METHODS NOT MOTIVES: IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONVERGENCE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM
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Transnational organized crime and corruption are topics that security planners are increasingly visiting in their analyses of terrorism, most often examining how terrorism and transnational organized crime intersect and diverge. Clarifying these relationships is vital to approaching the current turbulence in global politics. This article examines the relationships between these two entities to arrive at the conclusion that transnational criminal organizations and terrorist groups often adopt similar methods, they are inherently striving for divergent ends. Crime is primarily and economically driven enterprise, while terrorism remains rooted in political pursuits. While we note that such a relationship results in a number of consequences for policymakers and practitioners from both the US and the larger global community, and important conclusion we revisit throughout the article is the need for scholarly research on this relationship.

On September 10, 2001, American foreign policy still dealt primarily with Cold-War era threats. US diplomacy, intelligence, and law enforcement focused on nation states as primary actors. Various voices, however, warned that there was a new threat from a mix of terrorism and international organized crime that transcended the nation-state level. The networks these organizations operated, not nation states, now posed enormous threats to economic, political, and social order of the United States and many other countries. On September 10th, the debate as to whether and how non-state actors posed a legitimate security threat to the US continued, with state-based threats retaining priority.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks forced America’s hand. The US had to recognize transnational crime as a national security threat. The terrorist attacks that day brought a major shift in American foreign policy, one that did not occur in the previous decade despite numerous congressional hearings, special reports, and government evaluations. Only the well-orchestrated September 11 attacks against symbols of American life and the massive loss of innocent lives forced American into long overdue policy changes.
The new national security focus is a transnational one, posed by non-state actors spanning many countries that exploit porous borders and differences in international law to plot and perpetrate terrorist acts. The terrorists who masterminded the September 11 attacks were part of a diffuse network united by a common terrorist ideology rather than a particular citizenship or ethnicity. They reduced their risks by plotting their crime in Germany, which has the greatest controls preventing undercover policing and surveillance in Europe, and committing their crimes in the United States, exploiting its open borders and uncontrolled movements of visitors and citizens (Fijnaut and Marz, 1995; Erlanger, 2001). By structuring their operations among different locales, they reduced their risks and increased their opportunities of success.

This article focuses not on underlying causes of terrorism and the response to the threat, but on the methods of the transnational groups that now threaten our society. In particular, this analysis comments on their attributes, how they operate, and the criminal activities that sustain them. The article examines these factors of terrorist groups in a comparative fashion, using the growing research on and knowledge of international organized crime organizations to show how the two actors operate using similar ends. Transnational terrorists seek political ends when using criminal activities to fund their operations. Transnational organized criminals lack an ideology, using corruption of politicians from across the ideological spectrum as a tool for their ends, and infiltrate the political system, running for office or even establishing a political party, but commit their crimes primarily for economic ends.

Given the paucity of original research addressing terrorism and transnational organized crime in the field, the article seeks to establish a frame of reference that outlines directions for future research and refinement of the ideas presented here. For only by understanding the terrorist groups and their links to international crime organizations and the way the two types of transnational criminals overlap can we develop an effective and sustained strategy to address these groups and limit their destructive operations. As such, this article will offer some suggestions at the end for practitioners to consider, but they also serve as potential hypotheses or foci for future research by scholars in the field.

Attributes of Transnational Criminals

Transnational criminals are major beneficiaries of globalization. They move readily across borders, make full use of the anonymity provided by new forms of information technology, and exploit the banking secrecy of international finance. Motivated by goals rather than national interests, they work with many diverse nationalities or the groups themselves may be multinational. In the following sections, we comment on ways terrorist and organized crime share organizational principles and blend their support activities with legitimate international transactions.

