a Caribbean Cooperation Council (CCC) comprising the EU, CELAC, and Caribbean Community (CARICOM)²¹.

Regular CCC meetings are held to coordinate policies, share best practices, and monitor progress.

B. Enhance Trade and Investment:

²⁰ <https://www.iadb.org/en/news/latin-america-and-caribbean-single-free-trade-agreement-would-reap-11-billion-windfall-idb>

²¹ <https://caricom.org/member-states-and-associate-members/>

Facilitate trade agreements: Fast-track the modernised EU-Mexico SPA & EPA and explore trade agreements with other Caribbean nations.

Promote investment: Encourage EU and Mexican businesses to invest in sustainable projects in the Caribbean.

C. Climate Resilience and Green Transition

Collaborate on climate adaptation: develop joint projects for disaster risk reduction, coastal protection, and ecosystem restoration.

Support renewable energy initiatives: Establish a regional fund for clean energy infrastructure.

D. Capacity-Building and Education

Scholarships and exchange programs: Foster academic and professional mobility between the Caribbean and Europe.

Technical assistance: Strengthen Caribbean institutional governance, public administration, and disaster management capacity.

E. Public Awareness and Advocacy

Launch a joint campaign: raise awareness about the importance of Caribbean-Europe cooperation.

Engage civil society: Involve NGO's, academia, and youth in shaping the partnership.

4. Estimated Costs

Develop a comprehensive budget based on specific projects and initiatives.

Seek funding from Eu programs, private sector investments, and international development banks. By implementing this action plan, Mexico can contribute significantly to elevating Caribbean regional integration.²² To a higher level, we are fostering a strengthened partnership between the EU and CELAC.

The next stage would be to evolve a dialogue between the Caribbean Cooperation Council of Caricom within the CCC Steering mechanism and the Associate members: Anguilla, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and Turks and Caicos Islands.

5. Engaging them in the associate members in the CCC steering mechanism:

Outreach and Awareness:

²² Tavis D. Jules A Stich in time saves Caribbeanization: Meta-steering and Strategic Coordination in an Era of Caribbean Trans-Regionalism
[online] https://www.academia.edu/23160337/A_Stich_in_Time

Conduct targeted outreach to raise awareness about the CCC's role and benefits.

Engage with these countries' government officials, business leaders, and civil society.

Customised capacity building:

Offer capacity-building programs tailored to each country's needs.

Provide training on competition law, policy, and enforcement.

Incentives for Participation:

Highlight success stories from existing CCC members.

Showcase now active participation benefits economic growth and consumer welfare.

Collaboration with regional organisations:

Leverage existing regional bodies (OECS, ACS) to facilitate dialogue.

Explore joint initiatives to address cross-cutting issues.

Technical Assistance and Funding:

Provide technical assistance for establishing national competition authorities.

Seek funding from international partners to support CCC activities.

Building trust, emphasising mutual benefits, and tailoring approaches to each country's context are essential for successful engagement.

14. CARICOM CONTINENTAL-CARIBBEAN ISLANDS CITY NETWORK PROGRAM

Objective

To foster economic integration, cultural exchange, and sustainable development across the Caribbean and Central American regions:

Key Components:

1. Economic Integration

Trade Hubs: Establish Trade hubs in key cities from Yucatan to Nicaragua, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela, and the Caribbean Islands to facilitate the exchange of goods and services.

Free Trade Zones: Create free trade zones to attract investments and boost local economies.

[_Saves_Caribbeanization_Meta_steering-and-Strategic_Coordination_in_an_Era_Caribbean_Trans-Regionalism?](#)

Digital Economy: Promote digital infrastructure to support e-commerce and digital services.

2. Cultural Exchanges

Cultural Festivals: Organize annual cultural festivals showcasing the region's diverse heritage.

Educational Programs: Develop exchange programs for students and professionals to foster mutual understanding and collaboration.

Tourism Initiatives: Promote sustainable tourism, highlighting each city's unique cultural and natural attractions.

3. Sustainable Development:

Green Infrastructure: Invest in renewable energy projects and green infrastructure to combat climate change.

Disaster Resilience: Implement disaster resilience programs to detect natural disasters.

Sustainable Urban Planning: Encourage sustainable urban planning practices to ensure long-term growth and environmental protection.

5. Transportation and Connectivity

Regional Transport Network: To improve connectivity, develop a regional transport network, including highways, railways, and ports.

Air Travel: Enhance air travel connections between cities to facilitate more effortless movement of people and goods.

Public Transport: Invest in public transport systems to reduce traffic congestion and pollution.

5. Governance and Cooperation:

Regional Council: Establish a regional council to oversee the program's implementation and ensure cooperation between member cities.

Policy Harmonisation: Work towards harmonising policies and regulations to facilitate smoother integration.

Funding mechanisms: Create funding mechanisms to support various initiatives under the program.

Proposed Cities:

Yucatan: Merida

Belize: San Pedro

Honduras: Le Ceiba

Nicaragua: Corinto

Costa Rica: Puntarenas

Panama: Colon

Colombia: Cartagena

Venezuela: Maracaibo

Caribic Islands: Kingston, Port of Spain, Bridgetown, Nassau.

Implementation Phases:

1. Planning and Consultation: Engage stakeholders and conduct feasibility studies

2. Pilot Projects: Pilot projects in select cities to test and refine the program.

3. Full implementation: Roll out the program across all participating cities.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation: Continuously monitor programs and make necessary adjustments.

Examples of Projects:

1. Sustainability

Project: Orinico Delta Warao Support Programme

Objective: To support the Warao Indigenous people in the Orinoco Delta by reinforcing cultural identity, protecting Indigenous rights

Activities: Establishing territorial development processes.

We are building the capacity of indigenous communal councils.

We are implementing community investment funds that are responsive to local demands.

We are providing technical and organisational services to improve living conditions sustainably.

2. Cultural and Linguistic affinities

Project: BOLD – Building on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

Objective: To promote linguistic and Cultural Diversity through social action and educational initiatives.

Activities: We are training teachers to become social activists for sustainability, multilingualism, and interculturalism.

Implement service-learning and social action collaborative projects.

We support student teachers' active citizenship and civic engagement through professional knowledge and competencies.

3. Economic Integration

Project: Economic and Investment Plan for the Continental Carribic

Objective: To spur long-term recovery, accelerate green and digital transitions, and foster regional cooperation.

Activities: We are identifying and funding infrastructure projects to unlock significant investments.

We are promoting sustainable connectivity and digital transformation in the Caribbean islands.

We are supporting economic convergence and inclusive growth through targeted investments.

5. Transport and Connectivity

Objective: To advance sustainable connectivity in the Continental and Islands of the Caribbean through investments in transport, digital, climate and energy projects.

Activities: Constructing major road and railway connections facilitates regional trade and reduces travel times.

We are enhancing digital infrastructure and renewable energy projects.

We promote sustainable economic growth and integration between the Continental Caribbean and the CARICOM member islands.

Summary

A paradiplomatic network among continental and island cities of the Caribbean would create a decentralized yet coordinated platform for regional cooperation, rooted in the strengths of local governance. Such a network would link municipalities across linguistic, political, and geographical divides—connecting port cities, tourism hubs, cultural centers, and climate-vulnerable coastal zones.

The rationale lies in cities' growing role as first responders to shared challenges: climate adaptation, infrastructure resilience, urban planning, tourism management, and cultural exchange. Unlike national governments, cities can act swiftly, innovate locally, and collaborate pragmatically across borders. A well-structured network would facilitate peer learning, joint project development, technical assistance, and access to international funding mechanisms such as those from the EU, IDB, or climate finance institutions.

Moreover, it would bridge the historical divide between island and continental states—linking places like Havana, Cartagena, Port of Spain, and Santo Domingo into a dynamic mesh of urban diplomacy. By leveraging mayors, city councils, and urban agencies as regional actors, the network could reinforce Caribbean integration from the ground up, supporting sustainable development goals and strengthening the region's collective voice in broader EU-CELAC and multilateral fora.

15. CUBA& THE CARRIBEAN (CARICOM)

The third sequence involves rapprochement between within the CARICOM's Council Cooperation Council (CCC) and Curacao and Cuba.

The Caribbean holds a central position in Cuban foreign policy, reflecting shared histories, cultural ties, and economic and political interests. Cuba's commitment to regional solidarity is deeply rooted in its historical role as a supporter of decolonization movements and South-South cooperation. The

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) was the first collective regional body to recognize Cuba diplomatically in 1972, challenging its international isolation during the Cold War. This enduring relationship underscores the Caribbean's strategic significance to Havana.

Economically, Cuba views the Caribbean as a vital partner in trade, particularly in areas such as healthcare, education, and energy. The island's highly trained medical personnel and technical expertise have facilitated its provision of medical diplomacy across the region, strengthening ties and fostering goodwill. Additionally, the Caribbean represents a critical market for Cuban exports, such as pharmaceuticals and biotechnology products, which remain key drivers of the Cuban economy. Cuba's political alignment with Caribbean nations also serves as a bulwark against U.S. influence in the region. In multilateral forums such as CELAC and CARICOM, Havana collaborates with Caribbean states to advocate for non-interventionist policies, respect for sovereignty, and climate justice. These partnerships amplify Cuba's voice on the global stage and provide a counterbalance to U.S. policies, such as the embargo.

Engaging Havana is essential to foster regional integration, address common challenges like climate change, and leverage Cuba's human capital for mutual benefit. Stimulating dialogue with Havana can also advance broader geopolitical goals, such as reducing tensions in U.S.-Caribbean relations and promoting sustainable development initiatives. For the Caribbean, engaging Cuba ensures the continuity of their historical solidarity and enhances the region's collective bargaining power in international negotiations.

Roadmap for Dialogue and Cooperation:

1. Engaging Cuba

Establish regular consultations with the Cuban government to identify shared priorities.

Explore joint projects in trade facilitation, sustainable tourism, and disaster risk reduction.

Cuba: Strengthen existing collaboration in health, education, and disaster response.

Promote cultural exchanges and people-to-people connections.

2. CCC Council Involvement

Educate CCC Council members about the importance of associate member's participation.

Highlight the benefits of regional integration and cooperation.

Technical Assistance: Provide capacity-building workshops for CCC Council representatives.

Focus on competition policy harmonisation and enforcement.

3. Major Development needs

Energy security

Collaborate on renewable energy projects to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

Address vulnerabilities related to energy supply and resilience.

Food security: Enhance regional food production and distribution networks.

Explore agribusiness partnerships.

Development financing: Advocate for increased international support for Caribbean development.

Leverage existing partnerships with external organisations.

Summary

The dynamics between the European Union (EU), Cuba, CARICOM, and CELAC reflect a complex interplay of regional integration, political interests, and development goals that significantly contribute to the objectives of their summit. The EU and CELAC maintain a strategic partnership aimed at strengthening political dialogue, trade relations, sustainable development, and cooperation on global challenges such as climate change and migration. Within this framework, Cuba plays a distinctive role as a key advocate for regional unity and social justice, emphasizing sovereignty, anti-imperialism, and South-South cooperation. This perspective is particularly influential in shaping the agenda towards deeper collaboration on health, education, and social policies. CARICOM represents the Caribbean dimension of Cuban foreign policy, focusing on fostering regional integration, economic cooperation, and sustainable development in the Caribbean context. Although CARICOM operates independently, it complements CELAC's broader agenda by addressing the specific economic and environmental challenges faced by Caribbean nations. The relationship among these actors is characterized by a multi-layered approach: the EU, as an external partner, brings financial resources, trade agreements, and normative frameworks that promote democracy and human rights, while CELAC and CARICOM represent regional unity and development priorities. Cuba's involvement adds a political and ideological dimension that influences discussions on sovereignty, development models, and social equity. Together, these interactions contribute to the summit's goals by promoting regional integration, advancing sustainable development initiatives, enhancing economic cooperation, and fostering

inclusive political dialogue. Furthermore, this collaboration supports multilateralism by reinforcing cooperative approaches to global challenges, thereby aligning with the broader aims of the summit in global governance and partnership.

China's deepening engagement in Cuba, particularly through investments and military and intelligence cooperation has heightened US concerns about strategic encroachment in its traditional sphere of influence. This growing China-Cuba axis complicates the already tense US-China relationship by introducing a security dimension just 90 miles from US shores. For Latin America, China's presence in Cuba signals a broader shift where Beijing is asserting economic and possibly military influence in the region, traditionally dominated by the US with its overtly geopolitical slant and all that. Regional powers may leverage China's growing role and insatiable thirst for resources and so weiter to diversify their alliances and reduce dependence on the US, challenging Washington's historical primacy in the hemisphere. Globally, this dynamic underscores an emerging multipolar order where strategic partnerships like China-Cuba serve as proxies for great power competition beyond Asia-Pacific. The evolving regional order in Latin America is increasingly shaped by external powers like China and the EU, with forums such as the EU-CELAC partnership offering a counterbalance to US-China rivalry by promoting multilateral cooperation, sustainable development, and normative influence across the region.

Between Revolution and Nationalism, there is a choice to be made.

16. REACHING OUT TO SAINT MARTEEN, ARUBA AND CURACAO

The Role of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten in Dutch Global Strategy

Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands but are autonomous countries within the kingdom. These Caribbean territories play a key role in the Netherlands' global strategy, acting as strategic outposts for political, economic, and security interests. Their geographical location, political status, and economic functions significantly influence Dutch foreign and domestic policy.

Geopolitical Importance

Strategic Location:

Located just off the coast of Venezuela, Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten occupy an important position in the Caribbean Sea. This makes them

crucial for maritime trade routes between Europe, the Americas, and Africa. Their location also allows the Kingdom of the Netherlands to maintain a regional presence, particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America.

These islands are positioned to monitor key shipping lanes, making them strategic for the Netherlands' geopolitical interests, especially concerning regional security issues, natural disasters, and economic exchanges.

Military and Defense:

The islands contribute to the Netherlands' regional defense strategy. The Kingdom has military personnel stationed in these territories to respond to natural disasters, civil unrest, or security threats in the Caribbean and Latin America. This contributes to the overall security architecture of NATO and the broader Western alliance.

The proximity to Venezuela, an area of geopolitical tension, also places the islands in a sensitive position regarding regional security concerns, particularly in countering the influence of non-Western powers in the region.

Economic Significance

Financial and Trade Hubs:

Curaçao, with its well-developed infrastructure, serves as a key international business hub, particularly for finance and offshore banking. This is strategically valuable for the Netherlands, as it can offer financial services to Latin America and other parts of the Caribbean.

Aruba and Sint Maarten also participate in regional trade and tourism, which are essential components of their economies. These islands act as gateways for Dutch goods and services to the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America, and their economies benefit from Dutch investment and the wider European Union market.

Tourism and International Business:

The Dutch Caribbean territories are major tourist destinations, particularly for visitors from North America and Europe. Aruba, known for its beaches, and Sint Maarten, with its dual French and Dutch administration, play a significant role in generating revenue through tourism. These industries are key contributors to the Netherlands' regional economic footprint.

These islands also attract international investment in sectors such as tourism, trade, and renewable energy, which aligns with the Netherlands' broader economic goals.

Trade Relations with the Americas:

These territories offer access to markets in the Caribbean and Latin America, allowing Dutch companies to establish a foothold in the region. The Netherlands, with the help of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten, can act as an intermediary between Europe and Latin America, facilitating trade agreements and investment opportunities.

Political and Diplomatic Role

Diplomatic Influence in the Caribbean:

While Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten have a high degree of autonomy, they are still part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. This unique political arrangement allows the Netherlands to exert influence over Caribbean regional affairs through the kingdom's presence.

The islands act as a bridge for diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and other Caribbean countries. They are key players in organizations such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), promoting Dutch interests and maintaining strong ties with the broader Caribbean region.

Stability and Regional Cooperation:

These territories also help reinforce the stability of the Dutch Kingdom and its diplomatic interests in the Caribbean. By maintaining peaceful and cooperative relations with their neighbors, they contribute to regional security and political dialogue, making the Netherlands a reliable partner in the Caribbean.

4. Security and Counter-Narcotics Role

Combating Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime:

The proximity of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten to South American countries like Venezuela and Colombia makes them key players in regional anti-narcotics operations. They are often used as staging points for counter-narcotics and law enforcement activities in the Caribbean, supporting both Dutch and American efforts to combat drug trafficking.

The islands host international cooperation initiatives and share intelligence with the United States, the European Union, and other Latin American nations to counteract organized crime and illicit trade.

Humanitarian and Disaster Response:

Due to their location in the Caribbean, these islands are often on the front lines of natural disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes. The Netherlands, through these territories, is able

to project humanitarian aid and disaster relief capacity across the Caribbean. This also strengthens the kingdom's role as a reliable partner in global disaster response.

In addition, the Dutch military stationed on the islands is responsible for providing humanitarian assistance and security in the event of a regional crisis.

Environmental and Climate Change Initiatives

Climate Change Vulnerability:

As small island nations, Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are highly vulnerable to climate change, including rising sea levels and extreme weather events. The Netherlands has used its position in the Caribbean to advocate for global action on climate change, particularly regarding island states' environmental concerns.

The Dutch Caribbean territories are part of broader international initiatives to protect marine biodiversity, reduce emissions, and support sustainable development in the Caribbean region.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The Netherlands has worked with local governments in these territories to implement policies that align with global sustainability goals. Renewable energy development, environmental protection, and building climate resilience are priorities in these islands, contributing to the Netherlands' position as a global leader in environmental governance.

6. The Netherlands' Security Framework and Integration with NATO

Regional Security Partnership:

As part of NATO, the Kingdom of the Netherlands relies on its Caribbean territories to fulfill its defense obligations in the Americas. These territories act as valuable assets for NATO's strategic reach in the Western Hemisphere.

The islands also contribute to the Netherlands' broader regional cooperation with the United States, particularly in joint military and security operations across the Caribbean and Latin America.

Strengthening and Leveraging the Role of the Dutch Caribbean Territories Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are key elements of the Netherlands' global strategy. They provide economic opportunities, enhance regional influence, and support defense and security initiatives in the Caribbean. Their political autonomy, combined with their strategic position, makes them essential components of Dutch diplomacy, defense, and trade relations. Moving forward, strengthening ties through regional cooperation and fostering more

sustainable development initiatives will further cement their role in global Dutch strategy, while addressing the security, economic, and environmental challenges that impact both the Kingdom and the broader Caribbean region.

Aruba, Sint Maarten, and Curaçao are part of the *pouvoir constituant* (constitutional authority) in the Kingdom of the Netherlands because they are autonomous constituent countries within the Kingdom, a unique political arrangement enshrined in the Charter for the Kingdom of the Netherlands (*Statuut voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*). This charter, adopted in 1954, recognizes their autonomy while maintaining their inclusion within the Kingdom's constitutional framework. As a result, they share sovereignty with the Netherlands, have their own governments, and are responsible for most domestic matters such as healthcare, education, and economic policy. However, matters like defense, foreign affairs, and nationality remain under the purview of the Kingdom, represented by the Dutch government in The Hague. This balance reflects a colonial legacy and post-World War II decolonization processes aimed at granting more self-determination while preserving ties with the Netherlands.

Development Needs of Aruba, Sint Maarten, and Curaçao

1. **Economic Diversification:** These territories rely heavily on tourism, leaving them vulnerable to economic shocks like those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Diversifying their economies into areas like renewable energy, digital services, or agriculture is a pressing need.
2. **Infrastructure Modernization:** Aging infrastructure, particularly in ports, transportation, and energy systems, requires significant investment to support long-term development and resilience against climate change.
3. **Social Inequalities and Poverty:** High levels of inequality and limited access to affordable housing and education are persistent challenges, exacerbating social tensions.
4. **Climate Resilience:** These islands are highly vulnerable to hurricanes, sea-level rise, and other climate-related risks. Improved disaster preparedness and investment in sustainable development are critical.
5. **Governance and Public Administration:** Corruption and inefficiencies in governance undermine development. Strengthening institutions and promoting transparency are key priorities.

The Hague's Response

The Netherlands has taken a multifaceted approach to support the development of its Caribbean territories:

Financial Support: The Dutch government has provided substantial financial aid, particularly during crises. For example, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Netherlands provided loans and direct grants to support public services and stabilize economies.

Oversight and Reform Initiatives: The Hague has tied financial support to reforms in governance, transparency, and fiscal responsibility. This has caused tensions, particularly in Sint Maarten, where oversight boards are viewed as infringements on autonomy.

Climate and Disaster Funding: The Netherlands has invested in projects aimed at improving climate resilience, including upgrading infrastructure and emergency response systems. For instance, Den Haag has pledged funding for hurricane-proof housing and renewable energy projects.

Regional Cooperation: The Netherlands encourages closer cooperation among Aruba, Sint Maarten, and Curaçao to address shared challenges such as migration, organized crime, and economic vulnerabilities.

Security Challenges in the Dutch Caribbean

1. **Transnational Organized Crime:** The Dutch Caribbean is a key transit route for drug trafficking between South America and Europe. Criminal networks exploit the islands' geographic location and porous borders.

2. **Illegal Migration and Human Trafficking:** The islands face challenges related to irregular migration from Venezuela, Haiti, and other neighboring countries, as well as human trafficking networks.
3. **Climate-Related Risks:** Hurricanes and rising sea levels pose existential threats to the islands, impacting security and public safety.
4. **Economic Instability and Social Unrest:** Economic hardships often lead to social protests, which can escalate into security concerns.
5. **Cybersecurity Threats:** As digitalization grows, the islands face increasing vulnerabilities to cyberattacks, necessitating robust cybersecurity measures.

Summary

Aruba, Sint Maarten, and Curaçao are integral parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with autonomy enshrined in the Kingdom's constitutional framework. Their development needs—ranging from economic diversification to climate resilience—demand both local initiatives and substantial support from The Hague. While the Netherlands has made strides in providing financial aid and disaster resilience measures, challenges persist, particularly in governance and addressing security threats like drug trafficking and climate change. Enhanced cooperation between the Dutch Caribbean territories, stronger institutional reforms, and sustainable investments are critical to addressing these multifaceted challenges.



Saint Marteen

Interest: Saint Marteen, a constituent country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, relies heavily on tourism. It seeks economic diversification and sustainable development.

Development Level: Saint Marteen faces vulnerabilities due to its small size, dependence on tourism, and exposure to climate risk.

Needs: Saint Marteen requires investment in resilience, education, and economic diversification.

Aruba:

Interest: as an autonomous Dutch constituent country, Aruba seeks economic diversification beyond tourism. It aims to enhance financial services, logistics, and renewable energy sectors.

Development Level: Aruba has a relatively high standard of living but faces sustainability and economic resilience challenges.

Needs: Aruba has a relatively high standard of living but faces challenges related to sustainability and economic resilience measures.

5. State-to-State conflicts

Guyana-Venezuela Border Controversy

Continue regional collaboration to find a lasting solution.

Engage international partners to mediate.

Cross-Border Smuggling:

Address arms smuggling:

Address arms smuggling between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, Colombia, and Venezuela.

Sustained dialogue, mutual understanding, and practical cooperation are essential for advancing Caribbean integration and addressing shared challenges.

How the EU, CELAC, and CARICOM Can Reach Out to Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten to Address Challenges

Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten, as autonomous members within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, are crucial players in the Caribbean region. Given their strategic location, political autonomy, and economic potential, these islands face a unique set of challenges that demand tailored regional cooperation. The European Union (EU), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are key stakeholders that could play an instrumental role in addressing these challenges. Here's how these organizations can enhance engagement with Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten:

1. Strengthening Political and Diplomatic Dialogue

Formalizing Diplomatic Engagements:

The EU, CELAC, and CARICOM should engage these islands through formal diplomatic channels, emphasizing the shared interests of the Caribbean region. Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten, while part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, still have strong ties to the Caribbean and Latin America. Direct diplomatic dialogue, such as regular meetings or summits, would provide an opportunity for these territories to express their regional concerns and aspirations, ensuring that their voices are heard in broader regional frameworks.

Regional Cooperation in Multilateral Forums:

The EU and CELAC could ensure that Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are included in multilateral forums

that deal with Caribbean issues, such as the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and the CELAC summit. This would allow the islands to actively participate in discussions that directly impact them, particularly in areas such as trade, development, and climate change.

2. Economic Development and Trade Partnerships

Promoting Sustainable Trade and Investment:

The EU could leverage its trade relationships with the Kingdom of the Netherlands to include Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten in its regional trade agreements, particularly those aimed at promoting sustainable economic development. With their strategic position as trade hubs in the Caribbean, these islands can facilitate EU access to Latin American markets, while receiving preferential treatment under the EU's Caribbean trade agreements.

CELAC, as an organization representing Latin American and Caribbean countries, can facilitate economic cooperation by encouraging investment in key sectors such as renewable energy, tourism, and technology. For instance, CELAC countries could offer incentives for the islands to build on their potential in green technologies and sustainable tourism, sectors where they already have growing interests.

Leveraging CARICOM's Economic Networks:

Although Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are not formal members of CARICOM, their geographical and historical ties make them valuable partners for CARICOM. Strengthening economic partnerships could involve trade facilitation, joint ventures in key sectors (such as energy or infrastructure), and improving regional connectivity, which could be achieved through investments in ports, airports, and digital infrastructure.

3. Addressing Environmental Challenges

Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation Programs:

Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten are highly vulnerable to climate change, including hurricanes, rising sea levels, and extreme weather events. The EU, through its European External Action (EEAS), could offer support in the form of climate financing, technical expertise, and disaster risk reduction strategies tailored to these islands' unique environmental circumstances.

CARICOM's regional climate change initiatives could be expanded to include these territories, allowing them to benefit from collective knowledge-sharing on climate resilience. CARICOM could facilitate joint Caribbean climate change policies and advocate for global climate financing in international forums, ensuring that the islands receive the resources needed to enhance their climate resilience.

CELAC could further contribute by fostering cooperation between Caribbean countries and Latin American nations that face similar environmental challenges. A concerted effort on regional environmental policy, perhaps in collaboration with the United Nations and other international organizations, could help address issues such as marine pollution, coastal erosion, and renewable energy development.

4. Enhancing Regional Security Cooperation

Combating Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking:

Given the proximity of Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten to Latin America, the region is vulnerable to drug trafficking and organized crime. The EU can support these territories in building capacity for law enforcement and border security. EU-backed programs, such as the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), can offer expertise and resources to strengthen anti-narcotics efforts.

CELAC and CARICOM should coordinate joint anti-crime initiatives in the Caribbean. These territories can collaborate with their neighbors through the Caribbean Regional Security System (RSS) and other regional security frameworks to combat drug trafficking, human trafficking, and organized crime.

Strengthening Disaster Preparedness and Humanitarian Aid:

The EU and CELAC could provide resources to improve disaster preparedness on the islands, particularly to handle natural disasters like hurricanes and floods, which are common in the region. By investing in early warning systems, building climate-resilient infrastructure, and improving regional cooperation, the islands would be better prepared to face such challenges.

In a similar vein, CARICOM's role in disaster response can be expanded to incorporate Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten into broader regional strategies, allowing for better coordination of humanitarian relief efforts across the Caribbean.

5. Promoting Social and Cultural Cooperation

Cultural Diplomacy and Education Exchanges:

The EU and CARICOM could organize cultural exchanges, educational programs, and joint initiatives that foster people-to-people connections. This could include student exchange programs, technical assistance in education, and cultural collaborations that would further strengthen ties between the islands and other CARICOM members.

CELAC's engagement can focus on regional cooperation in areas such as cultural heritage preservation, particularly through UNESCO's cultural programs. Collaborative efforts could promote the shared Caribbean identity while ensuring that Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten continue to be recognized for their cultural contributions within the wider Caribbean and Latin American context.

Youth Development and Employment:

A joint youth development program could be implemented across these islands, focusing on training, skill-building, and employment opportunities. This would help combat high unemployment rates and provide a future generation of young people with the tools to succeed in both local and global markets.

6. Facilitating Connectivity and Infrastructure Development

Improving Regional Connectivity:

The EU, through its European Development Fund (EDF), could support projects aimed at improving infrastructure, including roads, telecommunications, and transportation networks. This would help Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten strengthen their connectivity with the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America, improving access to markets and enhancing trade. CARICOM could enhance its efforts to improve regional air and sea transportation links, ensuring these islands are better connected to key regional and global hubs. With their strategic location, improving air and sea connectivity will also increase tourism and facilitate smoother trade routes across the region.

A Unified Approach for a Stronger Caribbean

The EU, CELAC, and CARICOM have much to offer in addressing the diverse challenges faced by Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten. By strengthening diplomatic ties, enhancing trade cooperation, addressing environmental and security concerns, and promoting social and cultural exchanges, these organizations can

support the islands' sustainable development while reinforcing the broader Caribbean's regional unity. A cohesive approach that considers the islands' unique role within both the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the wider Caribbean context will foster a more prosperous, secure, and resilient future for these territories and their neighbors.

17. PUERTO RICO AND THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

The U.S. History with Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands

The United States' relationship with Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands is deeply rooted in its expansionist history. Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory in 1898 following the Spanish-American War, when Spain ceded the island to the U.S. under the Treaty of Paris. The island's strategic location in the Caribbean Sea made it a vital military and naval asset,

particularly during the early 20th century and World War II. Despite its status as a U.S. territory, Puerto Rico's political identity has remained contested, as its people have U.S. citizenship but lack full political representation and voting rights in Congress.

The U.S. Virgin Islands—purchased from Denmark in 1917 under the guise of securing American naval dominance during World War I—also occupy a strategic geographic position, overseeing key shipping routes in the Caribbean. Similar to Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands became a non-incorporated U.S. territory, granting its citizens limited political rights and significant economic reliance on federal support. The U.S. sought to use both territories as gateways to project influence in Latin America and the wider Caribbean, while leveraging their economic potential in agriculture, tourism, and trade.



Strategic Challenges in U.S.-Territory Relations

1. **Political Status and Representation:** A central challenge is the ambiguous political status of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Puerto Rico, in particular, continues to debate its future—whether as a state, independent nation, or continued territory. This unresolved question fosters political tension and limits the territories' ability to advocate for themselves in federal policymaking.
2. **Economic Dependence:** Both territories are heavily reliant on U.S. federal aid, making their economies vulnerable to fluctuations in federal policy or disaster relief funding. Economic dependence has stifled local innovation and left Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands struggling to build self-sustaining economies.
3. **Debt Crisis in Puerto Rico:** Puerto Rico's \$70 billion debt crisis, coupled with austerity measures imposed by the U.S. Congress under the PROMESA Act, has created widespread social unrest and undermined economic stability. This financial oversight, seen by many Puerto Ricans as a neocolonial imposition, has exacerbated tensions between San Juan and Washington.
4. **Disaster Response and Climate Resilience:** The territories are highly vulnerable to hurricanes and climate change. Failures in disaster response—such as the delayed and inadequate U.S. federal response to Hurricane Maria in 2017—have exposed gaps in the U.S. commitment to these territories and led to criticism of federal neglect.
5. **Social Inequalities:** The territories face persistent issues of poverty, high unemployment, and inadequate healthcare and education systems. Puerto Rico's poverty rate exceeds 40%, while both territories struggle with migration outflows as residents seek better opportunities on the U.S. mainland.

6. **Strategic Importance vs. Neglect:** While the U.S. views Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands as strategically vital, particularly in the Caribbean's geopolitics and trade routes, this interest has often been episodic. Economic, military, and humanitarian needs are frequently sidelined in favor of short-term priorities, leaving the territories in prolonged states of underdevelopment.
7. **Geopolitical Tensions:** As China and other global actors increase their presence in the Caribbean, the U.S. faces challenges in maintaining influence over its territories and the region at large. A lack of sustained investment in the territories risks undermining their geopolitical utility as strategic outposts.
5. **Health and Education Systems:** Both territories struggle with healthcare worker shortages and underfunded education systems. Improving access to quality healthcare and educational opportunities is a pressing need.
6. **Social Inequalities:** High poverty rates, unemployment, and income disparities are ongoing challenges, particularly in Puerto Rico, where over 40% of the population lives below the poverty line.

