Does *Insularity* Matter?

A Bivariate Regression Analysis of Worldwide Governance Indicators:

Government Effectiveness and Corruption Control Efficacy

in United Nations Small Island Developing States

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**Abstract**

A plethora of research has marked the study of islands, *nissology*, as vastly interdisciplinary. In this paper, I integrate a body of scholarship from island studies in attempting to nuance our understanding of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the correlative effect (regression analysis) between government effectiveness and the control of corruption. Using datasets from World Bank, I conduct a quantitative analysis to claim whether there is a correlation between Government Effectiveness (GOVEF) and the efficacy of Control of Corruption (CONOC) in SIDS, and, to what degree does GOVEF affect CONOC. Furthermore, I contend with an assumption of “assimilation,” or, the notion that smaller island states have more effective governance.

**Keywords**: *Island studies*, *Islandness*, *government effectiveness*, *corruption control*, *Small Island Developing States*

**Introduction**

According to a variety of international NGOs charged with combatting corruption, a significant amount of detail is missing about Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and anticorruption initiatives. The “small” island state I refer to follows from the definition that these states are defined by “their small size, remoteness, narrow resource and export base, and exposure to global environmental challenges and external economic shocks, including to a large range of impacts from climate change and potentially more frequent and intense natural disasters” ([*Sustainable Development*](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/)).[[1]](#footnote-1) These “vulnerabilities” opens a space for analyzing corruption on SIDS: “There is still relatively little empirical evidence on what anti-corruption models would work best in the specific context of PICs [Pacific Island Countries]” (*Transparency International*). Island states are “recognized as a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities” ([*OHRLLS*](http://unohrlls.org/about-sids/)) that are autonomously governing systems that are grouped into three main categories: 1) Pacific Island SIDS. 2) Caribbean Island SIDS. 3) Africa, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea SIDS (AIMS).[[2]](#footnote-2)

In 2006, “Island Studies” became a phenomenon that scholars were studying “on islands’ own terms” that further nuances understanding of island “histories and cultures, particular for those island people which have endured decades of colonialism” (Balacchino, 2008: 37).[[3]](#footnote-3) This paper attempts to unpack notions of the Small Island states and their systems of governance. Why, then, “should we continue to refer to *small* islands, or *small* island developing states (SIDS)? Why should we have an International *Small* Islands Studies Association (ISISA)?” (Balacchino, 2008: 39).[[4]](#footnote-4) Discourse surrounding islands has propagated the need for research regarding the governance of islands. As such, this paper attempts to understand the relationship between government effectiveness (GOVEF) and the control of corruption (CONOC) of United Nations Small Island Developing States (hereafter, UN-SIDS). Kaufman, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2007) offer definitions for both GOVEF and CONOC (respectively) as follows:

☞ *Government Effectiveness*

The quality of public services, the quality of the civil service and the degree of its independence from political pressures, the quality of policy formulation and implementation, and the credibility of the government’s commitment to such policies.

And,

☞ *Control of Corruption*

The extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand forms of corruption, as well as “capture” of the state by elites and private interests.[[5]](#footnote-5)

To amend the above definition further, CONOC “also measures the strength and effectiveness of a country’s policy and institutional framework to prevent and combat corruption” (*Millenium*).

The hypothesis I advance is that *higher GOVEF scores positively affects the levels of CONOC in UN-SIDS*.In testing this hypothesis, the approach taken is twofold: 1) in solving for a correlation coefficient, I determine the strength and the direction of the correlation to assert where there is a strong positive correlation between GOVEF and CONOC. And 2) I inquire, to what degree, does government effectiveness contribute to the variance of the control of corruption, and, what conclusions can we draw from this relationship? Throughout the paper, I run with the assumption that smaller islands are more “assimilated” than of larger islands (see discussion for more regarding assimilation). I end the paper with concluding marks regarding the ontological island size (i.e., *insularity*) as a possible controlled variable in a multivariate analysis of UN-SIDS.

