Organised crime, violence and development: Topic Guide

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Organised crime, violence and development

Topic guide

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About this Topic Guide

This guide summarises some of the most rigorous available evidence on the links between organised crime, violence and development.

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Summary

It is increasingly recognised in the international aid community that organised crime hinders inclusive and sustainable development in many ways. Today's universe of organised criminal activities and of the individuals, groups and networks involved in them is virtually infinite. Spanning the whole globe, organised criminal operations range from illegal protection economies and extortion rackets to cybercrime, oil theft, money laundering, counterfeiting, maritime piracy and the trafficking and/or smuggling of illicit drugs, humans, firearms and wildlife.

In 2009, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated that transnational organised crime generated $ 870 billion, the equivalent of 1.5% of global gross domestic product (GDP). All criminal proceeds worldwide amounted to an estimated 3.6% of global GDP, equivalent to about $2.1 trillion.

Organised crime is not an "alien", external threat. Criminal operations are planned, designed and implemented by mafia bosses, drug kingpins, paramilitary and insurgent commanders, warlords and gang leaders – but also by, and with, politicians, military and police officers, civil servants, investment bankers and accountants, among representatives of many other professions.

Organised crime promotes "non-development" across four distinct dimensions:

- **Economic**: Huge proceeds from illicit and criminal activities are siphoned away from the legitimate economy, and lawful markets are distorted.

- **Political and governance**: Organised crime alters the political economy of developing countries, as illegal-criminal interests that span the public–private divide and involve non-state and state actors transform economic, political and social institutions.

- **Social**: The social cohesion of communities and societies is fractured as criminal subcultures emerge and replace traditional values and norms.

- **(Human) security**: The security of both citizens and states is endangered by organised crime.

Organised crime is sometimes associated with violence, even with warlike forms of violence. But there is no strong correlation between organised criminal activities and violence. Measures of stability and relatively low levels of violence can be compatible with huge high-value criminal operations, such as transnational drug trafficking and oil theft on an industrial scale. Such "stability" in crime-permeated environments may be due to the existence of state or elite-sponsored protection rackets and effective corruption rings. But it may also arise from other types of (local) governance arrangements and agreements involving both criminal organisations and legitimate political, economic and social groups.

Conventional law enforcement and security approaches to tackling organised crime are insufficient, and at times also unrealistic and counterproductive. Such approaches are not useful where states do not have sufficient law enforcement capacity and do not hold the monopoly on the use of force. Things are complicated further because in such settings the rule of law is weak or non-existent, corruption and human rights violations are rife, and political and social institutions, both formal and informal, are not separated by the membrane of legality from organised criminal activities. Wider society—affected by rampant inequalities in income and well-being—may not even consider such activities illegitimate. The evidence shows that conventional law enforcement and security approaches can have unintended consequences for security, governance, social cohesion and so on, including by boosting violence and disrupting the fragile political equilibrium between criminal organisations and state agents.

Integrated approaches address organised crime as a complex matter and aim to integrate law enforcement and security with diplomatic and development actions. Law enforcement, justice and security interventions are necessary, but need to be used as part of a broader effort to rein in organised criminal activities in developing countries and limit the harm they cause.

The development of integrated approaches is key, but remains a work in progress. The following four issues need to be addressed.

- We need to determine whether development programming in crime-permeated settings should prioritise: a) supporting law enforcement/security efforts to contain the spread of organised crime and/or prevent its emergence; or b) protecting development processes from the negative effects of organised crime. These are two essentially different forms of engagement.

- International development actors will need to review basic operating procedures, tools and mandates to be able to design and implement effective programmes in organised crime-permeated development settings and prevent the "securitisation" of crime-sensitive development interventions. They will also need to increase their capacity to conduct in-depth political economy analyses of crime-permeated development settings that systematically factor in the element of organised crime.

- Introducing a strategic focus on organised crime is not entirely congruent with the Sustainable Development Goals. Crime-sensitive development actors will need to increase their efforts to build a strong coalition of international development agencies to pursue this cause effectively.

- The international development community will need to engage more forcefully with: 1) reforms in the banking, tax and foreign trade sectors of high-income countries; and 2) reforms of global governance mechanisms, such as the UN-administered international drug control regime.