The U.S. history with Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands reveals a complex interplay of strategic interests, economic dependency, and political inequities. While these territories remain vital for U.S. influence in the Caribbean, unresolved issues such as political status, economic instability, and climate resilience continue to strain relationships. Addressing these challenges requires a renewed commitment to equitable development, meaningful self-determination, and a long-term strategy that balances U.S. interests with the aspirations of the territories' citizens.

The Development needs

The development needs of Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands are:

1. **Economic Diversification:** Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands heavily depend on tourism, manufacturing, and U.S. federal funding, leaving their economies vulnerable to external shocks, such as hurricanes and pandemics. Diversification into sectors like renewable energy, digital services, and agriculture is crucial for economic resilience.
2. **Infrastructure Modernization:** Both territories face outdated and deteriorating infrastructure, particularly in transportation, energy grids, and water systems. Puerto Rico's power grid has suffered repeated failures, especially after Hurricane Maria in 2017, emphasizing the need for urgent upgrades.
3. **Debt and Fiscal Management:** Puerto Rico, in particular, is burdened by a \$70 billion public debt crisis, managed under a U.S.-imposed fiscal oversight board. This constrains local governance and limits investments in social and economic development.
4. **Climate Resilience and Disaster Preparedness:** Frequent hurricanes and rising sea levels pose significant threats. Enhancing disaster response systems and investing in climate-resilient infrastructure are vital.

How Mexico, the EU-CELAC Partnership, and CARICOM Could Respond to Mexico's Role

Medical Diplomacy: Mexico could provide healthcare personnel and expertise, especially in rural areas, replicating its existing medical outreach programs in other parts of the Caribbean.

Trade and Investment: Mexico can deepen trade ties by exporting affordable goods and partnering in industries like agriculture, biotechnology, and renewable energy.

Disaster Response Collaboration: Mexico's expertise in disaster management and its geographical proximity make it a natural partner for assisting Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands during hurricanes or other emergencies.

EU-CELAC Partnership

Development Financing: The EU-CELAC partnership could extend grants or concessional loans to support climate adaptation projects, such as building hurricane-resistant infrastructure and renewable energy grids.

Technical Assistance: The EU could share expertise in areas like waste management, sustainable tourism, and digital transformation.

Cultural Exchange and Education: EU-CELAC initiatives could foster educational exchanges, scholarships, and research partnerships to strengthen human capital development in the territories.

CARICOM's Role

Regional Solidarity: CARICOM could advocate for Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in regional forums, pushing for greater attention to their development needs.

Knowledge Sharing: CARICOM countries could share best practices in tourism development, renewable energy, and disaster management to address shared challenges.

Regional Integration: Including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands in regional trade agreements or frameworks could strengthen economic ties and open new markets for Caribbean products.

U.S. Counterpart Response

The U.S. plays a critical role in addressing Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands' development needs. Key areas of focus could include:

1. **Debt Relief and Fiscal Autonomy:** Revisiting the PROMESA framework to provide more local control over fiscal policy and considering partial debt forgiveness for Puerto Rico.
2. **Infrastructure Investments:** Allocating federal funds for modernizing energy grids, ports, and transportation systems in both territories.
3. **Climate Action Funding:** Expanding federal programs for disaster preparedness, such as FEMA, and increasing funding for climate adaptation projects.
4. **Healthcare and Education:** Addressing disparities in Medicaid funding and investing in healthcare worker retention and educational institutions.
5. **Job Creation Initiatives:** Supporting programs to foster entrepreneurship, promote small businesses, and attract investment in high-growth sectors like renewable energy and technology.

Synergies Between International and U.S. Efforts

The combined efforts of Mexico, the EU-CELAC partnership, CARICOM, and the U.S. could create a multilateral approach to development in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands:

Joint Investment in Climate Resilience: Collaborating on regional disaster response systems and renewable energy projects can create synergies and reduce redundancy.

Policy Coordination: Aligning international development programs with U.S. federal strategies ensures that resources are used efficiently and avoid duplication.

Capacity Building: International actors, alongside U.S. support, can fund training programs for local leaders, empowering communities to take charge of their own development.

The international community and the U.S. can help Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands transition toward a sustainable and resilient future by coordinating efforts to address economic, social, and environmental challenges.

18. CAYMAN ISLANDS AND BAHAMAS

Political History and Geopolitical Position of the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas

Cayman Islands:

The Cayman Islands are a British Overseas Territory located in the Caribbean Sea, south of Cuba and northeast of Honduras. The islands have a long history of British colonial rule, and while they have maintained their status as an Overseas Territory, they are self-governing in many areas, such as local governance and economic affairs. The UK remains responsible for defense, foreign affairs, and constitutional matters.

Geopolitical Position: Strategically located in the western Caribbean, the Cayman Islands serve as a financial hub with a favorable tax regime. The islands' position also offers access to key maritime routes and proximity to Central America and the US. These advantages have helped the Cayman Islands develop as a major offshore finance center, particularly for banking, insurance, and investment services.

The Bahamas:

The Bahamas is an independent nation, a former British colony, which gained independence in 1973. It is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). The Bahamas consists of over 700 islands and cays, with a significant portion of its economy tied to tourism, offshore finance, and banking.

Geopolitical Position: The Bahamas is strategically positioned in the Atlantic Ocean, serving as a gateway between the United States and the Caribbean. Its proximity to the US East Coast makes it a critical ally in terms of security and economic cooperation, especially in the context of trade, tourism, and narcotics control.

Security and Threat Perception in the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas

Cayman Islands:

Security Perception: The Cayman Islands have relatively low crime rates, and the local population generally perceives their security as stable. However, as a British Overseas Territory, the islands' defense is primarily under the purview of the UK, with British naval and military assets available for emergencies.

Key Security Challenges:

Natural Disasters: Being located in the Caribbean, the Cayman Islands are highly vulnerable to hurricanes, posing a significant security risk.

Offshore Financial Sector Risks: The prominence of the Cayman Islands in global finance exposes them to potential risks, such as international pressure to adhere to financial regulations or threats of sanctions due to concerns about money laundering or tax evasion.

The Bahamas:

Security Perception: The Bahamas faces greater concerns regarding security threats, including narcotics trafficking, organized crime, and gang violence. These challenges are compounded by the country's geographic location, making it a transit point for illicit drugs moving from Latin America to the United States.

Key Security Challenges:

Narco-trafficking: As a key transshipment point for drugs, particularly cocaine, the Bahamas faces significant security risks associated with drug cartels.

Natural Disasters: Like the Cayman Islands, the Bahamas is also vulnerable to hurricanes and tropical storms, which can cause widespread devastation and loss of life.

Marine Border Security: The Bahamas' extensive coastline and numerous islands make it difficult to monitor and secure borders, leading to challenges in addressing human trafficking and illegal immigration.

Development Needs of the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas

Cayman Islands:

Economic Diversification: Although the Cayman Islands' financial sector is robust, there is a need for diversification to reduce dependence on offshore finance. Sustainable tourism and environmental conservation could be developed further.

Climate Change Adaptation: Given its vulnerability to rising sea levels and hurricanes, the Cayman Islands must invest in climate change mitigation and resilience strategies to safeguard its infrastructure and natural resources.

Social Development: The government must also address social issues such as affordable housing, education, and healthcare, particularly for expatriate workers who make up a significant portion of the population.

The Bahamas:

Economic Diversification: The Bahamas heavily relies on tourism, making it vulnerable to global economic fluctuations, natural disasters, and shifts in travel patterns. Economic diversification into sectors such as agriculture, renewable energy, and technology is crucial for long-term stability.

Climate Change Resilience: As an island nation, the Bahamas faces existential threats from climate change, particularly from rising sea levels and extreme weather events like hurricanes. The government needs substantial investments in climate resilience, disaster preparedness, and infrastructure.

Social Development and Inequality: Socioeconomic inequality remains a challenge in the Bahamas, with rural areas lagging behind the more developed urban centers. Improved healthcare, education, and access to quality services are essential for inclusive growth.

Responses from the US, EU, CELAC, and Other Partners

The US:

Security Cooperation: The US is a key security partner for both the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas. The US Coast Guard works closely with Bahamian authorities to combat narco-trafficking and human smuggling. The Bahamas is also part of US-led regional security initiatives like the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), which aims to reduce crime and improve security across the region.

Economic and Climate Support: The US provides significant economic assistance to the Bahamas, particularly after natural disasters. Additionally, the US supports climate change adaptation programs in the Caribbean through various regional partnerships.

Trade and Investment: The US is a major trade partner and investor in both territories, with tourism and real estate being key sectors of American interest.

The EU:

Climate Change and Sustainable Development: The EU is a significant partner for both territories in addressing climate change. Through funding and expertise, the EU supports disaster resilience and environmental conservation in the Caribbean.

Trade Relations: The EU has free trade agreements with CARIFORUM (which includes the Bahamas), promoting economic cooperation. Additionally, the EU supports regional economic integration, which can benefit the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands in diversifying their economies.

CELAC:

Regional Cooperation: CELAC can provide a platform for the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas to engage with Latin American and Caribbean countries on issues such as climate change, sustainable development, and security.

Environmental Initiatives: CELAC countries are increasingly focused on collaborative regional responses to climate change, and both territories could benefit from regional programs and partnerships in areas such as renewable energy, marine conservation, and disaster management.

CARICOM:

Security and Crime: CARICOM is a valuable partner for the Bahamas, providing support through regional security frameworks to combat organized crime, human trafficking, and narcotics smuggling.

Disaster Relief and Preparedness: As a regional body, CARICOM plays a key role in coordinating disaster relief efforts. It can continue to provide the Bahamas and the Cayman Islands with logistical, financial, and technical assistance to bolster climate resilience and disaster recovery.

Economic Cooperation: CARICOM can help the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas further integrate into regional trade initiatives, offering opportunities for diversification of their economies and promoting sustainable development goals.

Both the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas face distinct challenges, such as environmental threats, economic dependence on tourism, and security concerns like narcotrafficking. Their geographical positions—strategically placed between the Americas, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic—make them important players in regional security and economic affairs. Through collaboration with international partners such as the US, the EU, CELAC, and CARICOM, these territories can address their vulnerabilities, diversify their economies, and enhance climate resilience. A coordinated approach to security, climate change, and sustainable development will ensure that both the Cayman Islands and the Bahamas can thrive in an increasingly interconnected and rapidly changing global landscape.

19. THE STORY OF HISPANIOLA: A TALE OF DIVISION AND COMPLEXITY

Hispaniola, one of the largest islands in the Caribbean, holds a unique place in history as the site of both European colonization and the first successful slave rebellion in the Americas. Originally inhabited by the Taíno people, the island was "discovered" by Christopher Columbus in 1492 during his

first voyage, marking the beginning of European colonization in the New World. The Spanish established their first permanent settlement, Santo Domingo, on the eastern side of the island, which became the capital of Spain's burgeoning colonial empire in the Americas. Over time, the western portion of the island became a French colony, officially ceded by Spain under the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. This division laid the groundwork for the formation of two distinct nations: the Dominican Republic (formerly Santo Domingo) and Haiti.

Haiti, located on the western side of the island, was one of France's wealthiest colonies in the 18th century, primarily due to its lucrative sugar and coffee plantations worked by enslaved Africans. However, the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804), led by figures such as Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jacques Dessalines, resulted in the overthrow of French rule and the establishment of Haiti as the first independent Black republic. The Dominican Republic, by contrast, remained under Spanish rule, with a different colonial trajectory shaped by cattle ranching and a more racially mixed population. This divergence in historical experiences and economic development set the stage for a complex and often fraught relationship between the two nations.

Strategic Challenges on Hispaniola

Economic Disparities: Haiti is one of the poorest nations in the Western Hemisphere, plagued by chronic poverty, weak infrastructure, and limited state capacity. In contrast, the Dominican Republic has experienced more sustained economic growth, fueled by tourism, agriculture, and remittances. These disparities create imbalances in bilateral relations and drive significant migration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic, often under precarious conditions.

Migration and Border Tensions: The porous 391-kilometer border between the two nations is a hotspot for migration, human trafficking, and smuggling. Many Haitians cross into the Dominican Republic in search of work, but this has fueled anti-immigrant sentiment and strained resources in border regions.

Political Instability in Haiti: Haiti has faced decades of political turmoil, exacerbated by the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, gang violence, and weak governance. This instability creates security concerns for the Dominican Republic and hampers cooperative efforts on issues like border management and trade.

Environmental Degradation: Deforestation, soil erosion, and natural disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes

disproportionately affect Haiti due to weaker environmental protections and governance. This ecological imbalance impacts the entire island, leading to transboundary issues like water scarcity and resource depletion.

Colonial Legacies and Cultural Divisions: The historical division between French-speaking Haiti and Spanish-speaking Dominican Republic has fostered cultural and racial tensions. Misunderstandings and stereotypes persist, complicating efforts to build regional solidarity and mutual trust.

Shared Vulnerability to Climate Change: Both nations face severe risks from rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and declining agricultural productivity due to climate change. However, Haiti's limited resources make it more vulnerable, further exacerbating disparities on the island.

Dependence on External Actors: Both countries rely heavily on foreign aid and international partnerships for development. Haiti, in particular, has seen significant intervention by the United Nations, NGOs, and donor nations. However, this external involvement often lacks coordination and long-term impact.

Geopolitical Competition: The island's strategic location in the Caribbean makes it an area of interest for global powers like the United States, China, and the European Union. These nations often approach Haiti and the Dominican Republic separately, leading to fragmented development strategies rather than a holistic approach to addressing shared challenges.

The story of Hispaniola is one of divergence, resilience, and complexity. The division of the island into Haiti and the Dominican Republic reflects contrasting colonial legacies and socio-economic trajectories that continue to shape their relationship today. Strategic challenges such as migration, political instability, and environmental degradation underscore the need for greater collaboration and shared responsibility. However, these efforts must address underlying inequalities and foster a spirit of mutual respect to bridge the historical and cultural divides that have long characterized this divided island.



Causes of Current Unrest and Gang Violence in Haiti:

Political Instability: The assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021 left a power vacuum, deepening Haiti's political crisis. Weak interim governance, contested legitimacy, and failure to hold elections have exacerbated instability.

Economic Collapse: Haiti faces chronic poverty, unemployment, and inflation, worsened by decades of mismanagement, corruption, and dependency on foreign aid. This economic despair provides fertile ground for criminal networks.

Weak State Institutions: Haiti's government lacks control over its territory, particularly in urban areas dominated by gangs. The police force is underfunded, poorly trained, and often infiltrated by criminal elements.

Gang Proliferation: Over 200 gangs control significant portions of the capital, Port-au-Prince, and other regions. These groups engage in kidnapping, extortion, and smuggling, exploiting weak law enforcement and impoverished communities.

Humanitarian Crisis: Limited access to food, clean water, and healthcare—exacerbated by natural disasters and climate change—has created widespread desperation. The combination of need and insecurity has driven massive internal displacement and migration.

International Neglect: Despite years of international intervention, efforts have been piecemeal, uncoordinated, and often short-term. The lack of a coherent strategy has failed to address the root causes of Haiti's challenges.

How the UN Is Chipping In

Security Initiatives: The United Nations is leading efforts to stabilize Haiti by assisting the Haitian National Police (HNP) with training and resources. However, these efforts

have been insufficient to counter the entrenched gang violence.

Humanitarian Assistance: The UN provides aid for food security, healthcare, and education through agencies like the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF. Yet, insecurity often hinders the delivery of aid.

Political Mediation: The UN is facilitating dialogue among political factions to establish a transitional government and pave the way for elections. However, progress has been slow due to entrenched divisions.

Deployment Planning: The UN has proposed an international security assistance force, including countries like Kenya, to help stabilize Haiti. However, the implementation remains uncertain.

Impact of Mexican Troop Deployment in a Peacekeeping Force (PKF)

A Mexican-led troop deployment could have significant symbolic and practical effects on Haiti's stability:

Regional Leadership: Mexico's participation would reinforce Latin American solidarity with Haiti, showcasing Mexico as a regional leader in addressing shared challenges.

Cultural and Linguistic Alignment: Unlike past peacekeeping efforts dominated by Western nations, Mexico's cultural affinity with Haiti could enhance trust and cooperation on the ground.

Focus on Development: Mexico's historical focus on development diplomacy (e.g., technical cooperation) could shift the mission's emphasis from merely maintaining order to addressing root causes of instability.

Strengthening the Police: Mexican forces could train and collaborate directly with the HNP to improve their capacity to combat gangs and restore public security.

Long-Term Stability: Mexico's deployment could emphasize holistic development, tying military stabilization efforts to economic and social reconstruction programs.

Comprehensive Development Plan for Haiti: Underpinning Mexico's Deployment

A plan for Haiti's recovery, supported by Mexico, should include the following pillars:

Security Sector Reform:

Train and equip the Haitian National Police to restore law and order.

Disband gangs through demobilization programs and targeted operations.

Establish secure zones to protect humanitarian aid delivery.

Economic Revival:

Create job opportunities in sectors like agriculture, renewable energy, and construction.

Attract foreign investment by improving legal frameworks and infrastructure.

Implement small business programs to empower local entrepreneurs.

Infrastructure Development:

Rebuild roads, bridges, and energy systems to connect rural areas to markets.

Expand access to clean water and sanitation facilities.

Construct resilient housing to mitigate the impact of natural disasters.

Education and Healthcare:

Build schools and train teachers to increase literacy and skills among youth.

Improve healthcare facilities, with a focus on maternal and child health.

Deploy mobile clinics to reach underserved areas.

Governance and Institution Building:

Support the establishment of a transitional government with broad political representation.

Provide training and resources for public administration and local governance.

Strengthen anti-corruption mechanisms to ensure accountability.

Climate Resilience:

Implement reforestation projects and sustainable farming practices.

Develop early warning systems for hurricanes and earthquakes.

Invest in renewable energy to reduce dependence on imported fuel.

Action Plan: "Hispaniola Forever"

Binational Cooperation Framework: Establish a joint development strategy for Haiti and the Dominican Republic, addressing shared challenges such as migration, trade, and environmental degradation.

International Task Force: Mexico, alongside CARICOM, the EU-CELAC partnership, and the UN, would coordinate a multi-stakeholder task force to oversee Haiti's recovery efforts.

Long-Term Funding Mechanism: Create a dedicated regional development fund for Haiti, supported by contributions from Mexico, the EU, CARICOM, and other international partners.

Civil Society Inclusion: Engage local communities, women's organizations, and youth groups in shaping and implementing development programs.

Haiti-Dominican Border Stabilization: Invest in secure and orderly border infrastructure, including checkpoints and trade hubs, while promoting cross-border economic opportunities.

Humanitarian Surge: Mobilize resources for immediate humanitarian aid, focusing on food security, healthcare, and shelter for displaced populations.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish mechanisms to track progress, ensuring transparency and accountability in all development efforts.

Cultural and Educational Exchange: Foster cultural ties between Haiti, Mexico, and regional partners through scholarships, technical training programs, and arts initiatives.

By aligning security efforts with a robust development agenda, Mexico's leadership and the "Hispaniola Forever" action plan can address Haiti's immediate needs while laying the foundation for long-term stability and prosperity. This holistic approach recognizes that sustainable peace requires addressing not only violence but also the economic, political, and social conditions fueling Haiti's crisis.

20. POLITICAL HISTORY OF BARBADOS AND KEY ORIENTATIONS IN FOREIGN POLICY

Political History of Barbados:

Barbados, an island in the Caribbean, has a rich history marked by its colonization and subsequent path to independence. Initially colonized by the British in 1627, Barbados remained a British colony for more than 300 years, during which it developed a plantation economy heavily reliant on African slavery. In 1966, Barbados gained its independence from the United Kingdom, becoming a self-governing nation within the Commonwealth of Nations. The country retained ties to the British monarchy until November 2021, when it transitioned to a republic, officially removing Queen Elizabeth II as its head of state.

Over the decades, Barbados has maintained a stable democratic system, with regular elections and peaceful transitions of power. The country's political landscape has

been dominated by two major parties: the Barbados Labour Party (BLP) and the Democratic Labour Party (DLP). Barbados has also been recognized for its high levels of human development, social welfare, and strong legal and financial systems.

Key Orientations in Foreign Policy:

Barbados' foreign policy has primarily focused on the following key orientations:

Regional Integration: Barbados has been a strong advocate of regional integration in the Caribbean, being a founding member of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB). The country has emphasized cooperation on issues such as trade, education, climate change, and regional security.

Global Diplomacy: Barbados maintains an active role in international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the Commonwealth, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The country is vocal about issues such as climate change, sustainable development, and the rights of small island developing states (SIDS).

South-South Cooperation: Barbados has strengthened ties with other developing countries, especially through South-South Cooperation with nations in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. This allows Barbados to advocate for issues like debt relief, climate change action, and trade justice on the global stage.

Why Was Barbados Chosen as the Seat of the CARICOM Headquarters?

Geographical Location: Barbados is centrally located in the eastern Caribbean, making it accessible to other CARICOM member states. Its central position within the Caribbean Sea facilitates easier diplomatic outreach and coordination across the region.

Stable Governance: Barbados is known for its stable democratic governance and political institutions. This stability made it a logical choice for hosting CARICOM's headquarters, as it offers a neutral and secure environment for regional cooperation.

Economic and Diplomatic Influence: Barbados is one of the more economically developed nations in the region and has a history of diplomatic leadership in regional integration. Its strong role in the Caribbean's economy and international diplomacy made it an attractive host for CARICOM's secretariat.

Symbol of Regional Leadership: Barbados' leadership in regional organizations such as CARICOM, its support for the integration process, and its contributions to discussions on climate change and human rights reinforced its position as a leader in the Caribbean. By hosting the CARICOM headquarters, Barbados further solidified its role as a diplomatic hub in the region.

Factors Impinging on Barbados' Sense of Security and Threat Perception

1. Economic Vulnerabilities:

Over-reliance on Tourism: Barbados' economy is heavily dependent on tourism, making it vulnerable to global economic fluctuations, natural disasters, and public health crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Economic shocks can heighten insecurity, particularly as tourism is the backbone of employment and government revenue.

External Debt: Like many Caribbean nations, Barbados faces challenges with managing external debt. Fluctuating interest rates, limited fiscal capacity, and heavy reliance on external borrowing can create long-term financial insecurity.

2. Climate Change and Natural Disasters:

Hurricanes and Rising Sea Levels: Barbados is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, particularly hurricanes, which regularly affect the Caribbean region. Climate change also poses a threat in the form of rising sea levels, endangering the island's infrastructure, agricultural capacity, and tourism.

Environmental Degradation: As a small island state, Barbados faces significant threats from environmental degradation, particularly from marine pollution, coral bleaching, and unsustainable land use practices. These environmental issues can exacerbate food insecurity, impact tourism, and strain public resources.

3. Geopolitical Tensions and Global Shifts:

Shifting Global Alliances: Barbados' geopolitical position in the Caribbean puts it at the crossroads of competing global powers. While maintaining close ties to the United Kingdom, the United States, and CARICOM, the island must navigate emerging tensions and shifting alliances, particularly with the growing influence of China in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Regional Instability: The challenges faced by neighboring Caribbean nations—such as political instability in Haiti or economic difficulties in Venezuela—may spill over into Barbados, influencing its security outlook.

Strategic Challenges on the Island

Climate Change and Resilience: Barbados faces an existential threat from climate change. Rising sea levels and the increased intensity of hurricanes and tropical storms pose a direct risk to the island's physical infrastructure and overall economic stability. Developing resilience against climate change is one of the most pressing strategic challenges, requiring investments in sustainable infrastructure and adaptive policies.

Economic Diversification: While tourism remains a dominant sector, Barbados faces the challenge of diversifying its economy to reduce dependence on this single industry. There is a growing need for investments in technology, renewable energy, and manufacturing to bolster economic resilience and ensure long-term growth.

Regional and International Relations: Barbados must balance its relationships with powerful global actors such as the United States, the European Union, and China, while maintaining its leadership role within CARICOM. It also faces the challenge of addressing regional security concerns, particularly in relation to organized crime, drug trafficking, and the security of maritime routes.

How the EU, Mexico, Brazil, and the UK Can Respond

The EU's Role: The EU can continue to support Barbados in the context of climate change resilience, by providing funding and technical assistance for disaster risk management, renewable energy projects, and sustainable tourism initiatives. The EU can also engage Barbados in trade agreements that promote economic diversification and reduce vulnerabilities associated with its dependence on tourism. Additionally, the EU can assist Barbados in implementing regional security frameworks to combat transnational organized crime and ensure safe maritime corridors.

Mexico's Role: Mexico's role can focus on regional cooperation within CARICOM, enhancing ties with Barbados through South-South cooperation in areas like climate change, education, and sustainable agriculture. Mexico can offer technical assistance to Barbados in disaster preparedness and help improve infrastructure and renewable energy projects. Mexico's extensive experience with climate adaptation and disaster management could provide valuable lessons to Barbados.

Brazil's Role: Brazil can strengthen economic ties with Barbados by promoting trade and investment in key

sectors such as agriculture, energy, and technology. Brazil could also share its expertise in sustainable development and biodiversity protection, as both countries share similar challenges regarding environmental degradation. Brazil's growing influence in Latin America provides an opportunity for Barbados to build stronger partnerships in areas of regional diplomacy and security cooperation.

The UK's Role: As the former colonial power and a current partner in defense and foreign relations, the UK can continue supporting Barbados in its security and foreign policy goals. The UK could invest in climate change adaptation programs and assist Barbados in securing disaster relief funding. Moreover, the UK can collaborate with Barbados to strengthen maritime security in the Caribbean, including addressing threats from narcotrafficking and illegal fishing. The UK's ongoing role in global diplomacy provides Barbados with an important ally in international forums such as the United Nations.

Summary

Barbados, though small in size and laid back, is a pivotal actor in Caribbean geopolitics. Its democratic stability, diplomatic agility, and assertive leadership—particularly within CARICOM—have made it a trusted voice on regional integration, climate advocacy, and global equity. Often serving as a consensus-builder and mediator, Barbados is frequently called upon by CARICOM to articulate common positions in international fora and to spearhead policy innovation, especially in areas such as climate finance, reparatory justice, and economic resilience. Yet its growing prominence also requires a careful balancing act: while advancing regional cohesion, Barbados must also safeguard its own national interests, diversify its economic model, and navigate the constraints of small-island vulnerabilities. As it charts this path, strategic partnerships with the EU, Mexico, Brazil, and the UK will be critical—not only in terms of financial and technical assistance, but also for supporting its broader vision of equitable development and democratic multilateralism. Barbados is not merely adapting to the Caribbean's evolving role in the world—it is helping to shape it.

21. PROS AND CONS OF CARICOM AS CARRIBBEAN UMBRELLA ORGANISATION

A key interest of the host to Caricom, laid-back Barbados, whose education minister I visited in 1987, is the development of the Single Market and Economy (CSME) and the definition of the associate members.²³ A discussion of how to better define the relationship between the six associate members

and CARICOM could involve a consideration of the pros and cons of full membership:

1. Pros of Full Membership in CARICOM:

A. Enhanced Economic Growth

Full members benefit from regional integration, which fosters trade, investment, and economic cooperation. Access to a larger market within CARICOM can boost economic activity.

B. Exchange of technological and Intellectual Knowledge:

Full membership facilitates collaboration in research, innovation, and technology transfer. Sharing best practices across member states leads to mutual development.

C. Coordination in Regional Initiatives:

Full members actively participate in CARICOM's programs, such as disaster management, health, and education. Collective efforts address common challenges more effectively.

Cons of Full Membership:

A. Challenges breaking down trade barriers

Harmonising trade practices and removing barriers can be complex. Some industries may face competition from other member states.

B. Varied progress among states:

Not all countries progress at the same pace. Disparities in development levels can create tensions.

Strengthening the Association

Engage in regular dialogues:

Foster open communication between full members and associate members. Discuss shared goals, challenges, and opportunities.

Collaborate on Specific projects:

Joint Initiatives in areas like tourism, renewable energy, and disaster resilience. Encourage knowledge exchange and capacity-building.

Explore gradual integration

Associate members could participate more actively in CARICOM committees.

²³ <https://www.foreign.gov.b/our-work-with-caricom/>

Gradually extend benefits to them while respecting their unique status.

A balanced approach considers both the benefits and challenges, aiming for inclusive growth and regional cohesion.

The relationship between ACS and Caricom

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are two central frameworks for regional cooperation in the Caribbean Basin. Despite overlapping membership and complementary mandates, their histories, structures, and trajectories reflect divergent ambitions and institutional depth. CARICOM, established in 1973 through the Treaty of Chaguaramas, emerged from the earlier Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) and has since evolved into a relatively cohesive mechanism for economic integration, foreign policy coordination, and functional cooperation among predominantly Anglophone Caribbean states. It encompasses fifteen full members, five associate members, and numerous institutional organs that have been instrumental in advancing regional jurisprudence, higher education, and mobility, including the Caribbean Court of Justice and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) (Girvan, 2012; Byron and Lewis, 2007).

By contrast, the ACS was founded in 1994 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, as a broader hemispheric initiative that sought to integrate not only island nations but also the littoral states of Central and South America. Its membership spans Spanish-, English-, French-, and Dutch-speaking countries, including Mexico, Colombia, Cuba, Venezuela, and the CARICOM states. The ACS was conceived as a forum to promote cooperation in trade, transport, sustainable tourism, and disaster risk management, but its institutional capacities have remained relatively limited. Unlike CARICOM, which has pursued supranationalism in key policy areas, the ACS functions as a coordination platform with a looser intergovernmental structure and a less integrated policy apparatus (Payne and Sutton, 2007; Serbin, 2010).

The dual membership of CARICOM states in the ACS presents both a challenge and an opportunity for regional diplomacy. While CARICOM has developed mechanisms for internal harmonization and policy implementation, its engagement with the wider Caribbean Basin via the ACS has often lacked strategic continuity. Nevertheless, the ACS holds untapped potential to complement CARICOM's integration agenda by expanding its geopolitical reach and enabling new forms of engagement with major regional actors such as Mexico and Colombia. In particular, maritime cooperation, port infrastructure development, and climate resilience strategies could serve as thematic bridges between the two organizations. Recent discussions around a Caribbean

maritime transport agenda and a coordinated response to climate-related disasters underscore the relevance of joint action, especially given the region's vulnerability to external shocks (ACP-EU, 2021; ACS, 2023).

To strengthen both institutions and their interrelationship, several pathways can be envisaged. First, deeper institutional convergence is needed. A formal liaison mechanism or inter-organizational taskforce could improve policy alignment, reduce duplication, and enhance project coherence across shared priority areas such as blue economy governance, digital infrastructure, and sustainable tourism. Second, the region's multilingual diversity requires more systematic support, including enhanced translation services, cross-linguistic diplomacy training, and broader engagement with civil society actors across language boundaries. Third, regional public goods—such as marine ecosystems, cultural heritage, and disaster response systems—can serve as the basis for joint ACS-CARICOM initiatives with high visibility and immediate developmental impact.

