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**The Re-Emergence of  
Suriname's Désiré (Desi) Bouterse:  
Political Acumen and Geopolitical Anxiety**

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York College of The City University of New York**

**June 2011**

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*The views expressed in this research paper are those of the author  
and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the  
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## Executive Summary

This study examines some concerns that derive from Suriname's May-July 2010 elections, which resulted in the re-emergence of erstwhile military ruler and convicted drug trafficker, Désiré (Desi) Bouterse, as President of the Republic. The victory reflects Bouterse's political acumen in aggregating disparate political interests and in establishing a viable coalition government. But because of his history and profile, this triumph has generated anxiety in some places internationally. In this respect, the study examines anxieties related to three matters: (a) relations with Guyana, where there is an existing territorial dispute and a recently resolved maritime dispute, (b) illegal drug trafficking operations, and (c) foreign policy engagement with Venezuela.

There has been a flurry of bilateral activities—including several presidential summits—with Guyana since President Bouterse's inauguration, albeit seemingly more about symbolism than substance. Although the maritime dispute was settled by a Tribunal of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea in 2007, the 15,000 km<sup>2</sup> New River Triangle is still unresolved. Indeed, in June 2011 President Bouterse reasserted Suriname's claim to the Triangle. Suriname has upped the ante in that dispute by portraying internationally the map of Suriname as inclusive of the disputed area. In all likelihood that self-redefinition slowly will become the country's cartographic definition in the eyes of the world if Guyana does not successfully rebuff that move or pursue the definitive settlement of the dispute.

A geonarcotics assessment shows Suriname to be still heavily implicated in trafficking, because of geography, law enforcement limitations, corruption, and other factors. But despite Bouterse's drug-related history and that of former senior military officers, several reasons suggest the inexpediency of a narco-state being created by Bouterse. As well, as part of Suriname's pursuit of increased Caribbean

and South American engagement, it has boosted relations with Venezuela, which has included it in *PetroCaribe* and provided housing and agricultural aid. However, the engagement appears to be driven more by pragmatism and less by any ideological affinity with Hugo Chavez.

## Introduction

Although Roberto Espíndola's analysis of Latin America's contemporary political dynamics does not include Suriname, his simple but prescient observation resonates powerfully with that country: "Elections in Latin America [and the Caribbean] keep showing that the region retains its capacity to surprise observers, as well as a potential to generate expectations."<sup>1</sup> Suriname's 2010 elections surely had surprising outcomes, the most significant of which was the re-emergence of Désiré Delano (Desi) Bouterse as national leader, this time through democratic means.

Bouterse's re-emergence has both local and foreign implications. Internally, it has generated hopes about political unity and improved quality of life, among other things. Externally, it has raised geopolitical anxieties because of his colorful history and unenviable profile: a two-times coup-maker and authoritarian ruler (1980-1987; 1990-1991); the only world leader with the dubious distinction of an 11-year prison sentence for drug trafficking, issued *in absentia* by a Dutch court, with extradition foreclosed because Suriname and Holland lack mutual extradition treaties; and defendant (along with others) in a domestic trial for ordering the murder of 15 political opponents in 1982.

Thus, more than any other Caribbean nation except Haiti (and a few Latin American ones) that held elections within the last decade, Suriname's electoral outcomes situate it at a noteworthy historical juncture. This juncture has fascinating internal and external elements, reflecting, in theoretical terms, both Political Adaptation and Intermestic dynamics.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Roberto Espíndola, "New Politics, New Parties?" in eds. Richard L. Millett, et al. *Latin American Democracy: Emerging Reality or Endangered Species?* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 141.

<sup>2</sup> See Huntington 1968 regarding Political Adaptation. See Manning 1977 for the initial use of Intermestic, and Lowenthal 1992 for the first application in relation to Latin America and the Caribbean.

In order to appreciate some of the adaptation and dynamics it is important to examine a few contestation issues and some of the anxieties that have surfaced because of the results of the contestation.

## **Political Contestation and Interest Aggregation**

In 1996 the late Gary Brana-Shute, Cultural Anthropologist and Suriname-expert, noted the following in a study on Suriname's civil-military relations: "Can we expect any more coups in Suriname? No, I am absolutely sure of that. Will Bouterse and his allies go away? No, I am very certain of that too, now that they have well-funded political machine—the NDP—that has surprisingly wide support."<sup>3</sup> Thus, he was eerily prophetic. Not only did Bouterse not go away, but he returned in 2010 to the pinnacle of political power, and this time legitimated through a key democracy factor: elections. I attribute a significant aspect of this outcome to his political acumen in (a) exploiting the country's political vicissitudes and (b) aggregating various political interests to deliver *De Mega Combinatie* (Mega Combination) as a coalition force. And, by political acumen I mean the use of a mixture of shrewdness, charisma, and organizational skills to gain political outcomes both for him and the individuals and groups whose interests he aggregates and represents.

In terms of political system, Suriname is a constitutional republic, with an executive branch headed by a president, a 51-member unicameral legislature called the National Assembly that is popularly elected for five-year terms on the basis of proportional representation, and a judiciary. The president is elected for a five-year term by a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly or, failing that, by a majority of the People's Assembly. If at least two-thirds of the Assembly cannot agree on a candidate, a People's

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<sup>3</sup> Gary Brana-Shute, "Suriname: A Military and Its Auxiliaries," *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 3, Spring: 1996, 482.

Assembly is formed from all National Assembly delegates and regional and municipal representatives who were elected by popular vote in the most recent national elections. A vice president, normally elected at the same time as the president, needs a simple majority in the National Assembly or People's Assembly to be elected for a five-year term. The president serves as head of state and head of government. He is supreme commander of the armed forces and chairs the National Security Council.<sup>4</sup>

The May 25, 2010 elections were contested by seven political parties:

AC	A Combinatie (A Combination)
BVD	Basispartij voor Vernieuwing en Democratie (Basic Party for Renewal and Democracy)
MC	Mega Combinatie (Mega Combination)
NDP	Nationale Democratische Partij (National Democratic Party)
NFDO	Nieuwe Front voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling (New Front for Democracy and Development)
PDOE	Partij voor Democratie en Ontwikkeling door Eenheid (Party for Democracy and Development through Unity)
VVV	Volksalliantie voor Vooruitgang (People's Alliance for Progress).

As with most elections in the Americas—and elsewhere—over the last few decades, the Suriname elections were monitored by foreign observers. The observers found no evidence of fraud. Although the Organization of American States (OAS) team did offer six specific recommendations

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<sup>4</sup> For a full discussion of the structure and operation of Suriname's political system and some contemporary political aspects, see Dew 1994, Sedoc-Dahlberg 1997, Singh 2007, and Inter Parliamentary Union at <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:Rki69QfL7zgJ:www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2299.htm+mega+combination+composition&cd=10&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com>.

for future improvement, their report noted: “The electoral process and the election event itself took place in a peaceful and proper environment and complied with all international election standards, without any irregularities being reported.”<sup>5</sup> Similarly, CARICOM monitors indicated: “Based on our observations, the CARICOM Electoral Observer Mission is of the view that all was in place, and the authorities conducted the business of the day freely, fairly and transparently.”<sup>6</sup>

Some 73 percent of the 324,490 eligible voters cast their votes. The A Combination group won 4.7 percent of the votes and seven parliamentary seats; BVD, 5.1 percent and no seats; Mega Combination, 40.2 percent and 23 seats; NFD, 31.7 percent and 14 seats; PDOE, 5.1 percent and one seat; and VVV, 13 percent and six seats.<sup>7</sup> In Political Science vernacular that was a plurality outcome and not a majority one. Since no political party won decisively, coalition-building became necessary. After two months of political negotiations, on July 19, 2010 Desi Bouterse emerged as head of the Mega Combination slate and the Ninth President of the Republic, having fashioned a multi-ethnic coalition that delivered 36 votes. Robert Ameerali, an Independent and former head of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was elected as Vice President. Ameerali’s nomination itself demonstrated Bouterse’s acumen; it resulted from a deal

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<sup>5</sup> OAS, “Mission to Observe the General Elections In the Republic of Suriname, May 25, 2010: to OAS Permanent Council, Irene Klinger, Chief of Mission,” Washington, DC, 2010: 4.