1 Concepts and perspectives

1.1 What is organised crime?

In 2010, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Antonio Maria Costa, issued a stern warning to the international community regarding the growing threat posed by organised crime to the security of states and the development and well-being of societies across the globe:

> In the past quarter century (namely, since the end of the Cold War), global governance has failed to keep pace with economic globalization. Therefore, as unprecedented openness in trade, finance, travel and communication has created economic growth and well-being, it has also given rise to massive opportunities for criminals to make their business prosper. Organized crime has diversified, gone global and reached macro-economic proportions: illicit goods are sourced from one continent, trafficked across another, and marketed in a third. Mafias are today truly a transnational problem: a threat to security, especially in poor and conflict-ridden countries. Crime is fuelling corruption, infiltrating business and politics, and hindering development. And it is undermining governance by empowering those who operate outside the law […] So serious is the organized crime threat that the UN Security Council has on several occasions considered its implications in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Central America, Somalia, West Africa, and in relation to several themes (trafficking of arms, drugs, people, and natural resources). […] Armies have been mobilized to fight drug cartels, navies have been sent to capture pirates. Yet the threat persists (UNODC, 2010: ii).

Today's universe of organised criminal activities and the individuals, groups and networks involved in them appears to be virtually infinite. Organised criminal operations range from illegal protection and extortion rackets to the trafficking and/or smuggling of illicit drugs, humans, firearms and wildlife, cybercrime, oil theft, money laundering, counterfeiting and maritime piracy (Costa, 2010; UNODC, 2010). The people who plan, steer and implement these operations varyingly include mafia bosses, drug kingpins, paramilitary and insurgent commanders, warlords and gang leaders—but also politicians, military and police officers, civil servants, investment bankers, cargo ship captains and accountants, among representatives of many other professions. In 2009, UNODC estimated that transnational organised crime generated $870 billion, the equivalent of 1.5% of global gross domestic product (GDP) (UNODC, n.d.), and that "all criminal proceeds [worldwide] likely [amounted] to some 3.6% of global GDP, equivalent to about US$2.1 trillion" (UNODC, 2011: 7).[1] Considering that since then the world has become not less but more connected through processes of globalisation, it is not implausible that today these figures would be even higher.

Yet, while real enough, organised crime as an analytical concept and social phenomenon remains somewhat elusive. Despite significant efforts by scholars from a variety of social science backgrounds (criminology, economics, sociology, political science, anthropology) to explain its motives, structures and societal impacts, the truth is the "study of organized crime is still in its infant stages" (von Lampe, 2016: 13) and "has not yet yielded a cohesive and cumulative body of knowledge" (Schultze-Kraft, 2016: 30). According to Klaus von Lampe, a renowned expert in the field, no fewer than 180 different definitions can be found in the literature (2016).[2]

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[1] That is, roughly the same as Italy's 2014 GDP. World Development Indicators database, World Bank, 11 April 2016, available at: http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf

[2] www.organized-crime.de/organizedcrimedefinitions.htm. On the problem of defining organised crime, see also Allum & Gilmour (2012), Levi (2014) and von Lampe (2001, 2008).

Much of the research on organised crime in the past 40 years or longer has focused on the question of whether it should be understood as an "active creature" perceived to be "threatening or dangerous to society" (Vander Beken, 2012: 83); or rather as a set of illegal-criminal activities, particularly those associated with illicit markets, such as the trafficking of illicit drugs and humans (UNODC, 2010). More recently, these approaches have been complemented by a focus on illegal governance, as will be explained below. This research has generally not pictured organised crime as an "abnormal" or "deviant" social phenomenon but rather as "normal" and "rational".[3]

The principal motive for groups of people to organise and engage in unlawful activities, which are essentially concerned with providing private "protection" in illegal or illicit markets, is typically identified as the pursuit of financial and other material gain. In this vein, the criminal version of the neoclassical *homo economicus*, aptly renamed *homo economicus criminalis* (Duyne et al., 2002; MacCarthy, 2011), is above all concerned with the "provision of illegal goods and services [but also] predatory crimes, such as theft, robbery, and fraud" (von Lampe, 2016: 3) and with the exercise of power "to bring a level of order to crime and criminals in some form of an underworld government"—power which, however, "may well extend into the upperworld" (ibid.: 7). What kinds of illegal goods and services are provided and what form criminal organisations take—that is, whether, for instance, they are hierarchically organised mafias that sell private protection in a specific locality or more horizontally operating transnational drug trafficking networks that smuggle cocaine or heroin across continents—depends on particular historical, social, cultural and political circumstances (Allum & Gilmour 2012).