**Corruption and Governance**

Research on corruption and governance has surfaced in a plethora of ways: public office and official convictions, climate change, and governance to name a few. While many works have briefly intersected the dichotomy of government effectiveness and the control of corruption, this paper attempts to investigate the raw WGI scores and determine if research is best suited pursuing GOVEF as a primary point of criticism for the lack of an island state’s ability (or lack thereof) to maintain effective anticorruption programs. For example, experts have posited “whether there is a systematic relationship between the size of government and the incidence of corruption” (Goel and Nelson, 1998: 111; Islam and Montenegro, 2002).[[6]](#footnote-6) Closely related to what I argue here (i.e., the correlation and causality of GOVEF on CONOC), Goel and Nelson find the “results show that government size… does indeed have a strong positive influence on corruption” (Goel & Nelson, 1998: 117).[[7]](#footnote-7)

Other works, however, challenge the correlation between government size and effectiveness (Afonso et al., 2003; Brunetti and Weder, 1999);[[8]](#footnote-8) nevertheless,

*while corruption is manifest in every society, and in democratic as well as authoritarian regimes, systems corruption is a deadly sign that a society can no longer effectively manage its resources for public purposes… Every resource is privatized – appropriated for private gain at the expense of those members of the public who are supposed to be served by governance* (Charlick, 1992-3: 177).[[9]](#footnote-9)

According to *Transparency International* “Many of these issues are linked to factors associated with the size of the countries, the geographical features of the region and the challenge to integrate political institutions with strong cultural and tribal traditions that prevail in the region” (2010).[[10]](#footnote-10) For example, Weitzel and Berns investigate whether “the corruption index seems to capture the effects of government ineffectiveness (and vice versa) supporting the notion of endogeneity between bribery and red tape” with respect to cross-border takeover premiums (2006: 803).[[11]](#footnote-11) They find, that despite “the close relationship between government effectiveness and corruption [it] may indicate that the traditional notion of corruption… is too narrow, particularly for financially and economically more developed countries” (Weitzel and Berns, 2006: 803).[[12]](#footnote-12) While the traditional notion of corruption is reportedly ‘too narrow’ for more developed countries, how might this be deployed to small islands? Notwithstanding this claim, however, the definition of CONOC offered by Kaufman, Kraay, and Mastruzzi (2007) encapsulates corruption on a greater scale than a ‘narrow’ focus pertaining to only bribery (see CONOC definition above). Axel Hadenius noted in *Democracy and Development* that small states had high values of democracy; positing that, “island states, as they are usually small, may be of special interest” (Anckar, 2006: 44; Hadenius, 1992: 122-66).[[13]](#footnote-13)

The *Anti-Corruption Resource Centre* (ACRC) published an ‘expert answer’ regarding the “Corruption challenges in small island developing states in the Pacific region” (2010: 1).[[14]](#footnote-14) The ACRC finds that anticorruption programs for PICs are compromised due to government effectiveness, and furthermore, affected by “low levels of state penetration, limited opportunities for public participation, [and] lack of civil society involvement” (ACRC, 2010: 1).[[15]](#footnote-15) This stands to reason with (as well as supports) the direction of this paper: cross-country analysis of UN-SIDS and whether there are correlative properties between GOVEF and CONOC, and whether GOVEF has a significant role in the determination of CONOC. In other words, if weakness (or, the ineffectiveness of governmental bodies) compromises anticorruption initiatives could we not postulate that strong governance would impact corruption in a similar relationship? Furthermore, it stands to also argue that given the predicted relationship I am arguing, could we not make assertions based of scholarship in nissology that can help us further understand how island governance functions in terms of their size. In considering the size of islands as a framework of situating this paper into the discussion of Island governance and corruption, allows for the embellishment of what Taglioni (2011) attempted with the apprehension of “insularity and its variability, as well as the possible influence of political status on levels of development in small spaces characterized by insularity” (61).[[16]](#footnote-16) He posits that, “small insular spaces… From the Caribbean to the Pacific, the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean… are the spaces upon which most researchers base their analyses when they refer to islands” (Taglioni, 2011: 45).[[17]](#footnote-17)