<sup>6</sup> CARICOM, “Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Electoral Observer Mission to Suriname: Preliminary Statement.” May 28, 2010, accessed January 29, 2011,

[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:W58vnMRUFB UJ:www.caricom.org/jsp/pressreleases/pres233\\_10.jsp+Suriname+elections+Caricom+observers&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:W58vnMRUFB UJ:www.caricom.org/jsp/pressreleases/pres233_10.jsp+Suriname+elections+Caricom+observers&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com).

Understandably, the results also reflected the plural society nature of the nation. The National Assembly comprises 17 Hindustani, 11 Creole, 10 Maroon, nine Javanese, two Amerindian, and two Chinese. Interestingly, as well, 31 of the 51 new parliamentarians were elected for the first time.

stuck with a political nemesis, Ronnie Brunswijk, former head of a guerrilla group that battled his military regime in the 1980s, now head of the A Combination group.<sup>8</sup>

Even before the final deal was sealed, one sensed a mixture of muted admiration of Bouterse's political acumen and anxiety about what his victory might portend. For instance, in June 2010 an editorial in Guyana's *Stabroek News* captured this mixture thus:

Bouterse is still perceived as a charismatic and pragmatic man of action and his alliance appealed to the young and poor with sugary promises for easy jobs and cheap housing. Memories are short. The young have no recollection of Bouterse's blotchy record of governance. He seized power in a coup d'état in 1980 and left office only under intense international pressure in 1987 but seized power again in another coup d'état in 1990. He still faces criminal charges for his role in the extra-judicial execution of political opponents in 1982. He was convicted in a court in the Netherlands for trafficking cocaine from

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<sup>8</sup> "Legislative Elections of 25 May 2010," Republic of Suriname, 2010, available at <http://psephos.adam-carr.net/countries/s/suriname/suriname2010.txt>; Anouska Kock, "Brunswijk and Bouterse shake hands on Governing Suriname Together," *Abeng Central*, June 3, 2010, accessed November 4, 2010, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:yrN5G8fZaKMJ:abengcentral.wordpress.com/2010/06/03/brunswijk-and-bouterse-shake-hands-on-governing-suriname-together/+A+combination+ronnie+brunswijk+2010+suriname&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com>; Rory Carroll, "Suriname President Promises not to Interfere in his own Murder Trial," *The Guardian*, July 22, 2010, accessed November 2, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/22/suriname-president-murder-trial>; "We are More Attracted to Guyana'—says Bouterse as Guyana and Suriname Concretize Relations," *West Indian News*, September 7, 2010, accessed November 26, 2010, <http://www.thewestindiannews.com/%E2%80%9Cwe-are-more-attracted-to-guyana%E2%80%9D-%E2%80%93-says-bouterse-as-guyana-and-suriname-concretise-relations>.

Suriname to the Netherlands in 1999, but avoided serving a sentence because both countries prohibit extradition of each other's citizens.

Bouterse's party was also part of President Jules Wijdenbosch's 1996 coalition administration. Wijdenbosch embarked on internal policies which practically bankrupted the country and on external policies which provoked aggression against Guyana and defied the Caribbean Community. It was no surprise, therefore, that the election results have generated uneasiness and despondency. Outgoing President Ronald Venetiaan who leads the minority New Front for Democracy and Development alliance confirmed that his group would not work with the Combinatie as long as Bouterse remained in control.

Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen said that the Netherlands respected the will of the electorate but added that "the past cannot be forgotten...Mr. Bouterse has been sentenced to an 11-year prison term in the Netherlands for drug dealing and, in Suriname, a case about the murders of December 1982 is still proceeding. We cannot brush all that away."<sup>9</sup>

## **Anxiety and Geopolitics**

The mixture of awe of Bouterse's political acumen and anxiety about some implications of his triumph has both internal and external aspects. As one writer put it, Bouterse's victory "indicates not just how shallow the pool of political leadership is in Suriname; it's also left many inside and outside the country wondering if an addiction to the iron fist

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<sup>9</sup> "Suriname's Uneasy Elections," *Stabroek News*, June 1, 2010, accessed January 20, 2011, <http://www.stabroeknews.com/2010/editorial/06/01/suriname%25E2%2580%2599s-uneasy-elections-3/>.

still lingers in Latin America.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, there is curiosity in some quarters about the likely outcome of Bouterse’s trial, including speculation that his presidential quest was partly intended to foreclose facing justice ultimately.

The concern here is not with the internal aspects, but with some external ones. Of course, internal and external dynamics are never entirely divorced, especially when geopolitics is involved. The concept of *geopolitics* is defined here as the relationship between physical and political geography on the one hand and national power on the other, with key factors being the possession of strategic materials, ownership of or access to strategic lanes of communication, and the possession or location of military bases and other security installations. Geopolitics provides the context in which threats and vulnerabilities may develop or be heightened, or national power enhanced directly or indirectly.

Free and fair elections, which are essential to democracy, sometimes result in outcomes that lead to both awkwardness and anxiety. Such is the case with Desi Bouterse’s re-emergence, as seen at the August 12, 2010 presidential inauguration, which was not attended by a single foreign head of state. Initially, two foreign leaders accepted the inauguration invitation: Presidents Bharat Jagdeo of Guyana and Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, two key neighbors. However, they both skipped the event. The United States was represented by its ambassador in Paramaribo, John Nay. Understandably, Holland was not invited to the event, and they made it known that they would not attend even if invited. Indeed, said one report, “When Bouterse was elected last month Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen said in

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<sup>10</sup> Tim Padgett, “Suriname: The Dictator Who Came in from the Cold.” *TIME*, August 12, 2010, accessed February 21, 2011, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2009955,00.html>.

a statement he would only be welcomed in the Netherlands to serve his 11 year sentence.”<sup>11</sup>

Albert Ramdin, the Suriname-born Assistant Secretary General of the OAS, who headed the OAS delegation to the inauguration, captured the awkwardness and anxiety well: “... the leaders’ absence was understandable because ... it was not every day that a soldier who has led a coup is later democratically elected as president.” Further, “In the Americas some people are still hesitant about Bouterse. They still do not know how to deal with the situation in Suriname. Latin American and Caribbean countries will be looking to see how the policies of President Bouterse’s government unfold over the next six months.”<sup>12</sup>

It is not feasible to examine all the possible international anxieties with security ramifications. But it is necessary to pay some attention to at least three matters: relations with Guyana, notably in relation to the territorial disputes; illegal drug operations; and foreign policy engagement with Venezuela.

## **On Suriname’s Western Front**

Although Guyana’s governing elites will not openly acknowledge this, Guyana likely is the nation most nervous about Bouterse’s election, and for several reasons: the

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<sup>11</sup> “Desi Bouterse Sworn in as Suriname President,” *Daily Herald*, August 12, 2010, accessed February 20, 2011, <http://www.thedailyherald.com/regional/2-news/6948-desi-bouterse-sworn-in-as-suriname-president-.html>; Ben Fox, “Suriname Scrutinized as ex-Dictator Returns,” *Washington Times*, August 12 2010, accessed January 30, 2011, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/aug/12/suriname-scrutinized-as-ex-dictator-returns/print/>.

<sup>12</sup> “Frontiers: Why Should Guyana trust Suriname,” *Stabroek News*, August 31, 2010, accessed November 23, 2010, <http://www.stabroeknews.com/2010/guyana-review/08/31/frontiers-why-should-guyana-trust-suriname/>.

existence of a territorial dispute over the New River Triangle; a recently settled dispute over maritime boundaries, which once in 2000 saw Suriname's use of military force; and long-standing immigration tensions, among other things. All of this is in the context of Guyana's weakening defense and diplomatic establishments over the last decade.