Both of these conceptions of organised crime are reflected in the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the Palermo Convention), adopted under UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/55/25 on 15 November 2000 and entering into effect in 2003. As of May 2016, the Convention has 147 State Signatories and 186 State Parties. Article 2 of the international treaty offers the following definitions of "organized criminal group" and "serious crime" (UNODC, 2004: 5):

   a) "Organized criminal group" shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit;
   b) "Serious crime" shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty.

While the UN Convention represents a minimum consensus among the international community on what organised crime is, in recent times the "illegal-enterprise model" (Kleemans, 2012: 616) of organised crime that underpins it has increasingly become the object of critique. According to Edward Kleemans, for instance, there is not enough evidence to view members of criminal groups foremost as "rational, profit-oriented entrepreneurs, who are involved in activities that, although illegal, are driven by the same laws of supply and demand as legal activities" (ibid.: 616). In this author's view, "there is nothing wrong with the assumption that economic motives may explain criminal activities" but "there is something wrong […] with the assumption that the

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[3] This contrasts with earlier debates – as well as some more recent contributions – which framed organised crime as representing a social pathology caused by certain dysfunctions in the development of modern societies and states (see Della Porta, 2012). This framing met a fierce critique from Margaret Beare, who observes that, "writers have argued that there was a *preferred* political and law enforcement view that created: a public image of organized crime that resulted in increasing resources to fight the threat; a justification for the fact that law enforcement actions were having little impact on the criminal activity due to its size, scope, and imperviousness; an 'alien' conspiracy notion that separated organized crime from "normal" society and therefore distanced organized crime from the corruption and collusion of public officials and law enforcement" (Beare, 1997: 156).

actions of people involved in organised crime are coordinated by an invisible hand [of the market]. In essence, organised crime is about criminal co-operation under difficult circumstances. Under such circumstances, the visible hand of social relations, and the visible hand of manipulation and violence is much more important" (ibid.: 626). Because illicit markets are characterised by the "handicap of illegality", which is reflected in a low trust environment, social relations become crucial for the "execution of transnational, illegal activities" (ibid.). Kleemans' emphasis on the salience of social relations in the organisation and conduct of criminal activities ties in with other more recent contributions to the study of organised crime. John de Boer and Louise Bosetti, for instance, highlight the importance of research on "criminal opportunities", where the aim is,

> [...] to focus on understanding and tackling markets, products, services and identities that can be criminally exploited for multiple, not just economic, purpose and effect. This approach enables us to focus on how new criminal opportunities enabled by modern technology, political upheaval, conflict and natural disasters provide motivation for individuals, and groups, who formerly were not connected with criminal activity to engage in it (de Boer & Bosetti, 2015: 3).

Further, they point to,

> the emergence of literature that approaches organized crime as a type of "strategy" that is adopted by criminal organizations and warring parties (whether state-based or non-state). Depending on the context and situation [...] armed groups will either adapt criminal or political strategies, sometimes interchangeably, and sometimes with different factions within the same group pursuing distinct strategies. [...] Non-state violent actors [...] employ a variety of strategies that combine different motives, methods and targets. In the process, these actors often develop political capital among local populations and in some case overtly challenge the state (de Boer & Bosetti, 2015: 3).

The relationship between organised crime and the state—that is, whether it is one of confrontation or cooperation—is indeed a crucial issue, not least for understanding and mitigating the negative impact on development and governance. In this regard, Ivan Briscoe and Pamela Kalkman emphasise that:

> An approach rooted in the notion of institutional capture by an external criminal force is – despite its persuasive rhetoric – gravely mistaken. [...] Illicit activity has become part of the living organism of many countries' public and business affairs. It must be treated not as a foreign body, but as an integral part of governance and economic systems, and it is essential that policy responses are adapted to this reality (Briscoe & Kalkman, 2016: 3).