**Methodology**

This manuscript attempts to nuance any relationship between government effectiveness (independent variable) to the control of corruption (dependent variable). The arrays of data (i.e., government effectiveness and control of corruption) were compiled on Microsoft *Excel* and cross-examined (imported) into *Stata*. This dataset is provided by the World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) Excel spreadsheet containing Government Effectiveness and Control of Corruption datasets.[[18]](#footnote-18) The WGI data “is itself a composite data index organized through an aggregation methodology” (Apaza, 2009: 139);[[19]](#footnote-19) that captures “six dimensions of governance” (Kaufman, Kray, and Mastruzzi, 2007).[[20]](#footnote-20) For the purposes of this paper, however, I have extracted data from 2010 to 2015 for the following United Nations Small Island Developing States: Antigua and Barbuda (ATG), Bahamas (BHS), Barbados (BRB), Belize (BLZ), Cape Verde (CPV), Comoros (COM), Cuba (CUB), Dominica (DMA), Dominican Republic (DOM), Fiji (FJI), Grenada (GRD), Guinea-Bissau (GNB), Guyana (GUY), Haiti (HTI), Jamaica (JAM), Kiribati (KIR), Maldives (MDV), Marshall Islands (MHL), Mauritius (MUS), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Nauru (NRU), Palau (PLW), Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa (WSM), Sao Tome and Principe (STP), Seychelles (SYC), Singapore (SGP), and Solomon Islands (SLB), St. Kitts and Nevis (KNA), St. Lucia (LCA), St. Vincent and the Grenadines (VCT), Suriname (SUR), Timor-Leste (TMP), Tonga (TON), Trinidad and Tobago (TTO), Tuvalu (TUV), and Vanuatu (VUT) where *N* = 222 score pairs (i.e., for each country one score pair is its respective GOVEF and CONOC score, per year, as one unit) and “the maximum limit of 1.5 million people [population]… defines the small [island] states” (Taglioni, 2011: 49).[[21]](#footnote-21) In making sense of this data, I also conduct a bivariate regression analysis to determine the magnitude of effect that government effectiveness has on control of corruption to determine whether higher GOVEF scores positively affect CONOC. In the discussion, I attempt to bridge the results to a discussion regarding insularity and the implementation of controlled variables.

**Results**

In determining whether GOVEF has a noteworthy influence on CONOC, I contend with the data in two ways: First, by using a *chi*-square (nonparametric analysis) I nominalized the interval-level data by creating coding categories and reporting frequencies. A *chi­*-square analysis is employed by compartmentalizing countries into categorical phenomena (see Table 1 below).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **CATEGORY** | **CORRELATIVE PROPERTIES** |
| **A** | GOVEF (+) / CONOC (+) |
| **B** | GOVEF (–) / CONOC (–) |
| **C** | GOVEF (+) / CONOC (–) |
| **D** | GOVEF (–) / CONOC (+) |
| **E** | GOVEF (0) / CONOC (–) |
| **F** | GOVEF (0) / CONOC (+) |
| **G** | GOVEF (+) / CONOC (0) |
| **H** | GOVEF (–) / CONOC (0) |
| **I** | GOVEF (0) / CONOC (0) |

**Table 1: Correlative Properties of UN-SIDS**

Table 1 above depicts what I define as *correlative properties*, which are nominalized instances of correlation of all countries (see Appendix II for actual analysis). For example, Category A demonstrates the increase of government effectiveness and control of corruption (a positive correlative property), whereas, Category C exhibits a negative correlative property. The “0” represent ‘naught’ or ‘no change’ of both GOVEF and CONOC per year for each country. I employ a *chi*-square to demonstrate whether there is an initial significant difference amongst nominalized variables. For example, Categories A and B represent a positive correlation, which also happens to be the dominant frequency (see Appendix II for analysis). *2*) I employ a correlation diagnostics of all UN-SIDS score pairs and determine a visual representation of the strength and direction of the association between GOVEF and CONOC. And 3) in conducting a regression analysis, I contend with a strong magnitude (i.e., GE has a high impact factor on CC).