Organizational Principles: Networks

Transnational crime groups – whether terrorists or international organized criminals – often operate using a network structure. The perpetrators who launched the
September 11 attack on the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon were distinct cells of a larger organization, each cell operating in a separate and detached fashion from each other (Hedges, 2001). Such a network structure is not unique, indeed it characterizes many other terrorist groups and many of the new international organized crime groups. Unlike the top-down-hierarchical structure of traditional mafia-type organizations, organized crime groups such as the Colombian drug cartels and Russian-speaking organized crime function as loosely-organized networks of cells. The cells give organizational flexibility, reduce the possibility of law-enforcement penetration, and provide greater efficiency. Network structures also make it more difficult to identify leaders while reducing the size of the leadership within each organization. As such, modern organized criminal groups and leading terrorist organizations resemble modern, “flat” business structures rather than the multilayer organization found in older corporations such as the Ford Motor Company and the steel industry (Williams, 1998).

Terrorists and international organized criminals depend on secrecy as a foundational concept for their organizations. This includes secret membership, secret locales, secret leadership, and secret communications. The organizers of their activities are hard to identify, and both groups use all forms of modern information technology to execute their operations with minimal risk of disclosure. For example, both types of transnational criminal organization prefer to hide their financial transfers “in the open,” using the massive number of currency transfers and international business transactions to mask their movements of ill-gotten or ill-destined funds. Likewise, a number of recent articles note the increasing use of the Internet as a means of communication, recruitment, and, when appropriate, publicity (Zanini and Edwards, 2001).

International crime networks most often seek to find safe haven in a particular country, but operate internationally by moving their commodities and finances across and through numerous countries. While some terrorist groups remain affiliated with a particular nation state, like the Irish Republican Army or the Tamil Tigers, it is becoming more common to find that, like Al Qaeda, terrorist organizations use nation-states in much the same fashion as organized crime groups – as means to an end. Both forms of criminal organization, for example, specialize in identifying ways that they can leverage gaps in state judicial and police capacities to their advantage, most often in establishing safe haven or moving goods or persons across lightly-guarded borders. Indeed, it came as no surprise to find that authorities became concerned that Al Qaeda leaders might escape from Afghanistan using cargo ships, in much the same fashion that organized crime groups send their illicit goods and services around the globe through cargo containers, due to the difficulties that authorities have had in the past in tracking and inspecting the larger daily shipment of international cargo (Shenon, 2001). Hence, neither group belongs exclusively to a particular nation state.

International organized crime groups and terrorists both employ specialists. These specialists conduct intelligence operations, move money, and are experts in information technology and communications. The most successful of these groups have had some of those within their ranks educated to become specialists; others contracted out for these services. The specialists who are hired on a contractual basis can be knowing accomplices, or they can be hired through intermediaries and be unaware who the end users of their services are.
BLENDING LEGITIMATE AND ILLEGITIMATE ACTIVITIES

Both types of transnational crime networks, as they internationalize their activities, blend their activities with legitimate structures and processes. For example, both types of organization utilize overseas or émigré communities of the same ethnic group or same religious persuasion in order to provide a cover for their operations. Sometimes these overseas communities sympathize with their activities or are economic beneficiaries of their illicit activity. Other times, the overseas communities aren’t complicit in operating transnational crime; they merely provide shelter or support to members of the network. These overseas communities sometimes are aware of transnational crime operations; other time they have no idea that such organizations are in their midst.

The organizational blending of legitimate and illegitimate activities is a hallmark of how transnational crime networks conduct their operations. For example, the resources of the terrorists or the profits of international organized crime groups are combined with legitimate funds, making it hard to detect where criminal funds end and the legitimate funds begin. For example, the Bank of New York case in 1999 involved billions emanating from Russia, some which came from transnational activities of Russian organized crime (Webster, 2000). The money sent to the accounts in the Bank of New York represented wire transfers from Russian crime groups, as well as accounts from correspondent banks (banks in country where the foreign bank does not have its own affiliate to conduct its operations). The Al Qaeda organizations uses charities to move money. Funds going to the charities are, indeed, directed toward social welfare activities in the community, but a traditional 10 percent tithe, or sometimes a much greater share, is used to support terrorists.