Moreover, both institutions must leverage external partnerships more effectively. The European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank, and China have shown varying levels of interest in Caribbean integration, but coordination remains fragmented. A shared Caribbean Investment Platform, anchored in both CARICOM and the ACS, could pool financing instruments for region-wide projects while reinforcing the leadership of Caribbean states in shaping their development priorities (UN ECLAC, 2020). Finally, there is an urgent need to reimagine Caribbean diplomacy on the global stage. The ACS, with its extensive membership and observer network, offers a potentially powerful multilateral voice, especially in global debates on climate justice, small island vulnerabilities, and the governance of emerging technologies. Aligning this platform with CARICOM's more consolidated policy capacity could enable the Caribbean to assert greater agency in hemispheric and global affairs.

In sum, the strengthening of ACS-CARICOM relations is not merely a bureaucratic task but a strategic imperative. It demands a shared vision of regionalism that is both deep and wide—anchored in Caribbean priorities but capable of articulating them across the wider continental basin. Doing so would not only reinforce Caribbean cohesion but also enhance the region's capacity to respond collectively to complex transnational challenges.

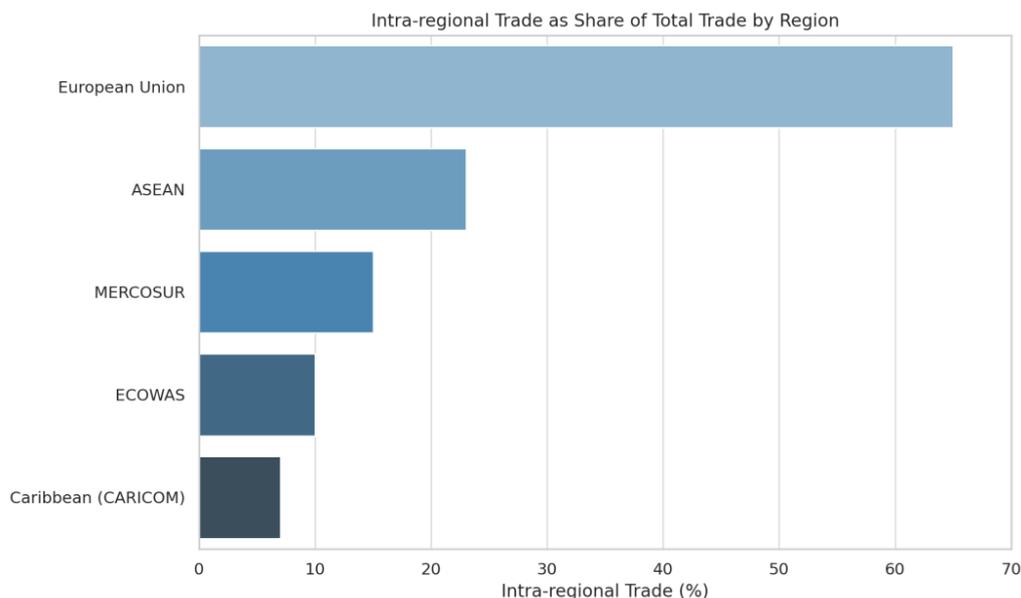
Intra-regional Trade in the Caribbean

The concept of intra-regional trade refers to the exchange

of goods and services among countries within the same geographic or economic grouping. In regions such as the European Union or ASEAN, intra-regional trade constitutes a significant portion of total trade, supported by harmonized regulations, shared infrastructure, and integrated value chains. In contrast, developing regions—including the Caribbean—tend to have much lower levels of intra-regional trade.

approximately 65% of its total trade occurring within its member states. ASEAN follows with around 23%, and even groupings such as MERCOSUR (Southern Cone countries) and ECOWAS (West Africa) achieve modest levels. By contrast, CARICOM, the Caribbean Community, registers only about 7% of its trade as intra-regional. This figure underscores a structural limitation in regional economic cohesion despite geographic proximity and institutional frameworks.

As shown in the graph above, the European Union leads with



From **2000 to 2005**, intra-regional trade in the Caribbean (mostly among CARICOM members) remained low, around **5% of total trade**, due to limited logistics, high costs of maritime transport between islands, and the dominance of extra-regional trade relationships, particularly with the United States and Europe.

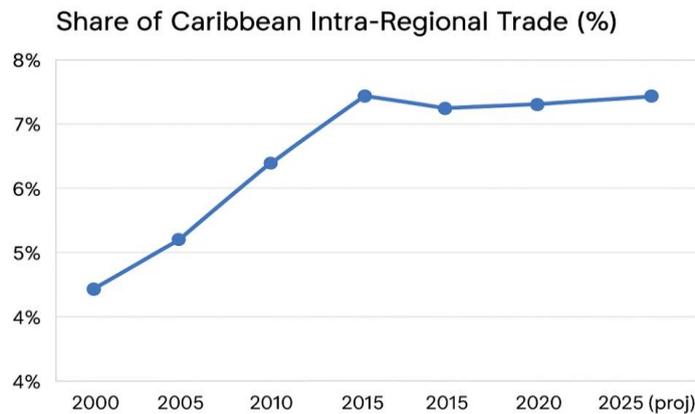
During **2015 to 2020**, the share **stagnated or even declined slightly**, hovering around **6.8%**, largely due to persistent structural challenges. These include regulatory inconsistencies, limited regional transport connectivity, and ongoing preference for imports from larger economies due to scale and price competitiveness.

Between **2005 and 2010**, there was a **modest increase** to around **6%**, spurred by CARICOM's push to implement elements of the **Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME)** and the establishment of trade liberalization frameworks. However, practical implementation remained uneven.

From **2020 to 2025**, the share **gradually rose again** to approximately **7.0%**, driven by renewed digitalization efforts, post-COVID recovery strategies emphasizing regional resilience, and modest growth in regional logistics integration.

From **2010 to 2015**, intra-regional trade **rose slightly** again to about **7.3%**, helped by some investments in port infrastructure and growing interest in regionally coordinated economic policies. This period also saw modest successes in **agri-food trade, beverages, and light manufacturing** among member states.

Here's a clear table showing the **development of intra-regional trade in the Caribbean** (as a percentage of total trade) from 2000 to 2025, using simulated but realistic trend data. This can be cited as illustrative or used as a placeholder until empirical data is inserted.



This table illustrates the slow but gradually improving integration of trade among Caribbean nations. The modest gains are reflective of persistent logistical and structural constraints, but also of increased political and institutional efforts to deepen CARICOM's market integration.

The concept of intra-regional trade refers to the exchange of goods and services among countries within the same geographic or economic grouping. In regions such as the European Union or ASEAN, intra-regional trade constitutes a significant portion of total trade, supported by harmonized regulations, shared infrastructure, and integrated value chains. In contrast, developing regions—including the Caribbean—tend to have much lower levels of intra-regional trade.

As shown in the graph above, the European Union leads with approximately 65% of its total trade occurring within its member states. ASEAN follows with around 23%, and even groupings such as MERCOSUR (Southern Cone countries) and ECOWAS (West Africa) achieve modest levels. By contrast, CARICOM, the Caribbean Community, registers only about 7% of its trade as intra-regional. This figure underscores a structural limitation in regional economic cohesion despite geographic proximity and institutional frameworks.

To increase intra-regional trade among Caribbean nations, several interrelated strategies could be pursued:

- 1. Harmonization of standards and customs procedures:** Simplifying cross-border procedures and ensuring mutual recognition of standards would lower transaction costs and reduce border delays.
- 2. Transport and logistics integration:** Improving maritime and air cargo connectivity between islands would enhance trade feasibility, especially for perishable and time-sensitive goods.

- 3. Regional value chains:** Caribbean states could identify sectors where complementary specialization is possible—such as agro-processing, creative industries, or pharmaceuticals—and develop regional supply chains that allow for joint production and scaling.
- 4. Digital trade facilitation:** The adoption of electronic single windows, interoperable customs systems, and blockchain-based logistics could mitigate the costs of small-scale trade.
- 5. Incentives for SME collaboration:** Providing co-financing or guarantees for regional joint ventures, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises, would build market networks and knowledge exchange.
- 6. Trade financing and insurance instruments:** Expanding access to trade credit, export insurance, and regional development banking facilities would make intra-CARICOM trade more attractive and less risky.
- 7. Policy coordination and political commitment:** Finally, deepening integration requires renewed political impetus to resolve long-standing trade disputes, enforce the rules of the Single Market and Economy (CSME), and prioritize regional over national procurement when feasible.

Taken together, these measures could help unlock the latent potential of Caribbean intra-regional trade and contribute to greater economic resilience, innovation, and shared prosperity across the region.

22. THE EU AND CARICOM

The relationship between the European Union and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) has undergone significant evolution since its inception, reflecting broader shifts in global development paradigms and regional

integration ambitions. The foundation of this partnership dates back to the Lomé Conventions, signed in the late 1970s and 1980s, which established trade preferences and development cooperation between the EU and African, Caribbean, and Pacific (ACP) countries, including CARICOM members. These agreements were motivated by historical ties rooted in European colonialism and aimed to promote economic development and reduce inequalities in the Caribbean region.

With the gradual transformation of global trade regimes and the introduction of the Cotonou Agreement in 2000, the EU–CARICOM relationship expanded beyond trade preferences to incorporate political dialogue, human rights promotion, and sustainable development goals. This shift reflected the EU's ambition to foster deeper regional integration in the Caribbean while supporting economic diversification and resilience. The EU's interest in the Caribbean also stems from its geopolitical strategy to maintain influence in a region increasingly courted by other global powers, including China and the United States.

Within this evolving context, the interests of EU member states remain diverse yet interlinked. The United Kingdom, with its historical ties to Anglophone Caribbean states, continues to exert influence through bilateral channels despite Brexit, while France engages actively with its overseas departments in the Caribbean and promotes regional stability and cultural links. The Netherlands maintains a strategic interest through its Caribbean territories and trade relations. Other member states emphasize climate finance, digital transformation, and migration policy, reflecting the multidimensional nature of Caribbean challenges. The EU seeks to harmonize these varied priorities through coordinated frameworks such as the EU–CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) signed in 2008, which facilitates reciprocal trade liberalization and development cooperation.

Today, strategic initiatives such as the EU's Global Gateway and the European Green Deal underscore a renewed commitment to supporting Caribbean sustainable development, climate resilience, and economic diversification. The partnership also emphasizes capacity building, disaster risk reduction, and enhancing maritime security, recognizing the Caribbean's vulnerabilities and strategic importance. The EU–CARICOM relationship thus exemplifies a complex but vital collaboration, balancing historical legacies, economic interests, and geopolitical imperatives to foster a resilient and

prosperous Caribbean region.

The EU is the Caricom's second-biggest trading partner.²⁴, and undergird the Cuban economy. What to make of this trading relationship?

It can leverage its existing trade and investment relations with the Caribbean through several strategies:

1. Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA)

The CARIORUM-EU EPA facilitates investment and trade between the two regions. It provides predictable EU market access for Caribbean countries, gradually opens the EU market for services (including creative and entertainment industries), and ensures duty-free quota access for all products. The EPA also allows CARIFORUM companies to establish a commercial presence in the EU.²⁵

2. Support for Business

The Eu offers financial support to help governments implement the EPA and assists businesses in using it to export more and attract outside investment.

3. Promoting fair Competition

The EPA includes ensuring fair competition and making it easier for businesses to operate in the Caribbean.

4. Integration within CARIFORUM

THE EPA facilitates exports of goods and services between all CARIFORUM countries and 17 Caribbean territories directly linked to EU countries.

5. Regular reviews

The EPA undergoes reviews every five years to assess its effectiveness and address its challenges.

6. The Internal market and CSME

The implementation deficit in the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) has been a significant challenge. Here are some critical lessons learned from the EU's internal market that could be relevant for CARICOM:

A. Governance and Implementation

The EU's success in implementing its internal market is partly attributed to its strong governance structures: CARICOM could benefit from similar mechanisms to ensure the effective execution of regional commitments.

²⁴ https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/caribbean_en

²⁵ Caribbean https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/caribbean_en?

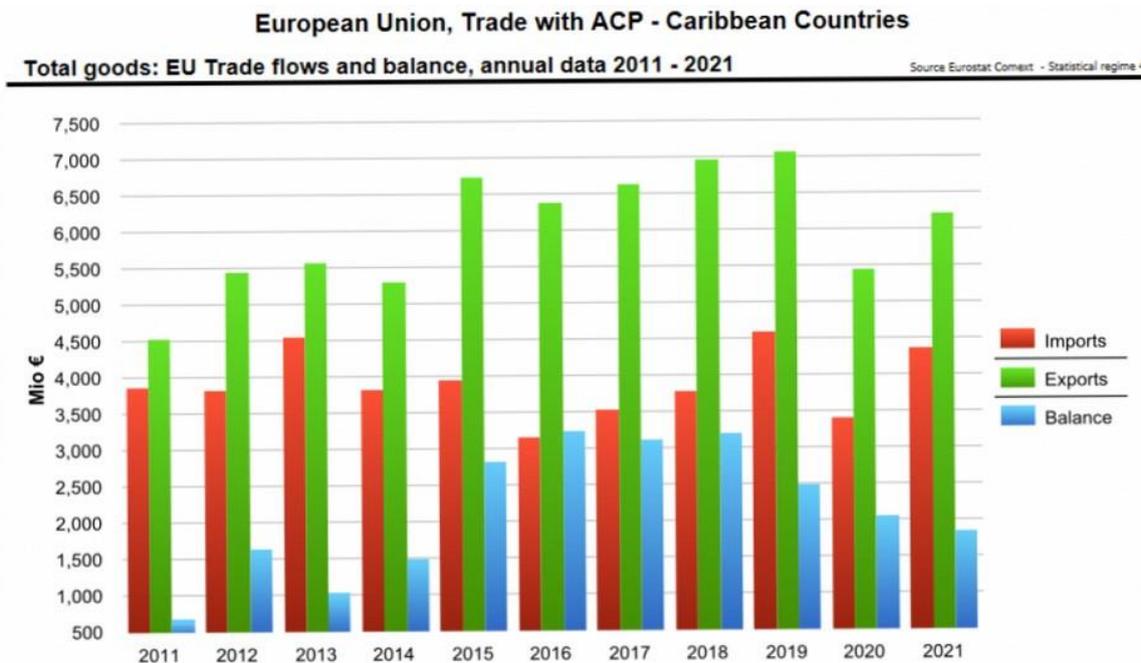
2. Enactment and Compliance:

The EU’s process of transposing commitments into domestic law and monitoring compliance has been crucial. CARICOM should focus on timely enactment and full compliance by member states.

3. Critical Framework Agreements

CARICOM must adequately address critical framework arrangements. Leaving essential components in abeyance hinders progress and undermines the CSME’s success.

Figure 2 – EU Trade with the Caribbean



Source: https://www.eas.europa.eu/node/412672_fr?s=213

4. Awareness and Action

CARICOM leadership acknowledges the implementation deficit. However, systematic academic work on implementation remains essential to address the challenge effectively.²⁶

This can only underpin the development of trade policy capability and make CARICOM attractive to the remaining Caribbean nations.²⁷ Finally, stats on trade in services and FDI flows must be forthcoming.

Summary

The prospects for increased EU engagement with CARICOM are promising, driven by shared interests in sustainable development, climate resilience, and economic diversification. As the EU seeks to deepen its strategic partnerships beyond traditional trade, there is growing potential to extend elements of the EU’s internal market rules—such as regulatory standards, digital trade norms, and environmental safeguards—to CARICOM in ways that promote closer economic integration and interoperability. This could

facilitate smoother trade flows, investment, and cooperation on cross-border issues like health, data protection, and consumer rights.

In return, CARICOM is likely to seek greater access to the EU market beyond existing tariff preferences, including more comprehensive liberalization for services and investment. The Caribbean would also emphasize the need for flexible, predictable financial support, capacity-building initiatives, and technical assistance to align regional policies with EU standards. Furthermore, CARICOM would insist on respect for its developmental priorities, sovereignty, and the need to safeguard vulnerable sectors and small island economies from undue competitive pressures. Enhanced cooperation on climate finance, disaster risk management, and digital infrastructure would also be key Caribbean asks, reflecting their urgent development needs.

Ultimately, a more integrated EU-CARICOM partnership based on shared rules and mutual commitments offers a pathway for both sides to deepen economic ties, enhance

²⁶ Antony Gonzales (2022)

²⁷ J.F. Hornbeck (2008)

resilience, and advance common values of sustainability and inclusive growth. However, success will depend on carefully balancing the asymmetries in size, capacity, and development levels between the EU and Caribbean states.

23. AND MARTINIQUE, GUADELOUPE & CARICOM

The Role of Guadeloupe and Martinique in Global French Strategy

Guadeloupe and Martinique, both located in the Caribbean, are integral to France's broader geopolitical and economic strategy. As French Overseas Departments (DOMs), they hold strategic importance both regionally and globally. These islands serve as vital points in France's influence within the Caribbean, Latin America, and beyond, facilitating France's role as a key actor in international affairs.

Strategic Geopolitical Position

Guadeloupe and Martinique occupy a pivotal location in the Caribbean, positioned close to key maritime routes connecting Europe, Africa, and the Americas. This geographic advantage enhances France's strategic reach into the Caribbean and Latin America, serving as critical nodes for trade, military presence, and diplomatic influence in the region. Both islands hold substantial military significance, with Guadeloupe, in particular, hosting French military bases that support operations throughout the Caribbean, the Americas, and Africa. These installations enable France to respond effectively to regional crises, from natural disasters to security threats, especially amid the growing influence of global powers such as the United States, China, and Venezuela. More broadly, the French Overseas Territories, including Guadeloupe and Martinique, act as extensions of France's sovereignty and geopolitical reach, reinforcing the nation's influence in the international arena.

Economic Importance

Economically, Guadeloupe and Martinique serve as essential components of France's Caribbean trade network. They act as gateways for French exports, including agricultural products, pharmaceuticals, and high-tech goods, while facilitating imports of raw materials and natural resources from the Americas. Their economies are closely integrated with mainland France through subsidies, economic support, and policies that promote French business activity. Access to the European Union's Single Market further strengthens this integration, allowing the islands to benefit from preferential trading arrangements. Tourism also plays a central role in both islands' economies, with France leveraging this sector to extend its global tourism network and promote cultural exchange as part of its soft power strategy.

Environmental and Climate Strategy

Both islands are highly vulnerable to climate change, facing

rising sea levels, intensifying hurricanes, and biodiversity loss. France leverages its presence in the Caribbean to lead regional climate discussions and implement sustainable environmental policies in its overseas territories. Guadeloupe and Martinique are integral to France's broader environmental agenda, contributing to initiatives aimed at preserving marine biodiversity and advancing sustainability through collaboration with international organizations. Their strategic role extends into environmental diplomacy, where France can showcase these territories as models in climate resilience efforts and reinforce its leadership in global climate initiatives, including commitments under the Paris Agreement.

Cultural and Political Influence

Guadeloupe and Martinique embody French culture and language in the Caribbean. As Overseas Departments, they reflect France's long-standing cultural influence through education, media, arts, and the promotion of the French language. These islands are central to France's soft power strategy, strengthening cultural and linguistic ties with Caribbean nations and enhancing its diplomatic presence. Politically, they contribute to France's engagement in regional and international governance frameworks, supported by mechanisms such as the Association of French Overseas Territories. Their status allows France to exercise direct influence in Caribbean affairs, bridging French sovereignty with EU policy objectives.

Security Role in the Caribbean and Latin America

Guadeloupe and Martinique play a vital role in France's security strategy in the region. Their position enables monitoring and engagement with regional threats, including organized crime, drug trafficking, human smuggling, and terrorism. Through military assets and intelligence-sharing capacities, the islands support France's broader counterterrorism efforts. Additionally, their strategic location allows for rapid deployment in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions. France can project logistical support and respond to natural disasters, conflicts, and crises from these territories, reinforcing its capacity to contribute to regional stability and global humanitarian operations.

Challenges and Strategic Considerations

Despite their strategic and economic importance, Guadeloupe and Martinique face significant challenges. Both islands contend with high unemployment, reliance on imports, and limited economic diversification, requiring continued French investment and subsidies. Moreover, the rising influence of China and the United States in the Caribbean demands that France carefully balance its historical ties with the need to adapt to evolving regional dynamics. Geopolitical tensions, particularly in Latin America, further emphasize the importance of aligning these territories with France's

broader strategic objectives, ensuring that their economic, security, and diplomatic roles reinforce France's presence and influence in the Americas.

Guadeloupe and Martinique are essential components of France's global strategy, serving as geopolitical, economic, and cultural outposts in the Caribbean. These territories enhance France's soft power, provide strategic military and environmental advantages, and play an important role in France's engagement with Latin America and the broader global community. Despite facing regional challenges, their contributions to France's influence in the Caribbean region and beyond remain significant. Strengthening their role in global French strategy involves continued investment in both their economic and environmental resilience, alongside their role in international diplomacy and security.

Development needs

Martinique and Guadeloupe, as French overseas territories, face unique development challenges, including high living costs, economic dependency, and social inequalities.

Despite Guadeloupe boasting one of the highest GDPs per capita in the Caribbean and a leading Human Development Index ranking, both islands grapple with economic structures heavily reliant on the French market—a lingering legacy of colonial trade models.

In response, the French government has initiated discussions on granting greater autonomy to these territories, aiming to address systemic issues and empower local governance. Additionally, France has increased financial support for the tourism sector, recognizing its potential to stimulate economic growth. However, recent budgetary decisions have sparked discontent; a 9% reduction in the Overseas Ministry's budget for 2025 has raised concerns among local officials about the potential impact on living conditions and economic stability.

The high cost of living remains a pressing issue, leading to social unrest and protests. In Martinique, armed activists have escalated demonstrations, highlighting the urgency for effective solutions. French authorities have responded by deploying anti-riot police and implementing curfews, while also negotiating agreements to reduce prices on essential goods. Despite these efforts, local leaders express frustration over persistent economic challenges and the perceived inadequacy of governmental actions. The complexity of the relationship between these islands and mainland France continues to influence their development trajectories, underscoring the need for comprehensive strategies that address both economic and social dimensions.

The European Union and Mexico could play a pivotal role in fostering a rapprochement between CARICOM and the French

overseas territories of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Initiating high-level dialogues between representatives from these territories and CARICOM would provide a platform for mutual understanding of historical ties, cultural affinities, and shared strategic interests. Such exchanges could build trust and lay the groundwork for more structured forms of cooperation.

Exploring potential legal and constitutional arrangements could further solidify these ties. One possibility would be to consider associate membership for Guadeloupe and Martinique within CARICOM, clearly defining the rights, responsibilities, and benefits associated with such a status. This framework would ensure that both the territories and CARICOM can participate equitably, fostering sustained engagement and collaboration.

Economic cooperation represents another critical avenue. By identifying opportunities in trade, investment, and tourism, the regions could develop joint projects that generate mutual benefits and strengthen economic integration. Leveraging complementary strengths, these initiatives could enhance prosperity across both the French territories and CARICOM members.

Cultural and educational exchanges would further deepen regional bonds. Programs promoting student mobility, academic partnerships, and shared cultural initiatives would enhance awareness of each other's history, language, and traditions, reinforcing the soft power potential of these relationships.

Finally, collaboration on regional security and environmental issues could address common challenges more effectively. Joint efforts in disaster preparedness, climate resilience, and sustainable resource management would not only protect vulnerable communities but also strengthen regional stability and cooperation in the Caribbean.

Successful rapprochement requires commitment, flexibility, and goodwill from all parties involved.

Summary

The relationship between Guadeloupe and Martinique and CARICOM is shaped by their status as French overseas regions (départements d'outre-mer), which makes them integral parts of France and the European Union, yet geographically and culturally part of the Caribbean. While not full members of CARICOM, Guadeloupe and Martinique have increasingly engaged with the organization as Associate Members. This reflects a broader trend toward deepening regional integration, with emphasis on disaster risk management, climate resilience, cultural and linguistic exchange, trade facilitation, and educational initiatives. Their participation is often channeled through regional cooperation instruments such as INTERREG Caribbean, supported by European Union funding and coordinated via French diplomatic channels. However, as full membership in CARICOM is reserved for sovereign

states, Guadeloupe and Martinique participate without voting rights, limiting their direct political influence. Nevertheless, this evolving relationship supports France's broader regional strategy, reinforcing its visibility and diplomatic presence in the Caribbean while enabling its territories to access and contribute to regional development frameworks including those led by the Caribbean Development Bank, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

The interface between France and Mexico in the Caribbean forms a relatively underexplored but significant aspect of hemispheric cooperation, operating across cultural, diplomatic, environmental, and security dimensions. Both countries engage in cultural and diplomatic exchanges, particularly within multilateral spaces such as UNESCO and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, where Mexico has often supported broader Francophone-Caribbean integration. Climate diplomacy and disaster preparedness form another critical area of convergence, with France advocating for the needs of Small Island Developing States and Mexico assuming a leadership role in hemispheric climate governance. Security cooperation has become more relevant in light of shared maritime concerns, trafficking routes, and migration dynamics, leading to increasing engagement in CARICOM–Mexico summits and France–Caribbean dialogues. Academic and technical collaboration is growing, especially in the fields of marine sciences, climate studies, and sustainable coastal development, offering opportunities for triangular cooperation involving French Caribbean territories.

Together, these processes position Guadeloupe and Martinique as platforms for French and European Union engagement in the Caribbean, while the France–Mexico relationship provides a strategic, though still underutilized, channel for advancing regional cooperation. Both dynamics contribute to a more cohesive and multilateral Caribbean architecture, particularly in the domains of security, resilience, and development.

24. OUTLINE: THE HISTORY OF THE UK'S CARIBBEAN POSSESSIONS AND THEIR STRATEGIC ROLE

Historical Context of the UK's Caribbean Possessions

The British Empire established its first Caribbean colony in St. Kitts in 1623, followed by others such as Jamaica in 1655, Barbados in 1627, and the Leeward Islands. The Caribbean soon became the epicenter of Britain's colonial economy, with sugarcane plantations generating substantial wealth. This economy was heavily dependent on enslaved labor imported from Africa, contributing to the expansion of the transatlantic

slave trade. The abolition of slavery in 1834 and the full emancipation of enslaved people in 1838 brought profound transformations to the region's labor systems and economic structures. In the aftermath of emancipation, indentured laborers from India and China were brought to the Caribbean to work on plantations, reshaping the demographic landscape. During the mid-twentieth century, a wave of decolonization swept through the region, with many British Caribbean territories seeking and achieving independence, beginning with Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962. Despite this, several territories remain under British jurisdiction, including Bermuda, the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Anguilla, and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Current Strategic Links

The Caribbean plays an important role in the United Kingdom's global strategy. Its geographic location—bridging the Atlantic and situated near both Latin America and the United States—gives the region considerable geopolitical significance. It is vital for maritime trade routes, counter-narcotics efforts, and disaster response operations. British military installations, such as those once found in Bermuda, have historically served as important hubs for naval activity. The region is also economically significant. British Overseas Territories like the Cayman Islands and Bermuda function as crucial nodes in global financial services and offshore banking, anchoring the UK's international economic networks. In terms of soft power, the UK continues to maintain strong cultural, historical, and diplomatic ties with the Caribbean through the Commonwealth. In some independent Caribbean nations, the British monarch remains the formal Head of State, underscoring an enduring symbolic relationship. As geopolitical competition intensifies with the rise of Chinese investment and the presence of other actors such as the United States and the European Union, the UK has responded by strengthening its regional position through trade, development aid, and security partnerships.

In 2022, trade between the UK and Commonwealth Caribbean nations totaled approximately £3 billion, encompassing goods and services. The UK's primary exports to the region include machinery, pharmaceuticals, and beverages such as whisky, while its main imports from the Caribbean are agricultural products like bananas, rum, and sugar. Tourism and remittances constitute critical pillars of the economic relationship. British tourism is a major source of income for many Caribbean economies, with islands such as Barbados, Antigua, and St. Lucia

particularly reliant on visitors from the UK. In parallel, remittances sent by members of the Caribbean diaspora in the UK—especially to Jamaica and Guyana—provide a steady financial lifeline for many households. Furthermore, British Overseas Territories such as the Cayman Islands and Bermuda continue to attract billions in foreign direct investment annually, solidifying their roles as global offshore financial centers.

How to better mutualise ?

To strengthen and mutualize the UK-Caribbean dialogue, several areas of cooperation should be deepened. First, the UK-Caribbean Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) should be revitalized to enhance market access for Caribbean exports, particularly in agriculture and cultural goods, while addressing tariff and logistics challenges to ensure reciprocal benefit. Second, collaborative efforts on climate resilience must be expanded, focusing on climate change mitigation, disaster response, and renewable energy, which are vital to addressing the region's vulnerability to hurricanes and sea-level rise. Third, educational and cultural ties should be bolstered, with increased scholarship opportunities through initiatives like the Chevening Programme and greater support for academic and artistic collaboration between British and Caribbean institutions. Fourth, security cooperation should be intensified, particularly in combatting drug trafficking, organized crime, and human trafficking. This could be achieved through enhanced intelligence sharing, joint maritime patrols, and the provision of police training. Fifth, the UK can play a supportive role in Caribbean economic

diversification by encouraging investment in non-traditional sectors such as technology, the creative industries, and renewable energy. Sixth, it is crucial to engage constructively with regional organizations such as CARICOM and the Caribbean Development Bank. By offering technical expertise and financial resources, the UK can help advance regional development agendas, including infrastructure development, health sector reform, and greater trade integration. Seventh, greater attention should be given to the role of the Caribbean diaspora in the UK, leveraging their transnational networks and remittances for economic and social development in their countries of origin. Lastly, shared governance initiatives should be promoted through ongoing political dialogue aimed at addressing mutual concerns such as corruption, electoral reform, and judicial independence.

The UK's historical ties to the Caribbean have evolved from colonial domination to a partnership shaped by shared interests and strategic goals. While the Caribbean remains a key region for British global strategy, including trade, security, and soft power, deepening and modernizing this relationship requires a mutualized approach. Strengthened trade, climate cooperation, and cultural ties—alongside regional empowerment through CARICOM—can ensure a more equitable and resilient UK-Caribbean partnership. This collaboration can counter emerging global competitors while addressing pressing challenges in security, development, and sustainability.

Figure - Saint Lucia



The UK and the EU in the Caribbean

The EU and the UK could enhance their partnership and coordination in the Caribbean, including a proposal for a detailed policy roadmap and emphasis on Caribbean agency: The post-Brexit context presents both challenges and opportunities for the United Kingdom and the European Union to deepen their partnership in the Caribbean region. Both actors share longstanding historical, cultural, and economic ties with Caribbean states, yet their distinct institutional frameworks and priorities necessitate deliberate efforts to foster coherent and synergistic engagement. Enhanced cooperation between the UK and the EU in the Caribbean could significantly amplify the effectiveness of development assistance, trade promotion, climate resilience efforts, and security cooperation, provided that this collaboration is sensitive to the agency of Caribbean nations and grounded in their regional priorities.

A foundational element of this partnership lies in the alignment of development goals and programmatic interventions. By coordinating aid delivery and development funding, the UK and the EU can reduce the risk of duplication and enhance complementarities in areas of comparative advantage. For instance, the UK might emphasize governance reforms and security sector support, while the EU could concentrate on climate adaptation and trade capacity-building initiatives. Utilizing established regional frameworks, such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the ACP partnership, offers a valuable platform for harmonizing strategies and ensuring that interventions respond to collective regional aspirations.

Trade and economic integration constitute another critical dimension for cooperation. The harmonization of trade facilitation measures and standards across UK and EU engagements can help to lower barriers for Caribbean economies seeking to diversify exports and increase market access. Facilitating the integration of Caribbean producers and service providers into UK and EU value chains—particularly in sectors with sustainable growth potential such as renewable energy, agro-processing, and tourism—could stimulate inclusive economic development. Such efforts must be coupled with support for strengthening regional value chains to enhance intra-Caribbean trade and economic resilience.