But it also is true that Bouterse regards Guyana as vital to his foreign policy engagement. Therefore, it was not entirely surprising that his first international presidential trip was to Guyana: a one-day working visit on September 6, 2010<sup>13</sup> that touched on several matters, including climate change, information technology, mining, infrastructure development, energy, agriculture, fisheries, and tertiary education. The wealth of topics and paucity of concrete deliverables make for credible speculation that the summit was more about symbolism than substance. It was noted that “the Jagdeo-Bouterse encounter” ... “was not the first time that Guyana threw a lifeline to Suriname which was swimming in a sea of international opprobrium.”<sup>14</sup>

During the visit Bouterse declared “Suriname is at a crossroads now and we want to share new ideas with Guyana. We have a special movement and aspiration

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<sup>13</sup> Bouterse fell ill with dengue fever shortly before the visit but he insisted on making the trip even though he had not fully recovered.

<sup>14</sup> “Suriname Desperately seeks Acceptability,” September 30, 2010, accessed November 26, 2010, <http://www.stabroeknews.com/2010/guyana-review/frontiers/09/30/suriname-desperately-seeks-acceptability/>. As evidence, it has been noted “President Desmond Hoyte had agreed to a similar ‘working visit’ by President Johannes Kraag in January 1991 at Plantation Skeldon on the Corentyne. Mr. Kraag has recently been installed by Suriname’s National Army’s Acting Commander Ivan Graanoogst—then Bouterse’s trusted deputy—after the 24<sup>th</sup> December 1990 ‘Telephone Coup.’ Two days after Bouterse’s resignation as Army Commander, the Army telephoned President Ramsewak Shankar to inform him that he and his cabinet had been removed from office.”

towards South America and the Caribbean.”<sup>15</sup> President Bouterse visited again two months later, on November 20, 2010, this time to Berbice, which borders Suriname, rather than the capital, Georgetown. Jagdeo reciprocated on November 20, 2010, to Nickerie and not the capital, Paramaribo.<sup>16</sup> Bouterse visited Guyana again on February 26, 2011, on the way back to Suriname after attending the CARICOM Summit in Grenada.<sup>17</sup>

The matter of a “lifeline” surfaced again in January 2011 when President Jagdeo dropped a bombshell at the Guyana Defense Force senior leadership conference in declaring: “A foreign mission asked us if we will arrest the president of Suriname when he comes here because he is wanted somewhere else, and I said to them ‘No’.”<sup>18</sup> Jagdeo declined

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<sup>15</sup> “‘We are More Attracted to Guyana’—says Bouterse as Guyana and Suriname Concretize Relations,” *West Indian News*, 2010. (See also “Suriname Desperately seeks Acceptability,” *Straboek News*, 2010, about the visit overall).

<sup>16</sup> “Absence of Foreign Ministry in talks with Suriname Criticized,” *Demerarawaves*, November 20, 2010, accessed November 26, 2010, [http://www.demerarawaves.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=232:absence-of-foreign-ministry-in-talks-with-surriname-criticized-&catid=1&Itemid=20](http://www.demerarawaves.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=232:absence-of-foreign-ministry-in-talks-with-surriname-criticized-&catid=1&Itemid=20). Jagdeo’s November visit generated criticism because of the team’s composition. Foreign Minister Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett was notably absent, although her counterpart, Winston Lackin, was part of Bouterse’s delegation. Included in Jagdeo’s team was Donald Ramotar, MP and General Secretary of the ruling People’s Progressive Party (PPP). Criticism came both from opposition parties and from within the PPP, as Ramotar was contending for the party presidential nomination for the forthcoming elections. Jagdeo had taken Ramotar on other foreign trips, using state funds. Other PPP hopefuls viewed such as competitively advantaging him, both in signaling “anointment” as successor and in offering him foreign policy experience. Unsurprisingly, in April 2011 Ramotar was named the candidate.

<sup>17</sup> “Bouterse makes brief stop-over,” *Newspress*, March 2, 2011, accessed March 2, 2011, <http://www.guyanesenews.com/news/bouterse-makes-brief-stop-over>. The two leaders reportedly discussed bridging of the Corentyne River, crime, immigration, and regularizing the river-boat system between the two nations.

<sup>18</sup> “Guyana was asked about arresting Suriname’s President,” *Demerarawaves*, January 25, 2011, accessed January 26, 2011,

to name the nation involved, but his revelation generated understandable speculation about what country had made the request. This led the United States to issue a statement through its embassy in Georgetown distancing itself from the matter.

At the end of the day, any “life-lining” in Guyana’s dealing with Suriname and the geopolitical anxiety occasioned by Bouterse’s election are driven by what in essence is the elephant in the room for both nations—the territorial issues and the attendant political heat they generate domestically. There are two sets of issues: one is about land—the unresolved New River Triangle; the other pertains to the maritime dispute that was resolved in 2007 but still has some residual aspects. Figure 1 shows the two areas.

The New River Triangle dispute, which involves 15,540 km<sup>2</sup> (6,000 square miles) of territory, dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The area is resource-rich, with timber and minerals and indications of the presence of bauxite and aluminum. The Border Mixed Commission, established in 1989 as a framework for rapprochement and to move the parties progressively towards resolution, has been dormant for several years. Meanwhile, over the last few decades there have been many diplomatic and security twists and turns in the territorial saga.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps the most significant—and daring—development was Suriname’s presenting to the world what it had long done within Suriname: cartographically portraying the area as part of its territory.

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[http://www.demerarawaves.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=585:guyana-was-asked-about-arresting-surinames-president&catid=18:security&Itemid=59](http://www.demerarawaves.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=585:guyana-was-asked-about-arresting-surinames-president&catid=18:security&Itemid=59).

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the historical antecedents and legal and political dynamics of this dispute, see Donovan 2003, Ferguson 2007, Pollard 2007, and Stabroek News 2010c.

**Figure 1 – Guyana-Suriname Disputed Areas**



Source: Donovan 2003<sup>20</sup>

The occasion was the World Bank Low Carbon Development Strategy Forum held in October 2009 in Washington, DC. Suriname upped the ante by including in its submission the map shown in Figure 2.<sup>21</sup> (See <http://www.forestcarbonpartnership.org/fcp/Node/175.>)

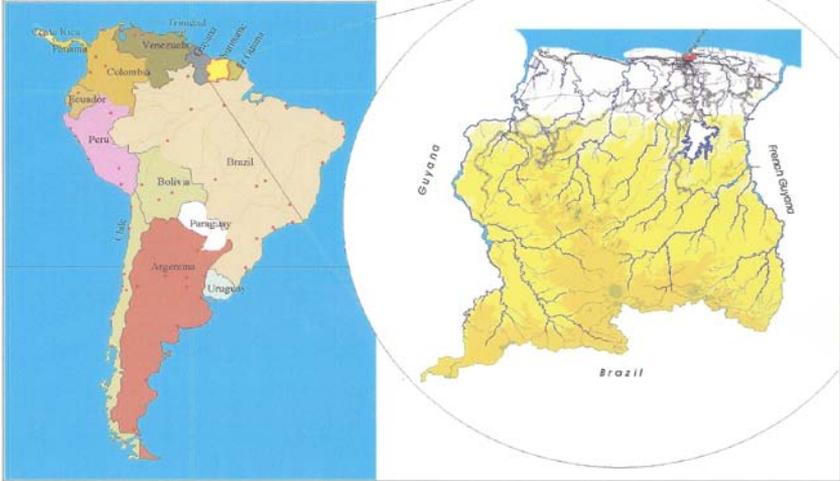
<sup>20</sup> Thomas Donovan, “Suriname-Guyana Maritime and Territorial Disputes: A Legal and Historical Analysis,” *Journal of Transnational Law and Policy*, Vol. 23 Spring, 2003, 41-98.