OPERATING TECHNIQUES OF TRANSNATIONAL CRIMES

Although international organized criminals and terrorists have different motives, both types of transnational criminals use similar methods to execute their crimes. For both, violence is a central tool of their criminal arsenal, providing internal control and a highly visible external weapon. At the same time, both groups use many less visible techniques – such as the Internet, satellite phones, and cell phones – finding them essential to maintaining their organizations and committing their crimes. And while money laundering and corruption – collusion remain important tools for transnational criminals, a more striking confluence is found in the ways that both engage in organized criminal activities to further their ends.

Violence

Both the application and the credible threat of violence are central to the way both international organized criminals and terrorists operate. But how the violence is applied can be quite different. International organized crime groups use targeted violence to promote organizational goals, eliminate competitors, and remove political threats, while terrorist groups kill to eliminate political competitors. Furthermore, in the past decade, most organized crime violence has been concentrated in the host country,
while numerous terrorist attacks have been committed outside the territory that hosts the terrorist network.

International organized crime groups may kill financial competitors, eliminate rivals within the organizations, and do away with community members they believe support rival groups. Hundreds have died in mafia wars, and innocent individuals have been killed along with rival Mafiosi. In northern Mexico, organized crime groups have killed dozens of individuals in communities where their enemies were housed (Smith, 1999; Shelley, 2001). For the most part, the application of this form of violence is consistent with settling “turf” and obtaining or maintaining monopolization of the criminal enterprises in a specific geographical region. As such, it is not directly targeted at the state, but does negatively impact the state’s mandate to maintain law and order.

Organized crime violence can be targeted at the state, state officials, and major institutions in response to state crackdowns. During the early 1990s, when massive law enforcement and military force was deployed in Italy against the mafia, dozens of high-level Italian officials were killed in bombings and assassinations. The most noted of these were the killings of Judge Falcone and Judge Borsellino in Sicily in 1992 (Stille, 1995). Similar patterns of violence befell Colombia throughout the 1980s and 90s, both when the government began to crackdown on the cartels and again when the government enacted an extradition treaty with the US. An important note to make now, and one that is revisited in the discussion of goals, is that these violent campaigns do not often seek the overthrow of the government, but rather seek to force an end to government practices that threaten the existence or the livelihood of the organized crime groups.

Terrorist groups focus violence on targets that help promote their organizational goals and eliminate political enemies. Their human victims are often selected more at random than those targeted and killed by organized crime groups. While members of organized crime groups may kill as part of retaliatory attacks, their goal is to threaten those who hurt their organization and their profits — not to instill general terror. Terrorist organizations hit targets in public places, such as tourist attractions, where innocent individuals unrelated to the targeted organization often are killed. Shopping malls and markets, means of transport, and office buildings are often targets of terrorist attacks. Terrorists, like organized criminals also choose to attack symbolic buildings. Just as perpetrators of the September 11 attack chose symbols of American military and economic power, organized crime groups have singled out targets of great symbolic significance to local citizens. In Bogota, Colombia, the Supreme Court was attacked in 1985, and many of its judges were killed. However, a recent survey of events shows that this divergence may be more blurred than first thought. For example, art and religion are core values of contemporary Italy, so when the mafia bombed the Lateran Church in Rome and the Ufizzi Museum in Florence in 1993, the very core of Italian society and culture was attacked. In the end, terrorist organizations place more emphasis on the symbolism of an application of violence, such as a blast that kills citizens in an historic market or the destruction of a government building, while organized crime most often selects targets that are critical to government efforts to eliminate the groups or its activities.