This "embeddedness" of organised criminal activities and actors in the very fabric of the economy, the state and society has alternatively been captured by concepts such as "criminal governance" (Arias, 2006), "co-opted state reconfiguration" (Garay-Salamanca & Salcedo-Albarán, 2012) and "crimilegality" (Schultze-Kraft, 2016), as well as by foregrounding the social bases and origins of organised crime (Duncan, 2014) and the emergence of "protection markets" (Ellis & Shaw, 2015).

While not a unified body of research, these perspectives have in common that they foreground issues of criminal-illegal governance, particularly in fragile states. They challenge notions of the existence of a boundary between organised criminal groups and networks, political institutions and society and the idea that the actions of criminal organisations are essentially a function of their pursuit of financial and other material gains by illegal-criminal means. What they propose instead is to focus attention on the economic, political and social relationships, bargains and agreements between a range of different state and (armed) non-state actors, including criminal groups and networks, which are often localised but may also extend from the local up to the

national and international levels. African organised crime experts Stephen Ellis and Mark Shaw, referring to an erosion of the "frontiers between politics, crime and business" (2015: 511), highlight that, in Africa,

> […] the protection economy may be considered as a set of transactions entered into for the purpose of ensuring the facilitation, sustainability and safety of […] activities undertaken by a criminal enterprise. In almost all cases, some elements of the state are involved, and indeed in African countries, the state (no matter how weak) is often the defining element in protection markets, either as a direct participant, facilitator, or regulator (Ellis & Shaw, 2015: 522–3).

This analysis is echoed by Latin Americanist Desmond Arias' on drug trafficking in Rio de Janeiro, which shows that "drug traffickers are well connected to state and social actors and […] their political projects go beyond clientelism, linking them into legitimate, rule abiding state bureaucrats, NGOs [non-governmental organisations], and religious organisations. They help traffickers make use of money made by legitimate businesses and build and reinforce their legitimacy in favelas" (Arias, 2006: 322). Thus, "more than parallel 'states' and 'polities' drug trafficking in Rio represents an expression of transformed state and social power at the local level" (ibid.).

Recent work by Schultze-Kraft approaches the issue of the relationship between the criminal and non-criminal spheres of economic, political and social orders in the global South by introducing the concept of "crimilegality":

> A crimilegal order is neither "modern" nor "non-modern" but combines and integrates elements of both. […] "Legal" institutions and organizations coexist and interact with "illegal" and "criminal" ones. Formal constitutional and legal dispensations coexist and interact with patrimonialism and clientelism. Regular patterns of social exchange, interaction and transaction that take place in the grey areas that lie between legality and illegality-criminality create their own "law". Crimilegality creates crimilegitimacy (Schultze-Kraft, 2016: 37).

1.2 Organised crime and violence and instability

Organised crime and illicit markets are commonly associated with violence and political instability.[4] Already in the early 20th century, social theorist Walter Benjamin had written that "the great criminal has aroused the secret admiration of the public" not because of "his deed but […] [because of] the violence to which it bears witness" (Benjamin, 1996: 239). This perception is being promoted by graphic news reporting on armed conflicts and situations of chronic violence that are fuelled by proceeds from drug trafficking and other illegal-criminal activities, such as those in Afghanistan, Colombia, Mexico, Central America and—in the 1990s and 2000s—Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, the available evidence does not bear out that organised criminal activities, such as drug trafficking, oil theft and diamond or wildlife smuggling, are necessarily—and equally—violent.

It is furthermore often assumed that organised crime is the midwife of political instability, social disintegration and state fragility or failure. But, again, there is no conclusive evidence that this is actually always and necessarily the case (Patrick, 2011). Hence, it appears wise to start this section by quoting R.T. Naylor, a renowned expert on the matter: "perhaps the best answer to

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[4] Including by the World Bank in its milestone report on conflict, security and development (World Bank, 2011), discussed in Section 2.

the broad question of whether illicit markets are more prone to violence than licit ones is 'maybe, but it depends'" (Naylor, 2009: 241).

Research on the relationship between organised crime and violence has focused on three distinct issues: (1) criminal activities and organisations' propensity for violence; (2) the (potential) violence related to illicit markets; and (3) the role of the state and political and social institutions in spurring and/or regulating violence associated with criminal activities.

