**Transnational Organized Crime: An Overview from Six Continents**: Jay Albanese and Philip Reichel (SAGE Publications, 2013. ISBN 978-1-4522-9007-2).

*Reviewed by Robert Chapa*1

Transnational Organized Crime: An Overview from Six Continents presents scholarly and well-researched information on transnational organized crime (TOC). Albanese and Reichel (2013) discuss TOC as a network of loosely affiliated criminal organizations located in different countries. These networks operate similarly to a legitimate business. The concept and applied application of a TOC's goods and services will start in one country and then progress through other countries using supply chains affiliates, marketing, and delivery operations. The defining difference between TOC's management businesses is that the goods and services are illegal and often negatively impact the general population. The book covers all areas of TOCs from discussions on organized crime in the US, human slavery, drug cartels, and Terrorism. Other topics are also covered and contribute to the general understanding of TOCs.

Chapter one introduces the overall concept of TOCs as networks that are affiliated throughout the globe. The comparison between TOCs with legitimate businesses is made here. For example, the supply chain for ecstasy is described using the model of the manufacture, production, and distribution business processes. The authors do an excellent job of explaining the elements and stakeholders. Additionally, criminal networks are dynamic organizations that can adjust to input from networks quickly. These networks have few levels and are associated with mutual interests in the forms of profit and power. Phil Williams (2001) validates these assertions in *Transnational Criminal networks* (Williams, 2001). Criminal networks are described as fluid or dynamic with the ability to act nimbly and quickly. Due to networks maintaining relationships, their connections are easy to model with sophisticated software now used by law enforcement.

Hierarchies are also discussed in chapter 1. Albanese and Reichel (2013) explain the differences between standard rigid hierarchies such as the mafia organizations with an all-powerful leader at the top and regional hierarchies. Albanese and Reichel give the example of motorcycle gangs. These organizations have a certain amount of autonomy between levels. Williams also validates this description. He makes assertions about the hierarchy characteristics with one exception. He claims that the Mafia allows some freedom to their local branches. This point stands in contrast to Albanese and Reichel. Another interesting finding was that 70% of TOCs operate in at least three countries for conducting business processes. This high percentage is surprising because of the number of broken laws and the number of actors needed (Albanese & Reichel, 2013).

Additionally, Albanese and Reichel (2013) assert that TOCs flourish in corrupt countries, do not respect the rule of law, and have weak governments. This assertion was supported by the work of Williams (2001). There is little doubt that TOCs become powerful and set up their bases of operations in countries with these traits. The high degree of poverty, hunger, unemployment, instability make easy prey of the locals. TOCs in some regions may often be seen as the authority or the law.

Probably the strongest argument for the growth of TOCs is the ingredients of globalization, the ability of the population to be highly mobile, and the high advancements in technology in the areas of communication specifically. The establishment of the Internet has allowed illegal activity such as fraud and gambling to prosper across borders and boundaries. These revelations were further validated by Williams (2001). An area where the authors were absent on material was in the vastness of the roles of TOCs. For example, Williams describes the networks in terms of defensive structures. He goes into detail about how the outer core of the organization is the first line of defense and how it is more difficult to penetrate the TOCs as a focus on the center is made.

Chapter two discusses TOCs in North America. The authors point out that due to the adjacent borders of the countries and the large population of the United States, fertile ground for organized crime is laid. Albanese and Reichel also state that North Americans' wealth draws organized crime to the US. The geographical nature of the United States by both land and water accessibility further contributes to TOC's appeal. Sadly, the authors do not project confidence in the American citizenry to dull the desire for illicit goods and services.

Additionally, a history of the development of organized crime is discussed. Traditional crimes such as murder, extortion, fraud, prostitution, gambling as a means of profit generation were examined. However, it was the discussion of modern TOC actions relevant to the contemporary world. For example, technology has provided the means to commit crimes from a distance, anonymously, and with higher profit potential. TOCs have tapped into data cables to steal credit card information from various department stores. The credit card information was then sent overseas, where they were used to create counterfeit cards. The level of sophistication and technical ability should raise eyebrows.

Albanese and Reichel (2013) focused on five ethnic groups, the Italian Cosa Nostra, Russian, Chinese, Mexican cartels, and Canadian TOCs. The activities, types of crimes, structure, and the preference for violence are discussed in detail. Of the five ethnic groups, the Russian organized crime (ROC) has exhibited strong stability for high-tech criminal activity. In addition to credit card fraud and other hacking-style activities, ROC has become proficient at creating fake companies that appeal to investors but make a money-making scheme. Stock market manipulation fraud is an area of active ROC focus. Of course, the Mexican drug cartels are primarily known for manufacturing and distributing drugs. Another trait of the Mexican drug cartels is extensive violence and intimidation. They have no issues killing journalists or using car bombs to convey their menacing authority. The authors mentioned an interesting point about the Chinese TOC: their activities tend to be constrained among their people/neighborhoods and, therefore, go unnoticed by the public. Aside from discussing the various criminal activities of TOC, the chapter does an excellent job of suggesting countermeasures for law enforcement.