**Information Technology**

Increasingly, both types of transnational criminal groups exploit information technology to support any number of operational activities. For example, sophisticated
intelligence operations are central to gathering information on targets, reducing the group’s vulnerability, and identifying sympathizers or individuals they can corrupt for their objectives (US Senate, 1997). Both terrorists and organized crime have utilized the information found on the Internet, such as the media and other open sources, in order to enhance their intelligence gathering capabilities. Information technology also enhances the ability of criminal networks to remain at arms length when interacting with the licit sectors of the economy – transactions that oftentimes expose them to potential detection or interdiction. For example, many of the terrorists from the September 11 attacks used a commercial Web site, travelocity.com, to purchase the tickets they needed to board the airplanes that they turned into weapons. They also sent messages through computer terminals at local business service centers, such as Kinkos, in order to enhance their anonymity. Finally, there is growing concern that terrorist organizations might turn to information technology for use as a weapon, either in an offensive (e.g. perpetrating terror attacks) or defense (e.g. disrupting law enforcement interdiction) fashion (Zanini and Edwards, 2001).

Most importantly, information technology has vastly improved the ability of specialists to avoid the controls that states seek to impose on the movement of goods and services through the creation and distribution of high-quality forged documents. While states have redesigned their passports and visas with advanced anti-counterfeiting measures, such as computer-designed pictures and holographic images, counterfeiters have quickly found ways to circumvent these measures. For example, numerous websites sell near perfect replicas of driver’s licenses and green cards as “novelty items” over the Internet – including explicit instructions on how to alter them so they would look official. In a more insidious example, a report recently noted that Triads in Hong Kong were recruiting graduates of local technical colleges to serve as counterfeiters for the criminal gangs (Hong Kong Imail, 2000). In the end, what has resulted is a specialization within the larger illicit political economy – that of the document fraud expert – that both terrorists and criminal organizations can tap as their needs warrant.

Terrorists, just like transnational organized criminals, exploit information technology to maximize the effectiveness of their operations through the use of rapid, robust, and relatively secure communications (Picarelli and Shelley, 2001). Both organizations use a wide variety of electronic forms of communication, such as the Internet, facsimile machines, satellite and cellular phones, email, and online chat rooms. Furthermore, both types of organizations are known to engage in forms of securing their communications through high-powered encryption and a modified form of steganography, where messages and other information are hid within other types of files like images or streaming video (Kolata, 2001). Both groups exploit software and webpages on the Internet that enhance or provide anonymity, in turn decreasing the ability of law enforcement or intelligence agencies to detect their activities.

Information technology is also an avenue or medium for perpetrating criminal activity (Picarelli and Williams, 2000). Organized criminals, for example, are known to run gambling operations on the Internet, and have utilized information technology in order to enhance their stakes in “pump and dump” or “boiler room” stock fraud schemes in the US. Likewise, while difficult to confirm, numerous press reports have linked organized crime to hacking activities, particularly attacks on banking and financial institutions. Finally, organized crime is entrenched in the illegal pirating of various forms of intellectual property.
However, the most significant and well-documented form of convergence between organized crime and terrorism in regards to information technology is the movement of money internationally. Earlier we noted the ways that both organizations use modern forms of wire transfer and other electronic commerce flows to move money around the world. By using just a phone and the Internet, terrorists are able to give instructions to transfer funds through the financial centers of the legitimate global economy. At the same time, the ages-old underground banking system of hawala (the banking of the Indian subcontinent) now depends heavily on the technology of phones and the Web to transfer money and information rapidly and securely (Frantz, 2001; Passas, 1999). These days, members of different terrorist groups are given special training in computers and software, and computer engineers are hired to facilitate communications.

**Money Laundering**

Terrorists rely on the money to fund their illicit activities, and this means they need their funds laundered successfully throughout the world. The raison d’etre for organized crime is the production of ill-gotten funds. For both organizations, money launderers and business fronts allow them to remain hidden within business activities while leveraging the funds in their possession to achieve their ends.

