



# Transnational organized crime (TOC) and the relationship to good governance in the Caribbean

## Transnational organized crime democracy (TOCD)

Transnational  
organized crime

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Miguel Goede

*University of The Netherlands Antilles, Curacao, The Netherlands Antilles*

### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this article is to discuss transnational organized crime (TOC) and the relationship to good governance in the Caribbean.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper is exploratory. It follows a path of inductive reasoning, from observation of the eight global cases to a broader general analysis and the development of a theoretical framework or ideal type.

**Findings** – The influence of TOC on governance in the Caribbean is worrying. Normative theories of democracy, public administration and governance no longer apply. Economic growth diminishes, unemployment rises, crime rises.

**Originality/value** – The paper contributes to the understanding of the impact of TOC on good governance especially on Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean.

**Keywords** Caribbean, Good governance, Small Island Developing States, Transnational organized crime

**Paper type** Research paper

### Introduction

This article is about transnational organized crime (TOC) in the Caribbean. It focuses on the island of Curaçao. Geographically, Curaçao is in a unique position, less than 100 km from the Venezuelan coast and it is at the crossroads of routes from South America and Europe and the USA. Historically and culturally the island has strong links with Europe, which seems to make it an attractive route to Europe for TOC. Politically, Curaçao is a Small Island Developing State (SIDS) with a tradition of populism and relatively weak social institutions. And economically, Curaçao commands few resources compared with those available to TOC. All of these characteristics, which Curaçao shares with many other SIDS in the Caribbean, make the region vulnerable to the influence of TOC. This article examines this complex network of influences to show the interaction of TOC and political populism to make SIDS vulnerable to being undermined in a process described as transnational organized crime democracy (TOCD) or mafiocracy.



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### **TOCD or mafiocracy**

TOC is a global phenomenon. It is not an easy task to define TOC (Gilligan, 2007). There is a large number of definitions[1]. This article adopts the UN definition:

The term organized crime usually refers to large-scale and complex criminal activities carried out by tightly or loosely organized associations and aimed at the establishment, supply and exploitation of illegal markets at the expense of society. Such operations are generally carried out with a ruthless disregard of the law, and often involve offenses against individuals, including threats, intimidation and physical violence (United Nations, 1990, p. 5)[2].

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was established in 1997[3] to deal with the issue, and has adopted several resolutions (United Nations, 2010). In 2000 the Palermo Convention was assigned to provide a response to the rising TOC of the 1980s and 1990s. TOC has changed, it is nowadays often intertwined with terrorist groups (Standing, 2010).

TOCD denotes the ruling of a country by elected political parties heavily influenced by organized crime. The term is introduced purely descriptive and is not meant to be a negative normative value statement. TOCD is a system in which a small group controls government and influences the daily life of all inhabitants and visitors of a country. It covers the economy, politics, social life, the media and culture. The objective is the financial benefit of using power, intimidation, violence and corruption. TOC achieves this by occupying the governmental organizations and the state owned enterprises (SOE). The criminals commit character assassination of the elite and replace them with their own associates. To achieve this they provide false testimony, in collaboration with populists and their political organizations, portraying the elite as totally corrupt and evil. TOC aims to weaken and even to eliminate democratic institutions. They further weaken the parliament.

They also target the security service, the central bank, the utility companies, the harbor and the airport authorities. Controlling the media is a key strategic objective. Through the media they control public opinion and the behavior of the citizens. The signs are that TOC tries to influence not only the judicial system and the police organization but also the health care system and the educational system. TOC tries to establish a total system that leaves the citizens no other option than to accept and even join the system and to stop resisting the system to be able to lead a normal life. The consequences are the rise of poverty and crime while culture and folklore are destroyed (Castro, 2011)[4].

On 16 July 2012, UNODC started a new global awareness campaign on transnational crime:

With a turnover estimated to be around US\$ 870 billion a year, organized criminal networks profit from the sale of illegal goods wherever there is a demand. These immense illicit funds are worth more than 6 times the amount of official development assistance, and are comparable to 1.5 per cent of global GDP, or 7 per cent of the world's exports of merchandise (UNODC, 2012)[5].

To fight TOC, international and regional collaboration is taking place. The fight against money laundering has become a serious regional and global effort. This has resulted in the installation of the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) in 1992 as an initiative of the G7 (Wilson and Rattray, 2007).

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TOC flourishes best when state institutions are weak. The globalization process of the last 20 years has favored TOC. It has put the poor in a position where they consider crime as an option for survival (Bagley, 2001; De Andrade Filho, 2008).