<sup>21</sup> “An Unfortunate Map Display,” *Guyana Chronicle*, November 6, 2002, accessed March 3, 2011, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:jOV3Ag2LYbAJ:www.landofsixpeoples.com/news022/nc21106.htm+jagdeo+visit+suriname+2002+parliament+map&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com>. It is worth noting that Jagdeo allowed himself to be humiliated in January 2002 when, as part of an official visit to Suriname, he was invited to address the National Assembly and he spoke from a

## Figure 2 – Suriname Redefined by Suriname



LOCATION SURINAME



Source: *Suriname's Presentation to the World Bank Low Carbon Development Forum, October 2009.*

Guyana's feeble protest of this audacious move and its inability to secure a retraction of the map reflect its relative diplomatic (and military) ineffectiveness.<sup>22</sup> More significantly, Suriname's bold chess move has set the stage for eventual *de facto* acceptance internationally of its cartographic definition of the nation, irrespective of the status of the dispute or the *de jure* ownership of Triangle. My prediction is that now that Suriname's definition of itself had an international *début*, especially having been presented at a World Bank forum, it will be reproduced and used by others and, by default, slowly will become the geographic

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position in the Assembly where the map of Suriname with the New River Triangle as part of Suriname was part of the backdrop.

<sup>22</sup> I mention military effectiveness not to suggest that military measures should have been used but because in the international arena—whether for big, medium, or small states—the possession of military assets and sometimes just the perception of that possession—even without the use of gunboat diplomacy—can influence outcomes as national interests are pursued, especially when such fundamental interests as territorial possession (or the definition of it) are involved.

definition of Suriname in the eyes of the world. This is all the more so since Suriname recently began to depict itself as inclusive of the New River Triangle on the web site of its embassy in Washington, DC.<sup>23</sup>

The maritime zone's geopolitical value in terms of resources is perhaps greater than the New River Triangle's given the hydrocarbons there. One study notes that:

The disputed maritime area between Guyana and Suriname, called the Guyana Basin, is an under-explored area on the continental shelf of South America extending from present day Venezuela to Suriname. The Guyana Basin is geographically next to Trinidad and Venezuela, both important oil producers on the Caribbean plateau and the Venezuelan extension, which are two large and productive oil fields. Throughout this area, large commercial petroleum consortiums such as Exxon, Agip, and Burlington have successfully drilled for petroleum.

Limited exploration in the Guyana Basin has been carried out to date. However in June 2000, the United States Geological Survey's World Petroleum Assessment 2000 estimated that the resource potential for the Guyana Basin is 15.2 billion barrels of oil. This estimate indicates that the Guyana Basin is the second most important unexplored region in the world in terms of oil potential. If the potential is reached, it would be the twelfth most productive site in the world.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See <http://www.surinameembassy.org/>. This is a variation of Venezuela's approach where it portrays Essequibo, the five-eighths of Guyana it claims, as part of its territory but as *Zona en reclamación*. See, for example, <http://www.venezuelatuya.com/geografia/mapavenezuela.htm>.

<sup>24</sup> Donovan "Suriname-Guyana Maritime and Territorial Disputes: A Legal and Historical Analysis," 48.

The zone in question was 31,600 km<sup>2</sup> (5,251 square miles) in size. The dispute has witnessed several dramatic high points, perhaps the most notable of which was the ejection in June 2000 by Suriname Defense Force naval vessels of the oil platforms of a Canadian-owned company, CGX, which had been licensed by Guyana to drill in the Guyana Basin. The episode witnessed the humiliation of the Guyana Defense Force—once larger and better trained than the Suriname Defense Force. One report also noted: “To add insult to injury, Paramaribo had deployed its naval vessels in the area in a show of strength, declared itself ‘the power in the river’ and led Georgetown on a meaningless diplomatic waltz which ended on 18 June, with the then Foreign Minister Clement Rohee conceding failure in his quest to restore the status quo ante. The next year, Mr. Rohee was removed from the ministry.”<sup>25</sup>

Interestingly, Suriname’s use of force was itself a manifestation of Inter-mestic dynamics. Up until early May 2000, about a year after CGX began its exploration in the area, Surinamese authorities voiced no concern about the presence or purpose of CGX in the Basin. Things began to change later that month as the campaign for the impending elections—set for May 25—heated up. Opposition figures began accusing the ruling coalition of condoning Guyana’s intrusion into “Surinamese territory” and plundering its oil wealth. As Shridath Ramphal put it, “political machoism was stirring the nationalist plot; and the Government was not going to be outdone.”<sup>26</sup> On May 11, Suriname delivered a

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<sup>25</sup> “Nervous Neighbors: Guyana and Suriname,” *Stabroek News*, November 5, 2008, accessed March 1, 2011, <http://www.stabroeknews.com/2008/guyana-review/11/05/nervous-neighbours-guyana-and-suriname/>.

<sup>26</sup> Shridath Ramphal, *Triumph for UNCLOS: The Guyana-Suriname Maritime Arbitration: A Compilation and Commentary*, (London: Hansib Publishers, 2008), 146.

*Note Verbale*<sup>27</sup> to Guyana through Guyana’s ambassador in Paramaribo, demanding that Guyana cease operations in what it deemed its territory.

Guyana replied asserting that the exploration was being undertaken within its maritime space. Suriname ignored Guyana’s response and found it politically expedient not to acknowledge having received it. The May 25, 2000 elections resulted in a loss of power for the ruling coalition and victory for the New Front coalition, although it was sometime before the new National Assembly elected a president. Then on May 31, with the new president not yet agreed on, Suriname’s foreign minister—whose president had just lost power—issued a new *Note Verbale* to Guyana’s ambassador. It re-asserted its allegation about Guyana’s illegal actions, demanded immediate cessation of activities, and promised to use “all avenues” if Guyana did not comply with its demands.

Simultaneously, Suriname ordered CGX to cease operations or face appropriate sanctions. Guyana replied to the May 31 *Note Verbale* on June 2, offering to host high-level talks within 24 hours. That same day Guyana Defense Force Coast Guard patrolling the Guyana Basin near the rigs reported Surinamese military aircraft flying threateningly over the rig and Coast Guard vessels. Guyana protested the airspace intrusion and renewed the offer to hold talks, to no avail. Just after midnight on June 3 the Surinamese navy arrived in the CGX concession area, circled the rig, trained spotlights on the platform and ordered: “leave the area within 12 hours, or the consequences will be yours.”<sup>28</sup> Understandably fearful for their physical safety and destruction of their equipment, the CGX operators detached the rigs and left under naval

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<sup>27</sup> This is a form of communication used in the diplomatic community that is unsigned and written in the third person. It is less formal than a *Note* but more formal than an *Aide-Mémoire*.

<sup>28</sup> Ramphal, *Triumph for UNCLOS*, 149.

escort. Suriname also forced Esso and Maxus to end their oil operations in the Basin.

The affair also highlighted CARICOM's limitations as a dispute-resolution mechanism. CARICOM tried but failed to resolve the disagreement between two of its members. Guyana then took the matter to arbitration under the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) in February 2004. The case took three years, with the composition of the five-member Tribunal alone taking nine months. Both sides mounted formidable teams of international lawyers, geographers, and diplomats. Guyana had a 21-member team, and Suriname a 25-member team. (For details of the two teams, see Ramphal, *Triumph for UNCLOS*, 341-342).<sup>29</sup> Suriname challenged the jurisdiction of the Tribunal and the validity of the established international legal principle of equidistance in fixing boundaries, and it attempted to justify the June 3, 2000 use of force.