The *chi*-square analysis tells us whether there is a significant difference amongst the observations in question. The nominalization of the data (i.e., creating nominal categories and reporting frequencies) elicited the following obtained *chi*:

The critical *chi* is identified as **15.507** for 0.05 significance (see [MEDCALC](https://www.medcalc.org/manual/chi-square-table.php) for critical chi square reference). As a result, the obtained *chi* greater than the critical *chi*, thus, we can say there is a significant variance between increase/decrease combinations. Beginning the analysis in this way rules out the null hypothesis (*null*) as being no significant difference between GOVEF and CONOC amongst SIDS; notwithstanding, however, the *chi* only scratches the surface as to understanding this relationship that I demonstrate below.

Additionally, in projecting that the *null* is that the population data has zero (0) or no correlation, I contend with the notion that there is a strong correlation. Consider the scatter plot below:

***Chart 1*: Correlation between Government Effectiveness and Control of Corruption of UN-SIDS**

Chart 1 depicts a scatter plot graph (score pairs for each country, where, *N*=222). From this data, *Pearson’s* correlation coefficient yielded a strong positive correlation of 0.748. Testing the significance of Pearson’s *r*, the critical value of *t* at .05 significance level (95%) is 1.960 whereas the obtained value of *t* is 16.80, and thus, the null hypothesis (whether there is no correlation between government effectiveness and control of corruption) can be rejected (see: Appendix I, hereafter referred as *Data*).

With respect to the regression analysis of GOVEF and CONOC of UN-SIDS, the weight of determination of the variables [i.e., GOVEF (*X)* on CONOC (*Y)*] is important to note (see: *Data*). The data yields the following predicted regression model:

The regression line above visually supports the *Y*-intercept at 20.17, and, given the positive correlation, the slope is positive (0.73). We can, then predict, given some (*x*)score in government effectiveness would contribute to 0.73 variances of a given score of corruption control (*y*). Returning back to the research question: to what degree does GOVEF affect CONOC? I turn to solving for “goodness of fit” to answer this. Squaring Pearson’s *r*, 0.748, yields 0.560. This demonstrates that 56% of a SIDS’ variation in controlling corruption is determined by its effective governance. Inversely, we can say that 44% of SIDS’ variation in controlling corruption is not determined by their ability to effectively govern. However, I turn to a discussion for understanding the results offered as well as posit further prospects in furthering this project.

**Discussion**

The question as to whether size matters (geographically or institutionally), consider what Shleifer (2000) stated regarding WGI analysis: “Various measures of institutional quality, even when they come from different sources, and even when they address conceptually distinct aspects of the quality of government, are strongly positively correlated with each other” (2000).[[22]](#footnote-22) To put alternatively, the use of WGI in analysis is considered as not independently discreet between the six dimensions of governance. As a result, Shleifer postulates that correlated variables are deemed problematic because it is difficult to identify the degree of each dimension of governance influences the other.

Harkening back to Kaufman, Kraay, and Mastruuzi’s (2007) definition of government effectiveness as “assemblages” (i.e., consisting of four categories that make up government effectiveness) is an important segue into the discussion of the results. First, the accuracy of WGI data is heavily criticized by some scholars because “aggregate indicators remain somehow unreliable… WGI are based on perceptions, not actual data” (Apaza, 2009: 142).[[23]](#footnote-23) The analysis of government effectiveness alone is a composition that makes up four subcategories. This paper runs with the assumption that Small Island states are more “assimilated” than comparative states.[[24]](#footnote-24) Explicatively, this assumption is positioned as one of the drawbacks of this paper that contributed to no empirical method.