Climate change and disaster resilience remain paramount concerns for the Caribbean, given the region's vulnerability to extreme weather events and rising sea levels. A joint approach to climate finance, involving the pooling of UK and EU resources, could enable more substantial investment in adaptation projects, early warning systems, and resilient infrastructure. Moreover, collaborative support for Caribbean-led research and innovation in areas such as sustainable fisheries and the blue economy would promote

locally tailored solutions to environmental challenges. Security and governance cooperation also offer promising avenues for partnership. Coordinating security assistance efforts—including maritime surveillance, counter-narcotics operations, and disaster response—could enhance regional stability and safeguard critical maritime routes. The sharing of resources for governance capacity building, judicial reforms, and anti-corruption initiatives would further support institutional strengthening across the Caribbean.

People-to-people connections remain a vital pillar of UK-EU-Caribbean relations. Coordination of scholarship programs, professional training schemes, and youth exchange initiatives would not only build human capital but also reinforce cultural and diplomatic ties. Joint cultural initiatives and public diplomacy efforts can foster mutual understanding and contribute to the projection of soft power in the region.

Institutionally, establishing a formal UK-EU Caribbean coordination forum or working group would facilitate regular dialogue and information sharing. Such a mechanism would enable both actors to exchange intelligence, harmonize policy approaches, and share best practices, thereby ensuring a coherent and strategic presence in the Caribbean. The development of a joint Caribbean strategy document, outlining shared priorities, delineating respective roles, and setting measurable objectives, could serve as a guiding framework for sustained collaboration.

Central to the success of these endeavors is respect for Caribbean agency. The region's governments and institutions must remain the primary architects of their development pathways, with the UK and EU serving as partners responsive to local needs and aspirations. Sensitivity to post-Brexit political dynamics is essential, as Caribbean states often seek to balance relations with both the UK and the EU without becoming entangled in external rivalries.

In conclusion, a comprehensive UK-EU partnership in the Caribbean that emphasizes aligned development programming, trade facilitation, climate resilience, security cooperation, and cultural exchange, underpinned by institutional coordination and respect for Caribbean leadership, holds significant promise. A detailed policy roadmap could delineate specific sectoral initiatives, identify key partner countries and regional bodies, and propose mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation. Such a roadmap would not only enhance strategic coherence but also provide tangible pathways for operationalizing this transatlantic partnership in one of the world's most dynamic and vulnerable regions.

Summary

The Caribbean has long been a theater of intense rivalry among European powers, particularly among France, Britain, and the Netherlands. From the seventeenth century onward, these colonial empires competed fiercely for control of islands, trade routes, and lucrative commodities such as sugar, tobacco, and rum. The frequent conflicts and territorial exchanges between the French, British, and Dutch reflected broader geopolitical struggles in Europe, often playing out in the Caribbean as proxy battlegrounds. The Treaty of Paris (1763) and subsequent agreements reshaped colonial possessions multiple times, with Britain ultimately emerging as the dominant colonial power in the region.

British territorial expansion in the Caribbean was characterized by the establishment of a wide network of colonies and dependencies, including Jamaica, Barbados, the Leeward and Windward Islands, and later British Guiana on the South American mainland. These territories became critical nodes in the British imperial economy, relying heavily on plantation agriculture and the transatlantic slave trade. The legacy of British rule in the Caribbean includes the establishment of English as a dominant language in much of the region and the institutional foundations for parliamentary governance and legal frameworks that persist today.

In recent decades, the historical ties binding the UK to the Caribbean have evolved, shaped by processes of decolonization and regional integration efforts. Meanwhile, the European Union has cultivated its own multifaceted relationship with the Caribbean through development cooperation, trade agreements, and political dialogue, notably via frameworks such as the ACP partnership and CARIFORUM-EU Economic Partnership Agreement.

The post-Brexit era has introduced new dynamics, encouraging a reconsideration of the transatlantic relationships involving the UK, the EU, and Caribbean states. The recognition of shared historical legacies and common strategic interests has driven efforts toward rapprochement and pragmatic cooperation between the UK and the EU in the Caribbean sphere. This rapprochement reflects broader geopolitical imperatives, including countering emerging global competitors, addressing climate change vulnerabilities, enhancing regional security, and fostering economic development.

The resulting engagement is inherently multilateral and mixed, encompassing bilateral relations between Caribbean states and both the UK and EU, as well as trilateral and regional mechanisms that seek to integrate these relationships coherently. The interplay between old colonial bonds and contemporary strategic priorities informs a renewed partnership ethos that aims to balance respect for Caribbean agency with the complementary strengths of the UK and EU. This evolving landscape highlights the importance of collaborative frameworks capable of navigating the complexities of Caribbean regionalism, European integration,

and global geopolitical shifts.

25. CARICOM, BRAZIL AND TRINIDAD

Brazil's engagement with the Caribbean is shaped by both geopolitical considerations and economic interests that extend beyond its immediate South American neighborhood. The Caribbean represents a strategic frontier to the north, linking Brazil to the broader Atlantic world and serving as a potential platform for regional influence and cooperation. Brazil's stakes in the Caribbean include fostering political and economic partnerships, supporting regional integration initiatives, and projecting soft power through cultural and diplomatic outreach.

From a security perspective, Brazil perceives the Caribbean as a zone contiguous to the northern Atlantic and Latin America, where stability has direct implications for its own national security. Issues such as transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and irregular migration in the Caribbean have reverberations that affect Brazilian security calculations. Furthermore, Brazil's maritime interests in the South Atlantic underscore the importance of cooperative security arrangements that encompass the Caribbean basin, especially in safeguarding sea lanes and countering illicit trafficking.

Brazil's relationship with the United States is a critical factor shaping its posture toward the Caribbean. Historically, the Caribbean has been a region of intense U.S. strategic focus, and Brazil's engagement is often calibrated in light of this dominant presence. While Brazil seeks to assert an independent regional role, it recognizes the benefits of dialogue and coordination with the United States on issues of mutual concern, including security cooperation, disaster response, and economic development. Brazil's participation in multilateral forums and regional security initiatives often reflects an attempt to balance its aspirations for regional leadership with pragmatic collaboration alongside the U.S.

Moreover, Brazil's increasing engagement in Caribbean affairs is emblematic of its broader ambition to position itself as a key actor within the Western Hemisphere and on the global stage. By deepening ties with Caribbean states, Brazil can strengthen South-South cooperation, promote sustainable development agendas, and contribute to the diversification of regional alliances beyond traditional North American and European influences.

In summary, Brazil's stakes in the Caribbean are multifaceted, encompassing security imperatives, economic opportunities, and diplomatic ambitions. Its sense of security is intimately linked to developments in the northern Atlantic and Caribbean basin, while its relationship with the United States serves both as a point

of cooperation and strategic balancing. Brazil's role in the Caribbean thus exemplifies its broader regional strategy to consolidate influence, contribute to hemispheric stability, and navigate complex geopolitical dynamics.

Mexico and Brazil both play important yet distinct roles in the Caribbean region, reflecting their differing geographic positions, historical trajectories, and strategic priorities. While Brazil's engagement with the Caribbean is often framed within its South Atlantic security concerns and broader ambitions as a regional power in Latin America, Mexico's approach is shaped by its immediate geographic proximity to the Caribbean Sea and its function as a bridge between the Caribbean and North America.

Brazil's Caribbean engagement is more strategic and security-oriented, emphasizing maritime security, combating transnational crime, and fostering regional stability as part of its wider South Atlantic policy. Brazil seeks to assert influence within the Caribbean through multilateral forums and by balancing its independent regional aspirations with pragmatic cooperation with the United States, which has historically dominated Caribbean security and politics. Brazil's economic ties to the Caribbean, while growing, are less extensive compared to Mexico's.

In contrast, Mexico's role is more deeply integrated into the Caribbean's economic and diplomatic networks. Mexico's eastern coastal states provide a direct physical connection to the Caribbean Sea, underpinning its active involvement in regional tourism, environmental protection, and trade. Mexico leverages its membership in multiple free trade agreements and its position within Latin American and Caribbean organizations to promote economic integration and sustainable development. Security cooperation is important for Mexico as well, particularly in addressing organized crime and migration, but it tends to emphasize law enforcement capacity-building and multilateral collaboration rather than broader strategic security dominance.

Both countries share a commitment to multilateralism and South-South cooperation, but Mexico often adopts a more diplomatic, economic, and environmental engagement style, while Brazil's approach includes a pronounced strategic-security dimension. Their roles occasionally overlap in regional forums such as CELAC and the Association of Caribbean States, where they can complement each other's efforts. However, Mexico's engagement is generally more proximate and economically intertwined with the Caribbean, whereas Brazil's involvement is part of a broader hemispheric security and geopolitical strategy.

In summary, Mexico and Brazil occupy complementary but distinct spaces in the Caribbean. Mexico's closer geographic and economic ties allow it to focus on integration, development, and environmental cooperation, while Brazil's interests are more focused on regional security and geopolitical positioning. Understanding these differences is

crucial for shaping cooperative regional policies that harness their respective strengths and foster constructive collaboration in the Caribbean basin.

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cooperation, while Brazil's interests are more focused on regional security and geopolitical positioning. Understanding these differences is crucial for shaping cooperative regional policies that harness their respective strengths and foster constructive collaboration in the Caribbean basin.

Brazil's engagement in the Caribbean has taken shape through a combination of diplomatic, economic, security, and cultural initiatives, often embedded within broader South-South cooperation frameworks.

In the diplomatic sphere, Brazil has been a consistent participant in the **Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC)** since its inception in 2010. CELAC provides a platform for political dialogue and regional integration between Latin American and Caribbean countries, allowing Brazil to advocate for collective action on issues such as sustainable development, climate change adaptation, and economic cooperation. Brazil has supported Caribbean integration efforts by encouraging dialogue on trade facilitation and infrastructure development within CELAC meetings and ministerial forums.

In terms of security, Brazil has worked with Caribbean states through **joint training exercises and information sharing** programs aimed at countering transnational crime and narcotics trafficking. Notably, Brazil's **Participation in the Regional Security System (RSS)** exercises—though the RSS primarily includes Eastern Caribbean states—illustrates Brazil's interest in regional security cooperation. Brazil's Navy has occasionally participated in joint maritime patrols and exercises within the broader Atlantic space, including Caribbean littoral waters, focusing on enhancing maritime domain awareness. These efforts align with Brazil's South Atlantic strategy to secure maritime routes and combat illicit trafficking.

Economically, Brazil has sought to expand trade and investment ties with Caribbean countries such as Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados. Brazilian enterprises have invested in sectors like renewable energy and infrastructure projects, albeit on a limited scale compared to other partners. Brazil's export of machinery, vehicles, and agricultural products has grown incrementally, supported by bilateral trade agreements and participation in regional economic forums. Brazil has also engaged in **technical cooperation programs** facilitated through the Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (ABC), providing expertise and capacity building in agriculture, public health, and education to Caribbean states. For example, agricultural development programs have been piloted in countries like Guyana and Suriname, reflecting shared tropical agricultural profiles.

Cultural diplomacy initiatives include scholarships offered by Brazilian universities to Caribbean students, often through government-to-government agreements. These programs aim to strengthen educational ties and foster mutual understanding. Brazil also promotes cultural exchanges that

highlight Afro-Brazilian heritage, resonating with the Caribbean's cultural landscape and enhancing Brazil's soft power in the region.

While Brazil's initiatives in the Caribbean remain relatively modest in scale, these targeted engagements underscore its strategic intent to cultivate deeper ties, contribute to regional stability, and broaden its influence beyond South America. Continued participation in multilateral forums and selective bilateral cooperation projects form the backbone of Brazil's Caribbean strategy, with potential for expansion as geopolitical and economic interests evolve.

Here is a tabulated summary of Brazil's key initiatives in the Caribbean, organized by sector, partner countries, and timeline where available:

Sector	Initiative/Activity	Partner Countries	Timeline / Notes
Diplomatic/Regional Integration	Active participation in CELAC forums, promoting Caribbean-Latin American dialogue	Entire Caribbean via CELAC	Since CELAC's establishment in 2010; ongoing
Security	Joint training exercises, intelligence sharing, maritime patrol cooperation	Eastern Caribbean states, wider Caribbean littoral	Ongoing since mid-2010s, linked to Regional Security System (RSS) exercises and South Atlantic maritime strategy
Trade & Investment	Export promotion (machinery, vehicles, agricultural products); investment in renewable energy and infrastructure	Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Guyana, Suriname	Increasing activity since early 2010s; ongoing.
Technical Cooperation	Agricultural development programs, public health, education capacity building	Guyana, Suriname, other Caribbean states	2010s onward via Brazilian Agency for Cooperation (ABC)
Cultural & Educational	Scholarships and exchange programs for Caribbean students; Afro-Brazilian cultural diplomacy	Various Caribbean countries	Ongoing, with formal agreements in place since early 2010s

This overview highlights Brazil's steady but measured engagement in the Caribbean, focused on building multilateral ties, security cooperation, economic linkages, and cultural exchanges. The initiatives tend to be embedded in regional frameworks rather than large standalone bilateral projects, reflecting Brazil's diplomatic approach of South-South solidarity and multilateralism. Let's explore the case for Brazil funding a new CARICOM headquarters in Barbados and discuss how Trinidad and Tobago could contribute to a strengthened CARICOM informed by comparative regionalism.

Brazil Funding a New CARICOM HQ in Barbados:

Strategic Location: as a central Caribbean island, Barbados offers a geographically advantageous location for a CARICOM headquarters. It provides accessibility to other member states and facilitates efficient coordination.

Symbolic Significance: Brazil's financial support would symbolise its commitment to regional integration and solidarity. It could strengthen diplomatic ties between Brazil and CARICOM nations by jumping off point from Guanya²⁸ and leveraging large Afro-Caribbean communities²⁹.

²⁸ <https://www.gov.br/planalto/en/latest-news/2024/02/in-guyana-lula-highlights-opportunities-for-integration-between-brazil-and-caribbean-countries>

Infrastructure and Facilities: A new headquarters could provide state-of-the-art facilities for meetings, conferences, and administrative functions. Brazil's funding could contribute to modern infrastructure.

Capacity Building: Brazil's expertise in renewable energy, agriculture, and technology could enhance CARICOM's capacity-building efforts.

Climate Resilience: Given Barbados' vulnerability to climate change, Brazil's funding could support sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure.

Trinidad and Tobago's Role:

Energy Hub: Trinidad and Tobago, with its oil and gas resources, could play a pivotal role in CARICOM's energy security. It could lead efforts to develop renewable energy projects and promote energy efficiency.

Trade and Commerce: Leveraging its strategic location and established trade networks, Trinidad and Tobago could facilitate intra-CARICOM trade, promoting economic growth³⁰.

²⁹ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afro-Brazilians>

³⁰ <https://www.businessbarbados.com/post/afreximbank-launches-caricom-office-in-barbados>

Maritime Connectivity: Trinidad and Tobago's maritime expertise could enhance regional connectivity through improved shipping routes and cargo transportation.

Comparative Regionalism: By analysing successful regional models (such as the European Union), Trinidad and Tobago could contribute insights on effective governance, trade policies, and cooperation mechanisms³¹.

In summary, Brazil's funding for a new CARICOM headquarters in Barbados would strengthen regional ties, and Trinidad and Tobago's involvement could focus on energy, trade, and comparative regionalism.³² Together, they can foster a resilient and integrated Caribbean community.



Venezuela, Brazil and the US

The crisis in Venezuela and Brazil's growing investments in Guyana are significant factors that shape and should continue to influence Brazil's relationship with the United States, especially in the context of regional geopolitics and strategic interests in the Caribbean and northern South America.

The Venezuelan crisis, marked by political instability, economic collapse, and a massive outflow of refugees, has destabilized the broader region and heightened security and humanitarian concerns for neighboring countries, including Brazil. Brazil shares a lengthy border with Venezuela and has been directly affected by refugee flows and cross-border security challenges such as smuggling and illicit trafficking. This situation places Brazil in a position where it needs to coordinate with regional and global powers, including the United States, which has taken a strong stance against the Maduro regime and supports efforts for democratic restoration and humanitarian aid.

Brazil and the United States thus share overlapping interests in promoting regional stability, addressing humanitarian needs, and countering transnational criminal networks that exploit the Venezuelan crisis. Cooperation in these areas can deepen bilateral ties, encouraging joint efforts on border security, refugee assistance, and diplomatic initiatives aimed at resolving Venezuela's political impasse. However, Brazil's historically independent foreign policy and regional

leadership aspirations sometimes temper its willingness to align too closely with U.S. approaches, especially if perceived as interfering or heavy-handed.

Meanwhile, Brazil's increasing investment and economic engagement in Guyana—especially following Guyana's discovery of significant offshore oil reserves—introduces new dimensions to its regional strategy. Guyana is emerging as a pivotal economic player in the Caribbean and South American interface, attracting considerable attention from global powers including the United States. The United States has intensified diplomatic and economic engagement with Guyana, recognizing its strategic value and energy potential.

Brazil's expanding presence in Guyana through investment, trade, and infrastructure projects is a sign of its intent to deepen economic influence in the Caribbean basin. This development could lead to both cooperation and competition with the United States, depending on how bilateral relations evolve and how Brazil's ambitions are perceived. On one hand, shared interests in Guyana's stability and development could foster trilateral cooperation. On the other hand, overlapping spheres of influence might create subtle rivalry, particularly in areas of energy and regional leadership.

Overall, the Venezuelan crisis and Brazil's investment in Guyana should encourage a pragmatic and nuanced

³¹<https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780199743292/obo-9780199743292-0301.xml>

³² <https://www.opm.gov.tt/46th-regular-meeting-of-the-caricom-heads-of-government-day-one/>

relationship between Brazil and the United States. Both countries have incentives to collaborate on regional stability, economic development, and security, but this cooperation will require careful balancing of sovereignty concerns, respect for regional agency, and recognition of Brazil's desire for greater autonomy in hemispheric affairs. How Brazil navigates these challenges will shape its role as a key regional player and influence broader U.S.-Brazil dynamics in the Caribbean and northern South America.

Policy Recommendations for U.S.-Brazil Cooperation on Venezuela and Guyana

The complexity of the Venezuelan crisis and Brazil's growing economic role in Guyana require a pragmatic and balanced approach to foster constructive U.S.-Brazil collaboration. The following recommendations aim to strengthen bilateral cooperation while respecting regional sensitivities and Brazil's aspirations.

1. Establish a Joint Regional Stability Task Force

A formal mechanism for U.S. and Brazilian cooperation could be established focusing on the Venezuelan humanitarian and security crisis. This task force would coordinate refugee assistance, border security operations, and intelligence sharing to combat illicit trafficking networks exploiting Venezuela's instability. By pooling resources and expertise, the two countries could mitigate spillover effects more effectively and send a unified message supporting democratic restoration.

2. Promote Multilateral and Regional Frameworks

Supporting and reinforcing regional organizations like the Organization of American States (OAS), CELAC, and CARICOM to mediate and address the Venezuelan crisis would enable Brazil and the U.S. to work within established, legitimate forums. This reduces bilateral tensions and elevates the role of Caribbean and Latin American states in shaping solutions, aligning with Brazil's emphasis on regional agency.

3. Coordinate Development and Infrastructure Investment in Guyana

Given Guyana's growing oil wealth and strategic importance, the U.S. and Brazil should seek avenues for coordinated infrastructure development and capacity building. Joint investments in energy, transportation, and environmental sustainability could foster complementary cooperation rather than competition. Transparent dialogue with the Guyanese government is critical to ensure alignment with national development priorities.

4. Enhance Diplomatic Dialogue on Spheres of Influence

Regular high-level diplomatic exchanges can preempt

misunderstandings over regional influence. Open communication about intentions, especially regarding investments and security initiatives in Guyana and northern South America, can reduce the risk of perceived encroachment and help identify areas for cooperation or constructive parallel engagement.

5. Support Conflict Prevention and Disaster Response Mechanisms

The Caribbean and northern South America are vulnerable to natural disasters, compounded by political instability. Joint contingency planning and resource sharing for disaster response, particularly in Venezuela's border regions and Guyana, would strengthen resilience and build trust between Brazil and the U.S.

Potential Areas of Friction and Management Strategies

Sovereignty and Non-Intervention Concerns

Brazil's tradition of independent foreign policy includes a strong emphasis on sovereignty and non-intervention. U.S. initiatives perceived as unilateral or heavy-handed in Venezuela could strain relations. To manage this, U.S. efforts should emphasize partnership, respect for regional leadership, and multilateral engagement.

Competing Economic Interests in Guyana

As Brazil deepens its investments in Guyana's oil and infrastructure sectors, competition with U.S. companies and strategic interests may arise. Transparent coordination and joint ventures where feasible can mitigate competition and foster mutually beneficial outcomes.

Differing Approaches to Venezuela's Political Solution

The U.S. and Brazil might diverge on the preferred diplomatic or coercive strategies toward Venezuela's government. Maintaining open channels for dialogue and agreeing on shared humanitarian priorities, even amid political differences, can sustain collaboration.

In summary, the Venezuelan crisis and Guyana's economic rise present both challenges and opportunities for U.S.-Brazil relations. A policy approach grounded in cooperation, respect for regional dynamics, and clear communication can enhance partnership, promote stability, and foster sustainable development in the Caribbean and northern South America.

Toward a Brazil-Led Convergence Diplomacy on Venezuela within CELAC

Given the spill-over effects to Colombia and regional rivalries, a Brazil-led initiative to address the Venezuelan crisis within the framework of CELAC would emphasize regional autonomy, diplomatic balance, and institutional capacity. The approach would avoid ideological polarization, instead prioritizing a multilateral and principle-based engagement that aligns with CELAC's foundational values of sovereignty, non-intervention, and peaceful conflict resolution.

1. Normative Anchoring

Non-Intervention and Sovereignty

The diplomatic foundation should rest on the Latin American tradition of non-interference. The initiative would reaffirm that political resolution in Venezuela must be achieved through sovereign national processes, while acknowledging the legitimate concern of CELAC states regarding democratic erosion and humanitarian deterioration.

Human Rights and Democratic Governance

Without resorting to punitive conditionalities, Brazil could champion a normative framework that encourages respect for human rights, electoral integrity, and political pluralism. Language would stress constructive engagement rather than confrontation.

2. Multi-Level Dialogue Framework

Track I – Intergovernmental Dialogue

Facilitate structured dialogue between the Venezuelan government and recognized opposition groups, with mediation support from neutral CELAC member states. Emphasis would be placed on outcomes such as electoral guarantees, political de-escalation, and transitional justice mechanisms.

Track II – Civil Society Engagement

Encourage inclusive dialogue among civil society actors from across the political spectrum, creating a regional forum for non-governmental participation in confidence-building and social reconciliation.

Track III – Technical Advisory Missions

Deploy CELAC-led technical delegations specializing in electoral systems, humanitarian logistics, and public health. These missions would operate with explicit mandates of non-intervention and transparency.

3. Electoral Accompaniment Mechanism

Develop a CELAC Electoral Observation Protocol designed to support transparent electoral processes in Venezuela. This mechanism would involve:

- Deployment of independent experts from CELAC institutions.
- Coordination with Venezuela's electoral authorities and civil society.
- Emphasis on verification rather than certification, avoiding duplication with OAS or UN mechanisms.

4. Humanitarian and Migration Cooperation

Regional Humanitarian Framework

Coordinate humanitarian assistance through CELAC mechanisms, focusing on health, food security, and displaced populations. Efforts would seek to strengthen cooperation with international agencies while affirming regional leadership.

Migration Governance

Initiate a CELAC Compact for Migrant Protection and Integration, with Brazil offering technical leadership based on its operational experience in Roraima and the "Operação Acolhida" program. The framework would enhance data sharing, legal harmonization, and resource pooling.

5. Follow-Up and Compliance Mechanism

To ensure institutional continuity and measurable progress, a **CELAC Monitoring and Evaluation Group on Venezuela (CMEGV)** should be established with the following features:

- **Composition:** Representatives from CELAC member states, supported by independent observers from UN-ECLAC, PAHO, or the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO).
- **Mandate:** Monitor implementation of agreed dialogue benchmarks, report on humanitarian conditions, and coordinate follow-up visits.
- **Frequency:** Quarterly briefings to CELAC foreign ministers, with biennial public reporting.
- **Authority:** Operate in a consultative capacity, with decisions made by consensus.

6. Regional Stability and Security Doctrine

Situate Venezuela's crisis within a broader CELAC agenda on regional stability, including:

- **Transnational threats:** Enhance coordination against illegal mining, trafficking networks, and environmental degradation across shared borders.
- **Energy and Development Cooperation:** Promote regional integration initiatives including electricity grids, hydrocarbon trade, and development banks.

7. Strategic Ambiguity and Diplomatic Flexibility

Maintain an approach of **strategic ambiguity** that avoids rigid alignments. Brazil's leadership would seek to facilitate incremental normalization steps tied to verifiable outcomes, such as the release of political detainees, restoration of press freedoms, and independent judicial oversight. The emphasis would remain on diplomacy, sequencing, and proportionality.

A convergence diplomacy led by Brazil within CELAC offers a pathway to address the Venezuelan crisis through regional legitimacy and constructive engagement. By institutionalizing dialogue, safeguarding sovereignty, and embedding follow-up mechanisms, such an initiative would strengthen CELAC's role as an autonomous forum capable of conflict mediation in Latin America. It would further position Brazil as a pivotal actor in crafting a post-hegemonic, post-polarized regional order.

Summary

Brazil and the European Union approach the CELAC region with overlapping yet distinct interests and objectives. Brazil's stance emphasizes regional sovereignty, South-South cooperation, and strategic autonomy, seeking to assert its leadership in Latin America and the Caribbean by promoting integration, sustainable development, and multilateral diplomacy. The EU, in contrast, combines normative objectives such as governance, human rights, and climate action with economic interests including trade facilitation, investment, and development cooperation. Both actors prioritize stability, development, and climate resilience, yet the EU tends to employ structured institutional frameworks and conditionalities, whereas Brazil favors more flexible, sovereignty-respecting engagement.

Within CELAC, Brazil and the United States share notable common ground, particularly concerning regional stability, democratic governance, and security cooperation. Both recognize the imperative to address transnational crime, migration flows, and political crises such as Venezuela. However, while the US often adopts a more interventionist and security-focused approach, Brazil pursues a more

diplomatic, multilateral style emphasizing dialogue and respect for sovereignty. This duality creates both opportunities for cooperation and tensions regarding methods and priorities.

Mexico and Brazil, as prominent CELAC members, differ markedly in their diplomatic styles and regional roles. Mexico tends to position itself as a pragmatic bridge between North America and Latin America, advocating economic integration and multilateralism with a conciliatory tone. Brazil, by contrast, projects a more autonomous leadership posture, emphasizing regional solidarity and strategic independence from traditional Western powers. These differences shape their respective influence within CELAC and impact regional negotiations.

The Caribbean, situated at the intersection of these dynamics, strategically positions itself by leveraging its multilateral platforms, such as CARICOM and the ACS, to balance relations with Brazil, Mexico, the EU, and the United States. Caribbean states prioritize economic development, climate resilience, and security while exercising agency to avoid being overshadowed by larger regional actors. By engaging in flexible diplomatic alliances and emphasizing regional integration, the Caribbean seeks to maximize benefits from diverse partnerships while safeguarding its sovereignty and development agendas.

26. STRENGTHENING CARICOM'S GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES:

To strengthen the governance structures of CARICOM (Caribbean Community), several actions should be taken to enhance decision-making, coordination, and institutional effectiveness. These actions would address structural weaknesses and improve CARICOM's ability to respond to the region's challenges. Here are key strategies:

Institutional Capacity Building:

CARICOM should invest in the capacity of its Secretariat to improve its operational effectiveness. This can be achieved through the development of specialized departments focusing on critical areas like climate change, trade, security, and public health. Strengthening CARICOM's technical and administrative capabilities will enhance the implementation of policies and programs.

Enhancing Decision-Making Processes:

The decision-making process within CARICOM should be streamlined and transparent, with

clearly defined roles for each member state. Implementing mechanisms for voting by majority rather than requiring unanimous consent would allow for quicker decisions, particularly in areas requiring immediate action like disaster relief or regional security.

Greater Autonomy for Key Institutions:

Giving more autonomy to key CARICOM institutions—such as the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and the CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS)—would enable them to act more independently and with greater efficiency. This autonomy can be achieved by increasing funding, political support, and reducing bureaucratic red tape.

Monitoring and Evaluation Systems:

CARICOM should adopt a robust monitoring and evaluation system to ensure that regional initiatives are effectively implemented. Such a system would provide data-driven insights and feedback to improve CARICOM's performance, helping member states to assess the success of regional policies and programs.

Enlargement Strategy for CARICOM:

Expanding CARICOM to include additional Caribbean states and territories could increase the organization's influence and resources, but it must be done with careful planning. A strategic enlargement strategy could focus on the following:

Targeting Geopolitically and Economically Aligned Nations:

CARICOM should consider enlarging its membership to include countries that are already geopolitically aligned with its mission. This could include Cuba, which shares strong historical, cultural, and economic ties with many CARICOM members, and the Dominican Republic, which has a growing economy and could add significant economic weight to the group.

Additionally, Central American nations such as Belize and Panama could potentially join, given their geographical proximity and common interests in trade, security, and climate change.

Gradual Membership and Integration:

The enlargement process should be gradual to ensure that new members are fully integrated into CARICOM's framework. It would involve comprehensive capacity-building programs and the adoption of clear protocols for membership to ensure

that the new members contribute meaningfully to the organization.

Strengthening Regional Coordination:

To make enlargement more successful, CARICOM should focus on improving the coordination between member states in regional trade, disaster management, and diplomatic relations. Expanded membership should be tied to increased cooperation on shared challenges like security and climate change.

Pre-conditions for Membership:

New members should demonstrate their commitment to CARICOM's values, such as democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. There should also be agreements on economic and trade policies that align with CARICOM's core goals of regional integration.

Relationship Between CARICOM and the ACP (African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States):

The relationship between CARICOM and the ACP can be strengthened by emphasizing shared interests, particularly in areas of trade, development, and climate resilience. Here's how CARICOM can better engage with the ACP:

Collaborative Advocacy:

CARICOM should work closely with the ACP to advocate for the global South's interests, including addressing the negative impacts of climate change, the promotion of fair trade, and advocating for the restructuring of international debt systems for small island developing states (SIDS).

Leveraging ACP Resources:

CARICOM can tap into the ACP's financial resources, particularly through the European Development Fund (EDF), to finance regional development projects, especially in agriculture, renewable energy, and disaster resilience.

Joint Development Programs:

CARICOM and ACP can launch joint programs on issues such as education, trade facilitation, and health to support the sustainable development of both the Caribbean and other ACP regions. Sharing knowledge on how ACP members tackle development challenges can provide CARICOM with valuable insights and strategies.

Insights from Tanja Börzel on Strengthening CARICOM's Authority:

Tanja Börzel, an expert on regional governance, would likely suggest that CARICOM can enhance its authority through the following measures:

Institutional Strengthening and Credibility:

Börzel would argue that CARICOM's institutional capacity needs to be strengthened. By focusing on transparency, accountability, and the professionalization of CARICOM's staff, the organization can build its credibility.

Inclusive Governance:

Börzel's theory of inclusive regional governance would stress the importance of involving civil society, the private sector, and the public in decision-making processes. Expanding participatory mechanisms would not only enhance CARICOM's legitimacy but also ensure that it can address the diverse needs of the region.