Not only did that strategy fail in the extant case but it facilitated the strengthening of "the Constitution of the Oceans" in relation to future cases. Says Ramphal: "In all three areas, the Tribunal in this case made decisions of major significance not only to the outcome of the Arbitration, but also to the development of international law generally. The Guyana-Suriname Maritime Award is likely to be an arbitral precedent much drawn upon in international jurisprudence in years ahead."<sup>30</sup> The Tribunal announced the Award on

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<sup>29</sup> CGX paid most of Guyana's legal bill. According to one report, "Toronto-based CGX Energy Inc. paid \$8.9 million in fees--the majority of Guyana's legal bill--incurred in a maritime border dispute with Suriname over rights to the undersea basin, President Bharrat Jagdeo said late Monday. 'This is no secret,' Jagdeo told reporters outside his offices Georgetown. 'I'm very grateful to CGX for footing the bill, because it didn't come from the treasury. But that doesn't mean that they have any preferences.'" (Associated Press, 2007).

<sup>30</sup> Ramphal, *Triumph for UNCLOS*, 17. Suriname also pursued a "denial of access" strategy. Although Guyana and Britain allowed Suriname

September 20, 2007: two-thirds of the disputed zone to Guyana and one-third to Suriname. Beyond this, Guyana felt vindicated in relation to the June 2000 use of force with the Tribunal's declaration: "As a result of this Award, Guyana now has undisputed title to the area where the incident occurred."<sup>31</sup>

As with other dispute settlement cases, the Tribunal's decision did not remove all frictions. On October 14, 2008, Suriname seized the *Lady Chanrda*, a privately owned Guyanese boat on the Corentyne River.<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, the settlement enabled resumption of oil exploration by CGX. Joining later was Tullow Oil, a British company, in a joint venture with REPSOL of Spain. Indications are that production could begin as early as 2014.<sup>33</sup>

It is reasonable to suggest that given the sensitivity in the Americas to how territorial disputes are dealt with—partly

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unlimited access to all historical archives, Suriname sought to deny access by Guyana to Dutch archives for the period June 1937 to March 1959, leading the Tribunal to declare in its first Procedural Order that: "The Tribunal shall not consider any document taken from a file in the archives of the Netherlands to which Guyana had been denied access." (Ramphal 2008, 222)

<sup>31</sup> For the case's historical, political, and legal dynamics, see Ramphal, 2008, 17. Shridath Ramphal is an international lawyer with a distinguished career: former Attorney General and then Foreign Minister of Guyana under Forbes Burnham (founder of the opposition PNCr), former Commonwealth Secretary General, and former Chancellor of both the University of the West Indies and the University of Guyana. He led Guyana's team. Suriname's team was led by then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lygia Kraag-Keteldijk.

<sup>32</sup> "Nervous Neighbors: Guyana and Suriname," *Stabroek News*, November 5, 2008, accessed March 1, 2011, <http://www.stabroeknews.com/2008/guyana-review/11/05/nervous-neighbours-guyana-and-suriname/>.

<sup>33</sup> "Oil Production in Guyana likely by 2014, analysts say," *World Countries News*, January 30, 2011, accessed February 23, 2011, <http://world-countries.net/archives/14768>; "Suriname appoints new Ambassadors to USA and Brazil." *Caribbean News Now*, January 11, 2011, accessed February 26, 2011, <http://www.caribbeannewsnow.com/headline-Suriname-appoints-new-ambassadors-to-USA-and-Brazil-4400.html>.

because of wars caused by them and because of the large number of existing disputes—it is not just Guyana that would be concerned about Bouterse’s conduct vis-à-vis territorial matters. But it also is true that Bouterse’s election has created international anxiety about other matters, including illegal drug operations.

## **On the Geonarcotics Front**

This writer originated the concept of “geonarcotics” in the early 1990s as a way to examine the drug phenomenon holistically. I first outlined it in 1993 in Canada’s *International Journal* and later applied it empirically in a study on the Caribbean.<sup>34</sup> The concept suggests the dynamic interaction of four factors: narcotics, geography, power, and politics; that the narcotics phenomenon is multidimensional, with four main problem areas (drug production, consumption-abuse, trafficking, and money laundering); that these problem areas give rise to actual and potential threats to the security of states; and that drug operations and the activities they spawn precipitate both conflict and cooperation among various state and non-state actors. The geonarcotics approach does not view the “war on drugs” purely as a military matter.

Apart from Bouterse’s conviction, his son and several senior military officials have been implicated in narcotics smuggling. In 1986 Etienne Boerenven, then the Suriname Defense Force’s second in command, was arrested in Miami, convicted of drug trafficking and sentenced. He was deported from Florida in May 1991 after serving five years of a 12-year prison sentence. In March 1998, Ronnie Brunswijk, a former Bouterse bodyguard who later became

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<sup>34</sup> Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith, “From Cold-War Geopolitics to Post-Cold War Geonarcotics,” *International Journal*, Vol. 49, Winter: 1993-1994, 1-36; *Drugs and Security in the Caribbean: Sovereignty Under Siege*, University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997.

his nemesis, was convicted of drug trafficking in Holland and sentenced *in absentia* to eight years in prison.<sup>35</sup>

In April 1999, Brazil's *TV Globo* reported allegations that Rupert Christopher, Suriname's ambassador in Brazil and a former defense minister under Bouterse, was implicated in the drug trade with Bouterse. Earlier that year, Bouterse's son, Dino, reportedly was recalled from Suriname's embassy in Brazil after authorities found evidence that he had been using his diplomatic immunity to smuggle drugs. In August 1999 Interpol issued an international arrest warrant on Belgium's behalf for Ruben Peiter, commander of the Suriname police mobile unit. Belgium suspected that Peiter was shipping cocaine in timber consignments. In August 2005 Dino Bouterse was convicted in Paramaribo and sentenced to eight years in prison for trafficking in drugs and weapons. He secured an early release.<sup>36</sup>

This profile suggests that as regards the matter of drugs, the international spotlight likely will be more on trafficking and less on production, consumption-abuse, and money laundering, although these three aspects are important. In

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<sup>35</sup> As noted earlier, Brunswijk heads the A Combination group. He is a member of the National Assembly, representing Marowijne district, in north-east Suriname, near French Guiana.

<sup>36</sup> Griffith, *Drugs and Security in the Caribbean*; Don Bohning, "Arms-for-sale Deals Rise: Suriname Military at Focal Point," *Miami Herald*, September 12, 1999, accessed March 4, 2011, <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:Obf1MPElv4wJ:www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v99/n994/a06.html+Ronnie+Brunswijk+drug+trafficking&cd=20&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com>; Gary Brana-Shute, "Narco-Criminality in the Caribbean," in Ivelaw L. Griffith, ed., *The Political Economy of Drugs in the Caribbean*, (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 97-112; Ank Kuipers, "Suriname MPs elect Strongman as President," *Star Online*, July 20, 2010, accessed March 5, 2011, [http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:kylTZFLNurUJ:thestar.com.my/news/story.asp%3Ffile%3D/2010/7/20/worldupdates/2010-07-20T035108Z\\_01\\_NOOTR\\_RTRMDNC\\_0\\_-502471-1%26sec%3DWorldupdates+dino+bouterse+trafficking+2005&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:kylTZFLNurUJ:thestar.com.my/news/story.asp%3Ffile%3D/2010/7/20/worldupdates/2010-07-20T035108Z_01_NOOTR_RTRMDNC_0_-502471-1%26sec%3DWorldupdates+dino+bouterse+trafficking+2005&cd=7&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&source=www.google.com).

relation to money laundering, for example, a director of the Suriname Central Bank once was indicted (*in absentia* in Holland) for money-laundering.<sup>37</sup>

Marijuana is cultivated in Suriname, although mostly for domestic consumption. But Suriname produces no cocaine, heroin, or methamphetamines, which feature prominently in trafficking there, as shown in the Appendix. Like everywhere else—including in the United States—that what is seized is a mere fraction of what is trafficked. Thus, an understandable question in terms of geonarcotics is: what explains Suriname’s deep involvement in trafficking? As with any nation so involved, there is no single-factor explanation. Corruption, economic deprivation, and law enforcement resource constraints are relevant factors. Nevertheless, geography is a major factor, and in several respects.