TOC is a growing problem worldwide and a growing threat to the stability of most Latin American and Caribbean States (LAC) (Hofmann, 2009). After the collapse of the former Soviet Union the Russian mafia also became active in the Caribbean. After the Cold War the security risks in the Caribbean have changed. Natural disasters and TOC have become significant factors. But from the perspective of the USA, President Chaves of Venezuela and his relations with Russia and Iran are also relevant threats (Verasammy, 2009). The Caribbean is being used as a transit point for drugs, arms smuggling, money laundering and human trafficking. Several offshore banks were opened in the 1990s. But in the 2000s this has become much more difficult because of measures by governments (Bagley, 2001; Ribando Seelke *et al.*, 2011). This study will concentrate on drug trafficking and money laundering.

This article is exploratory and descriptive in nature and produces more questions than answers. It follows a path of inductive reasoning, from specific observation of eight SIDS to a broader general analysis and the development of a theoretical framework. In other words, the data is presented first and from this the theory and generalizations are developed.

The paper is structured in the following sections. First a literature review is presented. This follows the global cases of Aruba, Bonaire, Sint Maarten, Dominica, Haiti, Suriname, Venezuela, Colombia and Curaçao. Based on these cases, theoretical framework or ideal type, in the tradition of the German sociologist Max Weber, is developed, applying inductive reasoning. An ideal type is constructed from elements and characteristics of a studied phenomena, but it does not necessarily correspond with all the characteristics of any one particular case. It does not refer to a perfect model, moral ideas nor statistical averages, but emphasizes certain elements common to most cases of the studied phenomenon. The article ends with concluding remarks.

The international literature review provides a macro picture of how TOC operates. It does not provide sufficient insight into how TOC actually works on a Caribbean SIDS (United Nations – UNODC, 2010). This article tries to provide some insights into how TOC actually operates locally on Caribbean islands.

### **Crime in the Caribbean**

The Caribbean is the area between North and South America. The islands have an ideal geographical location and climate, which, together with their close historical connections with Europe offer an ideal financial and logistical focal point for doing business; the perfect hub for connecting North and South, and East and West.

The UN report states that in the Caribbean drug cartels are spreading violence. It is estimated that 10 per cent of the cocaine from Colombia to the USA is transported via Venezuela and the Caribbean. The world's biggest trading partners are also the world's biggest market for illicit goods and services. The consequences for the Caribbean island societies are: addiction, drug related crime and violence, destabilization and corruption. In the 1990s the cocaine flow started to shift from the Caribbean to Central America and Mexico, because radar surveillance made trafficking by air more difficult. A UNODC report states the following in relation to Curaçao:

Parts of the Netherlands lie in the Caribbean (Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles) and Suriname in South America was a former Dutch colony. Rotterdam (The Netherlands) and Antwerp (Belgium) are Europe's largest seaports. From these hubs, cocaine is distributed to the rest of Europe. Between them, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands and Belgium accounted for close to 70% of all cocaine seized in Europe in 2008, but less than one quarter of the cocaine use (UNODC, 2010).

Criminal organizations in the Dutch Caribbean in the 1990s were working together with organizations in Cali and Medellin.

The European administered territories in the Caribbean and South America are mentioned as transit destinations for human trafficking to Europe and the USA. Going through these countries reduces the risk of being intercepted. Once in Europe these women and transgender individuals are exploited indoors or on the streets depending on the destination (UNODC, 2010).

Crime in the Caribbean is on the rise:

Countries such as Jamaica, St. Lucia, Antigua, the Bahamas, Bermuda, St. Kitts and Nevis and most recently Aruba struggle to agree on a forward plan to combat their increasing crime rates (Daniel, 2011; UNDP, 2012).

Much of the crime is gang related. This type of crime is often related to TOC (UNDP, 2012). The Caribbean confronts a paradox:

Why is it that, despite the democratization process experienced in the region in the last 20 years, citizen security levels, as well as the justice and security institutions in the region, are going through a crisis? Why is it that, despite the structural and institutional reforms promoted by countries in the region in order to construct governance mechanisms which are more transparent, horizontally and democratically, the justice and security institutions are overwhelmed and confidence in them is shattered? (UNDP, 2012).

Islands in the Caribbean are struggling with good governance, corruption, crime and organized crime. Often this is related to their condition as SIDS. This refers to the small scale, scarcity of the resources and the effects of climate change. The emergence of crime is rooted in the following causes: poverty, unemployment, social marginalization and inequality, the illegal drug trade, corruption, the trafficking of firearms, the deportation of criminals, and the effectiveness of the existing criminal justice systems and consequent waiving of sanctions (Lashin, 2005; Sluis, 2004, p. 127).

But TOC is also a distinctive factor influencing Good Governance.

### **The case of the Caribbean**

This section traces the network of links between Curaçao and other countries and islands in the area, especially Aruba, Bonaire, Sint Maarten, Dominica, Haiti, Suriname, Venezuela and Colombia. This provides the context and elements to the develop the ideal type of TOCD. The mafia has been active in the region since in the 1960 in Cuba. With the arrival of Fidel Castro they moved their activities in the 1970s to the Dominican Republic, Sint Maarten and Aruba (Verhoeven *et al.*, 2007).