Focus on "Collective Goods":

Börzel might recommend that CARICOM prioritize the provision of regional public goods, such as environmental protection, regional security, and trade cooperation, which can reinforce its authority by providing tangible benefits to member states and the region at large.

Comparative Regionalism and CARICOM's Development Potential:

When looking at CARICOM through a comparative regionalism lens, it is essential to understand how CARICOM's development potential can be measured against other regional organizations, such as ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) or the EU (European Union).

Regional Integration and Economic Growth:

CARICOM's success hinges on economic integration. By reducing trade barriers, harmonizing tariffs, and focusing on trade facilitation and investment, CARICOM can replicate the success of ASEAN and Mercosur in boosting regional trade and economic growth.

Institutional Development:

In comparison to the EU, which has a highly integrated political and economic system, CARICOM faces the challenge of aligning regional economic policies and achieving a greater degree of political cooperation. However, CARICOM can learn from the EU's institutionalized cooperation mechanisms such as the European Commission, which can serve as a

model for strengthening CARICOM's Secretariat and specialized agencies.

Climate Change and Environmental Cooperation:

CARICOM has the potential to become a leader in climate change action by aligning regional policies on climate resilience, renewable energy, and sustainable development. It can build on best practices from Pacific Island nations and SIDS (Small Island Developing States) that have successfully advocated for climate action at the international level.

Funding Estimates and Timeline for Enlargement and Governance Strengthening:

To fund the expansion and institutional strengthening of CARICOM, the following estimates are required:

Short-Term Funding (1-3 years):

Investment in institutional capacity building, improving governance processes, and setting up the required structures for membership enlargement.

Estimated Funding: \$50 million - \$100 million for capacity-building programs, administrative expansion, and strengthening regional cooperation.

Medium-Term Funding (3-5 years):

Regional development initiatives focused on economic diversification, environmental resilience, and security.

Funding for environmental programs and renewable energy partnerships would be key.

Estimated Funding: \$200 million - \$300 million.

Long-Term Funding (5+ years):

Full integration of new member states, creation of more regional public goods, and scaling up climate resilience and disaster risk management programs.

Investment in regional infrastructure, digital transformation, and education systems to enhance economic competitiveness.

Estimated Funding: \$500 million or more, including contributions from CARICOM members, international partners, and private investors.

Strengthening CARICOM's governance structures, expanding its membership, and enhancing regional cooperation are essential steps for fostering economic development and security in the Caribbean. By adopting a strategic enlargement approach, prioritizing institutional strengthening, and engaging in cooperative initiatives with global partners, CARICOM can enhance its authority and influence. The resources required for these efforts will

involve both short-term investments in capacity building and long-term funding for regional development, with a projected timeline for enlargement and governance strengthening over the next 5–10 years.



27. CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT DYNAMICS

The "Caribbean Development Dynamics 2025" report is a collaborative effort between the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Its primary objective is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Caribbean's development landscape, highlighting both challenges and opportunities, and offering policy recommendations to foster sustainable growth in the region.

Main Analytical Points and Conclusions:

1. **Climate Resilience and Natural Endowments:** The Caribbean is highly vulnerable to climate change, experiencing an 85% increase in climate-related extreme weather events between 2001 and 2020 compared to 1980-2000. Natural disasters have imposed an average annual cost of 2.13% of regional GDP from 1980 to 2020. The report emphasizes the need for ambitious adaptation measures, resilient infrastructure, and robust early warning systems. It also highlights the potential of the region's rich biodiversity—hosting almost 10% of the world's coral reefs—to develop sectors like renewable energy, sustainable tourism, and the blue economy.
2. **Social Inclusion and Protection Systems:** While there have been improvements in well-being over the past three decades, significant socio-economic disparities persist. Approximately 25% of the population lives in poverty, and 37% experience moderate or severe food insecurity. The report calls for strengthening social protection systems to address these issues effectively.
3. **Productivity and Macroeconomic Stability:** The region's potential GDP per capita growth is estimated at around 1.4%, which is below that of advanced

economies. Labor productivity stands at 46% of OECD levels as of 2023. High public debt, averaging 78.8% of GDP in 2022, poses additional challenges. The report suggests reforms to boost productivity, reinforce macroeconomic stability, and diversify economic activities beyond traditional sectors like tourism and natural resources.

4. **Governance and Public Services:** There is a noted decline in citizen satisfaction with democracy and public services. For instance, in 2023, 65% of people expressed low satisfaction with the democratic system, an increase of 22.6 percentage points over the last decade. The report recommends enhancing evidence-based policymaking, improving public services, and fostering citizen engagement to rebuild trust.
5. **Financing Development:** Tax revenues in the Caribbean average 21% of GDP, below Latin America's 22.4% and the OECD's 34%. The report advocates for more equitable and efficient tax systems, innovative debt instruments, and deeper financial markets to mobilize resources for development.
6. **Regional Integration and International Partnerships:** The Caribbean's share in global exports has declined, and intra-regional trade remains low. The report underscores the importance of regional cooperation to address shared challenges and enhance the region's voice in global discussions, particularly concerning the international financial architecture.³³

Utilization and Reinforcement through EU-CELAC Partnership and CARICOM:

The insights and recommendations from the "Caribbean Development Dynamics 2025" report can serve as a valuable resource for the EU-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Partnership and CARICOM (Caribbean Community) in several ways:

Policy Formulation: The report's data-driven analysis can inform the development of targeted policies aimed at addressing specific challenges identified within the Caribbean region.

Strategic Planning: Both the EU-CELAC Partnership and CARICOM can leverage the report's findings to design strategic initiatives that promote sustainable

³³ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/caribbean-development-dynamics-2024_a8e79405-en.html

development, economic diversification, and social inclusion.

Resource Allocation: The detailed insights into areas such as climate resilience and social protection can guide the allocation of resources to sectors where they are most needed and can have the greatest impact.

Strengthening Partnerships: The report highlights the importance of regional integration and international cooperation. The EU-CELAC Partnership and CARICOM can use these insights to strengthen existing collaborations and forge new partnerships to address common challenges.

By integrating the report's recommendations into their agendas, the EU-CELAC Partnership and CARICOM can enhance their efforts to promote sustainable development and improve the well-being of Caribbean populations.

The follow-up to the OECD-IDB flagship report, *Caribbean Development Dynamics 2025*, should focus on ensuring that the report's insights and recommendations translate into tangible actions and sustained progress. Here are key steps for effective follow-up:

1. Dissemination and Stakeholder Engagement

Regional Outreach: Share the report widely among Caribbean governments, civil society, private sector actors, and international development partners. Organize workshops and regional forums to discuss the findings.

Policy Dialogues: Facilitate policy dialogues where stakeholders can discuss the specific recommendations and their applicability to national contexts.

Collaboration with CARICOM and CELAC: Ensure that CARICOM members and the EU-CELAC Partnership incorporate the report's insights into their frameworks, such as the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and EU-LAC projects.

2. Regional and National Action Plans

National-Level Adaptation: Encourage each country to adopt tailored action plans based on the report's findings, reflecting unique circumstances while aligning with regional priorities.

Cross-Border Initiatives: Develop region-wide programs for shared challenges, such as climate resilience, trade integration, and financial stability, leveraging CARICOM's mechanisms.

Flagship-Specific Indicators: Use the report's metrics and indicators to monitor progress and set concrete milestones for follow-up activities.

3. Integration with Global and Regional Frameworks

Linkage with the SDGs: Align follow-up efforts with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to ensure global relevance and attract international support.

Regional Integration: Coordinate with existing CARICOM initiatives (e.g., the Regional Strategic Plan) to ensure complementarity rather than duplication.

Involvement of the EU-CELAC Partnership: Advocate for the report's key themes (climate resilience, economic diversification, social equity) to be central in EU-CELAC Partnership initiatives and funding priorities.

4. Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

Capacity Support: Provide technical assistance and capacity-building programs to governments for implementing recommendations, especially in areas like tax reform, productivity enhancement, and governance.

Training for Policymakers: Partner with institutions like the OECD Development Centre and IDB to offer training for Caribbean policymakers on designing and implementing reforms.

5. Financing and Resource Mobilization

Blended Finance: Leverage the report's focus on innovative financing (e.g., climate bonds, debt-for-nature swaps) to secure funding for key initiatives.

Private Sector Partnerships: Engage private sector stakeholders in funding and implementing development projects, particularly in renewable energy, tourism, and infrastructure.

International Advocacy: Use the report as a tool to advocate for concessional financing and debt relief, particularly in forums like the G20 and IMF.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Updates

Establish a Monitoring Framework: Develop a robust framework for tracking progress on key recommendations and ensuring accountability at both regional and national levels.

Annual Progress Reports: Publish follow-up reports or updates tracking how recommendations are being implemented and highlighting successful examples.

Regular Updates to the Report: Consider periodic updates (e.g., every three years) to assess new challenges, emerging trends, and lessons learned.

7. Partnerships for Strengthened Impact

Deepen OECD-IDB Collaboration: Expand the partnership between the OECD and IDB to conduct more in-depth studies on key topics like digital transformation, blue economy, or youth employment.

Foster Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): Use the report's findings to guide PPPs in areas like infrastructure, technology, and renewable energy.

Engage Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs): Work with MDBs, such as the World Bank, to provide financing and technical support for priority initiatives.

8. Promote Regional Leadership and Ownership

Champion Countries: Encourage countries already leading in areas like renewable energy or social protection to share best practices and act as regional champions.

Local Voices: Foster greater inclusion of Caribbean civil society, academia, and private sector voices in the follow-up process to ensure local ownership and relevance.

By maintaining a structured and collaborative approach, the follow-up to the flagship report can sustain momentum, enhance regional cohesion, and secure tangible development outcomes for the Caribbean.

Furthermore, this process of consolidation of the islanders nation-building project could be reinforced in terms of support for the nation-building projects in the Caribbean:

1. Invest in Digital Transformation

Establish **national digital agendas** to modernize government services, promote e-governance, and reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies.

Expand **digital infrastructure** (broadband access and 5G) to support businesses, education, and public services, especially in rural areas.

Promote **digital skills training** to prepare the workforce for opportunities in ICT, fintech, and the digital economy.

2. Strengthen Regional Trade and Economic Integration

Enhance the **CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME)** to facilitate the free movement of goods, services, and people. Develop **cross-border value chains** in agriculture, manufacturing, and creative industries to boost intra-regional trade and reduce dependency on external markets.

Standardize **regional trade regulations** to improve ease of doing business within the Caribbean.

3. Scale Renewable Energy and Climate Resilience Projects

Promote **solar, wind, and geothermal energy projects** to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and achieve energy independence.

Implement **resilient infrastructure projects**, such as hurricane-resistant buildings and flood defenses, to mitigate climate-related vulnerabilities.

Create **community-driven climate funds** to involve local populations in adaptation projects and ensure equity in resource allocation.

4. Expand Education and Workforce Development Programs

Launch **technical and vocational education and training (TVET)** programs tailored to emerging industries like renewable energy, ICT, and the blue economy.

Modernize education systems with a focus on **STEM education**, entrepreneurial skills, and innovation.

Partner with international institutions to provide **scholarships, internships, and exchange programs** for Caribbean youth.

5. Build Inclusive Social Protection Systems

Develop **universal health coverage** systems to ensure all citizens have access to quality healthcare services.

Introduce **targeted social assistance programs** to address poverty, food insecurity, and inequality.

Strengthen **labor protections** and wage policies to promote decent work and safeguard vulnerable workers.

6. Develop the Blue Economy

Promote **sustainable fisheries management** and marine conservation initiatives to ensure long-term viability of ocean resources.

Encourage **ocean-based industries**, such as aquaculture, marine biotechnology, and offshore renewable energy.

Establish **marine protected areas (MPAs)** to safeguard biodiversity and attract ecotourism.

7. Improve Governance and Transparency

Implement **anti-corruption frameworks** to improve trust in public institutions and ensure accountability.

Introduce **open data platforms** to enhance transparency and citizen engagement in governance.

Strengthen the **rule of law** and judicial systems to ensure fairness and improve investor confidence.

8. Foster Cultural and Creative Industries

Invest in the **arts, music, and cultural heritage sectors** to promote the Caribbean's unique identity globally.

Develop **creative hubs** and incubators to support entrepreneurs in industries like fashion, film, and entertainment.

Market the region's **cultural festivals and events** internationally to boost tourism and foster pride in local culture.

By integrating these initiatives into broader nation-building strategies, Caribbean countries can achieve sustainable development, economic diversification, and greater social cohesion.

28. RASTAMAN SAFARI

The saying, "You can't make an omelette without smashing eggs," resonates strongly when analyzing Jamaica's political history and the resulting complexities in its governance structures. Jamaica's history, marked by colonization, independence, and struggles for political and economic sovereignty, has significantly shaped its governance frameworks. Jamaica's path to independence in 1962, after centuries under British colonial rule, was a hard-won victory that resulted in a complex system of government influenced by both local traditions and external forces. This legacy manifests in a governance structure that balances parliamentary democracy with local considerations, but with its challenges, such as political instability, corruption concerns, and economic dependency on foreign aid and remittances.

Political History and Governance:

Jamaica's political history has fostered a culture of nationalism and self-determination, with a strong emphasis on sovereignty and independence. This has led to the development of a governance system where Jamaica's foreign policy orientations are shaped by its desire for global recognition as an independent state while managing its relationship with both former colonial powers and regional neighbors. Jamaica's two major political parties, the People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), have historically represented a left-leaning, social democratic orientation versus a more market-driven, conservative approach, respectively. These internal political divides sometimes challenge cohesion, especially in foreign policy directions.

Foreign Policy Orientations:

Jamaica's foreign policy has evolved to balance regional solidarity, economic partnerships, and global diplomacy. **Key orientations include:**

Regional Integration: Jamaica is an active member of CARICOM, participating in regional cooperation for trade, security, and sustainable development.

Non-alignment: As a former colony, Jamaica has always emphasized a non-aligned foreign policy, seeking to distance itself from the power blocs of the Cold War and advocating for equitable global trade and international peace.

International Cooperation: Jamaica has worked closely with international organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank, and the Commonwealth, emphasizing human rights, democracy, and environmental sustainability.

Threat Perception:

Jamaica's sense of security and its threat perception have been shaped by multiple factors:

1. **Economic Dependence:** As a small island developing state (SIDS), Jamaica's economy is highly vulnerable to global market fluctuations, trade imbalances, and external debt. This economic vulnerability often leads to a sense of insecurity, as Jamaica is dependent on remittances, tourism, and trade agreements.
2. **Crime and Violence:** Jamaica struggles with a high crime rate, often attributed to gang violence, drug trafficking, and internal inequality. These domestic security challenges create a sense of instability and inform the country's perception of external threats.
3. **Climate Change:** Jamaica is also at high risk from climate change, facing rising sea levels, hurricanes, and natural disasters, which directly impact its sense of security.
4. **Political Instability:** Jamaica's internal political volatility and the history of electoral tensions occasionally stoke perceptions of threats to democracy and civil order.

Do's and Don'ts in Relations with Jamaica:

To engage Jamaica effectively, external stakeholders must be mindful of several important considerations:

Do acknowledge Jamaica's historical struggles for sovereignty and autonomy. Treat Jamaica with the respect it demands for its independence, political maturity, and governance challenges.

Do support Jamaica's sustainable development efforts, particularly regarding climate change resilience, economic diversification, and social equity.

Do not undermine Jamaica's position on non-alignment or its efforts to navigate the geopolitical tensions of the global system.

Do not impose one-size-fits-all solutions to Jamaica's development needs. Tailor interventions to Jamaica's local context and provide support that aligns with Jamaican priorities and cultural sensitivities.

Do engage Jamaica in regional partnerships that enhance collective security, economic stability, and climate action within the Caribbean context.

Do not take Jamaica's commitment to democracy and sovereignty for granted. External pressures must be balanced with an understanding of Jamaica's desire to remain politically independent.

Jamaica's Development Needs:

Jamaica faces significant development challenges, which require collaborative regional and international responses. Some of the primary areas needing attention include:

1. **Economic Diversification:** With overreliance on tourism and remittances, Jamaica needs to diversify its economy. There's a need to invest in manufacturing, technology, and agriculture to ensure long-term economic stability.
2. **Youth Employment:** High unemployment rates among the youth, especially in rural areas, create social unrest and fuel crime. A focus on education, skills training, and job creation is vital for economic sustainability.
3. **Crime and Security:** Addressing the root causes of crime, such as poverty, lack of opportunity, and gang activity, requires a comprehensive security strategy alongside initiatives for peace-building, social services, and community development.
4. **Climate Change Resilience:** As a Caribbean island, Jamaica is vulnerable to natural disasters and the effects of climate change. Investments in resilience infrastructure—such as better coastal protection, disaster management systems, and sustainable agriculture—are essential.

How CARICOM, EU-CELAC, and the US Can Respond:

CARICOM:

Strengthening regional trade agreements and focusing on shared climate change adaptation efforts would be key. CARICOM should facilitate the exchange of best practices, financial support, and collective action to build Jamaica's resilience against both economic and environmental threats.

EU-CELAC:

The EU can support Jamaica's economic diversification efforts through trade agreements, foreign direct investment, and

climate change financing. The EU's experience in regional integration can also provide valuable lessons for Jamaica, especially in terms of governance and political stability.

CELAC, with its focus on Latin American and Caribbean integration, can provide a framework for Jamaica to engage in regional cooperation, particularly on issues like trade and security.

US:

The US plays a crucial role as Jamaica's primary trading partner, and its aid programs could help Jamaica address its development needs, especially in infrastructure, education, and security.

The US can also assist in addressing crime and drug trafficking through cooperative law enforcement initiatives and capacity-building programs.

However, the US must balance its interest in regional security with respect for Jamaica's sovereignty, avoiding heavy-handed approaches that could provoke resistance.

Executing a Comprehensive Development and Security Plan for Jamaica:

A comprehensive plan for Jamaica's development and security would need to include the following elements:

1. **Economic Support:** International stakeholders should prioritize diversification programs that foster technological innovation and the green economy. This can be achieved through joint ventures between Jamaica and international businesses, supported by EU-CELAC trade partnerships.
2. **Crime Prevention and Social Services:** CARICOM, along with the US, can assist Jamaica in improving criminal justice and law enforcement capabilities, focusing on rehabilitation, community policing, and violence prevention programs.
3. **Climate Resilience:** A regional task force on climate change could focus on funding and implementing sustainable infrastructure projects—such as solar energy installations, sustainable agriculture initiatives, and disaster-resilient housing—while coordinating with the EU for technical and financial support.
4. **Youth Empowerment:** Programs aimed at educational reforms, vocational training, and youth employment should be prioritized to address unemployment and reduce youth-driven violence.

By building on Jamaica's sovereign desires and regional partnerships, CARICOM, EU-CELAC, and the US can jointly strengthen Jamaica's sense of security, reduce its vulnerabilities, and ensure that it has the resources to

tackle its development needs effectively. The success of this approach lies in recognizing that, just as “you can’t make an omelette without smashing eggs,” progress comes with both challenges and opportunities that must be carefully managed for sustainable success.

Summary

Jamaica faces a confluence of strategic challenges that constrain its developmental trajectory and regional influence. Chief among these is the country’s continued dependence on a narrow set of economic sectors, particularly tourism and remittances, which exposes it to external shocks and limits resilience in times of crisis. Despite commendable efforts at macroeconomic stabilization, Jamaica’s high levels of public debt have historically limited its capacity for capital investment in infrastructure and social services. The structural weakness of its manufacturing and agricultural base further complicates attempts to diversify the economy and expand export capacity.

Environmental vulnerability remains an existential concern. The island is acutely exposed to the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels, increasingly intense tropical storms, and protracted droughts. These phenomena threaten not only physical infrastructure and livelihoods but also the tourism sector, which relies heavily on the preservation of coastal ecosystems. Environmental degradation—manifested in deforestation, poor waste management, and coral reef decline—exacerbates these risks and undercuts long-term sustainability goals.

Public safety and national security constitute another major strategic pressure point. Jamaica continues to experience persistently high rates of violent crime, much of it linked to gang activity and illicit trafficking networks. The capacity of law enforcement institutions is undermined by limited resources, slow judicial processes, and a lack of public trust. This dynamic discourages investment, perpetuates inequality, and restricts the emergence of inclusive urban development.

Human capital development is further constrained by high youth unemployment, inadequate alignment between

education and labour market needs, and significant brain drain. Skilled professionals often migrate to more developed economies, leaving shortages in critical sectors such as healthcare, education, and engineering. Rural populations also face limited access to quality health services and educational opportunities, deepening regional disparities.

Energy dependence remains a structural constraint, with continued reliance on imported fossil fuels driving up costs for households and businesses alike. The transition to renewable energy has begun but remains in its early stages and will require greater financing and technical assistance. Infrastructure deficits, especially in public transport, water management, and digital access, limit both productivity and quality of life.

Jamaica’s strategic positioning within the Caribbean also presents both opportunities and challenges. As an active member of CARICOM and a key node in transatlantic trade routes, it has the potential to act as a regional bridge. However, this role is limited by constrained diplomatic resources and competition for external financing. Institutional weaknesses in governance and corruption risks, particularly in public procurement and policing, continue to erode administrative effectiveness.

In this context, there are promising avenues for deeper strategic partnerships between Jamaica, the European Union, and the United Kingdom. Both partners can support Jamaica’s resilience through green financing, investment in digital and energy infrastructure, and capacity-building for climate adaptation. Technical cooperation could also target judicial reform, security sector modernization, and public service delivery. As the UK redefines its post-Brexit global posture and the EU deepens its engagement with the Caribbean through CELAC and Global Gateway initiatives, coordinated and sustained trilateral cooperation could help Jamaica address its interlinked economic, environmental, and governance challenges while reinforcing democratic governance and regional integration.



Mi deh yah, everyt'ing cris! Wah gwaan wid yuh?

29. CHINA AND THE CARRIBEAN

China's success in Latin American markets can be attributed to several key factors:

Trade Growth: Between 2000 and 2020, China-Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) trade grew 26-fold, reaching \$315 billion. By 2035, it is expected to exceed \$700 billion, making China LAC's top trading partner, something that is already the case for Peru, Brazil and Chile³⁴.

Commodity Demand: Chinese demand fueled a commodity super-cycle in Latin America during the 2000s, helping mitigate the impact of the 2008 global financial crisis on the region.

Resilience During the Pandemic: Despite the pandemic, trade with China remained robust, providing external growth for LAC, which faced significant challenges due to COVID-19.

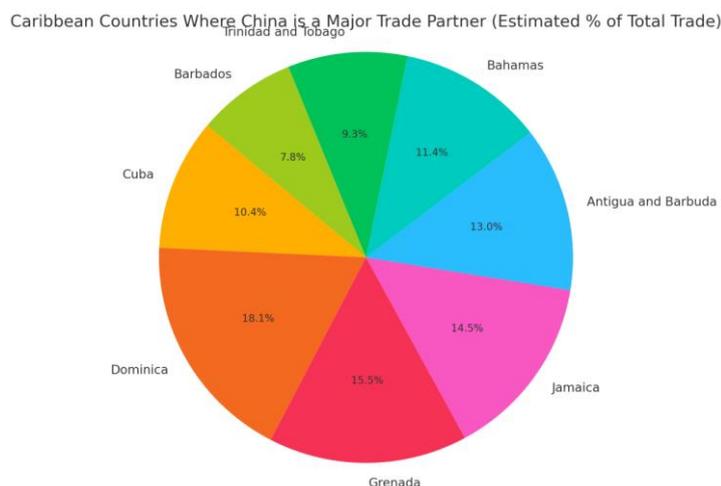
Infrastructure Investment: China's involvement in infrastructure projects, telecommunications, and power generation outpaces that of the United States in specific sectors.

Economic Interdependence: China seeks access to Latin America's markets, resources, and investment destinations to sustain its economic growth. This interdependence benefits both parties.

Diplomatic Relations: Politically, China aims to develop mutual trust, extend cooperation, and compete with Taiwan for diplomatic recognition and regional influence in international organisations like the UN.

China is increasingly important in the Caribbean, and its role adds a new and significant dimension to the regional geopolitical and economic landscape.

Here is a pie chart showing selected Caribbean countries where China is already a major trading partner, with approximate shares of their total trade conducted with China. These estimates illustrate the growing importance of China in Caribbean trade dynamics.



³⁴<https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12397>

China's engagement in the Caribbean has expanded rapidly over the past decade, driven by its broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), strategic interests in gaining influence in the Western Hemisphere, and the search for new markets and diplomatic allies. Through infrastructure investments, loans, trade agreements, and diplomatic outreach, China has positioned itself as a key partner for many Caribbean states.

China's involvement focuses heavily on financing infrastructure projects such as ports, highways, and energy facilities, often filling gaps left by traditional donors like the US and the EU. Many Caribbean countries have welcomed Chinese investments as opportunities to boost development and diversify their international partnerships. Additionally, China actively cultivates diplomatic ties, sometimes leveraging its relations to gain support in international forums, including votes at the United Nations.

The increasing presence of China introduces a third major actor alongside the US and EU, creating a more complex triangular dynamic. This expands the "balancing game" in the Caribbean, as countries may leverage Chinese investments and political support to negotiate better terms with Western powers or to reduce dependency on any single partner.

China's growing role as a major trading partner for Caribbean states is driven by a mix of economic pragmatism, strategic diplomacy, and shifting global alignments. Caribbean nations have actively sought to diversify their external relationships beyond traditional partners such as the United States and the European Union. In this context, China has emerged as an appealing alternative, offering access to a vast market, substantial infrastructure investment, and a different model of engagement.

The extension of China's Belt and Road Initiative into the Caribbean has played a key role. Through infrastructure projects ranging from ports and roads to renewable energy systems, China has laid the physical groundwork for increased trade. These initiatives have not only facilitated the movement of goods but also created deeper logistical and economic interdependence.

China's approach to financing has also been an attractive factor. Caribbean governments often face fiscal constraints and limited access to affordable credit. In contrast to Western financial institutions, China has provided loans and development support with fewer policy conditions. This flexibility has made Chinese capital a popular source for infrastructure and public investment.

Diplomatically, China has invested in long-term relationships across the region. From high-level political visits and cultural

diplomacy to scholarships and public health cooperation, it has built goodwill and institutional links that support its economic presence. Initiatives such as Confucius Institutes and Chinese-language training have further expanded its soft power footprint.

China's focus on sectors like mining, tourism, and energy aligns with key Caribbean economic priorities. In countries like Jamaica and Guyana, Chinese firms have become central players in extractive industries and large-scale tourism projects, anchoring bilateral trade in real production and services.

The retreat of some Western powers from the region has left a vacuum that China has filled with relative speed and consistency. While the U.S. and EU remain important actors, their engagement has at times lacked coordination or long-term follow-through, allowing China to present itself as a more reliable partner.

For China, the Caribbean also holds strategic maritime value. Its ports and shipping lanes are significant to Chinese logistics and global supply chain planning, especially in the context of Atlantic-Pacific trade corridors.

Diplomatic recognition has also influenced trade patterns. Caribbean states that support the One-China policy have often been rewarded with stronger economic ties, investment, and cooperation agreements, reinforcing a political-commercial dynamic.

Altogether, China's expanded trade role in the Caribbean reflects a blend of calculated opportunity, regional openness, and the broader rebalancing of global economic influence.

China's growing trade presence in the Caribbean has not occurred in isolation—it has been shaped and amplified by the broader context of Latin America's shifting economic geography, with Brazil and Mexico playing pivotal roles. As the two largest economies in the region, their deepening ties with China have helped normalize and encourage Chinese engagement across Latin America and the Caribbean.

Brazil's expansive agricultural and mineral exports to China—soy, iron ore, and oil chief among them—have established it as a primary supplier to Chinese markets. This high-volume, commodity-based relationship has created trade infrastructure and investment pathways that ripple into the Caribbean. Brazil's diplomatic weight, participation in BRICS, and political dialogue with China have also helped legitimize China's regional presence. In

forums like CELAC and the China–CELAC Forum, Brazil’s involvement has contributed to shaping a Latin American consensus on pragmatic engagement with China.

Mexico’s role is more complex but equally significant. While it competes with China in manufacturing exports to the U.S., it also serves as a regional industrial and logistical hub. Mexico’s ports on both the Pacific and Gulf coasts link Asian and Atlantic markets, positioning it as a strategic bridge in hemispheric trade. Chinese companies have invested in Mexican infrastructure and energy, and Mexico’s evolving relationship with China has signaled to Caribbean partners that engagement can be balanced with North American ties.

The presence of Brazil and Mexico as key interlocutors in Latin America’s China policy gives smaller Caribbean nations cover and confidence to pursue their own trade and investment relationships. When countries like Jamaica or the Dominican Republic engage with Chinese firms or sign on to Belt and Road projects, they do so in a regional environment already shaped by the large-scale, long-term participation of Brazil and Mexico. This reinforces China’s legitimacy as a development partner and multiplies its economic reach through interconnected markets and supply chains.

Thus, China’s success in the Caribbean is not only a result of bilateral overtures—it is part of a broader regional pattern in which Brazil’s resource diplomacy and Mexico’s logistical positioning have helped pave the way. Their roles have created the structural and political environment in which China’s influence has flourished across the Latin American and Caribbean space.

However, China’s engagement also raises concerns about debt sustainability, transparency, and long-term strategic intentions. Some Caribbean nations risk falling into debt traps or becoming overly reliant on Chinese financing. For the US and EU, China’s growing footprint challenges their traditional influence and pushes them to reconsider their engagement strategies, often leading to calls for increased investment, better cooperation, and more proactive diplomacy.

In summary, China is now a significant player in the Caribbean whose economic and political involvement shapes regional development and geopolitics. Its role complicates the existing US-EU dynamics and underscores the importance for Caribbean states to carefully navigate multiple partnerships to maximize benefits while safeguarding sovereignty and sustainable growth.

Here are three notable Chinese projects in the Caribbean that illustrate China’s growing presence and influence in the region:

1. **Port of Kingston Expansion, Jamaica** China’s state-owned China Harbour Engineering Company (CHEC) has been instrumental in the expansion and modernization of the Port of Kingston, one of the largest ports in the Caribbean. This project, supported through Chinese financing, aims to increase the port’s capacity and efficiency, positioning it as a major regional shipping hub. It strengthens Jamaica’s logistical importance and connects it more deeply to global trade networks, while also advancing China’s maritime and trade interests in the Western Hemisphere.
2. **South American Caribbean Gas Pipeline Project, Trinidad and Tobago** China has invested in Trinidad and Tobago’s energy infrastructure, including involvement in gas pipeline development and liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities. Chinese companies have partnered with local firms to enhance energy export capacity, which is crucial for the country’s economy. This energy cooperation bolsters China’s access to energy resources and strengthens its strategic ties with one of the region’s largest energy producers.
3. **Infrastructure Development in Antigua and Barbuda** China has financed and constructed several infrastructure projects in smaller Caribbean states like Antigua and Barbuda. This includes investments in road construction, public buildings, and sports facilities. These projects often come as part of bilateral agreements and are aimed at boosting local development, tourism capacity, and goodwill towards China. They exemplify China’s strategy of targeted infrastructure diplomacy in smaller Caribbean economies.

These projects highlight China’s dual approach of economic investment and strategic partnership-building in the Caribbean. They contribute to local development but also enhance China’s geopolitical footprint, challenging traditional Western influence in the region. If you want, I can provide further analysis on how these projects impact regional politics or economic sustainability.

CO2-Emissions of LATAM is growing

The prospect of the European Union (EU) and China cooperating to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in South America represents a unique opportunity for multilateral climate action that transcends regional interests. With South America facing increasing environmental pressures, a collaborative framework between the EU and China could capitalize on their complementary strengths to

accelerate decarbonization across the continent.