Location! Location! Location! Suriname is just a “stone’s throw” away from Colombia, a major cocaine and heroin production (and marijuana cultivation) center. It also is close to Venezuela, a major drug conduit, and it shares a 600 km-border with Guyana and a 593 km-border with Brazil, both of which feature prominently in drug transshipment from South America to the United States, Europe, and Africa, often for re-routing to Europe and the United States. Also, Suriname is less than 3,000 miles away from most places in the United States, a key demand country. Although it is further away from key drug demand countries in Europe—4,659 miles from Amsterdam, and 4,437 miles from London, for instance—there are commercial and social networks in those countries that make the trafficking journeys worthwhile for the illegal operators.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Brana-Shute, *The Political Economy of Drugs in the Caribbean*, 107.

<sup>38</sup> See Griffith, *Drugs and Security in the Caribbean*, 57-62 for data on the distances between and among source, transit, and destination countries in the Caribbean, South America, North America, and Europe.

Yet, is not merely a matter of physical geography; social geography also is a factor. Suriname has 163,270 square kilometers of territory; it is about the same size of the state of Georgia in the United States, with a little fewer than 10 million people. Thus, Suriname has a very low population density and the population lives mostly along the coast. Consequently most of the nation's territory is both under-peopled and under-policed. This combination provides vulnerability to drug trafficking (and other illegal activities) as well as opportunity for traffickers and other illegal operators.

Thus, a second understandable geonarcotics question is this: In light of the factors described above, is Bouterse likely to establish a narco-state?<sup>39</sup> This salience of this question increased for some individuals with the January 2011 WikiLeaks cable revelation. It was alleged that United States embassy officials in Suriname had filed reports to headquarters that Bouterse had continued his drug dealings even after his 1999 conviction, supposedly until 2006, when he still was a member of parliament, and that some of his ventures involved links with Guyanese Roger Khan.<sup>40</sup> As noted in the Appendix, in October 2009 Khan was sentenced to 40 years in prison in New York having been convicted on drug trafficking and related charges.

Clearly, with unemployment almost 10 percent, per capita GDP being under US\$10,000, and three-quarters of the

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<sup>39</sup> The term refers to situations where (a) the political elites of a country either act in complicity with drug barons or are so fearful of them that they turn a blind eye to their pursuits, or (b) drug dealers exercise effective control over parts of the nation, thereby undermining the governability of the nation by the elites who reputedly rule it. An example of the first case is Afghanistan under Taliban rule. An example of the second case is Colombia for much of the 1960s-1990s and contemporary Mexico in several states.

<sup>40</sup> "Bouterse Was Involved in Drugs after Conviction, says Wikileaks Cables;" *Daily Herald*, January 24 2011, accessed January 27, 2011, <http://www.thedailyherald.com/regional/2-news/12787-bouterse-was-involved-in-drugs-after-conviction-says-wikileaks-cables.html>.

population engaged in the low-wage service sector, economic deprivation is still a major challenge for Suriname. Indeed, as noted earlier, Bouterse won partly because of a pledge to improve the economic and social conditions of Surinamese. It is true that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts a five percent economic growth this year.<sup>41</sup> But, corruption still exists, and the conditions that conduce to it are unlikely to be eliminated in the near future. Moreover, the economic, political, and geographic conditions of proximate countries such as Guyana, Venezuela, and Brazil are not such as to reduce their contribution to Suriname's vulnerability to trafficking.

For all this, I do not envisage the creation of a narco-state in Suriname, and for several reasons. First, the very political acumen that helped Bouterse re-emerge legitimately should enable him to appreciate the inexpediency of such a pursuit. Such would hurt both his political self-interest as a world leader and the national interests of his nation. Second, Bouterse must know of the special spotlight both he and Suriname now are under. Thus, he is more likely to try to compensate for his history and negative image by being aggressive against trafficking than to become complicit (again) in it. Perhaps we already are seeing the makings of this with the quest for international assistance from Britain, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Pakistan, and elsewhere.<sup>42</sup> Finally, although Bouterse is in good health, he is in a chronological zone —age 65—when leaders begin to ponder both their

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<sup>41</sup> "IMF pleased with Suriname Economic Growth," *RJRnews*online, March 5, 2011, accessed March 6, 2011, <http://rjrnews.com/news/regional/imf-pleased-suriname%E2%80%99s-economic-growth>.

<sup>42</sup> "Suriname Seeks International Help in Drug Seizures," *Stabroek News*, February 22, 2011, accessed March 5, 2011, <http://www.stabroeknews.com/2011/news/breaking/02/22/suriname-seeks-international-help-on-drug-seizures/>.

mortality and their legacy.<sup>43</sup> He must know that enabling the development of a narco-state would damage his legacy.

Consider, though, that even if President Bouterse were to compensate for his drug trafficking history and image by being aggressive against traffickers he might well want to establish an external legacy outside the geonarcotics arena. The foreign policy arena can plausibly be that desired legacy area. In such a case, for understandable reasons, his primary zone of engagement would have to be the Caribbean, Brazil, and Venezuela, although Europe and the United States will continue to be important for trade, aid, and immigration.<sup>44</sup> As was noted earlier, in his first international trip—to Guyana in September 2010—Bouterse declared having “a special movement and aspiration towards South America and the Caribbean.”<sup>45</sup> Indeed, as part of its South American engagement, Suriname joined UNASUR (*Unión de Naciones Suramericanas* or Union of South American Nations) in January 2011.<sup>46</sup> It is in that context that we turn next to some dynamics related to a possible Venezuelan embrace.

## **On the Venezuelan Front**

A Venezuelan embrace of Suriname now that Bouterse is president is underway. This is explained by a few secondary factors and one primary one. One secondary factor is the fact that both Desi Bouterse and Hugo Chavez are political

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<sup>43</sup> He was born on October 13, 1945 in Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname.

<sup>44</sup> “Suriname Chooses France as Europe Gateway,” *Stabroek News*, February 11, 2011, accessed March 8, 2011, <http://www.stabroeknews.com/2011/news/breaking/02/11/suriname-chooses-france-as-europe-gateway/>. Suriname announced in February 2011 that it was changing its gateway to Europe from the Netherlands to France.

<sup>45</sup> Suriname assumes the six-month Chairmanship of Caricom in January 2012.

<sup>46</sup> The other members of UNASUR are: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.

mavericks, and perhaps bond at that level. Moreover, there is ostensibly an ideological affinity, as they both are left of the ideological spectrum. However, clearly Bouterse no longer has the strident left orientation he had during the 1980s and 1990s, when the overall ideological climate in the hemisphere and beyond was different. It is true that Suriname recognized the State of Palestine in February 2011, and hosted Chen Fengxiang, vice head of the Communist Party of China the following month.<sup>47</sup>

Nevertheless, Bouterse seems not interested in ideology but in pragmatism. For example, in outlining his five-year policy projections in the National Assembly in October 2010, he declared: “Our foreign policy will be aimed at Suriname agricultural produce gaining access to Caribbean markets. We will pursue a more intensive cooperation with Cuba in educating doctors, in order to bring health care within reach of each Surinamese. We will work more closely with Venezuela as regards the further development of our oil sector, with Japan and Korea on the fisheries sector, with the USA and Canada in the mining sector, and with India in the area of ICT.”<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, Cuba and Suriname established diplomatic relation in 1979 but after the United States invasion of Grenada in 1983 those relations were frozen until 1995. Cuba reopened an embassy in Paramaribo in 2006 and Suriname reopened one in Havana in January 2010, several months before Bouterse assumed the presidency.

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<sup>47</sup> “Suriname’s Recognition of State of Palestine,” *Suriname.net*, February 2, 2011, accessed March 12, 2011, <http://www.surinam.net/content/%E2%80%94welcomes-surinames-recognition-state-palestine-daily-times-0>; “Visiting Chinese Officials wants Strong Ties with Suriname,” *DevSur*, March 1, 2011, accessed March 12, 2011, <http://www.devsur.com/visiting-chinese-official-wants-strong-ties-with-suriname/2011/03/01/>.