Terrorists use most of the same methods to move money internationally that organized criminals do, exploiting both the legitimate and illegitimate banking systems – merging the legal and illegal – is central to their money system. In addition to owning and depositing funds in large financial institutions, terrorist support themselves through hawala, large-scale cash movement facilitated by their own transport systems, spin-off funds from charities, and front companies (Frantz, 2001; Passas, 1999). Electronics stores, which are part of the hawala system, sell VCRs and other appliances – and the terrorists receive funds from them; charities support the needy – but give a tithe to the terrorists; and front companies might actually be in the import-export business they claim to be in – but the terrorists receive the funds. For example, the US recently closed the Holy Land Foundation, which raised 13 million USD in the US last year, for its alleged funding of Hamas activities (Thachuk, 2002).

Both international organized criminals and terrorists show significant flexibility in the ways they move funds. Both groups have demonstrated the ability to exploit the differences in legislation among different countries to their benefit so that transnational criminals move their money with reduced risk of loss and detection (Eggen and Day, 2001). When money-laundering barriers are set up in one system, they move to another. For example, when one offshore banking center tightens its reporting requirements, illicit funds are likely to move to another. It is reasonable to assume that the obstacles placed on terrorists when their assets are frozen mean they will move into less regulated sectors where funds are harder to detect.

For international organized criminals and terrorists to continue evading the scrutiny of bank regulators and international investigators requires that these groups have in-house specialists and retain experienced advisors. These include financial advisors, accountants, bankers in offshore zones, and even bankers in major financial centers. Sometimes these advisors unwittingly aid the organized criminals and terrorists, other times they are fully cognizant of the nature of their clients.
Corruption
Another tool that both organized crime and terrorists have exploited is corruption. Corruption is a multifaceted tool in a number of respects. The reasons to employ corruption vary across organizations, but they often center on primary motivation of enhancing impunity. One example of this is the coopting government officials to mitigate the ability of law enforcement, regulatory, or other agencies that are directly responsible with interdicting or eradicating both forms of transnational criminal groups. Likewise, as was seen in the case of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan and Sudan, payments are sometimes made to government leaders in return for a safe haven from which to operate. Corruption is also a useful method for counterintelligence collection. Finally, coopted officials are oftentimes used to facilitate the operations of these groups, such as exerting pressure on unyielding businesses for organized crime groups or providing official passports for terrorists.

The methods of corruption are also diverse. The most common form is monetary payment, and this remains a popular form of corruption. However, transnational criminals also can provide goods, such as luxury items or narcotics, and a range of legal and illegal services in order to gain the services of a corrupt official. Another form of corruption arises from the use of compromising information or threats aimed to force an official to work with the transnational criminal group. Finally, both groups have demonstrated a knack for penetrating government agencies with operatives or sympathetic officials. For example, Chinese triad groups trafficking person into the US were in Hong Kong to ease the process of obtaining Canadian travel documents (South China Morning Post, 1999). Likewise, the US remains concerned about Al Qaeda’s ability to recruit sympathetic government and military officials in Pakistan (Mydans, 2002).

Criminal Activities
International organized criminals and terrorists engage in many of the same activities. For organized criminals, these activities are their main focus – profit making through illicit activity. For terrorists, these activities are the means to a political end. As terrorists develop a more diffuse, insulated network structure, the more that individual cells are left to their own devices to raise funds for their activities. As such, there is an increasing turn to organized crime activities to provide for these cells. More importantly, however, is a continuing trend in which both organizations cooperate in order to earn ill-gotten gains from two of the larger scale activities – drugs and trafficking in persons. The remainder of this section probes the various top-level forms of transnational organized crime in a context of identifying linkages between criminal and terrorist groups.

Narcotics Trafficking
Drug trafficking is now the largest source of profits for both international organized crime groups and terrorists. The International Monetary Fund estimates that trade in narcotics is now 2 percent of the global economy, while the UN estimates it is 7 percent of international trade (UN International Drug Control Program 1998, p. 124; IMF
In the drug trade, producer countries are at the least profitable end of the business, while those who refine and market the goods received a larger share of the profit. It is therefore not surprising to find the heaviest concentration of organized crime activity in refining and distribution states. Partially as a result, these states are often considered weak in comparison to their neighbors, and thus prove susceptible to terrorist infiltration and/or activity. For example, narcotics production is often cited as a factor for the rise of the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan throughout the Central Asian Republics.

