



**THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE
AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL
ORGANIZED CRIME**

The Think Tanks Forum

Friday, 31 May 2013, Rose Garden Plaza, Rome

Attendance

- Anton du Plessis, Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria, South Africa
- Charlie Edwards, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), London, UK
- Ernesto Savona, Transcrime, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore and University of Trento, Italy
- Paula Miraglia, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Margaret Beare, York University, Toronto, Canada
- Jorge Chabat, Center for Research and Teaching in Economics, Mexico City
- Louise Shelley, George Mason University, Arlington, USA
- Ruslan Stefanov, Centre for the Study of Democracy, Sofia, Bulgaria
- Ivan Brisco, Clingendael Institute, The Hague, Netherlands
- Yvon Dandurand, International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, Vancouver, Canada
- Hans Mathieu, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Bogota, Colombia
- Judith Vorrath, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWF), Berlin, Germany
- Camino Kavanagh, Center on International Cooperation (CIC), New York / West Africa Commission on Drugs (WACD)
- Karolina Wałęcik, Open Society Foundation (OSF), Budapest, Hungary
- Arthur Boutellis, International Peace Institute (IPI), New York, USA
- Ottillia Maunganidze, Institute for Security Studies, Pretoria, South Africa
- Mark Shaw, Global Initiative
- Peter Gastrow, Global Initiative
- Tuesday Reitano, Global Initiative
- Paul Dippenaar, Global Initiative

Objective of the Meeting

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organised Crime is conceived as a transitional, catalytic process that will facilitate the reconfiguration of thinking, coordination and response on transnational organised crime, and to support the sustainable translation and embedding of new approaches into existing multi-lateral frameworks.

The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (www.globalinitiative.net) has recently begun its operations. This meeting was a first step towards trying to understand how think tanks and academic institutions already actively working on the issue of transnational organised crime (TOC) could potentially interact with the Global Initiative as a forum for debate, have an avenue to impact on policy, and enhance collaboration.

Due to the short notice with which the meeting was convened – which was scheduled on the margins of the EU Cocaine Route Conference (28-30 May) – it was not possible to confirm attendance by a broader global representation, though outreach has begun to think tanks and academics in Asia and Africa for future meetings.

Role of Think Tanks in Responding to TOC

The meeting began with a tour de table, during which all participants briefly introduced themselves, and summarised the focus of their work on TOC. The second session of the day was intended to reflect further on the evolution of the policy environment, and what role think tanks and their research agendas have to play in responding to TOC. The debate during the morning highlighted a number of issues of common interest:

- Research around TOC is not yet a discipline of its own, but tends to be caught within the disciplines of criminology, fragile states, counter-terrorism, or, to a certain extent, corruption. Accordingly, there are no research institutions dedicated to studying TOC, and those working on the issue tend to do so on their own within their organisations.
- All participants agreed that even though TOC is not a new issue, the policy debate is currently rising on national agendas, and in a different way from the past. There are different dynamics – globalisation, changing economic patterns – that have brought new interlocutors to the table and fundamentally changed the debate from past, in particular since the TOC Convention was approved in 2000.
- There is a growing recognition on the part of Governments that TOC is a threat that they have to take seriously, and that it is increasingly intertwined with issues of national security and sovereignty, and with core sectors such as energy, the economy, and development.
- TOC as an issue extends far beyond just drugs. Participants noted research work and interest in human trafficking and migrant smuggling, cybercrime, piracy and environmental crimes.
- Participants noted specific geographic interests in TOC challenges in West and Central Africa, in Latin America, and in Central Asia, in particular, as related to the effects that the ISAF withdrawal will have on trends in heroin trafficking out of Afghanistan.
- Participants noted the increased blurring between state and non-state actors, and the infiltration of criminality and corruption into the highest levels of governance and the state, which creates new challenges. The links between TOC and corruption were debated within a number of frameworks, including in relation to governance, major events (e.g. sports) and in the criminal justice sector.
- Participants debated the utility of undertaking the TOC debate through a fragile-state lens. While there is clearly a relationship between state fragility and TOC, it is by no means linear. Furthermore, while there is evidence of TOC exacerbating and prolonging conflict, couching this within a conflict prevention / peace building lens does not offer additional entry points for resolving the issue.
- While there are many different definitions / perceptions of TOC, it is clear that the costs of TOC are increasing, and that our existing policies have had little effect. In particular the dangers of a militarised response to TOC were noted in a number of contexts. A broader range of actors is recognizing the need for new tools to respond to TOC in their daily work. This has created a real space for think tanks and researchers to engage with policymakers, to develop more effective policies that have greater impact. There is a shift in perspective

from crime control towards addressing the conditions that enable organised crime to flourish.

- The inability of existing multi-lateral structures to address TOC was noted, as was a growing disenchantment with UNTOC as a response. The discussion noted that there was an increased need to mobilise both political will and community level advocacy if there is to be sufficient momentum to impact TOC. This requires greater knowledge and advocacy, so that citizens begin to realise why combatting TOC is important for them on a tangible level, and not just a western concern.