<sup>48</sup> H.E Désiré Delano Bouterse, “Cross Roads: Together Towards Better Times. Statement of Government Policy 2010-2015 Delivered in the National Assembly on Friday 1 October 2010 by his Excellency D.D. Bouterse,” accessed March 11, 2011, <http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/suriname/pid/25800>.

Understandably, this does not mean that Chavez might not wish for ideological stridency, or that Bouterse can totally escape the embrace having accepted Chavez's largesse during the 2010 elections campaign. Moreover, anxiety in some quarters within Suriname about Venezuelan influence led one group, called "No Murderers for President," to begin protesting alleged interference. They even wrote to all UNASUR members, except Venezuela, of course, about this.<sup>49</sup>

What, then, is the primary explanatory factor in Suriname's Venezuelan embrace under Desi Bouterse? That factor is national interest. Suriname finds it expedient to enhance its relationship with Venezuela as part of its South American thrust, and because of aid and oil—both to acquire the latter on concessionary terms and get technical assistance for its own oil industry. For its part, Venezuela considers it in its national interest to expand its zone of influence by using oil, part of its Bolivarian strategy. The instrument for this is *PetroCaribe*. Chavez announced Suriname's inclusion in *PetroCaribe* while on a five-hour visit to Suriname on November 26, 2010. He also signed agreements on agriculture and housing. Venezuela will also supply fertilizers for Suriname's rice sector and the two will pursue a joint venture on rice farming. As well, they also will provide an undisclosed number of prefabricated houses to Suriname.<sup>50</sup>

*PetroCaribe* itself was established in 2005 under Venezuela's *PetroCaribe* Energy Agreement and finances a portion of the value of imports of Venezuelan crude oil on a

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<sup>49</sup> "UNASUR Should Probe Venezuelan Interference in Suriname—Group," *Stabroek News*, February 11, 2011, accessed March 8, 2011, <http://www.stabroeknews.com/2011/news/breaking/02/15/unasur-should-probe-venezuelan-interference-in-suriname-group/>.

<sup>50</sup> "Suriname to get fuel under PetroCaribe deal," *Caribbean 360*, November 29, 2010, accessed March 9, 2011, <http://www.caribbean360.com/news/51381.html>.

sliding scale: above \$30 per barrel, 25%; above \$40, 30%; above 50, 40%; and above \$100, 50%. Participating countries pay the balance over 25 years at two percent interest rate, which reduces to one percent at prices above \$40 per barrel along with a two-year repayment grace period.<sup>51</sup> It operates under six key terms:

1. Oil sold at concessionary terms.
2. Only part of the payment is paid in cash up front. The rest is converted into a loan, used for development purposes, to be repaid in 25 years at one or two percent interest.
3. No conditions are attached to the loans.
4. Portions of the loan can be repaid in the form of goods or services.
5. No private entities are permitted; all transactions are done on a state-to-state basis.
6. Transportation, docking facilities, and upgrades to refining and storage capabilities are included.<sup>52</sup>

As of March 2011 the following 17 countries were *PetroCaribe* participants: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Suriname, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They receive about 145,000 barrels daily, down from the 300,000 barrels initially envisaged, with some 95,000 barrels going to Cuba alone. This list of nations is not all leftist in orientation. So, although *PetroCaribe* is manifestly a part of Hugo Chavez's Bolivarian strategy, the participating nations are drawn to it not because of ideological affinity with Chavez but for

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<sup>51</sup> Norman Girvan, "ALBA, PetroCaribe, and Caricom: Issues in a New Dynamic," in Ralph S. Clem and Anthony P. Maingot, eds., *Venezuela's Petro-Diplomacy: Hugo Chávez's Foreign Policy*, (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2011), 122.

<sup>52</sup> Anthony P. Maingot, *Venezuela's Petro-Diplomacy*, 104.

pragmatic national interest reasons.<sup>53</sup> Anthony Maingot's assessment is, therefore, fully supportable: "This is the main lesson learned from Venezuela's efforts in the region: countries will seldom turn down economic assistance when they need it, but how they respond politically to that assistance will depend on their own political culture and realities."

Yet, there are risks, especially for those Eastern Caribbean nations with monocultural economies and, thus, greater economic vulnerability. This vulnerability was accentuated in early 2011 by developments in the Middle East, which drove the price of oil up considerably. As of March 2011 the price of crude topped \$US 115 per barrel and was expected to rise further if the situation is not ameliorated soon. Reliance on *PetroCaribe* likely will increase and so too possibly Venezuela's influence. At least Suriname has a more diversified economy, including some oil production, and can resist some pressures if it feels such are not consonant with its national interests in ways Dominica, St. Lucia, and others are less able to do. Further, Suriname is not—yet, at least—part of ALBA.

As Maingot points out, Hugo Chavez's strategy is about creating alternatives "to U.S. imperialism, capitalism (in its neoliberal, free trade, and privatization dimensions), and traditional oligarchies (often defined in racial terms)."<sup>54</sup> My worry, then, is that as middle-power Venezuela pursues its "great game" against hyper-power United States small Caribbean nations might become collateral victims. Geopolitically, ALBA and the Bolivarian strategy highlight

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<sup>53</sup> Central to the Bolivarian strategy is ALBA—Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, also called the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas)—of which Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are members, along with Venezuela. See Clem and Maingot 2011 for an examination of ALBA and the Bolivarian strategy.

<sup>54</sup> Maingot, *Venezuela's Petro-Diplomacy*, 112.

several political and economic vulnerabilities of Caribbean countries, in relation to CARICOM and the United States, which is the Venezuela's nemesis. It is this context that the re-emergence of Bouterse and the strengthening of relations with Venezuela have raised geopolitical anxieties.

Nevertheless, so far all indications are that Suriname's pursuits are guided by pragmatism and national interest rather than left ideological affinity. In this respect, Bouterse's articulation of his Development Diplomacy approach in the National Assembly in October 2010 bears noting:

The realization of the national development goals will be central in our interactions with other countries and international organizations, mindful of the policy principle that foreign policy must contribute to national development. The foreign policy will serve to support sectors that are central to the national development, such as agriculture and mining, education, health care, rural development, poverty alleviation and environmental protection. With regard to Suriname this implies a reorientation of the regular diplomacy to a development-oriented diplomacy, with more attention being paid to new subjects such as poverty alleviation, food security, the protection of upcoming business and industries, and the impact of climate change. In this concept the contribution of recognized NGOs and Surinamese will be of great value in the Diaspora. This development diplomacy will be aimed at optimizing effectiveness and productivity of international cooperation on behalf of national development.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Bouterse, "Cross Roads: Together Towards Better Times. Statement of Government Policy 2010-2015 Delivered in the National Assembly on Friday 1 October 2010 by his Excellency D.D. Bouterse," 6. Some of his key diplomatic selections can be viewed as furthering this approach. In January 2011, Subhas Mungra was appointed as ambassador to the United States. Mungra is an economist who once served as Permanent

## Conclusion

Suriname is clearly at a crossroads partly because the major outcome of the 2010 elections has caused some geopolitical anxieties—in Guyana with which there is a territorial dispute, regarding drug trafficking, and vis-à-vis Venezuela. This is essentially because of the triumph of erstwhile authoritarian ruler and convicted drug trafficker Désiré Desi Bouterse who made good use of his political acumen to re-emerge as the nation's chief political helmsman, this time legitimately.

Yet, it is important to bear in mind the broader context of political adaptation and democracy in the extant case. Samuel Huntington reminds us that: “Elections, open, free, and fair, are the essence of democracy, the inescapable *sine qua non*. Governments produced by elections may be inefficient, corrupt, shortsighted, irresponsible, dominated by special interests, and incapable of adopting policies demanded by the public good. These qualities may make such governments undesirable but they do not make them undemocratic.”<sup>56</sup> There is every reason to hope that not only will Suriname sustain its democratic trajectory but that the government of President Desi Bouterse will pursue such domestic and international policies and programs as to make his government desirable within the country and embraced as a valuable member of the regional and global comity of nations.