#### *Aruba*

This Dutch island lies off the coast of South America. The population is 108,000. The geographical location of the island is a blessing and a curse. The island is in the hands of a few powerful families. Venezuelan and Colombian groups use the island as a transit

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for the USA and Europe. TOC was very active in Aruba in the period from the 1980s until 1997 (Van Galen, 2004). In 1993 it was stated that Aruba was on its way to become the first independent state under mafia control (Blickman, 1997).

In 1986, after years of struggle and preparation, Aruba went through a period of constitutional changes and became autonomous within the Kingdom of The Netherlands. In 1985 the oil refinery left the island and there was huge unemployment and emigration. These factors made the island extremely vulnerable to TOC penetration.

In 1987 an important Italian group from Venezuela started a money laundering operation on the island. The members of this group were trying to stay out of the hands of the Italian justice. There is a network of banks, and lawyers with political and media ties. Activities involving the free zone are mentioned (Blickman, 1997; Van Galen, 2004). Some claim that between 1988 and 1992 60 per cent of the real-estate was acquired by TOC. This included the ownership of hotels and casinos. Aruba had moved from a medium risk island to a high risk island. The island was narco-complacent. Money laundering took place. Election campaigns of the main political parties were sponsored by drug money. The secret service was under pressure to release information to the government (Blickman, 1997). In other words: the underworld had penetrated the normal world (Van Galen, 2004).

Both main political parties claim that they have reversed the situation of TOC, working to move TOC off the island (Blickman, 1997). The claim of reduction of TOC activity is supported by studies. A recent study by the Dutch Government of the situation in Aruba states that in Aruba the conditions for TOC are favorable but that there are no indications of significant activity of TOC. Drug trafficking and money laundering have decreased since the turn of the century. But then there are not enough data to substantiate this claim. There is an atmosphere of corruption and conflict of interest on such a small island. But the number of hard cases is relatively low (Weenink *et al.*, 2011). Human trafficking and prostitution are a problem and are effectively combated (State Department, 2012). But recent arrests that were published by the media indicate that there is still TOC activity going on the island. In May 2011 the second in command of the Venezuela drug cartel was arrested in Aruba[6]. In July 2012 the coast guards confiscated a Venezuelan boat with 144 packages of Colombian drugs with a street value worth millions of dollars[7].

So from the 1980s to the 1990s TOC was a significant factor influencing governance in Aruba. But at the turn of the century this trend seems to have reversed.

### *Bonaire*

Bonaire is a small Dutch island off the coast of South America near Curaçao, with a population of 13,000. For many years there were allegations that the main politicians on the island were corrupt. Money flows to the political parties but also to politicians personally. There are currently investigations taking place. Apparently politicians are on the payroll of big Dutch construction companies. There are close relationships between politicians, high ranking civil servants and the business community, especially constructors and hospitality entrepreneurs. In this way companies try to get contracts from the government, in many cases financed by the Dutch and European aid funds (Dohmen and Verlaan, 2004). In 2012 these allegations have resurfaced[8]. On 13 September 2012 the court ordered the office of the Attorney General to prosecute two politicians on charges of fraud and money laundering. The case had been

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previously dropped. Some speculate that there are attempts to protect the persons involved by the Dutch authorities and politicians. Insiders declared that they fear the worst, because it involves notaries, lawyers, bank executives, high ranking civil servants, businessmen and politicians in the USA, Dubai, The Netherlands, Aruba and other parts of the Dutch Caribbean[9].

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### *Sint Maarten*

Sint Maarten, part of the Leeward Islands, is another of the Dutch Caribbean islands, the population size is 41,000. Sint Maarten is a safe haven for TOC (Zwart, 2012).

There are allegations that the political leaders of the island have been involved with TOC since the 1960s. From 1954, when constitutional changes went into effect, granting the island more autonomy within the Kingdom of The Netherlands, till his death in 1998 the island was ruled by one party, ruled by one man. Sint Maarten has developed into one of the best tourist destinations in the Caribbean. It is stated that TOC plays an important role in this development. Important hotels and casinos are built, owned and operated by mafia. They are also involved in illegal arms trafficking. The main brain in money laundering lives on the island. His status as the political leader has been taken over by a grandson (Sluis, 2004).

Rumors of TOC activities were confirmed by accountants' investigations and other investigations on good governance. The Public Prosecutor started an investigation in 1990 on TOC crimes. And in 1993 the Government of the Kingdom of The Netherlands stepped in, taking over the government for several years. This was the first and only time the Dutch had to do this.

Three politicians and high ranking officials were convicted and sentenced. In Sint Maarten the system of paying bribes by contractors is also in place. Here also the system reaches to the highest political places (Dohmen and Verlaan, 2004; Sluis, 2004).

Another more recent indication that there is TOC activity on the island was the arrest, in 2005, of a prominent hotel owner operating a hotel in Sint Maarten, who was arrested in Rome as soon as he landed on a flight from Caracas, Venezuela, on a charge of money laundering for the TOC[10].