In many parts of the world, drug sales are used to help support terrorist activities. This nexus of drug crime and terrorism occurs in Colombia (the FARC), Afghanistan (Taliban), and Sri Lanka (the Tamil Tigers). The nexus between terrorism and narcotics is not limited to the developing world. For example, the Aum Shinrikyo cult responsible for the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway in 1995 was also one of the most significant producers and distributors of methamphetamines in Japan, rivaling the well-entrenched Yakuza organized crime syndicates at the time (Kaplan and Marshall, 1996, pp. 162-6). Many of these groups are involved in more aspects of the drug trade than just cultivation, helping transport and even distribute drugs.

The linkages between terrorism and narcotics has been described as narcoterrorism, which policymakers and scholars alike have studied since the coinings of the term in the mid-1980s (Zagaris, 1991, p. 704). Much of this research dates back to the activities of the Sendero Luminoso in Peru, a terrorist organization that operated in conjunction with coca producers in the high valleys of rural Peru. The term is also associated with the problems combating the Medellin and Cali cartels in Colombia, and is most often applied in a contemporary sense to the numerous Colombion guerrilla factions (Hoffman, 1998, pp. 27-28). Reflecting this trend, the US security community in the late 1990s began to focus on “transnational threats,” a term that combined narcotics trafficking, arms proliferation, organized crime, terrorism, and cyberwarfare (National Defense University, 1999, Chap. 16).

**Trafficking in Persons**

The rise of human smuggling and trafficking by transnational criminals was enormous in the 1990s, in large part because there were significant potential profits and less risk of detection and prosecution than in the drug trade (Richard, 2000, Chap. 11). Moreover, the profits of the trafficking in persons are not subject to forfeiture in most western countries. Because of this, international organized crime groups, such as ones made up of Russians, Chinese, and groups from Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent, are moving large numbers of human cargo in a business that totals billions of dollars.

The trafficking in persons serves a number of ends for terrorist organizations. First, the trafficking in persons can mask the movement of members of terrorist or transnational criminal groups. As mentioned earlier, the movement of Afghans and Pakistanis has been used to mask the movement of at least one Al Qaeda operative. More importantly, however, are profits from the trade in human beings. For example, substantial evidence has pointed to the involvement of the Tamil Tigers in the smuggling and trafficking of Sri Lankans in order to obtain funds for continuing their operations, and reports noted that cells of the Ulster Volunteer Force of Northern Ireland received narcotics as payment from Snakeheads in support of their trafficking networks (Mirror Group, 2000). Organized crime has engaged in trafficking for both reasons, though...
they tend to focus on the profits earned rather than the movement of their members as motivation for entering trafficking in persons.

To achieve their results, traffickers and smugglers in persons rely on a number of related criminal activities and organizations. For example, they target consular officials who are gullible or vulnerable to corruption to get visas to help move those they traffic. They manufacture false documents, including passports, identification cards, even airplane tickets. Organized criminals and terrorists also target the private sector to achieve their human-trafficking goals, for example, corrupting individuals in the transport sector to obtain access to cargo containers and boats.

Other Forms of Organized Crime
Smaller-scale crime also funds the operations of both international organized criminals and terrorists. Both organized criminals and terrorists use their knowledge of finance and modern culture to manufacture bogus credit cards, conduct credit card scams, and solicit funds for their front organizations (Hedges, 2001). Likely the most present example of this fact was the discovery of a cell of Al Qaeda, particularly document fraud, they primarily supported themselves through the use of credit card fraud (Associated Press, 2001; Woolls, 2001).