One challenge identified by the group was defining or quantifying TOC because of its fluidity and its capacity to evolve quickly both in terms of its composition, criminal flows, but also in its relationship to the state. An engaged discussion was held on the possibility of creating a typology of organised crime groups, which could classify groups according to a number of criteria: e.g. origins / structures / products and services / incomes and costs / harm and impact. If this is then measured against the capacity of state institutions, it could provide a systematic framework for understanding OC and its impact, which in turn could indicate the entry points for a successful response.

Implications for a response: Role of the Global Initiative

After an introductory presentation by Mark Shaw on the Global Initiative, participants were invited to comment on its concept and scope, and to offer their insights on how the Global Initiative might add value to their work. Key issues that arose during the discussion were:

- Participants questioned how serious UN Member States really are about TOC. For the UN and multi-lateral systems, panels of experts remain the most potent tool to highlight TOC and corruption issues in countries. Funding for TOC activities, even in countries like Guinea-Bissau, remains a challenge. The Global Initiative, if properly supported, could have a very important role to play in raising awareness and mobilising public opinion, but also in catalysing political will around the issue. This will not be easy, but would be a significant contribution. If the Global Initiative is to work effectively at a national or a regional level, then it needs to be well grounded in the countries concerned, and find the right interlocutors and entry points to have real impact. A combination of public pressure and the combined support from a sufficient number of governments will be required to support implementation.
- The TOC paradigm has for too long been shaped by Northern / Western debates. There is considerable suspicion on the part of the BRICS countries about engaging with the traditional agenda of international cooperation, which has historically been linked to economic interests. As they now have more influence, the BRICS nations may welcome a new forum through which to engage. It was also noted that TOC is increasingly becoming a factor in the Middle East and North Africa. These regions have not been part of debates such as these, but that the GI could be a means to draw them in.
- Those participants whose work reaches into technical assistance and capacity building noted that many policy makers and law enforcement officials do not understand why they are fighting TOC, and do not necessarily see the harm beyond the criminal act and the seizures of illicit goods. Policy makers do not systematically reach out to the academic community. There is a need for a more sophisticated debate, particularly within law enforcement, for them to understand the context and rationale behind countering TOC. If

the Global Initiative, with its law enforcement roots, has the capacity to bridge this divide, then it can shift the debate.

- The value of redefining the TOC debate into a harm reduction framework was discussed. In contexts such as those where there is significant societal violence triggered or exacerbated by OC, this can be appropriate. However, the ability to capture the essence of harm and harm reduction within a debate on governance, corruption and the rule of law, and to make this a compelling and tangible narrative, is more complex.
- The lack of understanding and capacity to respond was also noted in regards to development and political actors in fragile states. The Network within the Global Initiative could have a role to play in offering analysis, expertise and lessons from other experience in contexts such as Mali, to ensure an effective political economy and to nuance the political and development debate with an understanding of OC dynamics. Over time, the Global Initiative could even be more proactive, and bring out the best of what we know about OC and how to respond, and proactively bring it to those countries that are most vulnerable to these threats as a preventive measure. As a first step, one practical area for the Global Initiative and the Network to engage could be in analysing and improving the methodology for OC threat assessments.
- The website of the Global Initiative could be a useful resource in bringing together the wide range of literature on organised crime which is currently very dispersed. A regular update on TOC developments sent by email could also add value. There is only the need to tread carefully on issues of copyright.

On the overall concept of the Global Initiative, participants offered the following feedback:

- Why would the Global Initiative want to limit its existence to 3 years? This serves as a disincentive to engage in many ways, as there is only a limited return on investment and effort for partners. Furthermore, if the Initiative, or specific components are successful, then they should be maintained.
- Participants noted a dichotomy between the Global Initiative's position on individual versus institutional membership in The Network. This specifically becomes a concern in regards to having research reports or products "owned by the Network", as these may contradict an institutional perspective.
- Participants felt that it was unclear whether the Global Initiative was a research institute or a catalytic forum, whether it would implement its own projects or even fund the projects of others. There was some concern in regards to duplication of efforts, or that the Global Initiative would compete with existing work, including by those included in the Forum themselves. The value that the Global Initiative will add, and how it will work, distinct from what already exists, needs to be well defined.
- Caution was also offered on allowing The Network to become so big as it becomes unwieldy to manage. Much of the value of the Global Initiative will come in its ability to be nimble and responsive, and a large network might be unwieldy in that regard. It was also asked what the procedure for membership and vetting would be, to ensure the right members who are sufficiently thematically and regionally representative.
- The need for prioritization was also considered to be important. The scope for the Global Initiative is broad and ambitious. It is not clear how initial priorities had been identified, and how Network members might feed into current and future prioritization.

Next Steps for the Think Tanks Forum

In discussing how the think tanks dialogue and the Global Initiative could move forward on a shared agenda, some areas of agreement emerged:

- Participants were pleased to continue the discussions through the Think Tank Forum and be associated with the Network.
- Participants expressed the desire for the group to be convened again..
- Participants would welcome the opportunity to review and comment on concept notes for upcoming activities, and on preliminary drafts of initial products.
- Participants will offer suggestions on new organisations from their regions / disciplines, that could be approached to become part of the Think Tanks Forum.
- Participants would consider linking to the Global Initiative website and promoting its work through their own channels.
- The Secretariat of the GI will approach participants to put the logos of their organisations on the website of the GI.
- The Secretariat will update on upcoming meetings where Think Tanks can participate, and will look for an opportunity to reconvene the group.