A recent Dutch study reports that the number of Russians and Turks is also increasing. TOC is mainly involved in money laundering, drug trafficking, construction and investments. Human smuggling and trafficking is reported. Also there are indications of illegal arms possession. Sint Maarten is a transit zone and a financial center of TOC. Also fraud with passports and other related documents is mentioned (Verhoeven *et al.*, 2007). A similar study in 2011 confirmed the situation and explained that due to the small scale it is difficult for the island authorities to cope with the situation. In this edition the study of skimming and insurance fraud was added to the list (Mesu *et al.*, 2011). In 2012 a politician was sentenced for bribery[11].

Today Sint Maarten is the base of a big casino organization. This group is under investigation in Italy for tax evasion of 45 billion dollars. The owner has ties to several Prime Ministers and important politicians in the Caribbean. An executive of this group was a candidate to become the President of the Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten. This appointment never took place because of the resistance from the opposition, the business community and civil society[12][13]. The following quote from a local newspaper illustrates the situation:

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What we see here from Italy to Cupecoy and to Curaçao is a pattern. It includes companies with hidden beneficial ownership, huge amounts of money, a pretended FAO ambassadorship, and a failed attempt to penetrate our banking system.

Yet, everybody in St. Maarten who may have something to say about this, seems to be bent on leaving the casino industry and Atlantis in particular, alone. There is still no Gaming Control Board, still no insight into how the casinos contribute to the tax base. The government has not shown any initiative to change the situation, in spite of the annual struggle to balance its budget, and the parliament is emitting the sound of silence.

Is there nobody at all who thinks that what happens in Italy could easily spread to St. Maarten – if it has not already happened? Is there nobody who wants to straighten out this mess and give at least the impression that our democratic system is in control?[14].

The situation described above is not acceptable. Action has been taken to reduce TOC activities. In August 2012 international arrest warrants were issued[15]. But in October it is reported that the Minister of Justice received a lawyer of a suspect involved in TOC[16].

TOC is involved in Sint Maarten in many ways, especially money laundering and is the home of people wanted by the international justice community. There are strong indications that TOC is part of the governance of the island, a position they acquired by sponsoring political parties and politicians.

### *Dominica*

Dominica has been an independent island since 1978 and is part of the British Commonwealth. The population is 73,000. The island is a rapidly developing financial center and has to cope with money laundering[17]. CFATF (2011) reports that Dominica is not making enough progress in putting checks in place to tackle money laundering. But the island has an agreement with the USA to fight drug trafficking[18]. The island is also a transshipment point for drugs and human trafficking.

There are indications of a network of presidents and prime ministers. The President of Dominica has close ties with the Presidents of Venezuela and Cuba (Joseph, 2009; La Prensa, 2011). He also has ties with the Prime Minister of Curaçao (La Prensa, 2011). Both are among the youngest Prime Ministers of the world. The Prime Minister of Dominica came under pressure in 2011 when a casino owner, a resident of Sint Maarten, was arrested in Italy with a Dominican diplomatic passport (Fontaine, 2011).

### *Haiti*

Formerly a French island, Haiti was one of the first countries to become independent in 1804. It is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and relies heavily on the transfer of funds from abroad. The population is 9,800,000. The earthquake of 2010 has increased the poverty and further weakened the democratic institutions. Haitian organized crime groups are engaged in drug trafficking and other criminal and fraudulent activities, but do not at this time appear to be involved in terrorist finance. While not a major financial center itself, regional money laundering enterprises utilizes Haitian couriers, especially via air hub routes to Central America.

The weakness of the Haitian judicial system and the prosecution mechanism continue to leave the country vulnerable to corruption and money laundering despite

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improving financial intelligence and enforcement capacity. A positive development in this regard was the naming of a President of Haiti's Supreme Court in October 2012.

Haiti has one operational free trade zone in Ouanaminthe and two under development in Port-au-Prince. There are at least 62 casinos in Haiti, the majority unlicensed; still, online gaming is illegal[19].

There are constant allegations of corruption involving even the President of Haiti. There are rumors regarding the funds made available by the international community to aid Haiti rebuild after the earthquake. The President is a personal friend of the Prime Minister of Curaçao.

### *Suriname*

This South American country became independent from The Netherlands in 1975. The population is 493,000, and its area is 163,821 km<sup>2</sup>. It is one of the least densely populated countries, and the population is concentrated in the capital city near the coast. From 1980 till 1987 Suriname was an isolated military dictatorship also cut off from financial developmental aid. An investigation by the Dutch parliament in 1995 presents the following picture. After the coup in 1980 the military regime, during this unstable period, gets involved with the Colombia cartel, involving the coup leader, his son, individuals surrounding him, including the President of the Central Bank of Suriname. The coup leader was the head of the so-called Suri cartel. TOC, Suri cartel, has developed into a small multi-ethnic organization. The tasks are distributed stereo-typically with the Indian descendants in the function of finance (Van Traa, 1995).