Some of the countermeasures pinioned by the authors were the encouragement of outreach law enforcement in the countries where the TOCs have command control structures. The purpose is to engage collaboratively with local law enforcement and criminal justice organizations to stem the influence and actions of TOCs. Another recommendation is information sharing with these country's law enforcement organizations. Collaboration and cooperation between international law enforcement are critical in the fight against TOCs. Furthermore, the authors believe that the borders are insecure. Unless more robust border security is implemented, illicit goods and services will continue to find a way into the US. Other studies such as William (2001) and Castle (1997) validated these assertions and suggestions. However, unless the citizenry of the United States takes it upon themselves to remove the demand for illicit goods and services, it is unlikely that law enforcement will stop the supply part of the equation.

Additionally, Castle (1997) better explained an area that Albanese and Reichel touched on. That was the threat of TOCs to state security. For example, Castle discusses four national security characteristics impacted by TOCs: core values, freedom from grave or existential threats, control or the use of force, and control over territory. As TOC grows, it threatens these state security characteristics (Castle, 1997).

Chapter three examines TOCs in Latin America. An in-depth history of the roots of TOCs in Latin America is given. An interesting point that the author makes is that the shift in governments from authoritarianism to democracy allowed for the conditions of TOCs to develop. Because of the lucrative drug trade market TOC, 's has entrenched itself in nearly every part of Latin America's society. Their presence is felt in politics and especially the economy of these countries. The authors focus on three factors institutional power, political and economic roles, and the condition of the reporters from the perspective of relationships with their neighbors. The author states that both the financial elites and political powerbrokers are subject to corruption due to the lack of respect for the rule of law. In these poorer countries, the means to adequately secure their borders is insufficient to stop powerful TOCs from moving products. These observations are supported by Castle (1997).

The sad story of Manuel Noriega is told in excruciating detail. The narrative is about absolute corruption. The central theme is the military's unchecked power and its relationship with drug cartels. During Noriega's reign, Panama was a TOC's Disneyland. Drug traffickers established cocaine manufacturing sites, laundered money, and enjoyed physical protection from international warrants. Had it not been for the United States' shift in its focus from communism to drugs, Panama would have continued to act as a robust base for TOCs. Unfortunately, Panama was not alone in its limited ability to resist powerful TOCs.

Columbia and its weak government provided fertile grounds for TOCs. In this section, the FARC insurgent group and the Cali cartel under the leadership of Pablo Escobar were discussed. The themes for the success of TOCs in Columbia were nearly identical for those in Panama. The government was weak, the citizenry was poor, and the elites were vulnerable to corruption. Additionally, Columbia offered an excellent geographical location for the movement of illicit goods and services. Castle (1997) made the same observations and emphasized the geographical element's role in TOCs appeal.

Another event that contributed to the rise of TOC's Latin America was the end of the Cold War. According to the authors, conditions were created that allowed TOCs to embed themselves in the social-economic and political layers of several countries in Latin America. The size and strength of TOCs in Latin America were examined. Pandillas and maras were highlighted for their different size, organizational strength, and sphere of influence. These groups are based almost entirely on locality. They range from activity and power in the small neighborhood to much more significant impact across cities or countries. Because of TOC's firm entrenchment, governments attempt to address the best methodology for limiting or suppressing their activities.

There are only three options for a government in dealing with a TOC. They can coexist with the TOC. If the government chooses this option, the TOC will choose evasion. The second option is disruption. In this case, the TOC will focus on the corruption of political players and others of influence. The third option is elimination. If a country chooses this option, the TOC has no choice but to confront the government and its forces.

It should be noted that confrontation is the least desirable option for both the state and the TOC due to the cost of lives, profit, and economics. However, extreme violence and open confrontation are inevitable if a TOC senses that the government is so weak that armed confrontation will benefit the TOC. Castle (1997) argues that the international community must collaborate with these countries to encourage continued resistance to TOCs. He emphasizes sharing of information, assets, and banking enforcements.

The TOC Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) is in open conflict with the Brazilian government. It has extensive operations ranging from the prison system through Brazil's two largest cities, and its affiliation with the FARC is emphasized. The PCC had no problems with murdering police and public officials. Furthermore, attacks on police stations and banks were committed. The main point to take away from this example was that, in this case, the PCC increased its power and strengthened its position in Brazil. The Brazilian authorities were not strong enough to win the conflict with the PCC. This points back to a weak government and poverty population, allowing TOC to maintain influence.