Regarding the **propensity for violence of criminal activities and organisations**, there are evidently instances where organised criminal groups take recourse to violence and where competition between them over illicit market shares turns violent, at times even extremely violent. However, this is not a general rule. Research into illicit markets and diverse criminal activities has shown that "it is important to distinguish between organized criminal activities in which violence or the threat of violence (coercion) is inherent, and organized criminal activities in which violence is attendant or supportive but not essential to the activities themselves" (Williams, 2009: 324).

Examples of inherently violent criminal activities include armed robbery, kidnapping and extortion. However,

> when it comes to criminal organizations trafficking illicit commodities, violence is always latent and often manifest, but it is not integral to the criminal activity. […] [Rather] criminal organizations operate outside of the law and cannot resort to law to settle disputes with rivals, to deal with recalcitrant employees, or to obtain redress for grievances. Instead they rely on the use and threat of violence for security (to protect markets, routes, and other strategic assets associated with their trafficking activities), internal order (to maintain internal discipline and punish those guilty of infractions) and power (to expand their market share) (Williams, 2009: 324–5).

In some violent crime-permeated settings, the use of violence by criminal organisations includes targeting family members of rival traffickers and other innocent civilians. It appears that these attacks and killings are geared towards "demoralising" competing criminal groups, showing them that no one associated with them, even if only literally "in passing", is safe (Shirk & Wallman, 2015). In this regard, Guatemala and Mexico are notorious for high rates of femicide or feminicide—the gender-based killing of women and girls (Carey & Torres, 2010; Fregoso & Bejarano, 2010; Wright, 2011).

Thus, while violence is certainly a tool employed by criminal organisations to achieve their goals, it is not necessarily their first preferred choice to act violently. As Phil Williams points out,

> […] much of the time, criminal organizations avoid violence against one another, and against the state. Cooperation among criminal organizations is widespread, even though it typically remains fragile and can easily break down. […] In terms of the relationship with the state, criminal organizations prefer to operate under the radar but if this is not possible then cooption of state authorities is generally preferred to confrontation. Similarly, criminal organizations are able to maintain internal discipline primarily through trusted relationships, albeit with a large dash of fear thrown in as insurance. The implication is that organized crime violence, while certainly more than an anomaly, is not the norm (Williams, 2009: 325).

With regard to **illicit markets**, the available evidence suggests they are not always and necessarily violent:

> The markets for illegal goods and services operate without the usual protection against fraud and violence offered by the court system. The state instead of attempting to facilitate transactions, aims to disrupt them. Contracts cannot be enforced through written documents

and the legal system; agreements are made hurriedly, sometimes in ambiguous code, and orally. Territories cannot be allocated through bidding for desirable locations, since there is no enforceable ownership of property for these purposes. All these factors can lead to violence for a variety of purposes. Yet illegality itself is insufficient to generate high levels of violence in a market (Reuter, 2009: 275).

When illicit markets—as well as licit ones in which criminal organisations invest and operate— turn violent, this is often related to competition over territory, such as drug trafficking routes, high-value real estate and particularly lucrative street corners for the retailing of drugs. This competition not only affects low-level, local illicit markets but also occurs at the high level, where the,

> […] groups are competing not for territories directly but for the rights to pay those corrupt officials who control specific channels, such as landing strips in a province in Guatemala. This is consistent with Schelling's classic conjecture about the U.S. Mafia, namely that organized crime was best thought of as the licensed collector of the rents associated with the franchise held by the corrupt police departments in individual American cities (Reuter, 2009: 277).

While upsurges in criminal violence can be explained in reference to these different types of competition, they are also caused by tougher and more effective law enforcement. Using the current situation in Mexico as an example, Reuter points out that, "as a result of tougher enforcement there has been considerable turnover in the leadership of the principal drug trafficking groups; many leaders have been incarcerated […] or killed in shoot-outs with the police and military" (Reuter, 2009: 278). As is known from other crime-affected settings, such as from the city of Medellín, a Colombian drug-trafficking stronghold, after the demobilisation of local paramilitary groups in the mid-2000s, "turn-over increases inter-gang conflict. [Further], the dismissal of large numbers of corrupt officials [as in Mexico] creates uncertainty and hence violence as traffickers search for new sources of protection" (ibid.: 278–9). Tougher law enforcement, which not untypically involves employing the military to fight drug trafficking groups and other criminal organisations, is also known to increase the levels of violence as the organisations "gear up" and strengthen their firepower and capability to hit both law enforcers and rivals.