A foundational pillar of such cooperation would be joint investment in renewable energy infrastructure. Countries like Brazil, Chile, and Colombia, blessed with abundant natural resources, stand to benefit immensely from coordinated financing and technological support. The EU, with its expertise in energy efficiency and regulatory innovation, and China, with its capacity for large-scale deployment of green technologies, could co-finance wind, solar, and hydroelectric projects. These efforts would not only enhance the energy mix in South America but also foster regional energy independence and resilience.³⁵

Technology and knowledge exchange would further reinforce this partnership. Through bilateral agreements, the EU and China could align standards for carbon accounting and sustainable manufacturing. The EU's rigorous regulatory frameworks could help shape emerging carbon markets in the region, while China's experimentation with domestic emissions trading schemes offers adaptable models for local conditions. Such policy harmonization would incentivize cleaner industry practices and embed low-carbon transitions into national development agendas.

CO2-Emissions, however, must come down: (1) Transportation (2) Energy efficiency in buildings (3) ESG-Governance on critical minerals (4) Phasing in of Hydrogen (5) Affordable energy for the people (6) Renewables in energy production (7) clean energy transition in oil and gas sectors (8) Biofuels (9) FDI in the energy sector³⁶

Nature-based solutions also deserve strategic prioritization. South America's vast carbon sinks, including the Amazon rainforest, are critical to global climate stability. Joint funding for reforestation, biodiversity protection, and sustainable land management would demonstrate responsible stewardship and align environmental conservation with socioeconomic development. Moreover, promoting climate-resilient agriculture through shared innovation would reduce land-use emissions, a significant contributor to the region's carbon footprint.

A cooperative EU-China engagement would also entail a diplomatic dimension, encouraging South American nations to adopt more ambitious climate targets and participate in global climate governance. This would require careful balance—respecting local sovereignty while offering incentives and technical support to integrate climate commitments into

broader development frameworks.

In sum, EU-China climate cooperation in South America could evolve into a pragmatic alliance that merges environmental urgency with economic opportunity. By fusing investment, innovation, and diplomatic outreach, the two powers can empower South American nations to lead their own low-carbon transformations while contributing to global climate mitigation. Such a partnership would not only exemplify the potential of multipolar climate diplomacy but also redefine the nature of global climate leadership in an era shaped more by collaboration than competition.

China, the EU and the Two Pivots

The evolving trade and foreign direct investment (FDI) relationship between the European Union (EU) and key Latin American pivot states—most notably Brazil and Chile—reflects broader shifts in global geopolitics and economic realignment. These relationships are shaped by mutual interests in sustainability, critical raw materials, strategic autonomy, and the rebalancing of global supply chains away from excessive dependence on China or geopolitical exposure to the United States. In this context, Brazil and Chile have emerged as Latin America's most significant pivot states for the EU, akin in function to Kazakhstan and Nigeria in their respective regions, serving as key regional hubs for European strategic engagement.

Evolution of EU-Latin America Trade and FDI Relations

Historically, EU-Latin America trade ties were framed by development assistance, preferential access, and cultural ties. The EU was long viewed as a partner in democratic consolidation and economic modernization. However, over the past two decades, this relationship has evolved toward one increasingly shaped by mutual strategic calculations. In trade, the EU is one of the top three partners for most Latin American countries, especially in sectors such as agri-food, pharmaceuticals, and machinery. In 2023, EU-Latin America trade in goods reached over €230 billion, and the EU remains the largest investor in the region, with a cumulative stock of over €800 billion in FDI.

Recent years have seen increased EU focus on securing access to critical raw materials, digital infrastructure, and

³⁵ [Climate action in Latin America](#)

³⁶ [Key areas for policy action – Latin America Energy Outlook 2023 – Analysis - IEA](#)

green energy sources in Latin America. The Global Gateway initiative, launched by the EU as a geopolitical alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), aims to channel significant investment into digital, climate, and transport infrastructure across the Global South, with Latin America identified as a priority region. Chile and Brazil, in particular, have drawn European interest due to their abundant natural resources, renewable energy potential, and political influence within the region.

Brazil and Chile as Pivot States

Brazil, Latin America's largest economy and a key player in the BRICS grouping, holds significant geopolitical weight. Its vast agricultural exports, industrial base, and mineral wealth (particularly iron ore and rare earths) make it essential for the EU's industrial and green transitions. The long-stalled EU-Mercosur trade agreement—which includes Brazil—symbolizes both the potential and limitations of EU engagement. While the agreement offers strategic economic benefits, it has faced domestic resistance within the EU over environmental concerns, especially regarding Amazon deforestation. Still, the Lula administration has signaled a renewed openness to compromise, aligning with EU green priorities to unlock the deal.

Chile, though smaller, plays an outsized strategic role due to its global dominance in copper and lithium—minerals vital to the energy transition. The recently modernized EU-Chile Advanced Framework Agreement (signed in late 2023) reflects the EU's intention to secure access to these resources while promoting sustainable practices and regulatory alignment. Chile's strong institutions, stable investment climate, and focus on clean energy (including green hydrogen) make it a model partner for the EU's strategic diversification.

Together, Brazil and Chile function for the EU as gateway economies in South America, comparable to **Kazakhstan** in Central Asia—due to its energy exports and Belt and Road connectivity—and **Nigeria** in West Africa—due to its demographic weight and hydrocarbons. These states provide the EU with economic scale, geopolitical leverage, and sector-specific assets vital to European resilience.

Future Trajectory and Strategic Gaps

Looking ahead, EU-Latin America relations are poised to deepen, driven by climate cooperation, digital transformation, and mutual strategic decoupling from overdependence on China or the U.S. However, several gaps remain:

Slow Implementation: Trade agreements such as EU-Mercosur remain politically stalled. The EU must streamline

ratification while reinforcing environmental standards through binding side agreements, rather than blocking deals outright.

Asymmetric Visibility: While Latin America perceives the EU as a benign partner, it often lacks the visibility and diplomatic bandwidth that the U.S. and China command in the region. The EU can do more to project coherent, high-level political engagement.

Investment Delivery: Initiatives like Global Gateway must be translated into real infrastructure and technology transfer. Latin American governments increasingly expect tangible, timely investments, not just values-based diplomacy.

Balancing the U.S. and China

The EU must also navigate its positioning vis-à-vis the two dominant external powers in Latin America:

With the U.S.: the EU shares democratic values and often converging interests, but European firms face stiff competition from U.S. counterparts in sectors like defense, digital tech, and agribusiness. A coordinated transatlantic approach to development finance and supply chain resilience—especially for semiconductors, batteries, and green tech—could prevent duplication and present a unified Western alternative to China.

With China, the EU faces a more complex dynamic. China is Latin America's top trading partner for many countries and dominates infrastructure finance and commodity purchases. However, there is growing concern in the region about overreliance on Chinese credit and its extractive investment model. The EU can position itself as a more sustainable, rule-based, and transparent alternative—offering not just trade, but institutional capacity-building, climate finance, and co-investment in technology.

What the EU Can Do Better

To strengthen its role and strategic interests in Latin America, the EU should:

1. **Accelerate ratification and modernization of trade agreements,** especially with Mercosur, ensuring enforceable environmental and labor standards.
2. **Deploy Global Gateway funds more assertively,** targeting clean energy, digital infrastructure, and

transport connectivity, with an emphasis on co-development rather than extraction.

3. **Support regional integration efforts**, such as CELAC or the Pacific Alliance, by providing technical and institutional support to reduce fragmentation and amplify regional voices.
4. **Expand university and innovation partnerships**, fostering deeper science, tech, and educational exchanges to cultivate long-term soft power and innovation ecosystems.
5. **Create a unified EU-Latin America strategic framework**, with a dedicated envoy or task force to streamline policy, investment, and diplomatic engagement.

Summary

China's growing economic presence in Latin America has significant implications for prosperity and geopolitics in the region and beyond.³⁷ From being an in-between option to US-Soviet rivalry, China increasingly relies on the south-south for its growth, market expansion and its insatiable thirst for natural resources.

If most Latin America, Africa, and Middle East (LAAM) countries become economically tethered to China in the next decade—but lack coordinated political will—then a Pax Sinica would likely be:

Fragmented but Influential: China's dominance would be felt through trade, infrastructure, and tech, but without unified regional governance, influence would vary by country.

Economic Over Political: Peace and stability would hinge on economic interdependence rather than shared political values or institutions.

Soft Power via Dependency: Nations may align with China's interests out of necessity—through debt, investment, or supply chains—rather than ideological affinity.

Security by Proxy: China might offer selective military aid or surveillance tech to stabilize key partners, as seen in Cambodia and Tajikistan.

Limited Cultural Integration: Unlike Pax Romana, cultural assimilation would be minimal; China's influence would remain transactional and pragmatic.

In essence, it would be a **networked Pax Sinica**, driven by

bilateral ties and economic leverage, not a cohesive regional order.

Brazil and Chile have become pivotal to the EU's strategy in Latin America due to their resource wealth, economic scale, and political relevance. As Latin America increasingly asserts its agency in a multipolar world, the EU must move from symbolic engagement to sustained strategic investment. By doing so—while carefully balancing its interests with those of the U.S. and China—the EU can secure critical supply chains, support democratic governance, and promote sustainable development in a region that is both geographically distant yet strategically indispensable.

30. GLOBAL GATEWAY AND THE CARIBBEAN

The European Union's Global Gateway strategy, launched in 2021, represents a significant ambition to bolster sustainable and resilient infrastructure development worldwide, with an emphasis on digital connectivity, climate and energy, transport, health, education, and governance. In the Caribbean context, the Global Gateway offers an opportunity for the EU to deepen its engagement by aligning investments with the region's pressing development needs and leveraging long-standing historical ties.

Several initiatives under the Global Gateway framework are highly relevant to the Caribbean's development priorities. Digital infrastructure investments can help address the region's connectivity gaps, fostering economic diversification and integration into global value chains. Renewable energy projects align with the Caribbean's urgent need for climate-resilient energy systems, reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels and enhancing sustainability. Transport infrastructure upgrades, including port modernization and inter-island connectivity, are critical for improving trade efficiency and tourism flows, key economic drivers for many Caribbean states. Furthermore, health and education investments support human capital development and strengthen resilience against pandemics and other shocks.

Caribbean states approach the EU with specific asks shaped by their unique vulnerabilities and development trajectories. Chief among these are support for climate adaptation and mitigation, financing mechanisms that reduce debt vulnerabilities, technical assistance for governance reforms, and capacity-building in innovation

³⁷ [China's trade with Latin America is bound to keep growing. Here's why that matters? | World Economic Forum](#)

and skills development. Caribbean governments often emphasize the importance of partnership models that respect sovereignty and local ownership, seeking flexible and predictable funding arrangements.

However, the intersection of Caribbean priorities with the EU's Global Gateway ambitions and the diverse interests of its member states introduces complexity. Some EU member states prioritize commercial opportunities for their firms, focusing on sectors like transport, digital services, and energy. Others emphasize normative agendas such as governance, rule of law, and social inclusion. The economic rationale for the EU involves promoting stability and sustainable growth in a region vulnerable to climate risks and external shocks, thereby safeguarding mutual interests including migration management and security.

These varying priorities can create tension between the desire for immediate commercial returns and the need for long-term sustainable development outcomes in the Caribbean. Additionally, Caribbean states may find themselves navigating between multiple donors and partners—such as the United States, China, and multilateral development banks—each offering different terms and priorities. This dynamic underscores the need for the EU and its member states to harmonize their approaches, ensuring that Global Gateway investments are coherent, demand-driven, and supportive of Caribbean-led development strategies.

In summary, the EU's Global Gateway has the potential to significantly enhance Caribbean development if it leverages relevant infrastructure projects aligned with regional priorities. Success depends on reconciling the competing priorities of the EU, its member states, and Caribbean partners through sustained dialogue, flexible financing, and genuine partnership models that elevate Caribbean agency and development sovereignty.

Projects and Initiatives

Relevant Global Gateway Projects and Areas for the Caribbean

Digital Connectivity: The Caribbean faces persistent challenges in broadband access and digital infrastructure, limiting economic diversification and innovation. Global Gateway's emphasis on expanding high-speed internet, undersea cables, and digital services can directly support Caribbean integration into global digital markets, e-commerce, and remote education.

Renewable Energy and Climate Resilience: Caribbean islands are highly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Projects focusing on renewable energy deployment (solar, wind, geothermal), smart grids, and energy efficiency align closely with regional goals to reduce fossil fuel dependence and enhance energy security. Climate-resilient infrastructure investments under Global Gateway, including coastal protection and sustainable water management, are crucial.

Transport and Logistics Infrastructure: Improving port facilities, inter-island ferry connections, and airport modernization are priorities for many Caribbean states reliant on tourism and trade. The Global Gateway's support for sustainable transport systems can boost regional connectivity and reduce logistical costs, enhancing competitiveness.

Health and Education Systems: Strengthening health infrastructure, digital health services, and educational institutions supports resilience against pandemics and builds human capital, addressing longstanding regional vulnerabilities. Here is a cross-tabulated summary that compares the priorities, Global Gateway focus, Caribbean asks, EU/member states' priorities, and potential tensions among the key stakeholders — Caribbean states, the EU, and EU member states — to help visualize their intersecting and competing interests:

Stakeholder	Priorities	Global Gateway Focus	Caribbean Asks	EU / Member States Priorities	Potential Tensions
Caribbean States	Climate resilience, sustainable development, economic diversification, connectivity, governance capacity	Renewable energy, digital connectivity, transport infrastructure, health and education.	Flexible financing, respect for sovereignty, capacity building, technical assistance, predictable funding	Normative agendas, commercial opportunities, governance, trade facilitation	Mismatch between commercial goals and long-term sustainability, fragmentation of funding, competing donor agendas
European Union (EU)	Promote stability, sustainable infrastructure, normative values, economic cooperation	Digital infrastructure, green energy, transport, health, education, governance	Alignment with Caribbean development plans, coordination with regional organizations	Member states' economic interests vary; focus on governance, social inclusion, market access	Balancing member states' interests, harmonizing approaches, avoiding duplication
EU Member States (MS)	Commercial returns, bilateral relations, normative influence, market access	Specific sector investments aligned with commercial interests (e.g., transport, energy)	Coordination to avoid fragmentation, support for local private sector	National economic priorities, diplomatic influence, development cooperation	Competing bilateral initiatives, lack of unified EU strategy, fragmented funding

This table highlights the complex interplay of priorities and interests shaping EU-Caribbean relations under the Global Gateway framework. It also underscores the importance of harmonization and coordination to reconcile competing agendas and optimize development outcomes.

Recommendations for Enhancing EU-Caribbean Coordination and Impact

1. Establish a Dedicated EU-Caribbean Global Gateway Coordination Platform

Create a formal mechanism involving the European Commission, relevant member states, Caribbean regional organizations (CARICOM, ACS), and national governments to align priorities, share information, and coordinate project pipelines. This platform should emphasize demand-driven programming based on Caribbean development plans.

2. Harmonize Member State Approaches and Pool Resources

Encourage member states to align their bilateral initiatives with the Global Gateway framework to reduce fragmentation.

Pooled funding mechanisms and joint calls for proposals could increase scale and impact while simplifying access for Caribbean partners.

3. Prioritize Capacity Building and Technical Assistance

Complement infrastructure investments with targeted support for governance reforms, regulatory frameworks, and skills development to ensure sustainability and maximize benefits from new technologies and systems.

4. Foster Public-Private Partnerships and Local Stakeholder Engagement

Leverage EU private sector expertise and financing through blended finance models while ensuring meaningful involvement of Caribbean private sector actors, civil society, and communities in project design and implementation.

5. Ensure Flexibility and Predictability in Financing

Design financing instruments that accommodate the fiscal realities and debt constraints of Caribbean countries, including grants, concessional loans, and guarantees, to foster long-term sustainable development.

6. Align Global Gateway Projects with Broader Caribbean Strategies

Coordinate with existing regional initiatives such as the Caribbean Development Bank's programs, U.S. Caribbean investments, and multilateral climate finance to create synergies and avoid duplication.

By operationalizing these recommendations, the EU can enhance the relevance, coherence, and effectiveness of the Global Gateway in the Caribbean, supporting the region's sustainable development while strengthening EU-Caribbean partnerships built on mutual interests and respect for sovereignty.

Summary

The EU's Global Gateway initiative presents a valuable opportunity to address critical infrastructure and development needs in the Caribbean, aligning closely with regional priorities such as climate resilience, digital connectivity, and sustainable transport. Caribbean states seek flexible, predictable financing and respect for their sovereignty, emphasizing capacity building and local ownership to ensure long-term success. Meanwhile, the EU promotes normative values alongside economic cooperation, yet its member states often pursue diverse, sometimes competing, commercial interests. This divergence can lead to fragmented efforts and challenges in delivering coherent support. Effective coordination and harmonization of EU policies and member state actions are essential to avoid duplication and maximize impact. The Caribbean's strategic engagement across multiple partners underscores its agency but also requires navigating competing donor agendas carefully. Mutual respect and partnership grounded in multilateral frameworks like CARICOM and the ACS can foster more inclusive and effective cooperation. Aligning Global Gateway projects with Caribbean development strategies enhances relevance and sustainability. Ultimately, reconciling diverse priorities demands sustained dialogue, flexible financing, and inclusive planning. By addressing these

challenges, the EU and Caribbean can build a resilient, equitable partnership that supports the region's long-term prosperity. Integrating the EU's Global Gateway efforts with the OECD's work on development needs in the Caribbean can create synergies and strengthen the effectiveness of both initiatives. The OECD provides valuable data, policy analysis, and recommendations focused on inclusive growth, governance, and sustainable development, which can inform and complement the EU's project design and implementation. Coordination can begin by aligning Global Gateway priorities with OECD assessments and country-specific development diagnostics to ensure investments target the most pressing structural challenges. Joint frameworks for monitoring and evaluation can leverage OECD expertise in data collection and impact measurement, promoting transparency and accountability. Engaging in regular dialogue between the EU, OECD, Caribbean governments, and regional bodies will facilitate knowledge sharing and avoid duplication. Furthermore, OECD's policy guidance on public governance, anti-corruption, and fiscal management can support capacity-building components of Global Gateway projects, enhancing institutional resilience in Caribbean states. Finally, collaboration on climate finance and sustainable infrastructure standards can harmonize efforts toward the region's climate adaptation goals. By embedding OECD insights and tools into Global Gateway programming, the EU can enhance the alignment, effectiveness, and sustainability of its development support in the Caribbean.

31. TOWARDS AN INTERREGIONAL STRATEGY ON THE GULF STREAM

The Gulf Stream is a powerful, warm Atlantic Ocean current that originates in the Gulf of Mexico, flows along the eastern coast of the United States, and continues northeastward across the Atlantic towards Europe. It is part of the larger Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), a critical component of the global ocean conveyor belt that regulates climate by redistributing heat between the tropics and higher latitudes.



Source: [What Is the Gulf Stream? | NOAA SciJinks – All About Weather](#)

The stability of the Gulf Stream is vital for moderating the climate of Western Europe, keeping it significantly warmer than other regions at similar latitudes. For the Caribbean, the Gulf Stream influences sea surface temperatures, hurricane paths, and rainfall patterns, shaping regional weather and ecosystems. Changes in the Gulf Stream's strength or direction therefore have direct climatic impacts on both the Caribbean and Europe, linking their weather and environmental stability.

Trouble arises from recent scientific evidence indicating a weakening of the AMOC and Gulf Stream system, largely driven by increased freshwater input from accelerated Arctic ice melt and Greenland ice sheet runoff. This influx of freshwater disrupts the ocean's salinity-driven "engine," weakening the sinking of dense, salty water that propels the circulation. As the Gulf Stream slows, Europe risks colder winters, disrupted rainfall, and increased climate variability, while the Caribbean faces altered hurricane activity, sea level rise on its eastern coasts, and greater vulnerability to drought or floods.

Mexico's geographical position is key because the Gulf Stream's origin is in the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea. Ocean temperatures, salinity, and freshwater inputs in this region—affected by Mexico's river discharges, land use, and climate change impacts—can influence the strength and behavior of the current. Moreover, Mexico's energy and climate policies, as well as its coastal management, affect regional contributions to the overall Atlantic circulation system.

In summary, the Gulf Stream physically and climatically connects the Caribbean, Mexico, and Europe in a complex system vulnerable to human-induced climate change. Understanding and addressing the health of this ocean current requires integrated regional cooperation among Caribbean nations, Mexico, and European partners to mitigate climate risks and build resilience.

An interregional EU–CELAC Gulf Stream strategy would weave together environmental science, climate diplomacy, ocean governance, and economic resilience into a shared agenda. At its core would be a recognition of the Gulf Stream not merely as a current, but as a transatlantic lifeline—stabilizing climates, underpinning fisheries, shaping rainfall, and anchoring the weather economies of both Europe and the Caribbean Basin.

A central priority would be the creation of a joint Atlantic Ocean observatory network, integrating satellites, buoys, and deep-sea sensors to monitor salinity, temperature, and

circulation patterns across the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, and North Atlantic. Mexico, the French Caribbean, and Portugal could serve as regional hubs, linking EU Copernicus Earth observation systems with locally managed data platforms.

In parallel, the strategy would foster shared climate impact modeling, enabling the co-development of regional risk maps and early warning systems for sea level rise, drought, and intensified hurricane seasons. These tools could underpin a transatlantic resilience pact focused on preparedness and coordinated emergency response across vulnerable coastal zones.

Building ocean and coastal resilience would also mean investing in a shared blue economy agenda. This includes support for sustainable fisheries, marine protected areas, and carbon-sequestering ecosystems such as mangroves and seagrasses. Twinning programs between EU and CELAC coastal municipalities could drive practical cooperation at the local level, aligning environmental goals with livelihood protection.

Green investment and energy cooperation would be essential, particularly in regions like Mexico's Gulf coast and the Caribbean's small island states. Tailored EU–CELAC finance mechanisms could channel Global Gateway funding toward climate-resilient infrastructure, renewable energy systems, and land-use policies that reduce freshwater and sediment stress on the Gulf Stream's origin zone.

A key enabling pillar would be scientific and educational exchange. A dedicated Transatlantic Gulf Stream Fellowship could link universities and research institutes across Lisbon, Havana, Veracruz, and other coastal centers, fostering joint expertise in marine science, climate economics, and ocean diplomacy.

Finally, to ensure long-term political traction, a dedicated Gulf Stream Working Group could be established within the EU–CELAC framework. Positioned as a standing agenda item at summits and ministerial dialogues, this track would elevate Atlantic Ocean health as a shared diplomatic priority and ensure alignment with global frameworks such as the Paris Agreement, the SDGs, and the UN Decade of Ocean Science.

In protecting the Gulf Stream, Europe, Mexico, and the Caribbean would not only safeguard their climates—they would also demonstrate that global interdependence

demands new models of regional collaboration rooted in ecological realities.

32. STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNANCE OF THE EU–CELAC PARTNERSHIP

The European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) represent one of the most significant bi-regional partnerships in the world, encompassing 60 countries, over one billion people, and approximately one third of global GDP. Despite this potential, the partnership’s governance structure remains weak, relying on rotating presidencies and periodic summits without a permanent mechanism for coordination and implementation.

This policy paper proposes a comprehensive governance model aimed at enhancing institutional continuity, improving decision-making efficiency, and ensuring accountability. The core of the proposal includes the creation of a permanent Joint Secretariat, a Ministerial Coordination Board, thematic working groups, a bi-regional funding mechanism, and robust monitoring tools.

By strengthening governance, the EU–CELAC partnership can transition from declarations to tangible results, enabling both regions to address shared challenges such as climate change, digital transformation, and global governance reform.

I. Background and Context

The EU–CELAC relationship has evolved since the first bi-regional summits in the early 2000s, culminating in the establishment of CELAC in 2010 as the EU’s primary counterpart in Latin America and the Caribbean. The partnership has generated numerous declarations, trade agreements, and joint positions on global issues.

However, several structural weaknesses persist:

Institutional Discontinuity: CELAC’s rotating presidency lacks the permanent institutional infrastructure of the EU, creating asymmetry and limiting follow-up capacity.

Implementation Gap: Commitments made at summits are often not translated into actionable programs due to insufficient monitoring mechanisms.

Stakeholder Exclusion: Civil society, academia, and private sector actors are insufficiently integrated into the policymaking process.

Policy Fragmentation: Diverse national priorities on both sides create difficulty in maintaining coherent bi-regional agendas.

Global dynamics—geopolitical competition, environmental crises, and the need for digital and economic resilience—make it urgent to establish a more structured governance framework capable of delivering concrete outcomes.

II. Objectives of Governance Reform

The overarching objective is to create a governance model that allows the EU–CELAC partnership to function as an effective strategic alliance. Specifically, the reform aims to:

1. **Ensure Continuity:** Establish permanent coordination mechanisms to avoid the loss of institutional memory.
2. **Increase Effectiveness:** Translate political agreements into measurable outcomes.
3. **Enhance Accountability:** Develop transparent systems to monitor and evaluate implementation.
4. **Promote Inclusiveness:** Systematically involve parliaments, civil society, and private sector actors.
5. **Build Resilience:** Strengthen joint capacity to respond to crises and adapt to changing global conditions.

III. Proposed Governance Architecture

1. EU–CELAC Joint Council

Composition: Heads of State or Government, the President of the European Commission, and the CELAC Pro Tempore Presidency.

Mandate: Set strategic direction, adopt multi-year roadmaps, and resolve high-level disputes.

Frequency: Biennial summits, alternating between Europe and Latin America/Caribbean.

2. Ministerial Coordination Board

Composition: Foreign Ministers and rotating ministers for priority areas (e.g., trade, climate, digital).

Mandate: Translate summit declarations into operational plans; supervise thematic working groups.

Frequency: Annual meetings, including mid-term reviews between summits.

3. Joint Secretariat

Structure: Bi-regional staff co-headed by EU and CELAC appointees, with dual hubs in Brussels and a CELAC capital.

Functions:

Monitor and track implementation.

Prepare agendas, reports, and data.

Maintain continuity across rotating CELAC presidencies.

Digital Platform: A secure portal for coordination and a public-facing dashboard for transparency.

4. Thematic Working Groups

Focus Areas: Climate & biodiversity, trade & investment, digital transition, migration, security, and human rights.

Composition: Technical experts, national representatives, EU institutions, and CELAC agencies.

Role: Draft policy recommendations, oversee joint projects, and report progress to the Ministerial Board.

5. Parliamentary and Civil Society Mechanisms

Parliamentary Assembly: Strengthen the EuroLat Assembly as the main parliamentary oversight body.

Civil Society Forum: Institutionalize annual consultations with NGOs, academia, and private sector representatives, with recommendations feeding into policy decisions.

IV. Decision-Making, Implementation and Financing

Joint Action Plans: Multi-year plans with measurable objectives, timelines, and assigned responsibilities for each thematic area.

Voting Rules:

Joint Council: Consensus-based to ensure political legitimacy.

Ministerial Board & Working Groups: Qualified majority voting to avoid deadlock, with opt-out clauses for sensitive national interests.

EU-CELAC Fund: A jointly financed mechanism supported by EU contributions, CELAC member states, and multilateral development banks to fund agreed projects and institutional capacity-building.

V. Monitoring and Accountability

Annual Progress Report: Prepared by the Joint Secretariat and publicly released, including scorecards for each thematic area and country contributions.

Independent Evaluation Panel: A group of policy experts conducts a comprehensive review every three years to assess effectiveness and propose adjustments.

Digital Dashboard: An online tool that tracks commitments, funding flows, and project milestones in real time, accessible to governments and the public.

VI. Flexibility and Crisis Management

The governance model incorporates mechanisms for differentiated integration and rapid response:

Variable Geometry: Allow coalitions of willing countries to advance specific initiatives without requiring unanimous participation.

Rapid Response Mechanism: A standing task force under the Joint Secretariat coordinates joint bi-regional action during emergencies such as pandemics, natural disasters, or cyber threats.

VII. Implementation Roadmap

Phase 1 (2025–2026)

Negotiate and adopt the governance reform package at the next EU-CELAC summit.

Establish an interim Joint Secretariat and pilot the digital coordination platform.

Phase 2 (2026–2028)

Launch thematic working groups and the EU-CELAC Fund. Publish the first Annual Progress Report.

Phase 3 (2028–2030)

Fully operationalize the Joint Secretariat.

Conduct the first Independent Evaluation Panel review.

Adjust governance mechanisms based on evaluation findings.

Strengthening the governance of the EU-CELAC partnership is critical for enabling the alliance to deliver on its strategic potential. The proposed model establishes institutional continuity, shared responsibility, and transparent accountability, allowing the partnership to move from declarations to concrete results. By adopting this governance framework, the EU and CELAC can jointly address global challenges and assert their role as key actors in a more multipolar and sustainable world order

33. EU-CELAC ACTION PLAN 2025–2030

The EU-CELAC Foreign Ministers have called for an agenda concerning the different themes to be discussed at the November 2025 Summit in Colombia.³⁸

Peace, Security, Green and Digital Transitions, Trade and Investment

Context

The European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) are entering a new phase of cooperation under the 2023–2025 EU–CELAC Roadmap, ahead of the IV EU–CELAC Summit (Santa Marta, November 2025).

Both regions seek to strengthen their bi-regional partnership through pragmatic, measurable action in four key domains: peace and security, green transition, digital transition, and trade and investment, supported by cross-cutting mechanisms for financing, governance, and accountability.

1. Peace and Security

Objective: Enhance collective resilience against transnational threats, reinforce rule-of-law institutions, and foster coordinated crisis response.

Key Actions:

Establish an EU–CELAC Security and Crisis Response Working Group to coordinate threat mapping and capacity-building. Pilot maritime law-enforcement cooperation in the Caribbean and Atlantic corridors, using EU expertise and CAF financing. Develop rapid-response coordination mechanisms for humanitarian and climate-related crises. Expand judicial integrity exchanges and anti-corruption training programmes. Create a bi-regional early-warning and information-sharing network by 2030.

Expected Results: Operational WG by mid-2026; two joint maritime/security exercises; visible reduction in illicit trafficking and improved cross-border coordination.

2. Green Transition

Objective: Accelerate decarbonisation, protect biodiversity, and expand climate-resilient infrastructure.

Key Actions:

Identify priority investible projects in renewables, clean transport, ports, and grid interconnection through a shared project pipeline.
--Set up a technical assistance window for project preparation

under the Global Gateway and CAF.

-Finance at least six flagship renewable-energy or green-industrial projects by 2028.

-Establish knowledge-sharing hubs for nature-based solutions, blue carbon, and coastal adaptation.

-Launch an EU–CELAC Green Investment Facility to leverage private capital for sustainable agriculture, energy, and biodiversity protection.

Expected Results: Expanded renewable capacity, job creation in green sectors, measurable emissions reduction, and increased biodiversity-linked financing.

3. Digital Transition

Objective: Foster a human-centric, secure, and inclusive digital ecosystem that supports innovation and trade.

Key Actions:

Implement the EU–LAC Digital Alliance with a rolling 18-month workplan on broadband connectivity, submarine cables, and data governance.

-Strengthen cybersecurity capacity through CSIRT twinning and network hardening in at least four CELAC states.

-Launch a Digital Inclusion Fund for broadband access and SME digitalisation.

-Develop a framework for data-flow governance balancing privacy, security, and innovation.

-Connect regional cloud and research networks and promote sovereign data capabilities for public institutions.

Expected Results: Improved digital connectivity, reduced costs of broadband access, stronger cyber-resilience, and harmonised data-protection standards.