Even though international efforts have suppressed TOCs in Latin America, there is no evidence that we have had a quantitative impact on TOCs. The weak governments, poverty of the people, and geographical characteristics of the Latin countries continue to contribute to the establishment and growth of TOCs. Unless the population embraces respect for the rule of law, no measurable changes are likely. However, because there is an impact on international security by TOCs, Castle (1997) asserts that inaction is not an option. Stronger countries must lead the way in fighting the threat. Albanese and Reichel did not sufficiently emphasize the impact on the interests and security of law-abiding states by TOCs and the very fact that they operate in a borderless methodology.

Chapter 4 explores TOCs in Europe. The focus was on criminal activities, offender structures, and illegal governance. Albanese and Reichel reveal that TOCs in Europe are primarily made up of different national and ethnic groups. Their crimes spread beyond Europe into several countries, including the United States. The TOC's offender structures integrate market-based interaction, criminal networks, and market-type organizations. The chapter further explores TOCs from two different perspectives. The first is an internal issue with an additional location in a country due to the crime and border crossing activity. The second issue is the global impact caused by the criminal activity of TOCs. A most exciting assertion was that TOCs comprise three main components, criminal activities, offender structures, and illegal governance. The authors gave an in-depth study to all three categories in a unique way not found in other research such as Castle (1997) or Williams (2001).

According to the chapter, some of the criminal's goods and services provided by TOCs are ecstasy, amphetamine, stolen vehicles, illegal waste, stolen credit cards, and a variety of Internet crimes. European TOCs are also the traffickers of human organs. Each step involves identifying and exploiting victims to arrange for the transplantation. The authors explain how different crimes such as trafficking in people, cigarettes, or electronic waste go from one country to another using different trafficking routes between eastern and southeastern Europe. Additionally, the crime patterns that crisscross Europe show an uneven distribution of their products, particularly synthetic drugs. A study by Sumpter and Franco (2018) validate these criminal activities by TOCs. An additional item that Sumpter and Franco add to this list is forgery and bomb-making.

Albanese and Reichel (2013) contribute to the discussion of TOCs in Europe by offering a conceptual framework used to analyze TOCs. They claim that the structures are economic, social, and quasi-government. Of course, each focuses on profit or providing members with a social network to exchange information provided with education or other support. These TOCs remain dynamic by temporarily setting up operations in one country or another. They may use border crossings temporarily or find new routes for crossing borders.

The authors also discuss the entrepreneurial structures of the two cities. They give an excellent example of the stolen cars sold in the black market. They also discuss kidnappings. In all cases, the concern here is for generating a profit and the TOC's different levels of management for conducting business.

An excellent discussion on criminal networks that are not embedded in associational structures is provided in this chapter. The authors stated the value of childhood friends and newer friendships developed in prisons to provide a criminal cooperation foundation. Interestingly, the author describes Amsterdam as a central hub for criminal social introductions. Many TOC members with common goals make connections to parties or other social outings in the city of Amsterdam. A study by Sumpter and Franco (2018) emphasizes new networking and relationship building with terrorists. This study fills a hole by Albanese and Reichel by adding the terrorism element and explaining that they seek efficiency by using each other's specialties and skills. They also form a symbiotic relationship because of their mutual goals.

The end of the chapter is dedicated to illegal governance. The Italian Mafias' powerful influence over all unlawful activity and legal action is reviewed. What is not entirely known is the proficiency of these types of ethnic organizations in establishing themselves beyond their culturally familiar geographical location. There have been limited successes in replicating their control over some new territories if there is extensive cooperation and protection from local criminal powers. The author also gave examples of Russian mafias who, although using the assistance provided by Italian Mafia members for money laundering, did not move to try and establish themselves in their territory. Sumpter and Franco (2019) contribute to this conversation by emphasizing the new relationships between TOCs and terrorist organizations. Interestingly they assert that the organizational structure of TOCs and terrorist organizations are similar. Both organizations have shifted from a central authority type architecture to more independent and distributed individual units (Sumpter & Franco, 2018).

Chapter 5 delves into TOCs in the continent of Africa. A surprising assertion by the authors was that TOC is based on maintaining its presence in most major cities worldwide. The authors also explained that the economic and political elites have significantly increased their wealth and power due to the growth of their economy. Another interesting revelation was that cybercrime and money laundering are fast becoming the primary source of revenue for TOCs in West Africa. Albanese and Reichel (2014) state that the compromised states of West Africa are fragile and susceptible for TOCs to expand their power and influence. Combined with insecure borders, the free flow of movement, the rise of mobile technology has allowed West Africa's TOCs to impact global economies significantly. The intense observation in this chapter is the continued insistence that the global economy and financial systems outpace the government's ability to regulate the economy and financial organizations. These assertions were supported almost word for word in Castle's (1997) and Andres and Amado's (2008) research, validating the main points.