These days Human Trafficking and prostitution are mentioned as a problem and are not effectively combated. Suriname is on the watch list (State Department, 2012). There are reports that the Chinese TOC is involved in this human trafficking[20].

Today Suriname is still a transit zone towards Europe, Africa and to a lesser extent the USA. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

In 2011, the Government of Suriname seized 415 kilograms of cocaine, 349 kilograms of cannabis, and 5 grams of hashish. Nationalities arrested in Suriname in 2011 for drug-related offenses included Surinamese, Dutch, Brazilians, Colombians, Venezuelans, Guyanese, and Nigerians. The Government of Suriname has yet to initiate a formal investigation into any of the cocaine seizures from 2010 found in containerized cargo originating from Suriname (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2012).

During 2011, the Government of Suriname publicly maintained its commitment to combat narcotics trafficking and took measures to apprehend and prosecute government officials for drug-related corruption. Corruption, however, remained pervasive throughout all levels of government. As a matter of policy, the government does not encourage or facilitate illicit drug production or distribution, nor is it involved in laundering the proceeds of the sale of illicit drug, but there is evidence of drug-related corruption among government officials.

Two high-level officials within the Suriname government have previous convictions for drug trafficking: President Desi Bouterse and Member of Parliament Ronnie Brunswijk have both been convicted in absentia in The Netherlands. France also has an outstanding arrest warrant for Brunswijk on similar charges. Neither has served the sentence associated with the conviction, as Suriname does not extradite its citizens (Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, 2012).

Suriname is a narco state, ruled by drug cartels, involving Brazilian groups and links the President in the past to the FARC and the President of Venezuela.



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Information disclosed by Wikileaks connects the President in the recent past with drug traffickers in Guayana[21][22][23][24]. On 16 September 2012 the Dutch press reports that the police investigation has shown proof that the President is still involved in drug trafficking[25]. Suriname responds by stating that this is a campaign of the Dutch Government against the President and Suriname.

### *Venezuela*

A South American republic, Venezuela has been ruled since 1999 by the populist leader President Chavez, who on 7 October 2012 got re-elected for a third presidential term till 2019. The role Venezuela plays in the TOC is unclear. Some sources state that Venezuela is a narco state. Others state that Venezuela is fighting TOC, namely drug trafficking. In 2005 Venezuela stopped the collaboration with the USA stating that the US officials involved were spies. But in 2012 the Venezuelan authorities made big arrests[26]. It is possible that Venezuela is a victim of international political propaganda of the USA[27].

Some observers state the following:

The drug cartels are a key political weapon and along with Venezuela's oil machine, constitute the fuel on which the vehicle of evil travels and is a key component of the asymmetric war[28].

What is meant with asymmetric warfare is explained in the following quotes:

Indeed, if state authority collapses giving way to anarchy and criminality, society itself deteriorates up to the point of becoming vulnerable as the law turns into ashes. Social and individual life turns, in the words of Mainwaring, "nasty, brutish, and short". Such vulnerability is the result of a power vacuum that could be taken over by any force capable of restoring order or co-existing with this gangster state. Democracy also collapses as the psychologically devastated people begin to request the presence of a strong leader. People demand order and thus they elect a leader that could lead them into further chaos. In the case of Latin America, this situation could pave the way for a Chavez-supported leader who is likely to exploit a situation of instability and popular discontent. Drug cartels are not interested in taking over the reins of government. Mostly, they live within the framework of a weak or an accomplice state. Rather, they are interested in the profits. They have no political agenda per se. However, it is precisely politically motivated forces such as Hugo Chavez, the Bolivarian revolutionaries, the FARC and the Iranians that would exploit this situation politically [...].

Thus, to our knowledge, the US government has not developed a response yet to a report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) that Chavez has become a partner of the drug cartels. Likewise, there has not been a reaction to serious reports about training of FARC (and probably other) terrorists in Venezuela, or the connections between the FARC and drug cartels to the government of Rafael Correa in Ecuador[29].

The role of Venezuela is unclear. Sources contradict each other. What is clear is that Venezuela plays a role in drug trafficking.

### *Colombia*

Colombia, Bolivia and Peru constitute the area where most of the world's cocaine is grown. Most of it is sold in the USA and Europe. TOC gangs operating at large-scale dominate the business. The Caribbean island nations function as transshipment

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locations and centers for money laundering. The TOC has become intertwined with terrorist groups like the FARC. Currently, in 2012, there are ongoing peace talks between the government of Colombia and the FARC[30]. On 17 September 2012 the media report that the FARC has an income from drug trafficking of €900 million. This money is invested in real estate, the transportation sector and hotel chains, in Germany, The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Venezuela, Argentina, Costa Rica and Panama. This capital will be used to compensate victims of the FARC.