4. Trade and Investment

Objective: Expand sustainable trade and attract responsible investment that supports industrial diversification and social inclusion.

Key Actions:

Establish an Investment Facilitation Taskforce to address regulatory bottlenecks and identify strategic sectors (renewables, digital services, green manufacturing).

Advance customs modernisation and digital trade facilitation, including electronic single windows and SPS convergence.

Launch an SME Matchmaking Platform and credit lines to boost exports and green upgrades.

Agree on sustainable investment principles to guide responsible EU and CELAC FDI.

³⁸ [Joint press release – Fourth CELAC-EU summit to take place on 9-10 November 2025 - Consilium](#)

Support regional value-chain development for renewable-energy technologies and electric-mobility components.

Expected Results: Rising bilateral trade volumes, more green-sector FDI, greater SME participation in value chains, and improved investment transparency.

5. Cross-Cutting Enablers

Project Pipeline Office: Create a shared digital platform to publish bankable EU–CELAC projects, harmonize documentation, and monitor progress.

Financing Architecture: Blend Global Gateway, EIB, CAF, and private funds, supported by a new Investment Guarantee Facility for first-loss protection.

Monitoring & Transparency: Launch a bi-regional dashboard tracking key performance indicators (KPIs) and evaluated annually by independent experts.

Stakeholder Inclusion: Involve civil society, indigenous groups, and the private sector in project design and oversight.

6. Governance and Timeline

Phase	Milestone	Expected Date	
<i>Initiation</i>	Political endorsement of the Action Plan, creation of WG and project office	Q1 2026	
<i>Implementation I</i>	Launch of pilot projects in security, digital inclusion, and green transition	2026–2027	
<i>Implementation II</i>	Mid-term review, blended finance scale-up	2027–2028	
<i>Consolidation</i>	Institutionalisation of Green Investment Facility and early-warning system	2029–2030	

7. Monitoring Indicators (selected)

1. Number of joint security operations and exercises conducted.
2. MW of renewable capacity financed and operational.
3. Broadband penetration increase in target areas (%).
4. Volume of green and digital investment mobilised (€).
5. Share of SMEs engaged in EU–CELAC trade initiatives.
6. Reduction in illicit maritime trafficking incidents.

The Action Plan positions the EU–CELAC partnership as a bi-regional model of sustainable interdependence, blending shared democratic values with pragmatic cooperation.

By linking peace and governance with economic and environmental progress, the partnership aims to secure stability, promote shared prosperity, and demonstrate that Europe and Latin America together can shape a fairer, greener, and more digital global order.

Strategic Vision



CONCLUSIONS

Mexico plays a significant role in the geopolitical landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean by acting as a mediator and facilitator of regional cooperation. Its diplomatic initiatives, particularly through frameworks like CELAC and CARICOM, position Mexico as a key player in addressing shared challenges such as climate change, economic development, and security issues.

In engaging with indigenous communities in the Caribbean, Mexico focuses on environmental diplomacy by promoting sustainable practices and resource management. Cultural diplomacy is emphasized through initiatives that celebrate shared heritage and foster mutual understanding. Additionally, Mexico advocates for human rights, ensuring that the voices of indigenous populations are heard in discussions about development and environmental protection.

Within the EU-CELAC framework, potential areas for enhanced cooperation between the EU and the Caribbean include trade and investment, climate action, and sustainable development initiatives. Collaborative efforts could focus on addressing the vulnerabilities of Caribbean nations to climate change while promoting economic diversification and resilience.

France and the Netherlands have economic, cultural, and security interests in the Caribbean region that include maintaining trade routes, ensuring the security of their territories, and fostering cultural ties with local populations. Their involvement often centers around tourism, agriculture, and renewable energy, as well as addressing issues related to drug trafficking and regional stability.

This study underscores the critical importance of understanding the historical and socio-economic ties that shape the Caribbean's geopolitical landscape. The complex relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic serves as a microcosm for broader regional challenges. By providing a nuanced examination of the vulnerabilities both nations face,

this research contributes essential insights into how colonial legacies continue to influence contemporary issues, such as economic dependency and climate resilience. In light of the increasing frequency of climate-related disasters, it is urgent that regional stakeholders acknowledge their shared vulnerabilities and work collaboratively toward sustainable solutions that transcend national boundaries. The findings point to the necessity for more robust regional cooperation through organizations like CARICOM, which can facilitate meaningful dialogue and synergistic efforts towards addressing common challenges, thereby fostering a climate of resilience and mutual support. Looking ahead, it is imperative that future research investigates the mechanisms through which regional partnerships can effectively mobilize resources and knowledge sharing, contributing to a holistic approach to climate adaptation and social equity in the Caribbean. Ultimately, the successful navigation of these intertwined fates will not only enhance resilience but also promote a model for cooperative governance that could serve as a beacon for other regions facing similar challenges. The piece illuminates the pivotal role of Mexico in shaping the geopolitical landscape of the Caribbean within the EU-CELAC framework. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of Mexico's engagements, ranging from strategic partnerships and economic interests to environmental and cultural diplomacy. By recognizing the historical ties and contemporary dynamics, this study provides a nuanced understanding of Mexico's influence in the region. Furthermore, the identified potential areas for enhanced cooperation between the EU and the Caribbean present opportunities for bolstering regional integration, economic development, and security collaboration. The significance of cultural exchange, environmental sustainability, and human rights advocacy in Mexico's interactions with indigenous communities underscores the broader impact of diplomatic initiatives on local

populations.

The insights into the interests of France and the Netherlands in the Caribbean region highlight the interconnectedness of global actors and the potential for collaborative efforts to address shared challenges. This not only strengthens regional partnerships but also contributes to the broader discourse on international relations and the evolving dynamics of interregional cooperation.

This piece contributes to a deeper comprehension of the complexities and opportunities within the Caribbean diplomatic landscape. It underscores the potential for collaborative initiatives to foster sustainable development, cultural exchange, and security cooperation, thereby shaping the future of regional diplomacy and international relations within the EU-CELAC framework.

Mexico has a deep stake in the Caribbean, rooted in cultural and historical ties, and sees the region as a key partner for regional integration in Latin America and the Caribbean. It focuses on collaboration in areas like trade, disaster resilience, and shared development goals, often advocating for these priorities through CELAC. Mexico also emphasizes South-South cooperation and contributes to tourism and climate change adaptation initiatives. Brazil, as the largest economy in Latin America, considers the Caribbean a vital ally for regional stability and economic cooperation. It prioritizes renewable energy, infrastructure, and agro-industries, leveraging its expertise to strengthen partnerships and expand its markets. Brazil's involvement also reflects its geopolitical interests, particularly in fostering a unified regional voice in global institutions. The European Union views the Caribbean as a critical partner in addressing global challenges such as climate change, governance, and sustainable development. Through its CARIFORUM and ACP relationships, the EU channels significant development aid into climate resilience, poverty reduction, and renewable energy projects. Trade relations are also a priority, with the EU supporting regional integration and diversification via Economic Partnership Agreements. Together, Mexico, Brazil, and the EU play vital roles in the Caribbean's development, advancing trade, resilience, and cooperation while pursuing broader geopolitical and regional objectives.

Caribbean states share several common interests, such as regional stability, economic growth, and climate change resilience, all of which require cooperation across borders to effectively address. The security concerns in the region include rising gang violence, organized crime, and drug trafficking, which pose significant challenges to governance and social cohesion. Many Caribbean nations, particularly small island developing states (SIDS), face similar economic vulnerabilities, relying heavily on tourism, remittances, and trade, which makes them susceptible to external shocks. Domestic conflicts, often fueled by inequality, poverty, and political instability, further exacerbate their development

challenges. Additionally, the Caribbean is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, creating a dire need for regional climate change mitigation and disaster management strategies. Given these shared concerns, the region requires a unified response to promote sustainable development and ensure peace and security. The EU-CELAC partnership could play a pivotal role in addressing these issues by providing financial support, technical expertise, and cooperative frameworks for action. With the EU's expertise in regional integration, trade partnerships, and climate change adaptation, and CELAC's role in Latin American-Caribbean solidarity, their collaboration would offer Caribbean nations the resources and support they need to overcome common challenges. Moreover, the EU and CELAC can help enhance governance structures, institutional capacity, and security cooperation in the Caribbean, facilitating long-term peace and stability. A strong EU-CELAC partnership can effectively integrate Caribbean states into broader global strategies for development and geopolitical positioning, especially in the context of climate change and regional security. The time is ripe for such a partnership, given the region's vulnerabilities and the EU-CELAC's shared commitment to multilateralism and inclusive growth.

This has to be compared to that Mexico has been grappling with an alarming rise in drug-related violence, with over 36,000 homicides attributed to cartel conflict in 2020 alone. Collaborations with international partners, particularly the EU and UK, are increasingly viewed as essential for addressing these challenges. The Merida Initiative exemplifies a successful partnership; it led to improved training for Mexican law enforcement agencies and the sharing of intelligence that contributed to significant drug seizure operations. Despite commitments, persistent corruption within law enforcement agencies poses a significant barrier to effective anti-drug strategies. Recommend that EU and UK engagements include anticorruption training programs and financial support for capacity-building initiatives. As stated by a Mexican lawmaker, 'Engaging with international partners must come with guarantees of support that prioritize the needs of Mexican communities affected by drug violence. In conclusion, conditional partnerships with the EU and UK not only represent an opportunity for Mexico to tackle its drug crisis effectively but also foster a collaborative model that enhances regional security. Building upon this background, it is crucial to identify the specific challenges Mexico faces in its anti-drug efforts. Addressing these challenges will require innovative solutions and international cooperation. Moving forward, the EU and UK should focus on creating tailored frameworks that provide ongoing support to Mexico's law enforcement agencies, while facilitating community-based initiatives aimed at

reducing demand for drugs through education, healthcare, and social development programs. By integrating these enhancements into your piece, you will produce a compelling, well-rounded argument that effectively addresses the complexities of Mexico's engagement in anti-drug initiatives while highlighting the significance of international partnerships. Having said that discussions are ongoing on how to proceed, albeit everyone agrees the situation in Haiti is untenable, and that a strengthening of sub-regional integration is key to initiate a diplomatic dialogue with Havana, upon which US-China rivalries in the region currently evolves.

Mexico's commitment to anti-drug initiatives could be significantly influenced by conditional engagements from the EU and the US, and even the UK fostering trust through strategic partnerships. In light of escalating drug-related violence, Mexico's commitment to implementing effective anti-drug initiatives could be significantly strengthened through conditional support and strategic partnerships with the EU and US, fostering trust and collaboration on shared security challenges.

Mexico's increasing engagement with the Caribbean opens significant opportunities for investment in areas critical to regional development and stability. Infrastructure and connectivity stand out as foundational needs, with investments aimed at upgrading ports, airports, and interisland transport systems to facilitate trade, tourism, and supply chain resilience. Renewable energy projects, including solar and wind, are essential to support the Caribbean's transition away from fossil fuels, aligning with Mexico's green agenda and promoting regional energy integration. Expanding digital infrastructure is also crucial to bridging the digital divide, fostering innovation, e-commerce, and educational access across the islands. Additionally, diversifying and enhancing tourism through eco- and cultural tourism initiatives can create new growth pathways for economies heavily reliant on this sector. Investments in modern agriculture, emphasizing climate-resilient practices and improved supply chains, will bolster food security and intra-regional trade. Disaster risk reduction and climate resilience projects are equally urgent, given the Caribbean's vulnerability to hurricanes and sea-level rise. Finally, educational programs and capacity-building efforts remain vital for cultivating the human capital necessary to sustain these developments.

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In this context, the European Union can strategically partner with Mexico by supporting and co-investing in these sectors, leveraging its financial resources, technical expertise, and global networks. Such collaboration would enhance the effectiveness and scale of development projects across the Caribbean, fostering economic diversification and resilience. Crucially, in return for earnest engagement in the fight against drug cartels—a persistent destabilizing force in the region—the EU can offer Mexico and its Caribbean partners tailored support for security sector reform, intelligence sharing, judicial cooperation, and capacity building for law enforcement agencies. This reciprocal relationship would not only address transnational criminal networks but also strengthen governance, rule of law, and regional stability. Through this integrated approach, the EU and Mexico can jointly advance sustainable development and security in the Caribbean, reinforcing their roles as committed and responsible partners in the hemisphere.

In early 2024, Mexico issued €2 billion in euro-denominated green bonds—the largest such placement in its history. This marked a return to the European market after a three-year hiatus and was aligned with the country's Sustainable Development Goals framework. Nearly 70% of the bonds were allocated to ESG-focused investors, and the issuance was coordinated by major financial institutions including BBVA, Citigroup, Deutsche Bank, HSBC, and Natixis. The move is expected to encourage more Mexican companies to adopt green and social financing instruments, potentially positioning Mexico as a mediator in global sustainable finance dialogues. The Stock Exchange in CDMX is in pole position to act as a go-between and financier once Senora Claudia

has made a decision about which rank Mexico should have on the SDG Index and ensured the organization is in place to deliver on public policy objectives.³⁹

In the sun-drenched corridors of diplomacy, where trade winds whisper secrets and alliances bloom, the Caribbean emerges as a pivotal player in Mexico's foreign policy symphony. Amidst concerns in the diplomatic community in CDMX about the possible links of AMLO to the deep structure of the state, there is general relief at the election of President Sheinbaum. She seems to have made only a few mistakes until now. Before we reward her with constructing a Renault EMobile Trucker factory, we must first understand what can be achieved in Cuba and, as a follow-up, Mexico's intentions and objectives in the Caribbean.

The relationship between the United States and the European Union in the Caribbean, Mexico, Brazil, and the wider Caribbean region involves a nuanced balancing act rooted in historical ties, economic interests, and geopolitical competition. Both actors seek to maintain influence in a region that is strategically important due to its geographic proximity, abundant natural resources, growing markets, and political significance within the Americas.

The United States has traditionally played the dominant role in the Western Hemisphere, driven by its Monroe Doctrine legacy and a focus on security, migration control, and economic integration through agreements like USMCA (formerly NAFTA). In Mexico, the US seeks to sustain economic ties, combat organized crime, and manage migration flows. In the Caribbean, the US engages mainly on security, counter-narcotics, and development assistance, while Brazil has emerged as a regional power with growing economic and political influence, often seen by the US as a competitor, especially in South America.

The European Union, for its part, pursues a more softpower approach emphasizing trade, development cooperation, and climate change initiatives. It fosters multilateralism through partnerships with regional bodies like CARICOM and CELAC, and it aims to promote sustainable development and democratic governance. The EU's interest in Mexico and Brazil includes expanding trade agreements and supporting reforms aligned with European standards. In the Caribbean, the EU remains a key development partner, especially in former colonial territories, and it advances environmental and social projects that complement but sometimes subtly challenge US influence.

The "balancing game" lies in how the US and EU coordinate

and compete for influence without overt conflict. The US often tolerates EU involvement insofar as it does not undermine its strategic interests, while the EU generally avoids antagonizing Washington, focusing on niche areas where it can add value. The stakes include economic market access, political alignment on global issues, migration management, and influence over regional security architectures. The US interests revolve around maintaining hegemony and security, while the EU seeks to build strategic partnerships and promote multilateral norms.

So far, results have been mixed. The US maintains strong ties with Mexico and a security-focused relationship with the Caribbean but has faced criticism for hardline immigration policies and uneven engagement on development. The EU has strengthened trade ties with Mexico (through the EU-Mexico Global Agreement) and Brazil, and it has increased cooperation with Caribbean states on climate and sustainable development, though its impact remains limited compared to US dominance. Both powers have occasionally found common ground, such as supporting regional disaster relief or climate initiatives, but competition remains in spheres like digital trade, infrastructure investment, and geopolitical influence.

Looking ahead, the future should focus on enhanced coordination and complementary roles. The US could benefit from embracing more multilateral development and environmental approaches championed by the EU, while the EU might seek deeper strategic engagement in security and migration dialogues where US expertise prevails. Both should aim to support inclusive economic growth, resilience to climate change, and good governance without exacerbating regional rivalries. Ultimately, a balanced partnership that respects regional sovereignty and leverages each actor's strengths could foster sustainable development and stability in the Caribbean, Mexico, and Brazil, while also serving broader transatlantic and hemispheric interests.

To harness the trade potential, the EU and Mexico could cooperate in developing trade and investment in this subregion, which was hitherto conceived as a tourist destination that was not worthy of greater strategic attention; yet, the interplay between continental and islands in the Caribbean is exactly what makes this an exciting interface in the EU-CELAC interregional relationship. One must assume the Caribbean nations would want to balance their relationship with the US, Mexico, Brazil, the EU and increasingly China with the

³⁹ [Mexico's SDG Portal Brings Functionality to Reporting – SDG Knowledge Hub](#)

development of trade inside the region and with the Central American nations.

Geopolitical Realignments and Mexico's Position in the Caribbean

The geopolitical landscape of the Caribbean is a theatre of overlapping ambitions, shaped by the competing influences of the United States, China, and other emerging powers such as India and Brazil. Within this intricate constellation, Mexico's foreign policy stands at a crossroads: how to lead without dominating, how to align without subordinating, and how to project influence while preserving sovereignty. Future research could explore how Mexico navigates these dynamics, balancing its regional leadership aspirations with the gravitational pull of larger global actors. This includes examining Mexico's potential as a mediator in U.S.–Caribbean relations, particularly in the delicate fields of security cooperation and migration management; evaluating the implications of China's growing economic footprint for Mexico's trade, diplomacy, and regional authority; and analyzing the extent to which Mexico's alignment with Brazil or Venezuela's shifting political trajectories could redefine South–South cooperation. Such inquiries would benefit from the dual lenses of realism and constructivism—one illuminating the structural constraints of power, the other the shaping influence of ideas and identity—revealing how Mexico manages regional alliances while maintaining both sovereignty and strategic relevance.

In the realm of trade and investment, the horizon is equally dynamic. As Mexico and the Caribbean deepen their economic engagement, the very architecture of exchange is being rewritten by digitalization, renewable energy transitions, and the reconfiguration of global supply chains. The growth of digital trade and e-commerce represents not only an economic opportunity but a metaphor for connectivity itself—linking markets, entrepreneurs, and communities across the Caribbean's scattered geography. Mexico's advanced digital infrastructure could thus serve as a bridge for small Caribbean enterprises seeking entry into global platforms. Renewable energy markets offer a parallel path: Mexico's expanding capacity in solar and wind technologies could help reduce the region's chronic energy dependency while driving a new cycle of green industrialization. Equally significant is the potential for supply chain integration, as Mexico positions itself as a hub for nearshoring strategies under the USMCA framework, inviting Caribbean economies into shared production networks. Trade data analysis, macroeconomic modeling, and interviews with regional business leaders could clarify how these transformations align with global trends in diversification and sustainable growth.

Regional integration frameworks provide the institutional

scaffolding for these ambitions but are themselves under pressure to adapt. While Mexico has long played a pivotal role in CELAC, CARICOM, and the Association of Caribbean States, the resilience of these institutions will depend on their ability to confront emerging and non-traditional security challenges. Here, the research agenda must ask whether regional frameworks can evolve beyond declaratory cooperation to tangible capability: can they combat cybercrime, regulate migration, or coordinate disaster response with precision and speed? Mexico's capacity to modernize and energize these institutions could determine whether the Caribbean speaks as a fragmented chorus or a collective voice in global forums. Comparative analysis with other regional models such as ASEAN or the African Union may yield lessons in institutional agility, policy coordination, and inclusivity.

Yet beyond trade and governance lies a subtler realm of diplomacy—the social and cultural dimensions of Mexico's engagement with the Caribbean. These are the spaces where policy meets people, where the abstractions of strategy become the lived experiences of migration, education, and culture. Migration dynamics, gender equality, and youth exchange all form threads of a larger human narrative that sustains regional connection. The experiences of Caribbean migrants in Mexico, the role of diaspora communities in shaping perceptions, and the impact of Mexican scholarships and cultural programs on young Caribbean citizens merit careful study. Through interviews, ethnographic work, and narrative inquiry, scholars can illuminate the human side of interregional cooperation—the empathy that underwrites diplomacy, the shared aspirations that outlast trade agreements.

Finally, the specter and promise of climate change give the Mexico–Caribbean relationship its most urgent moral and strategic dimension. The Caribbean's exposure to hurricanes, rising seas, and biodiversity loss makes climate cooperation not an option but an existential imperative. Future research could explore how Mexico's experience in disaster management, particularly through models such as FONDEN, could be scaled across the region; how joint initiatives in the blue economy might transform shared waters into zones of sustainable prosperity; and how carbon market mechanisms could serve as both an environmental and economic bridge between Mexico and Caribbean states. Here, the partnership acquires a rhetorical as well as practical symmetry: one region rich in capacity, the other rich in vulnerability—each offering what the other lacks, each depending on the other's resilience for its own.

Thus, the study of Mexico–Caribbean engagement becomes a microcosm of twenty-first-century interregionalism itself: complex yet coherent, pragmatic

yet aspirational, constrained by power but animated by possibility. The parallel struggles against inequality, climate risk, and marginalization echo across the Caribbean Sea like a dialogue between continents. To analyze this relationship is not merely to study foreign policy, but to explore how cooperation can be both an instrument of survival and a language of solidarity—a reminder that in an era of shifting power, partnership remains the most enduring form of influence.

Cultural and Historical Legacies in Mexico-Caribbean Relations

Research could further illuminate how shared cultural and historical ties shape Mexico's diplomatic and cultural strategies in the Caribbean. The deep resonance of Afro-Caribbean heritage in Mexico's cultural diplomacy offers fertile ground for understanding how solidarity is performed rather than merely declared. Historical case studies could reveal how Mexico's early support for Caribbean decolonization movements and anti-imperialist struggles continues to echo in its modern foreign policy. The role of language and media, too, merits exploration: they are not passive conduits of information but active architects of perception, shaping how Mexico imagines the Caribbean and how the Caribbean imagines Mexico. Through the lens of cultural studies—drawing on archival research and discourse analysis—scholars might uncover the long historical currents that underlie contemporary diplomacy, revealing that culture, in this sense, is both a mirror and a map of regional identity.

Technology and innovation have become the new arteries of development, carrying within them both promise and peril. Future research should examine how Mexico's technological advancements can support the Caribbean's development trajectory in areas such as digital infrastructure, healthcare technology, and educational innovation. How can Mexico help foster smart cities in island nations grappling with the dual pressures of urbanization and environmental vulnerability? To what extent can Mexican telemedicine or e-learning initiatives extend the reach of education and healthcare to underserved Caribbean communities? The answers to these questions lie not only in economics or engineering but in the ethics of partnership: technology as an instrument of inclusion rather than exclusion, of empowerment rather than dependence. Interdisciplinary studies that combine policy analysis, public health, and development economics could help articulate a shared technological horizon for the region.

Equally pressing is the need to evaluate the effectiveness of Mexico's development aid in the Caribbean. While Mexico's cooperation programs demonstrate political will, their alignment with Caribbean priorities—such as poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods, and social equity—requires closer scrutiny. Comparative studies with other

donors, including the United States, the European Union, and China, could reveal both the competitive and cooperative logics shaping aid in the region. Moreover, the mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation deserve greater transparency. Development assistance, if it is to be transformative, must be both accountable and adaptive; it must listen as well as lead.

As global governance itself undergoes transformation, Mexico's role within it must also evolve. The world's diplomatic architecture is no longer monolithic but multipolar, fragmented, and fluid. Climate finance, trade reform, and post-pandemic recovery now constitute the arenas where influence is both contested and constructed. Mexico's strategic alignment with Caribbean states offers an opportunity to project a collective voice in international forums such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the COP climate summits. Here, rhetorical solidarity must become institutional strategy. By coupling its leadership in regional integration with Caribbean priorities, Mexico can help ensure that small states speak with amplified resonance in global policy debates.

In this evolving context, research on Mexico's engagement with the Caribbean serves as both a mirror and a measure of broader hemispheric trends. Exploring the intersections of geopolitics, trade, climate action, culture, and social development reveals that the relationship is neither static nor singular but dynamic and layered. Such interdisciplinary investigation deepens our understanding of how Mexico's engagement both shapes and is shaped by Caribbean realities, offering insights not just for academics but for policymakers and civil society actors seeking to build an inclusive, resilient regional order.

Yet gaps remain. There is a striking absence of updated scholarship on the foreign policies of individual Caribbean nations. Much of the existing literature dates to the 1980s and 1990s, when the region's political economy was framed primarily through dependency and development lenses. Today, the challenges are both old and new: poverty persists, growth remains uneven, and governance must reconcile economic pragmatism with moral purpose. Mobilizing domestic and external resources, developing rights-based policies, and expanding social protection systems remain fundamental tasks.

Sustainable development, state formation, and diversification of foreign policy must now converge. Governance after recovery cannot simply restore; it must reinvent. Moreover, the persistent integration gap in Latin America and the Caribbean exposes a structural weakness: the disjunction between subregional and interregional cooperation. The motives for integration are often more

prestigious than practical, and implementation remains weak. The Caribbean and Central America still struggle to operationalize the agreements they sign, leaving Mexico unable to bear alone the burden of trade creation or foreign direct investment attraction across the hemisphere.

Finally, the foreign policy literature reveals a paradox. While the relationship between China and Latin America has been extensively documented, no comparative, systematic study exists that maps the full spectrum of CELAC countries' foreign policies. The economics of hemispheric, Latin American, and interregional integration remain under-theorized. Future scholarship must therefore rise to meet this intellectual deficit by bridging empirical evidence and theoretical imagination. For only by connecting the fragments—of history, of culture, of governance—can the Mexico–Caribbean relationship be seen not as a chapter in hemispheric politics, but as a story of mutual reinvention in a century of shifting power and shared vulnerability.

To sum up, the EU is clearly interested in partnering with Mexico, pivoting to Brazil, and engaging in earnest with the two subregions in the Caribbean and Central America. There is a growing recognition in Paris that its Caribbean possessions are fragile and that they have not been sufficiently addressed by the metropole.

By 2035, according to President Xi Jinping—or at least according to the most optimistic margin of his speeches—China might well be the unrivaled trading titan of Latin America, sweeping through ports and plantations with the quiet subtlety of a dragon in a rainstorm. One might calculate the probability with algorithms, econometrics, or an oracle, yet none can fully quantify ambition dressed as inevitability. The statistics may favor China, yet the continent, like an old scholar, raises an eyebrow at every bold prediction. Infrastructure investments, trade agreements, and diplomatic tours form the scaffolding of this projected supremacy, yet hurricanes, populist governments, and commodity price fluctuations are the mischievous gremlins lurking in the ledger. Latin America, with its rich soils and restless spirits, does not yield easily to even the most patient of foreign investors.

China and LATAM

Xi's stated goal to be the biggest trading power of all LATAM by 2025 assumes a kind of deterministic course: ports expand, supply chains flow, and Chinese firms dance with mercantile precision, while local producers applaud politely. Yet history, with its fondness for irony, reminds us that trade forecasts often resemble horoscopes—full of authority and delightfully vague. China's rise in Latin America might be measured in dollars, yes, but also in statues erected in Beijing, in state visits punctuated by ribbon-cuttings, in PR campaigns that suggest

destiny rather than deal-making. The probability is high enough to justify press releases, low enough to provoke eyebrow twitches in Bogotá, Brasília, and Buenos Aires. Local elites might cheer or frown, depending on whether their particular balance sheet benefits, while street vendors remain blissfully unconcerned.

By 2035, China's footprint may be undeniable, yet so too will be the resistance: protectionist laws, regional blocs, and the occasional nationalist tweet will complicate the grand narrative. The probability, in the end, is less a number and more a story told in power points, speeches, and economic summits. Some might place it at seventy percent, others at "optimistic, but subject to revision." Xi himself might wink at the uncertainty, confident that framing expectation is sometimes as useful as achieving it. It is, after all, easier to declare dominance in print than to negotiate soybean contracts in real time.

The prediction is audacious, bordering on theatrical: a global power claims Latin America as a stage, and the continent, naturally, improvises its lines. Probability, in this context, is a polite fiction, an elegant fiction dressed in economic metrics and diplomatic choreography. Every port upgraded, every loan approved, every bilateral agreement signed inflates the statistical likelihood—but never guarantees it. Latin America is a region of surprises, of sudden elections and sudden rains, of mercurial markets and mercurial moods. The numbers may point upward, yet reality insists on its own punctuation.

By 2035, China may indeed dominate the charts, yet not without negotiation, compromise, and sustained push-backs among European elites and civil society. To assign a crisp probability is to flirt with hubris; to read the situation as inevitable is to ignore history's delight in irony. Let us say, with measured satire, that the probability is high enough for speeches and headlines, low enough for hedged footnotes, and precisely uncertain enough to keep economists employed. After all, predictions are like soybeans: they are abundant, they travel far, and occasionally they sprout in unexpected places.

Discussion

We have presented a comprehensive analysis and a concise action plan addressing the key themes deliberated during the EU–CELAC Summit 2025, building upon our earlier recommendations for strengthening governance within the EU–CELAC framework. In so doing, we have sought not merely to outline policy but to reimagine partnership—like a bridge spanning turbulent waters, connecting distant shores through trust and cooperation

Each recommendation is a single brick in the edifice of regional governance and together they form a structure capable of supporting lasting prosperity. Our proposals for advancing Caribbean development dynamics are second to none, combining strategic foresight, practical innovation, and an unwavering commitment to regional prosperity—not a mere plan, but a chorus of initiatives, each voice echoing louder when joined with the others. Just as a gardener cultivates diverse plants to flourish in harmony, our approach nurtures multiple strands of economic, social, and environmental cooperation, ensuring that small, deliberate actions grow into transformative regional impact.

This approach seeks to temper power asymmetries, to dissolve the residue of external dependency, and to lay the groundwork for a more deliberate, more strategic, and more enduring EU engagement in its interregional dialogues. This provides the conditions for the transformation of the EU-CELAC Summit to an interregional partnership of a strategic nature, something our beloved leaders are cordially invited to digest and moreover act on.

This is important since interregional cooperation is not simply an administrative mechanism but a living architecture of shared purpose—a framework through which collective challenges, from governance and security to sustainable development and digital transformation, can be met with common resolve. It is through such cooperation that the EU and CELAC may transform asymmetry into alignment, policy into partnership, and dialogue into durable, mutually beneficial outcomes. Extension of internal market rules to CARICOM—check. OECD studies on the Caribbean—check. The scaffolding of cooperation is in place; what remains is to breathe life into its institutions and ensure that ambition is matched by action.

Haiti and Cuba stand as reminders that inclusivity cannot be proclaimed—it must be practiced. Their participation is not a peripheral question but a central test of whether the EU-CELAC framework can evolve from selective engagement to genuine solidarity. Tailored measures, attuned to their unique political and developmental contexts, will therefore be essential to ensure both inclusive participation and the long-term effectiveness of this partnership. The strategic calculus lies in coupling constructive engagement with Cuba to a tempered U.S. approach toward Colombia, and a measured recalibration of its military campaign against Caracas—transforming confrontation into containment, and containment into calibrated diplomacy. I expect Brazil to step up its engagement with Venezuela—a development the EU can leverage to reinforce governance across its interregional initiatives—while Venezuela itself requires external pressure to restore order within its borders. As a matter of fact, the EU-

CELAC Summit stand every chance to underperform in a decisive course, steering regional cooperation toward new horizons. Follow me, I am a leader.