The authors use Somalia as an example of a failed state that has experienced three significant impediments. Aside from the state's failure to govern by the rule of law, it also has bread TOCs and allowed terrorism to root. This can be seen by Somali pirates who regularly attack crafts in the shipping lanes close to their country. Additionally, most of the population is very youthful. The author states that three-quarters of the people are less than 35 years old. With such a high level of poverty, there is no shortage of willing young men to join these criminal gangs. These assertions are validated in Castle's (1997) and Andres and Amado's (2008) research, who make the same claims.

A surprising statement by Albanese and Reichel (2013) is that TOCs prefer a weak state to a failed state due to a minimum amount of stability conducive to TOC's illicit activities. Another interesting revelation was that highly corrupt governments might receive international legitimacy and recognition while lacking local control and legitimacy. These types of governments are controlled by organized crime. Unfortunately, not enough has been done to recognize this problem by the international community. These types of nations have been referred to as Mafia states. This original concept did not show up in the other research.

Sierra Leone is used as an example of a compromised state because so many funds from the West have contributed to the support of democracy while fighting against the entrenched criminal elements that are melded to critical institutions. Many other examples are given where TOCs control government functions due to the profit generated by the movement of drugs, specifically cocaine. Research by Andres and Amado (2008) expands on this concept. They state that the culture of West Africans considers the disrespect of the law for the pursuit of personal wealth and power to be desirable. They claim that this is a cultural phenomenon. After decades of extreme poverty, the perception is that wealth is the key to elevating oneself above politics, poverty, and especially the rule of law. This perception will be difficult to change.

Albanese and Reichel (2014) discuss urban hubs as breeding grounds for organized crime. Nairobi, Lagos, and Johannesburg are pointed out as primary examples. Furthermore, the authors reemphasize that mobility migration is the most potent cause for increased organized crime in West Africa. Along with the rapid advancement of technology and the willingness of West Africans to adopt mobile phones and the Internet, this gives them the ability to leapfrog technology and impact the stability of global economics in a way that was not possible before. Consider that cybercrime, identity theft, and Internet fraud are highest in Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon.

Research by Kshetri (2019) expands upon the cybersecurity claims made by Albanese and Reichel. Africa becoming the fastest cybercrime continent was supported in this research. The authors state that the primary reason is that there is no consequence to their actions. A haven for cybercriminals has been established in some West African countries. However, this research has some encouraging statements regarding counter cybercrime in West Africa. Specifically, Nigeria's Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and the African Union Commission have implemented technologies to counter cybercrime. Their ongoing efforts are expected to impact TOC's cybercriminal activities (Kshetri, 2019).

Terrorist organizations also use these West African countries for raising funds, avoiding financial sanctions, money laundering, and especially for the conversion of cash into diamonds or other tangible items that are easy to transport. This is possible because of the corrupt nature of the governments. Both Al Qaeda and Hezbollah have used West Africa for these purposes (Andres & Philip, 2008).

To counter some of these criminal advancements, the authors suggest continued efforts to prosecute the most prominent perpetrators through a system of regional prosecutions. They also offer community-level initiatives to educate the general population and establish social safety nets. The hope is to build trust between the government and its citizenry to suppress organized crime activities. Unfortunately, organized crime and the governments of West Africa are so intertwined that business cannot be conducted without involving members of organized crime.

**References**

Albanese, J., & Reichel, P. (2013). *Transnational organized crime: an overview from six continents*. SAGE Publications. <https://books.google.com/books?id=kVEXBAAAQBAJ>

Andres, D., & Philip, A. (2008). West Africa under attack: Drugs, Organized Crime and Terrorism as the new threats to Global Security. *Revista UNISCI*(16), 203-227.

Castle, A. (1997). *Transnational organized crime and international security*. Institute of International Relations, University of British Columbia Vancouver.

Kshetri, N. (2019). Cybercrime and Cybersecurity in Africa. *Journal of Global Information Technology Management*, *22*(2), 77-81. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1097198X.2019.1603527>

Sumpter, C., & Franco, J. (2018). Migration, Transnational Crime, and Terrorism

Exploring the Nexus in Europe and Southeast Asia. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, *12*(5), 36-50. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26515430>

Williams, P. (2001). Transnational criminal networks. *Networks and netwars: The future of terror, crime, and militancy*, *1382*, 61.