### *Curaçao*

Curaçao is a Dutch Caribbean island that on 10 October 2010 changed its constitutional status, after years of preparation, obtaining more autonomy but remaining in the Kingdom of The Netherlands. The population is 150,000.

The role of TOC in Curaçao has been exposed; financing of political parties is a sensitive issue. Business uses this as a way to obtain influence in government (Sluis, 2004, p. 103). Tielkemeijer (2010), a former public prosecutor, describes in his autobiographical book several cases of organized crime and corruption, going back to 1997. The picture that develops is one of organized crime: drug trafficking, money laundering, prostitution, sponsoring of political parties, manipulation of the media, bribery and penetrating government and governance. He concludes that the underworld has penetrated into the normal world. In 2011 Baselmans published his book *Curaçao; Maffia eiland*. He concludes that the island is infiltrated by TOC. He states that TOC is involved in drug- and human-trafficking, money laundering and pornography, gambling and real estate.

In the 1980s, the drug economy took off and reached a peak in 2000. During this period drug related crime exploded, based on the transshipment of drugs from Colombia to Europe through The Netherlands. Drug arrests on flights departing from Aruba and Curaçao for The Netherlands and the USA were far from rare. The Government of The Netherlands claimed to have arrested as many as 500 drug couriers a week at Schiphol in October 2002, many of them from the Caribbean. Drug related crime on the island was suppressed by introducing the coastguard and extra security measures at the airports of Curaçao and in The Netherlands. The pressure from The Netherlands played an important role in this (Sluis, 2004; Goede, 2008).

There are close relationships between politicians, high ranking civil servants and the business community. Construction companies have key politicians on their payroll and bribes were paid to high ranking civil servants. Party financing is not transparent. This system was first reported in 1975. Because several cases served in court more is known about the *modus operandi*. In 2000 a main “boss” of a political party was convicted for taking bribes. He remained an advisor of the party when the party was part of the governing coalition in government. People who had to deal with him declared that they were afraid of him because they were intimidated (Dohmen and Verlaan, 2004; Sluis, 2004, p. 104). As more information became available authorities started to act. In 2001 anonymous groups started to publish information on the networks involved in corruption. This information was also sent to the Dutch Minister of Antillean Affairs. In 2001 the then Prime Minister requested the authorities to start an investigation into corruption associated with the privatization of SOE. In 2003 an extensive investigation was started and several politicians were convicted. In December 2003, 17 persons were convicted on corruption charges. This illustrates that TOC has penetrated in the governance of the island and that authorities successfully are fighting back.

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The parties with the most access to bribery money and illicit funds had the best performance in elections (Dohmen and Verlaan, 2004; Tielkemeijer, 2010). Once a government is in office there are indications how they serve their campaign financiers. There are documented cases. A Prime Minister and Minister of Justice misused their powers to facilitate corruption and TOC. One of the well-documented cases is facilitated of the traveling of prostitutes (human trafficking) from the region to the island. And attempts of the Minister of Justice to reduce the sentences of individuals involved in the TOC (Tielkemeijer, 2010; Sluis, 2004).

The Wikileaks[31] cables, leaked in 2010, paint a portrait of the island as a hub for drug and human trafficking. The Venezuelan Government is said to have some influence in local political parties.

On June 2012 citizens of Curaçao filed a petition to the Government of the Kingdom of The Netherlands. The picture presented is of a government financed by TOC, serving the interest of TOC and taking control of institutions to protect and facilitate TOC. The following cases are mentioned: The Minister of Justice intervened directly in an investigation of a case of money laundering by a big sponsor of the election campaign of his political party[32]. The brother of the suspect is the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance tried to appoint an accountant affiliated with a casino group in Sint Maarten, as the Chair of the Supervisory Board of the Central Bank[33]. People affiliated with the gaming and gambling world have been appointed as members of the Supervisory Board of the Gaming Control Board. The Secret Service has been shut down and is being reconstructed under Dutch supervision[34]. The Prime Minister revealed personal financial documents of the President of the Central Bank. The Prime Minister made jokes about tapping the phones of judges and other influential people. The government ignores the rulings of the Court of Justice. A member of parliament intimidated the press and the Prime Minister did not defend the rights of the free press[35].

Before being shut down the Secret Service had already established relationships between TOC and politicians. A memo from the Secret Service of Curaçao, dated 27 October 2010, states that there are links between the Prime Minister and the casino in Sint Maarten, and that the Minister of Economic Affairs probably has a link with a political movement in the Middle East. Several ministers are corrupt and take bribes to speed up bureaucratic processes and to grant leases of government sections of land to project developers (IDVC/ADDVC, 2010).

Other international media publications add the following pieces to the puzzle. In the Venezuelan media, in April 2012, it is stated that the Government of Curaçao is in the hold of TOC, and that Curaçao is involved in business transactions with Syria, side stepping the international boycott. Also, Curaçao is a meeting place of infamous figures from Venezuela and the Prime Minister is friendly towards Iran, just like the President of Venezuela[36][37].