While ‘bigger’ governmental bodies do not necessarily entail ‘effective’ ones, the argument that lower levels of corruption seem to fall short with respect to SIDS: “…evidence indicates that within the group of relatively small Pacific Island countries itself the relation between size and corruption does not hold anymore” (ACRC, 2010: 3).[[25]](#footnote-25) Consider the case of Singapore from 2010 – 2015 (excerpted from *Data* and represented as Table 2 below):

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SIDS | CCODE | YEAR | GOVEF | CONOC |
| Singapore | SGP | 2010 | 100.00 | 98.57 |
| Singapore | SGP | 2011 | 99.53 | 96.68 |
| Singapore | SGP | 2012 | 99.53 | 97.16 |
| Singapore | SGP | 2013 | 99.53 | 96.68 |
| Singapore | SGP | 2014 | 100.00 | 97.12 |
| Singapore | SGP | 2015 | 100.00 | 97.12 |

**Table 2: Government effectiveness and Control of Corruption for Singapore from 2010 – 2015**

The dataset above depicts Singapore as having one of the most effective governments with nearly perfect scores. Moreover, corruption control trails behind with scores in the high 90s. The standard deviation of Singapore’s GOVEF score is 0.26 (within one standard deviation). Similarly, the CONOC standard deviation yields a 0.70 (also within one standard deviation). This is exemplary of the notion that Singapore being (of scale) the smallest of governing bodies (i.e., Singapore’s status as a city-state) problematizes the notion of government size to control of corruption (e.g., larger states with more effective governance). Anckar reported “political institutions in Small Island States” pitted against “larger island states… small mainland states… [and] all other states” (2006: 48).[[26]](#footnote-26) In these findings, Anckar finds that “the difference is evident enough to sustain the notion of a link between Islandness and democracy” (2006: 48).[[27]](#footnote-27)

Developing a precise analysis that captures a trend in comparing these scores is important. The results I presented offers a strong positive correlation amongst GOVEF and CONOC with approximately half the impact of the former with the latter (56%). Situating the hypothesis within the larger sphere of research regarding UN-SIDS sought after demonstrating the importance of considering governance and corruption on Small Island states. However, in adding controlled variables (i.e., insularity), could we account for an increase in the goodness of fit with respect to island size?

**Conclusion**

While research has investigated a wide breadth of areas related to governance and corruption, few have noted the impacts on UN-SIDS. The problems that plague Small Island states are not always what they seem. In 2006, ACRC reported that “a pilot survey carried out… in the Solomon Islands [SLB] found that 62% of respondents in rural areas and 46% in urban area believed that the government was corruption” (2010: 2).[[28]](#footnote-28) The Community Crime Surveys conducted “in [Papua New Guinea] PNG also showed that the large majority of the people surveyed considered that corruption was increasing in the country” (ACRC, 2010).[[29]](#footnote-29) In sum, the approach to analyzing government effectiveness and control of corruption on UN-SIDS allows for greater insights. These insights would help understanding systems of governance “on their own terms.” Further research would dictate whether this correlation holds true for a multivariate regression analysis between more variables. And, in addition, comparing a multivariate regression of additional mainland nations. Does the size of Islands determine the effectiveness of government, or its control of corruption for that matter? By aligning future research to pursue more in-depth empirical claims (i.e., adding controlled variables such as geography or population size), could we perhaps determine if the correlation (and presumed effect) of government effectiveness and control of corruption for UN-SIDS can be accounted for by island state size? As Anckar points out, “the working out and testing of mechanisms in the terrain between geography and politics remains a fascinating as well as challenging and much neglected task for the political science discipline” (Anckar, 2006: 51; Gottmann, 1980: 432-33).[[30]](#footnote-30)

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21. Taglioni, *Insularity*, 49

    However, population size is not referenced in the regression analysis (but rather proposed as a route for further research). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Shleifer, A. 2000. “Comment” *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity.* No. 2-3., 347-350. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Apaza, *Governance and Corruption*, 142 [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. By “assimilated” I stand to argue that Small Island states (differ amongst themselves in size) are more assimilated with respect to the definition of government effectiveness the smaller the Island is. I provide this assumption to frame understanding of variance between Small Island states and question the potentiality of future research to include a multivariate analysis (using controlled variables of geography in Island square miles or population size). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. ACRC, *U4 Expert Answer*, 3 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Anckar, *Islandness or smallness?*, 48 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. ACRC, *U4 Expert Answer*, 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
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