Theoretical implications

The findings reinforce the analytical value of inter-regionalism for understanding cooperative dynamics that extend beyond traditional bilateral relationships. The EU-CELAC case illustrates that interregional arrangements can move beyond declaratory agreements when supported by governance structures, coordinated project pipelines, and targeted sectoral action plans. The observed successes and limitations suggest that functionalist approaches, which emphasize technical cooperation and problem-solving, remain important, but must be complemented by attention to political asymmetries and legitimacy concerns. This extends existing theoretical models by demonstrating how interregional partnerships operate in environments characterized by heterogeneous member states and unequal capacities.

The study highlights the importance of adaptive governance mechanisms in interregional contexts. Strengthening governance under the EU-CELAC framework demonstrates that institutional design can mitigate power imbalances, but only when it incorporates local autonomy and flexible implementation. These findings support and nuance principal-agent frameworks, where the EU functions as a principal with financial and normative leverage, while CELAC states operate as agents with varying capacities. Theoretical implications include the necessity of accounting for multi-level governance interactions that combine formal institutions, technical expertise, and local stakeholder participation in shaping policy outcomes.

Empirical observations regarding external influence, funding asymmetries, and potential impositions reinforce theories of dependency and power asymmetry in international relations. The findings suggest that such asymmetries can simultaneously enable and constrain cooperation: while EU funding facilitates project implementation, it can also generate conditionalities that risk undermining local ownership. The study therefore contributes to theorizing strategic interdependence, illustrating how power differentials are negotiated through joint planning, shared decision-making, and tailored engagement with politically sensitive cases such as Haiti and Cuba. Mexico's role in Caribbean engagement further provides empirical support for concepts of middle-power diplomacy and regional stewardship. The findings underscore that middle powers can act as bridges between global actors and smaller states, facilitating tailored regional partnerships. Effective leadership in subregions

requires balancing initiative with respect for sovereignty, offering a nuanced contribution to literature on regional hierarchy and cooperative leadership in multipolar settings. The integration of governance, trade, green transitions, and digital cooperation demonstrates the relevance of policy network and transnational governance frameworks for understanding interregional partnerships. Sustainable outcomes are shown to require not only state-level agreements but also coordinated engagement of supranational organizations, development banks, and civil society actors. This reinforces network-centric approaches and underscores the multi-actor dimension of contemporary interregionalism, highlighting the interplay between normative commitments, such as climate or digital rights, and operational capacities, including finance and project implementation. Finally, the findings suggest a multi-scalar analytical approach: interregional partnerships should be studied not only at institutional or summit levels but also through the lens of subregional dynamics, including middle-power engagement, sectoral projects, and local ownership. This perspective contributes to methodological debates in international relations and regional studies by emphasizing layered governance and adaptive scenario analysis as essential tools for understanding complex interregional processes.

Overall, the study demonstrates that interregional partnerships such as EU–CELAC are complex, multi-layered phenomena shaped by governance design, power asymmetries, and strategic leadership. It extends theories of interregionalism, adaptive governance, dependency, and middle-power diplomacy by providing empirical evidence of how coordinated action plans in governance, trade, and regional engagement can mediate asymmetries and foster durable cooperation. It also emphasizes the necessity of integrating subregional and multi-actor perspectives into the theoretical study of interregional partnerships.

Potential Avenues for Future Research on Mexico's Role in the Caribbean

To contribute to ongoing scholarly discourse and offer a roadmap for future research, it is essential to highlight key areas that warrant deeper exploration. Emerging trends in geopolitics, economics, technology, and climate change offer fertile ground for studying Mexico's evolving role in the Caribbean. Below are several potential avenues for future research, emphasizing their significance and implications for regional development and international relations.

Scenarios

Scenarios is a strategic technique that allows for thinking outside the box for the sake of creating strategic leaps in strategic thinking:

EU–CELAC and Mexico–Caribbean Partnership Scenarios (2025–2035)

The evolving relationship between the European Union (EU) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) reflects a renewed attempt to consolidate a coherent Atlantic partnership after several cycles of fragmentation and political fluctuation. The trajectory of this relationship over the next decade will depend on the interplay between institutional cohesion within CELAC, the EU's external strategic orientation, and broader shifts in global economic governance. Likewise, Mexico's diplomatic engagement with the Caribbean constitutes a subregional test case for how Latin American middle powers can bridge continental and maritime dynamics under increasingly complex geopolitical pressures.

The EU–CELAC Strategic Horizon

The EU–CELAC partnership is currently guided by the 2023–2025 Roadmap, and the Santa Marta Summit scheduled for 2025 is expected to reaffirm this framework. Several structural drivers will define its evolution: the intensity of global competition among the United States, China, and the European Union for Latin American alignment; the capacity of CELAC to act with a unified diplomatic voice; the availability of climate finance and technology transfer mechanisms; and the political cycles that shape national priorities across the region.

One plausible trajectory for the partnership is that of *strategic convergence*, in which the EU and CELAC manage to institutionalize a coherent framework for cooperation across the green, digital, and security domains. Under such a scenario, the two regions would move toward an integrated institutional structure, perhaps a permanent coordination secretariat with shared technical units in Brussels and Santiago. The operationalization of a joint project pipeline under the Global Gateway and CAF co-financing would make Europe a preferred partner for sustainable investment and renewable infrastructure. The partnership would thus mature into a structured, rule-based model of transatlantic cooperation, defined by joint diplomatic stances in multilateral forums and the emergence of common standards on climate and digital governance.

A second scenario envisions a more selective, issue-based partnership. In this setting, political divergences within CELAC continue to inhibit comprehensive agreements, yet functional cooperation persists in non-controversial areas such as renewable energy, digital skills, or biodiversity management. Cooperation would become project-specific and coalitional, driven by the willingness of particular countries or blocs rather than regional consensus. Bilateral EU partnerships with subregional formations—

MERCOSUR, CARICOM, or the Pacific Alliance—would predominate, and Global Gateway funding would be fragmented across parallel pipelines. This form of pragmatic pluralism would produce visible results in narrow domains while falling short of strategic alignment.

A third, more adverse outcome would be one of strategic drift and hemispheric fragmentation. In this scenario, CELAC's internal cohesion deteriorates further, and the EU's external focus shifts eastward to its neighbourhood crises. Latin American states diversify partnerships toward the United States and China, while European investment and political attention recede. Trade negotiations stall, environmental and industrial policy conflicts intensify, and the transatlantic dialogue loses coherence. Europe's presence in the region would be limited to residual programmes in education, culture, and academic exchange. This trajectory would mark the regression of the bi-regional partnership into symbolic diplomacy.

The Mexico–Caribbean Vector

Within the broader CELAC architecture, Mexico occupies a distinctive position, acting simultaneously as a North American economy and a Latin American political hub. Its outreach to the Caribbean, especially through CARICOM and OECS frameworks, offers a laboratory for subregional diplomacy that connects maritime security, climate adaptation, and cultural cooperation. The future of the Mexico–Caribbean partnership will depend on Mexico's willingness to sustain its southern engagement despite the gravitational pull of the North American supply-chain system.

Under a positive trajectory, Mexico could emerge as a regional steward through the formation of a “Green Maritime Alliance” linking Caribbean states around a shared agenda of ocean governance, renewable energy, and disaster resilience. Such a partnership would likely be supported by multilateral institutions such as CAF and the Inter-American Development Bank and could evolve into a coordinated system of coast-guard training, blue economy initiatives, and cultural exchange programmes. Mexico's leadership in this sphere would also provide an entry point for EU collaboration, aligning European green diplomacy with Caribbean climate finance needs.

A more limited, transactional scenario would see cooperation remain episodic and project-based, mobilized mainly in response to crises or external funding opportunities. Mexico would retain symbolic solidarity with Caribbean states but prioritize its integration within the USMCA and North American economic structures. Under these conditions, engagement would be reactive rather than strategic, consisting of ad hoc memoranda on disaster management, digital inclusion, or cultural heritage.

In a less favourable outcome, Mexico's foreign policy could

become inward-looking or entirely North American-centric, while Caribbean states strengthen links with other major powers such as the United States, China, or the United Kingdom. The resulting decoupling would fragment the broader CELAC framework and diminish the collective diplomatic capacity of small island states. Regional coherence would weaken, and both Mexico and the Caribbean would lose influence in global governance debates on climate and migration.

Comparative Synthesis and Strategic Reflection

Taken together, these scenarios reveal that the EU–CELAC and Mexico–Caribbean partnerships are interdependent layers of a larger transatlantic architecture. In their best-case alignment, they could reinforce one another: a deepened EU–CELAC institutional framework could supply the financing, standards, and diplomatic gravity for Mexico's subregional initiatives, while the Mexico–Caribbean partnership could localize and operationalize EU–CELAC goals in maritime and climate-sensitive areas. Both arrangements depend on the emergence of credible institutional mechanisms, sustained political commitment, and consistent policy financing. If successful, they would convert the Atlantic Basin into a continuous zone of cooperative governance connecting the Americas and Europe through shared norms on sustainability, digital innovation, and resilience.

If coordination falters, however, fragmentation could deepen. Latin America might drift toward diversified bilateralism dominated by external powers, and the Caribbean could become an arena of overlapping, uncoordinated partnerships. The EU's normative and economic influence would erode, and the opportunity to shape a coherent Atlantic narrative—one grounded in shared democratic values, green development, and equitable digitalization—would be lost.

Strategic Takeaway and Actionable Insights

The future of EU–CELAC cooperation will hinge on whether both sides can move beyond declaratory politics toward mechanisms that deliver measurable, long-term impact. Institutional density and financial credibility will be decisive: without a permanent coordination structure, a transparent project pipeline, and predictable funding, even the most ambitious summit declarations will dissipate into symbolic gestures. For Europe, this requires sustaining its Global Gateway commitments despite competing priorities in its eastern and southern neighbourhoods. For CELAC, the challenge is to strengthen its internal decision-making capacity and to transform its rotating presidency into a vehicle for continuity.

Mexico's engagement with the Caribbean offers a microcosm of this broader dilemma. The degree to which

it can institutionalize regional stewardship will determine whether Latin American cooperation can mature into functional integration. Aligning Mexico's southern policy with EU green and digital strategies would create a triadic partnership that combines European finance, Mexican diplomatic leadership, and Caribbean implementation capacity. The shared agenda could then concentrate on climate adaptation, blue economy governance, and digital connectivity as mutually reinforcing pillars of Atlantic stability.

Ultimately, the EU–CELAC and Mexico–Caribbean partnerships represent not merely foreign policy mechanisms but a broader test of whether multipolar cooperation can evolve into shared governance. If sustained, they could exemplify a new Atlantic consensus founded on inclusivity, sustainability, and technological progress. If neglected, they risk becoming footnotes in a world increasingly defined by rival spheres of influence. The strategic imperative for both Europe and Latin America is therefore to institutionalize ambition—to anchor their political vision in durable frameworks, measurable projects, and joint narratives capable of shaping the global order toward mutual prosperity and resilience.

Counter-arguments

While stronger governance frameworks are often presented as necessary for stability and coordinated development, critics argue that imposing centralized or formalized governance structures can have unintended consequences in the Caribbean context. First, there is the risk of sovereignty tensions: Caribbean states are highly sensitive to external influence, and overly prescriptive EU or Mexican-led governance initiatives may be perceived as infringing on national autonomy. Efforts to institutionalize joint decision-making mechanisms or to standardize policies may encounter resistance if local political cultures favor decentralization or national discretion.

Second, enhanced governance structures can be bureaucratically heavy and slow to implement. Creating secretariats, steering committees, or compliance mechanisms often requires significant administrative capacity and recurring financial support, which may be scarce in small island states. This can lead to delays, inefficiencies, or failure to produce tangible benefits, undermining local trust and legitimacy.

Third, there is a potential misalignment of priorities. EU and Mexican agendas may emphasize issues like climate finance, anti-corruption standards, or digitalization that, while globally relevant, do not always align with the immediate needs of Caribbean populations, such as job creation in tourism or disaster recovery. Imposing externally defined governance norms risks generating policy mismatch and elite

capture, where local elites benefit from alignment with external actors while the broader population sees limited gains.

Expanding trade between EU–CELAC and within Mexico–Caribbean corridors is generally framed as mutually beneficial, but several counterarguments emerge. One concern is the risk of economic dependency. Caribbean economies are often small and heavily reliant on a narrow set of exports, such as tourism, sugar, or bananas. Rapidly integrating into European or Mexican supply chains could increase vulnerability to external shocks, global price fluctuations, or protectionist policies in partner economies.

Another argument relates to industrial displacement and inequality. Enhanced trade could favor larger enterprises and foreign investors, marginalizing local small and medium-sized businesses. Without accompanying capacity-building, technology transfer, or protective measures, trade liberalization may exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities. There is also the threat of environmental externalities: increased production or logistics to serve external markets can intensify carbon emissions, overfishing, or land-use pressure if sustainability safeguards are weak or poorly enforced.

Finally, critics point to geopolitical exposure. Trade expansion often entails deeper interdependence, which can create vulnerability to global geopolitical shocks. For example, a sudden EU or Mexican policy shift could disrupt Caribbean economies disproportionately, reducing policy space for domestic governments to manage crises independently.

Mexico's strengthened engagement in the Caribbean may bring coordination benefits, but several counterpoints are frequently raised. A primary concern is the perception of regional dominance. Caribbean states may fear that Mexico's leadership role could overshadow local agency, creating asymmetric relations that replicate patterns historically associated with external powers in the region. Such dynamics could provoke political pushback or reduce participation in joint initiatives.

Second, Mexico itself faces capacity and priority constraints. Its foreign policy is also oriented toward North America and global markets, which could limit the consistency and depth of its Caribbean engagement. If Mexico overcommits without adequate resources, initiatives may be underfunded or poorly implemented, undermining credibility.

Third, there is the risk of entanglement in complex local politics. Caribbean states are politically heterogeneous, with different party systems, governance capacities, and domestic pressures. Deep Mexican engagement in

sensitive areas such as maritime security, disaster management, or investment facilitation could inadvertently become politicized, potentially entangling Mexico in local disputes or affecting its neutral stance in broader regional affairs.

Finally, reinforced Mexican engagement could complicate multilateral coordination, particularly with the EU or other external partners. Divergent agendas or competing priorities could create overlaps, inefficiencies, or conflicting standards, reducing the effectiveness of joint EU–CELAC and Mexico–Caribbean programmes.

Synthesis

The counterarguments suggest that while strengthened governance, trade, and Mexican engagement hold strategic potential, they are not without risks. Sovereignty concerns, bureaucratic complexity, economic vulnerability, environmental pressures, and the perception of regional dominance all act as constraints. These critiques highlight the importance of calibrated, context-sensitive policies that balance external coordination with local autonomy, ensure equitable distribution of trade benefits, and incorporate robust environmental and social safeguards.

Actionable insight: To address these counterarguments, any EU–CELAC or Mexico–Caribbean initiative should embed inclusive consultation mechanisms, adaptive governance structures, and risk mitigation frameworks. This could involve phased implementation, local capacity-building, transparent monitoring, and alignment with domestic priorities to ensure legitimacy and sustainability.

Policy Recommendations

Mexico is well positioned to play a transformative role in the Caribbean and broader CELAC region. Strengthening regional integration frameworks should remain a central priority. Mexico can enhance its influence within CELAC, the Pacific Alliance, and CARICOM by facilitating deeper economic and political integration. This could include promoting free trade, improving infrastructure connectivity, and aligning environmental and sustainability policies across member states. Such efforts would reduce the region's dependence on external actors like the United States and China, while enabling Caribbean nations to project a more unified voice in global forums.

Climate diplomacy and resilience initiatives present another critical area for leadership. Mexico has the opportunity to spearhead projects that build sustainable, disaster-resilient infrastructure and promote renewable energy, particularly in countries such as the Bahamas, Cuba, and Jamaica. By advocating for targeted climate financing from international organizations and expanding initiatives in solar energy and climate-adaptive infrastructure, Mexico can strengthen long-

term regional relationships while enhancing the Caribbean's adaptive capacity to climate change.

Diversifying trade relationships is equally essential. While Mexico's trade with the Caribbean has grown, there is scope to expand beyond traditional products and sectors. By focusing on manufacturing, technology, and knowledge-intensive industries—such as ICT, automotive, and consumer goods—Mexico can offer competitive alternatives while supporting regional industrial development. Collaboration on tourism innovation, cultural industries, and creative sectors can further deepen economic and social ties.

Humanitarian and development assistance should also remain a priority. Mexico can enhance its engagement in countries such as Haiti and Cuba by focusing on healthcare, education, and critical infrastructure projects. Establishing a formalized regional development fund could coordinate aid, attract international support, and increase the efficiency and impact of development interventions across the Caribbean.

Finally, Mexico can strengthen its regional strategy through strategic partnerships with global actors, particularly China and the European Union. Rather than perceiving China's influence as purely competitive, Mexico can explore joint ventures in renewable energy, digital infrastructure, and sustainable tourism, leveraging multilateral cooperation to amplify regional benefits.

In summary, Mexico's diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagements with the Caribbean are vital to promoting sustainable regional development. By deepening integration efforts, expanding its role in climate resilience, diversifying trade, and fostering strategic international partnerships, Mexico can consolidate its influence while contributing meaningfully to the Caribbean's long-term growth and prosperity.

Caribbean states should prioritize deeper regional integration to enhance economic independence and political influence. By fostering closer collaboration within CARICOM, CELAC, and with neighboring partners like Mexico, the region can boost intra-regional trade, streamline infrastructure connectivity, and harmonize regulatory frameworks. These measures will reduce overreliance on external powers, improve negotiating leverage in global trade, and create shared opportunities in key sectors such as renewable energy, digital technology, and sustainable tourism. Economic cooperation should reflect the Caribbean's priorities, ensuring that growth benefits local communities and strengthens regional resilience.

Given the region's vulnerability to climate change, Caribbean states should place environmental

sustainability at the heart of policy-making. Priorities include building disaster-resilient infrastructure, expanding renewable energy capacity, protecting marine and terrestrial biodiversity, and managing natural resources sustainably. Collaboration with international partners—including Mexico, the EU, and multilateral organizations—should be leveraged to secure financing, technical expertise, and climate innovation, while maintaining Caribbean leadership in setting environmental agendas. These initiatives will safeguard communities, protect economies, and enhance the region's collective voice in global climate diplomacy.

Investing in human capital is essential for sustainable development. Caribbean states should prioritize education, healthcare, and skills development tailored to regional needs, while promoting cultural exchange and preserving local heritage. Strengthened security cooperation across the region—including countering organized crime, human trafficking, and climate-related emergencies—will protect communities and facilitate stability. By coordinating humanitarian response, disaster relief, and regional peacekeeping efforts, Caribbean states can safeguard citizens, reinforce sovereignty, and build a unified regional platform that amplifies the Caribbean's interests internationally.

The EU should support the Caribbean in strengthening human capital and regional security. Programs in education, healthcare, vocational training, and cultural exchange can enhance skills development while preserving regional cultural heritage. In addition, the EU can provide technical assistance and coordination for disaster preparedness, humanitarian response, and security cooperation, addressing challenges such as organized crime, human trafficking, and climate-induced emergencies. By aligning its support with Caribbean priorities, the EU can help ensure stability, resilience, and sustainable growth across the region, while reinforcing Europe's strategic partnership with the Caribbean. The EU can also collaborate with the OECD, of whom the UK, France and Holland are a member, to share best practices in governance, economic policy, and development indicators, helping Caribbean states identify strategies to maximize development potential.

The EU can assist the Caribbean in developing knowledge-based economies by supporting innovation ecosystems, entrepreneurship, and digital infrastructure. Investment in broadband connectivity, fintech, e-commerce, and smart logistics would enable Caribbean nations to integrate more effectively into global value chains and diversify their economies beyond traditional sectors such as tourism and agriculture. Through OECD partnerships and EU programs, Caribbean states can access data, policy guidance, and technical expertise that support sustainable development and investment prioritization. Public-private partnerships can facilitate technology transfer, innovation hubs, and skills

training, helping the Caribbean unlock its development potential while fostering inclusive economic growth.

Recognizing the Caribbean's vulnerability to climate change, the EU can expand support for renewable energy, disaster-resilient infrastructure, and environmental protection. Leveraging OECD research and climate financing mechanisms, the EU can help Caribbean nations design policies that maximize sustainability and long-term development benefits. Collaborative projects in climate-smart agriculture, coastal protection, and marine biodiversity management will safeguard communities, strengthen economies, and advance the region's leadership in global environmental governance.

The EU should encourage Caribbean states to diversify trade and attract sustainable investment. By supporting initiatives that expand exports in high-value sectors such as ICT, green technologies, and creative industries, the EU can help the Caribbean reduce dependency on a narrow range of commodities and tourism revenues. The OECD can provide comparative data, risk assessments, and investment guidance, ensuring that EU-Caribbean partnerships maximize development outcomes. Joint ventures with European firms, coupled with strategic policy support, can unlock growth potential while fostering resilient and diversified economies.

The EU could also provide technical support to enhance governance, institutional capacity, and regulatory frameworks in the Caribbean. This includes promoting transparency, public sector efficiency, and rule-of-law initiatives that strengthen democratic institutions. The OECD can serve as a critical partner by offering benchmarks, policy analysis, and capacity-building programs that help Caribbean states improve public administration and economic management. Furthermore, the EU can support Caribbean participation in regional and international forums, helping amplify their voice on climate policy, trade negotiations, and sustainable development goals. By reinforcing institutional capacity and multilateral engagement, the EU helps the Caribbean realize its development potential while enhancing regional stability and resilience.

Perspective

While incrementalism and pragmatic flexibility have long characterized Latin American regionalism, the current geopolitical and economic juncture renders such an approach increasingly untenable. The region faces a convergence of structural challenges—economic fragmentation, external dependency, limited digital infrastructure, and escalating climate vulnerabilities—that cannot be addressed through ad hoc or reactive coordination. "Muddling through" not only dilutes the

region's bargaining power in global trade and multilateral forums but also perpetuates institutional inefficiencies and undercuts investment certainty. Without a clear strategic direction and credible institutional commitments, Latin America risks marginalization in a rapidly bifurcating global order where scale, coherence, and regulatory depth are becoming prerequisites for meaningful economic influence. It is therefore imperative to move beyond rhetorical unity toward functional integration grounded in shared rules, interoperable markets, and actionable frameworks that can attract both domestic trust and international capital.

It also wants to mediate on Cuba, adopt a strategy for reforming the UNSC, and complete the negotiations on the bi-regional trade agreement with Mercosur, comparable to the geostrategic nature of the EU-CELAC relationship and the world we live in.

In this fragile yet resilient space, the Caribbean's future cannot be charted in isolation, nor deferred through rhetorical affirmations alone. As Latin America, Europe, and global actors reshape their strategic outlooks, the Caribbean must neither be treated as an appendage nor reduced to a zone of transit or competition. Instead, it should be acknowledged as a co-author of regional futures—capable of articulating its own terms of partnership, integration, and influence. The heart may indeed be always at risk of breaking here, but that is precisely what endows the region with its radical capacity to reimagine belonging, sovereignty, and solidarity. In choosing strategic coherence over fragmentation, and dignity over dependence, the Caribbean offers more than a site of crisis—it offers a model of reinvention.

Appendix 1 – Strategic Integration Pathways: A Comparative Economic Assessment of EU–CELAC, Hemispheric, and Latin American Free Trade Scenarios

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate and compare the economic benefits of three major regional integration scenarios, each offering distinct implications for growth, autonomy, and global positioning. The first scenario envisions an EU–CELAC Free Trade Area—modern, inclusive, and green-oriented—designed to strengthen interregional trade and investment flows between Europe and Latin America. The second proposes a broader hemispheric trade agreement that would include the United States and Canada, thereby testing the potential for a Pan-American economic space. The third examines a Latin American-only free trade area, rooted in CELAC or UNASUR structures, emphasizing South–South cooperation and regional self-reliance.

Through these comparative lenses, the study seeks to assess the distribution of economic gains across the Caribbean, Andean, Mercosur, and Central American regions, as well as

across key sectors such as agriculture, industry, services, and the emerging digital economy. By doing so, it aims to reveal not only who benefits and by how much, but also why integration matters—whether as a catalyst of shared prosperity or as an instrument of asymmetric dependence. The broader ambition is to explore how trade architecture shapes autonomy, dependency, and economic sovereignty, and to provide policymakers with concrete recommendations on sequencing, complementarities, and institutional anchoring to maximize regional coherence and global leverage.

The methodological foundation of this study rests upon the integration of advanced quantitative models and qualitative diagnostics. Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) models, such as GTAP or MIRAGE, will simulate both static and dynamic gains from trade liberalization, services opening, and investment provisions under each scenario. Gravity models will be employed to forecast trade flows based on historical patterns, allowing for a deeper understanding of potential trade creation and diversion effects. Complementing these models, structural diagnostics derived from ECLAC and OECD competitiveness frameworks will identify the national and regional constraints that either accelerate or inhibit integration.

Each scenario will be carefully designed to reflect not just economic possibility but political plausibility. Scenario A—the EU–CELAC Free Trade Area—will serve as a blueprint for a modern, inclusive, and sustainability-driven partnership. Scenario B—the Hemispheric Free Trade Area—will test the boundaries of continental cooperation, weighing the strategic benefits of scale against the risks of dilution of regional agency. Scenario C—the Latin American-only Free Trade Area—will explore whether a renewed vision of regional solidarity can generate competitive advantage without external tutelage.

The empirical analysis will be grounded in comprehensive data from global and regional institutions. Trade and tariff data from the WTO, UN Comtrade, ITC, and TRAINS will be complemented by FDI and investment climate indicators from UNCTAD, the World Bank, and the IMF. Regional intelligence will draw upon reports from ECLAC, CAF, and the OECD Latin America Outlook, while institutional and regulatory benchmarks will reference EU Market Access databases, USTR reports, and Latin American legal frameworks.

The study will produce a multidimensional set of outputs combining quantitative estimates and qualitative

interpretation. Economic projections will quantify GDP growth, trade expansion, FDI inflows, and sectoral competitiveness under each scenario, while comparative analysis will assess differentiated impacts across subregions. Caribbean Small Island States, Mercosur giants such as Brazil and Argentina, Pacific economies including Mexico, Chile, and Colombia, as well as Central American and Andean markets, will each be examined for their integration readiness, absorptive capacity, and resilience.

Beyond numerical analysis, the study will construct a strategic dashboard to evaluate the depth of integration, political feasibility, economic efficiency, and retention of sovereignty and policy space. The goal is to translate abstract metrics into meaningful insights—to move from numbers to narratives, from models to mechanisms. The research will culminate in detailed roadmaps for complementary agreements, including those centered on green investment, digital trade, and social cohesion mechanisms.

In sum, this work aspires to bridge analysis and action, theory and practice, integration and autonomy. By situating economic modeling within a broader geopolitical and institutional framework, it seeks to illuminate not merely which trade architecture is most efficient, but which is most just, most sustainable, and most attuned to the region's evolving identity within the global economy.

Comparative Strategic Framing

Potential Partners

- **Academic:** CEPII (Paris), ECLAC, CEBRI (Brazil), CIDE (Mexico), FLACSO
- **Institutions:** OECD Dev Centre, European Commission, IDB, UNCTAD
 - **Regional Forums:** CELAC, CARICOM, Mercosur Secretariat

Policy Relevance

This study would provide governments and multilateral institutions with a comprehensive, comparative evidence base to evaluate the most strategic trade integration path for the Latin American and Caribbean region. It responds to current geopolitical shifts, builds on Latin American ambitions for autonomy, and supports a value-driven recalibration of partnerships with the EU and the U.S.

Concept Note

Title: Strategic Trade Integration in the Americas: Comparative Economic Assessment of EU–CELAC, Hemispheric, and Latin American Free Trade Scenarios

Introduction

Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) are at a crossroads of strategic realignment. As the region navigates global shifts such as de-risking, green transitions, and the reconfiguration of trade alliances, CELAC has emerged as a key platform for regional coordination. This study proposes to assess, in rigorous economic terms, the comparative value of three strategic trade scenarios: a comprehensive EU–CELAC Free Trade Area (FTA), a hemispheric FTA involving the United States and Canada, and a Latin American-only integration pathway anchored in CELAC or ALADI. The aim is to equip policymakers with data-driven insights into which configuration offers the most sustainable and transformative benefits.

Criteria	EU-CELAC FTA	Hemispheric FTA (with U.S.)	Latin American FTA
Economic Scale	Medium-high	Very high (U.S. market access)	Moderate (more limited market, but higher alignment)
Strategic Autonomy	Preserved (EU as partner of choice)	Risk of dependency on U.S. terms	High (regional agency)
Green Transition	Strong alignment with EU goals	Moderate, less climatealigned	Varies widely among countries
Governance Cohesion	High via EU institutions	Low (due to asymmetries with U.S.)	Fragmented, but ideologically converging
Trade Facilitation	Advanced standards, complex rules of origin	Simplified access, but regulatory divergence	Easier intra-bloc convergence, but low digital capacity

The study will model and compare the economic impacts of three trade integration pathways:

- **Scenario A:** A deep and comprehensive EU-CELAC FTA covering goods, services, investment, and digital trade.
- **Scenario B:** A hemispheric FTA encompassing the United States, Canada, and the wider Americas, potentially through a revitalized FTAA or updated regional arrangements.
- **Scenario C:** An intra-Latin American trade bloc with CELAC or ALADI as its institutional backbone.

Each scenario will be evaluated on its potential to generate economic growth, increase trade flows, attract investment, support green transitions, and preserve strategic autonomy.

3. Methodological Framework

The research will employ a mixed-methods approach:

- **Computable General Equilibrium (CGE) Modeling** using tools like GTAP or MIRAGE to simulate macroeconomic and sectoral effects.
- **Gravity Model Extensions** to evaluate trade creation and diversion effects, based on historical and projected flows.
- **Sectoral Deep-Dives** into agriculture, mining, digital services, and green technology to map distributional impacts.
- **Qualitative Political Economy Analysis** of institutional feasibility, trade governance, and stakeholder preferences.

Data will be drawn from UN Comtrade, WTO, OECD TiVA, IMF, World Bank, and ECLAC databases, supplemented by

interviews and expert consultations.

4. Strategic Value Assessment

The study will go beyond economic metrics to evaluate strategic alignment, including:

- Compatibility with EU Green Deal and Global Gateway priorities
- Alignment with Latin American aspirations for autonomy, sustainability, and diversified partnerships
- Opportunities for regulatory convergence and digital transformation
- Risks of dependency and trade asymmetries under different frameworks

5. Stakeholder Mapping and Institutional Anchors

Key institutional and stakeholder partners include:

- EU:** DG Trade, DG INTPA, European External Action Service (EEAS)
- Latin America and Caribbean:** CELAC Secretariat, ECLAC, national trade and planning ministries, ALADI
- Others:** OECD Development Centre, CAF, IDB, CEPPII, Brookings, CEBRI, CIDE, EU-LAC Foundation

6. Funding and Timeline

The project is envisioned as a 12-18-month effort, with funding sought from Horizon Europe, the EU-LAC Foundation, IDB Integration Fund, or OECD regional instruments. Workshops and interim reports will feed into CELAC-EU Summit processes and other regional integration fora.

7. Expected Outcomes

- A detailed comparative analysis of economic and strategic benefits under each scenario
- Dashboards and data visualizations by country and sector
- A roadmap for LAC states and the EU to align trade policy with development goals
- Policy recommendations on how Caribbean and Latin American states can position themselves optimally within overlapping trade frameworks

Conclusion

This study responds to the urgent need for structured analysis and evidence-based policymaking in Latin America's trade policy landscape. By integrating macroeconomic modeling with geopolitical strategy, it seeks to clarify the benefits, trade-offs, and feasible pathways toward a more prosperous, resilient, and autonomous transatlantic partnership.

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