The more TOC gets involved in government the poorer the performance of the government and the economy. The performance of the government deteriorated to the extent that the Government of the Kingdom of The Netherlands had to intervene in July 2012[38]. In October 2012 the governing coalition lost the majority, when two members of parliament withdrew their support. The government accused these two members of parliament of selling their seats and refused to step down. New elections were on the way. During the election campaign of 2012 there were articles in the newspapers stating that the by now former Prime Minister was buying votes with money from TOC[39].

Curaçao plays a role in the TOC. During the process of constitutional change the TOC became very active influencing political parties, especially those advertising more autonomy from The Netherlands.

### **The ideal type of TOCD**

Based on the case study of Curaçao and the other global cases it is possible to identify the following characteristics of the ideal type of TOCD:

- The primary objective of TOCD is the accumulation of power and control of the Caribbean island states.
- Criminals achieve this by taking over populist political parties by financing election campaigns. These political parties are often run by a party boss, and not always by the political leader, who in some cases remains behind the scene.
- Once these parties become part of a government, TOC focuses on getting control of the Prime Minister or President, the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Economic Affairs; the Minister of Infrastructure is also of interest to TOC.
- They try to get hold of the Secret Service to eliminate intelligence information about their operations, and also to obtain information through information sharing with other Secret Services.
- They also try to control the Central Bank for the same reason.
- Through the government they try to control SOEs for the sake of power to control the economy and society, but also for business and money laundering.
- Ministers appoint civil servants who are willing to follow instructions to key positions. Through the Minister of Justice they try to influence court cases. They try to get control of the Citizens Registry and Election Bureau, elections and papers for immigration and passports. To facilitate their transactions they infiltrate the immigration organization, the customs organization, and the police.
- To influence elections it is also important to get control of the media. They do so by paying journalists, making the media dependent on their advertising payments, buying air time and even owning or partially owning some media channels.
- They get involved in business in the gaming industry. The best known is the casino but also the local lottery business. Real Estate and yachting are also businesses TOC gets involved in. The purpose is money laundering.
- Complicated legal structures are created by lawyers and financial experts that become part of the TOC. The main purpose is money laundering of the money obtained from the illegal trafficking activities.
- The Prime-Ministers and Presidents on the various islands of the Caribbean form a network.
- The ultimate objective of TOC is to establish an autonomous (semi independent) Caribbean island state as part of their global strategy. The autonomy provides freedom to act, but the association with The Netherlands makes the financial sector much more interesting. The strategy is to accumulate power.
- There is some sort of an alliance between TOC, terrorist groups and populist politicians.

- The effect of TOC is devastating to the economy and society. They almost cease to function properly. The economy does not function as it is supposed to, and normative theories of democracy, public administration and governance no longer apply. Economic growth diminishes and unemployment and crime rise.

### Concluding remarks

This article inductively reasons that it is plausible that TOC influences the governance of Caribbean SIDS and presents an ideal type of the TOCD.

TOC is a global phenomenon. There is a convergence of TOC, drug trafficking and terrorism (Cilluffo, 2000; Arnone and Borlini, 2010). The TOCD in the Caribbean is real. In small islands there are few resources to investigate TOC, especially during transition phases on the islands, such as constitutional changes or coping with natural disasters, when the situation is unstable (Budima, 2006). The fact that political parties and parliaments are corrupt is not a surprise. Investigations conducted by Transparency International confirm this (Antilliaans Dagblad, 2012). Part of the solution is zero tolerance of TOC and corruption and global cooperation (Van Dijk, 2007).

In some instances stakeholders state that organized crime promotes economic growth and social development. But this is not the case:

In our view, the most important negative effect of organized crime, offsetting all possible benefits, is its pernicious impact on governance. Organized crime tends to erode the integrity of those holding a public office, including those responsible for upholding the rule of law. Where organized crime groups are powerful, legislation, policy-making and legal rulings no longer serve the general interest but the interests of the few (Van Dijk, 2007).

In other words, organized crime distorts market mechanisms, governance procedures and management principles.

A UN report states that drug trafficking and corruption inhibit economic growth:

While revenues from the cocaine business declined, overall economic development improved. In Peru, GDP grew by 4% per year over the 1990-2000 period, that is, more than the overall economic growth in Latin America and the Caribbean over the same period (3.3% per year). Similarly, the Colombian economy grew, on average, by 4.4% per year over the 2000-2008 period, which was above the average for the Latin America and Caribbean region (3.6%). In parallel, corruption declined in Colombia. In 1999, Transparency International rated Colombia the country most affected by corruption in South America. By 2009, it had the second best rating, second only to Chile (United Nations – UNODC, 2010).