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Representative to the United Nations, as Foreign Minister, and as Finance Minister. Marlon Mohammedoessein, a career diplomat with over 20 years of service and who was trained in Brazil's Rio Branco Institute, also was appointed as ambassador to Brazil (Caribbean News Now 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968), 9-10.

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# Appendix

## Drug Trafficking Portrait of Suriname 2006-2010

<b>Year</b>	<b>Seizures and Arrests</b>
<b>2006</b>	<p>577 kilograms (kg) of cocaine and 42 kg of cannabis; 571 persons were arrested for drug-related offenses. While seizures and arrests decreased compared to 2005, this is due to the government's focus on targeting major traffickers. Within the last five years authorities have rounded up eight of the ten known major criminal organizations. Through September authorities arrested 112 people carrying cocaine in their stomachs. Many who evade detection in Suriname were arrested at the airport in Amsterdam, which since 2004 has implemented a 100 percent inspection of all passengers and baggage arriving from Suriname. In a major success Guyanese Shaheed "Roger" Khan, suspected of drug trafficking, was arrested on false documents charges. He was set to return to Guyana via Trinidad and Tobago, but was deported, instead, to the United States. [Khan was later convicted in New York and sentenced in October 2009 to 40 years for drug smuggling and illegal arms possession. Two months later his attorney, Robert Simels, was given 14 years for trying to kill witnesses. See Griffith 2009, 16.]</p>
<b>2007</b>	<p>206 kg of cocaine, 131 kg of cannabis, 3,154 ecstasy tablets, and 81 grams of ecstasy powder. A total of 667 people were arrested for drug-related offenses and 462 cases were sent to the Office of the Attorney General for prosecution. While the cocaine seizures are far below 2006's the decrease is attributed to the establishment of the Airport Narcotics Team and anti-narcotics training provided</p>

for customs and police officers, which forced traffickers to develop alternatives to getting drugs through the airport.

**2008**

228.1 kg of cocaine, 123 kg of cannabis, 785 ecstasy tablets and 3,346.4 grams of heroin. While 2008 seizures were on par with previous year, authorities continued targeting large trafficking rings, (with direct links to South American and European rings). United States intelligence shows that traffickers have changed their routes and methods of operations in response to the efforts of Surinamese authorities. Drug trafficking organizations have moved their landing strips further into the interior and changed trafficking tactics, such as using one landing strip for a very short period of time and then moving to another strip. A total of 582 people were arrested on drug-related offenses. The authorities also noted a slight decrease in the number of drug mules arrested, from 99 in 2007 to 66 in 2008. Traffickers continued the use of postal services to mail packages containing household items or foodstuff (ginger roots, noodles, and syrup) containing drugs. There was a notable increase of African nationals arrested at Suriname's Johan Adolf Pengel airport carrying drugs intended for Africa, through Holland. The most significant arrest trend in 2008 was the arrest of several members of different Surinamese entertainment groups.

**2009**

238.2 kilograms of cocaine, 158.5 kilograms of cannabis, 4,711.2 grams of hash, and 5.8 grams of heroin. In the second half of 2009 Suriname launched Operation Koetai, which focused interdiction on the border with Guyana. This operation resulted in 94.1 kilos of cocaine seize and

eight arrests as of October 30. People who attempted to bypass Operation Koetai by landing their boats in the district of Saramacca also were apprehended, resulting in seven additional arrests and the seizure of 77.5 kilos of cocaine. Operation Koetai forced an increase in the market price of cocaine from \$3,500 to \$7,000 per kilo in the area. During the year, Suriname installed a urine testing machine at the airport to identify suspected drug mules and introduced three Dutch-trained dogs to detect drugs on Amsterdam-bound flights. This enhanced effort may have contributed to the downward trend in the number of drug mules arrested—from 99 in 2007, to 66 in 2008, to 49 in 2009. One Surinamese drug mule was arrested at the airport in Holland after having swallowed 182 cocaine capsules, weighing nearly 2.2 kilos. Although the majority of the trafficking out of Suriname via the airport occurs mainly on Netherlands-bound flights, drugs also were intercepted on the US-bound flights in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, and the United States. For example, drugs were discovered on a US-bound Suriname Airways flight by US Customs in Aruba. Nationalities arrested in Suriname in 2009 for drug-related offenses included Filipinos, Spaniards, Dutch, Guyanese, Belgians, British, Brazilians, Ghanaians, Columbians, Venezuelans, and Nigerians. As of October 30 that year 454 people were arrested for drug-related offenses of which 323 cases were sent for prosecution. As of November 5 of the year, 293 people had been prosecuted for drug-related offenses.

**2010**

342.7 kg of cocaine, 32.5 liters of liquid cocaine, 146 kg of marijuana, 4.5 grams of hashish, and 2

grams of heroin. During 2010, 542 people were arrested for drug-related offenses, compared to 454 arrests in 2009. Suriname authorities focused significant interdiction resources on the western border with Guyana, a key route for cocaine trafficking by land, air, and water. In 2010 this effort yielded limited success, with fewer interdictions than in 2009. One officer posted at this checkpoint was arrested on corruption charges and this investigation is ongoing. A downward trend continued in the number of drug mules arrested—from 99 in 2007, to 66 in 2008, to 49 in 2009, to 34 in 2010. The use of foodstuff to move drugs out of Suriname continued in 2010, with cocaine discovered in prunes, dried fish, souvenirs, and syrup bottles. The bulk of the cocaine movement out of Suriname to Europe and Africa is via commercial sea cargo, including both larger boats and smaller fishing vessels that carry drugs out to sea and transfer them to larger freight vessels in international waters. There were several drug seizures in 2010 of cocaine found in sea cargo originating from Suriname, including: 166 kilos from a container at the port of Tilbury in the United Kingdom, where the drugs were concealed within industrial machinery parts; 266 kilos discovered by Pakistani Customs at the port of Karachi in the shipping container of plywood; and 147 kilos of liquid cocaine discovered by Dutch Customs officials, concealed within a cargo container of syrup.

Source: U.S. Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report; various years.

## About the Author

**Ivelaw Lloyd Griffith** is Professor of Political Science and Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs at York College of The City University of New York. A specialist on Caribbean and hemispheric security, drugs, and crime, he has published seven books, including *Strategy and Security in the Caribbean* (Praeger 1991), *Democracy and Human Rights in the Caribbean* (Westview Press 1997), *Drugs and Security in the Caribbean* (Penn State University Press 1997), and *Caribbean Security in the Age of Terror* (Ian Randle Publishers 2004).

A past-president of the Caribbean Studies Association, Dr. Griffith also has published articles in many scholarly journals, including *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, *Dickinson Journal of International Law*, *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, *University of Miami Law Review*, *International Journal*, *Mershon International Studies Review*, *Latin American Research Review*, *Caribbean Quarterly*, *Naval War College Review*, *The Round Table*, *International Journal*, *Third World Quarterly*, *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, *Joint Force Quarterly*, *Social and Economic Studies*, and *Security and Defense Studies Review*.

The Royal Military College of Canada and the George Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Germany are among places Dr. Griffith has been a Visiting Scholar, and he has been a consultant to Canada's Foreign Ministry, USAID, and other entities. A member of the editorial board of *Security and Defense Studies Review*, published by the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, he has testified before the United States Congress on Caribbean security issues. His recent work includes an entry in *The Encyclopedia of Drugs, Alcohol, and Addictive Behavior*, 3rd edition (2009), and invited Commentaries in *New York Carib News* (2010), the Inter-American Dialogue's *Latin American Advisor* (2010), and *Caribbean Icon* (2010, 2011).

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