Likewise, terrorist organizations have turned to other forms of traditional organized crime activities to raise money. Protections rackets, especially within émigré communities, remain a tried and true way of raising funds for terrorist organizations. For example, the Tamil Tigers have been linked to a number of such protection racketsincluding an estimated million dollars a month from the Tamil diaspora in Toronto (Dixon, 2000). Similarly, terrorists have recently turned to kidnapping and ransom in order to acquire money and arms. Members of the reportedly Al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf group in southern Philippines have taken to the kidnapping of foreign tourists and aid workers, to obtain ransoms, including a recent payment of a reported 300,000 USD (Bonner, 2002).

Finally, there was the curious case of Middle East terrorists operating in North Carolina to foment a cigarette smuggling operation that support their global activities. “Operation Smokescreen,” a US Federal law enforcement task force, arrested 18 members of a conspiracy that smuggled cigarettes from North Carolina in order to raise funds for the Lebanese-based Hezbollah (CNN, 2000). The European Commission found that the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) engaged in a similar pattern of using cigarette smuggling to funds its terrorist activities (Beelman, 2002). In the end, this case only demonstrates the extent to which terrorist organizations are diversifying and deepening their revenue streams to maintain and expand their enterprises.

Different Goals
International organized crime groups and terrorist groups both engage in illicit activity. The criminals involved in organized crime to this solely to make money. For terrorists, ordinary criminal activity is the way to support their larger political and ideological objectives. Both types of transnational criminals traffic in drugs, human beings, and
counterfeit currency, as well as engaging in diverse forms of fraud. Yet, while the crimes committed by these two groups don’t differ in substance, they differ in motive. The goals of terrorist groups are first and foremost political in nature – they seek to force a change in governance or leadership. Criminals are motivated by economic goals by the breadth and extend of their criminal activities often brings them into direct contact with the political system and politicians who they seek to influence for their own goals. Bruce Hoffman summarizes this bifurcation well:

Perhaps most fundamentally, the criminal is not concerned with influencing or affecting public opinion; he simply wants to abscond with his money or accomplish his mercenary task in the quickest and easiest way possible so that he may reap his reward and enjoy the fruits of his labors. By contrast, the fundamental aim of the terrorist’s violence is ultimately to change ‘the system’ – about which the ordinary criminal, of course, couldn’t care less (1998, p. 42).

An example of this difference is found by returning to the discussion of corruption. The contacts that criminals establish with politicians and the apparatus of power may appear similar to the political motivations of terrorist groups, but their goals are different. On the one hand, criminals seek to achieve political influence to forestall and undermine criminal investigations, to influence the development of legislation, and to obtain lucrative public contracts. They undermine the state though their actions, but that is not their primary purpose. Their primary purpose is the pursuit of criminal profits and illicit wealth. On the other hand, terrorists use corruption and influence peddling to provide them the space to operate within many societies. This is true in host, transit, and the target states where terrorists execute their operations. Like organized criminals, they engage in criminal rackets to raise funds and may at times attack the legal system or pay-off political leaders to stifle investigations, but the ends behind these means remain political in nature.

This means that organized criminals and terrorists cannot always be easily separated; they slop into each other’s roles as necessary. For example, a network of Algerian citizens in Spain oversaw document and credit card fraud rings, the proceeds from which supported Algerian and Chechen terrorist groups (Reuters, 2001). Likewise, although organized criminals have been know to kill prosecutors, judges, and police, they are not terrorists (their motives are economic not political), but they assume the role of terrorists when they do such things. The international organized criminals aren’t seeking to bring down a state, rather than wish merely to retaliate for or immobilize the state’s activities against them. The economic-ideological duality – and seeming interchangeability – of the participants in these two kinds of criminal groups forces the need to probe the underlying motives of the criminals. And it forces the need to understand the difficulty in setting up a strict divide between terrorism and international organized crime.