To successfully fight TOC corruption must be pushed back:

Despite all the initiatives and new legislations, the progress in the fight against corruption has been very limited. As seen, corruption pollutes the highest levels of government and society in many countries in Latin America. Corruption spreads to the public and private sectors and the majority of the countries are ill-equipped to confront it. The difficulty of consolidating democratic institutions and the lack of an efficient, strong and accessible judicial system only continue to exacerbate this problem (Nagle, 2002).

But the case of the Dutch islands is unique.

Curaçao is part of Europe because of its constitutional status of being an autonomous country within the Kingdom of The Netherlands. Curaçao is attractive for TOC because of the logistics that link it to Europe via The Netherlands, making the

movement of people, goods and money very efficient. This creates a situation that people, goods and money are, in a way, already in Europe when they enter Curaçao.

The islands are working on solutions with limited success. It is not a coincidence that the islands confront similar problems and that governments are unsuccessful in the battle against crime. That is why cooperation seems natural.

But because Curaçao is part of the Kingdom of The Netherlands, the Government of The Netherlands is very much involved in fighting TOC. The majority of the judges are Dutch and have little or no attachments with the locals. The same holds true for the Attorney General's Office. This makes the judicial system independent.

The island remains attractive for TOC but this is counterbalanced by collaboration with The Netherlands and the USA. The Dutch islands of Curaçao, Bonaire, Aruba and Sint Maarten have done a lot over the years to fight TOC. In 1996 the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard became operational[40]. In 1997 a Financial Intelligence Unit became operational[41]. In 2000 the Forward Operating Location was started. In the period between October 2009 and September 2010, in Curaçao and Aruba 145,000 kilo cocaine, 3,000 kilo marihuana and 60.8 kilo heroin were confiscated. The total value of these drugs was 3.1 billion dollars[42]. In October 2012 Curaçao approved a law stating that all ministers need to be screened before they can be appointed.

Based on the cases presented in this paper one might conclude that these Caribbean SIDS are the ones that organized crime has penetrated and are difficult to clean up. However, the opposite is true. These cases can be described because TOC has been disclosed to the greatest extent and the authorities are achieving success in fighting these organizations. In other SIDS organized crime may be present but unrevealed.

The location of the island near drug producing countries like Colombia and Venezuela plays an important role. Curaçao's many beaches on the south coast are easily accessed by boats from South America. That is why the coastguard and forward operating location have been established. But telecommunication and global logistics are also relevant. They are used for deal making, transportation and banking.

## Notes

1. The international literature does not use the term mafiocracy but uses the term TOC (Hofmann, 2009). But the term mafiocracy is used by Wickham-Crowley (1991). "The distinguishing features of mafiocracy are as follows: (1) the weakening or obliteration of party politics and loyalties, and their replacement by a quite unveiled form of individual patronage politics, embodied in extreme degrees of corruption, spoil systems, and protection rackets; (2) the easing out of the 'ruling class' from decisive control of the government apparatus upon upper-class properties; (3) an increasing disjunction between the state and society which, however, weakens the state apparatus while consolidating the power of the individual government official" (Wickham-Crowley, 1991).
2. Klaus von Lampe, Definitions of Organized Crime, [www.organized-crime.de/organizedcrimedefinitions.htm](http://www.organized-crime.de/organizedcrimedefinitions.htm) (accessed 24 July 2012).
3. [www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html?ref=menutop](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html?ref=menutop) (accessed 4 July 2012).
4. In March 2011, Chaco Castro a radio journalist in Curaçao, introduced the term "mafiocracy" for the first time in Curaçao. He gives credit to Pino Solanas.
5. [www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2012/July/new-unodc-campaign-highlights-transnational-organized-crime-as-an-us-870-billion-a-year-business.html?ref=fs1](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2012/July/new-unodc-campaign-highlights-transnational-organized-crime-as-an-us-870-billion-a-year-business.html?ref=fs1) (accessed 16 July 2012).

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12. [www.todaysexm.com/2011/11/16/italy-investigates-questionable-mega-loan-to-atlantisbetplus/](http://www.todaysexm.com/2011/11/16/italy-investigates-questionable-mega-loan-to-atlantisbetplus/) (accessed 16 July 2012).
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14. [www.todaysexm.com/2011/11/16/opinion-atlantis-casino/](http://www.todaysexm.com/2011/11/16/opinion-atlantis-casino/) (accessed 17 July 2012).
15. [www.smn-news.com/st-maarten-st-martin-news/10018-atlantis-owner-ducking-interpol-cannot-be-found-on-st-maarten-italy-placed-francesco-corallos-name-on-interpol-wanted-list.html](http://www.smn-news.com/st-maarten-st-martin-news/10018-atlantis-owner-ducking-interpol-cannot-be-found-on-st-maarten-italy-placed-francesco-corallos-name-on-interpol-wanted-list.html) (accessed 23 August 2012).
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### About the author

Dr Miguel Goede is President of The Association for Public Administration of The Netherlands Antilles and Aruba and is the former Rector Magnificus at the University of Curaçao, previously known as the University of The Netherlands Antilles.