CONCLUSION

The transnational crimes that international organized criminals and terrorists perpetrate are likely to become a defining problem for security in the 21st century. The expanding size of the global illicit economy is likely to provide the financial resources for these groups to recruit new members, hire expertise, and expand their operations. It is likely to increase as
the complex linkages into the licit world, such as through the purchase and use of legitimate firms for criminal ends, or the expansion of corrupt linkages with local and central government officials.

The enormous discrepancies in regulation in a globalized world allow organized criminals and terrorists to exploit this lack of consistency to their advantage. The existence of different legal standards on what constitutes the various forms of organized crime, corruption, and terrorism, though narrowing throughout the post-Cold War era, remain a vulnerability that transnational criminals can leverage for their own ends and thus remains a reason for continued concern. Similar problems are found in the regulation of international financial flows, where the continued pressure on money laundering through the global financial system may have the unintended effect of forcing money laundering towards off-the-books forms like hawala.

The United States has declared and begun to prosecute and aggressive war against terrorism. As a national strategy develops to counter the security threat of terrorism, it is imperative that the struggle attack not only the most visible manifestations of the problem, the terrorist group cells, but also consider the larger conditions within which these groups operate. Such a broader context will require increased attention to nonstate actors, the problems of weak nation states that provide these groups safe haven, and the lack of harmony among international regulation standards that aids the operations of these groups. Most of all, however, the broader strategy must consider the role that transnational criminal organizations directly or indirectly play in supporting the activities of terrorist organizations, as this article has outlined.

Defining such a strategy leads the US away from the traditional law enforcement and security tactics and taps additional planks in the platform. Most importantly, the US and its allies must examine the conditions that permit crime groups and terrorist groups to enter their countries and function effectively within their borders. Both transnational crime and terrorism need to be coupled with the problem of economic development. Much has been said about poverty being a breeding ground for terrorism and crime. Poverty and the lack of opportunity facilitate the recruitment of youths into terrorist activities. Likewise, many organized crime groups thrive on the possibility of drawing into their structures vulnerable youths who see no hope of making it in the legitimate economy. The young killers of Colombia, the poor of Sicily, and the impoverished of China and Mexico are all drawn to organized crime, and suggest the absence of effective development strategies as a root cause (Griswold, 2002). Thus, economic strategies can address the roots of transnational organized crime and terrorism. One caveat in developing such strategies is that developed states must address the demand for illicit goods and services within their countries, including and indeed especially the US, and not rely wholly on a supply-interdiction strategy that history has proven relatively unsuccessful in such areas as the war on drugs and other forms of contraband smuggling.

Moving from strategy to implementation, a couple of points are worth noting. First, regarding the important issue of organization, many have noted that transnational organized criminals and terrorists use network structures to run their operations. Given the advantage network forms of organization hold over more static hierarchical models, states need to respond to networks with network of their own. Internationally, coalitions and cooperation are required to get at the larger structures that allow terrorists’ transnational cells to operate effectively. Domestically, states must improve the information sharing among intelligence, military, and law enforcement agencies, create meaningful linkages among national/federal, regional/state and local
government agencies, and form flexible task forces that can react rapidly to the challenges that combinations of terrorist and organized crime groups can pose to states.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, the US and its allies must apply its efforts to engender and develop a strong civil society in poverty-stricken regions that breed organized crime and corruption. Numerous authors have concluded that civil society, especially in the form of strong bonds of trust between government and society, are crucial to the eradication of transnational crime (Shelley, 1994). While developing countries have a number of development programs already in place, they should more explicitly address the root causes of organized crime and terrorism. Likewise, states must continue to focus on the issue of corruption, the most lethal weapon to trust and authority between government and society. Finally, such policies must consider the potential for unintended consequences, such as the resentment to US programs overseas potentially generating more violence. In the end, scholars and practitioners alike must think strategically about the root causes of the problem and end the practice of tactically responding to the symptoms and outbreaks they generate.

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