The **state and political/social institutions** play a crucial role in spurring and/or regulating violence associated with criminal activities. The state—or parts of it—is by no means always an opponent of criminal organisations, but may well be in cohorts with them and participate actively, as mentioned above in relation to some African states, in the creation of "protection economies" (Elis & Shaw, 2015). The degree to which the state offers protection to organised crime is a key variable:

> Institutions of protection, especially what we call state-sponsored protection rackets help explain varying levels of violence within and across illicit markets. Where state-sponsored institutions of protection exist, levels of violence will likely be low. Conversely, the breakdown of state-sponsored protection rackets, which may result from well-meaning reforms intended to strengthen and improve law enforcement [and the rule of law], can ironically lead to increases in violence (Snyder & Durán-Martínez, 2009: 254).

The dynamics described above can be seen in the examples of Mexico after the transition from one-party rule to a more pluralistic political system in 2000, Burma/Myanmar after 1990 and Iraq following the US-led invasion in 2003. While Mexico witnessed a literal explosion of drug trafficking-related violence after its democratic opening, leading the US government to consider it as being on its way to becoming a "failed state", in Myanmar, by contrast, "the construction of a state-sponsored protection racket after 1990 helped quell a protracted civil war, resulting in a large reduction in violence" (Snyder & Durán-Martínez, 2009: 271). With regard to Iraq, "both Mexico and Iraq have a history of collusion between state elites and organized crime; and in both

cases that collusion has broken down" (Williams, 2009: 326). "The other similarity in context is that both Iraq and Mexico suffer from high levels of corruption. Moreover, although it is tempting to see corruption and violence as alternative strategies of criminal organizations – the infamous choice between silver and lead – in both countries corruption and violence are mutually reinforcing" (Williams, 2009: 329).

With significant context-specific variations, including with respect to the state's strength and the particular configuration of the existing protection economies, comparable pictures emerge in other cases of state- and/or elite-sponsored protection rackets[5] that are presently operational, such as in Nigeria (the world's single largest scenario for oil theft), Afghanistan (the world's single largest opium/heroin producer) and Guinea-Bissau (an important West African trans-shipment point for South American cocaine *en route* to Europe).

Throughout most of the 2000s, the oil-bearing Niger Delta region of Nigeria witnessed significant levels of violence, when so-called militant groups launched an effective attack on the vital oil infrastructure, significantly reducing the country's crude output and engaging the federal government military forces and the oil majors in violent confrontation. This escalation of violence in the Delta was accompanied by a hike in oil theft, locally known as "oil bunkering", in which a broad range of militants, oil industry employees and government officials, at both the local/regional and the federal level, have been involved. The crisis in the Delta was ultimately quelled by a presidential amnesty for the Niger Delta militants, issued in 2009 by the Yar'Adua administration, which re-established the terms of a federal state-sponsored protection racket for the massive theft of crude oil (Schultze-Kraft, forthcoming).

In Afghanistan,

> Despite growing evidence of the capture of "key pieces of the nascent state apparatus" by drug-trafficking interests, the continuing weakness of the state itself, particularly beyond Kabul, negates its classification as a traditional "narco-state". Where Afghanistan is concerned, there is sufficient "narco" but not enough state. That said, in accommodating the drugs trade and tolerating relationships between major drug traffickers, key governors and deputy ministers, President Karzai has arguably created what former Minister of the Interior Ali Jalali has referred to as a *pax narcotica*; an approach to governance that, while helping to secure the president's future, has done little for regional and international security (Bewley-Taylor, 2013: 14).

With respect to cocaine trafficking through Guinea-Bissau, Shaw observes that,

> Protection has been supplied by a small network within the country's elite. […] The ability of the elite network to offer protection derives precisely from the fact that the key institutions of the state, including notably the justice system, matter little, and are unable to mount a response. […] In Guinea-Bissau then, what could be termed the "political economy of protection" – managed by an elite protection network – can be described as the set of transactions entered into over time by an elite groups of often competing individuals for the purpose of ensuring the facilitation, sustainability and safety of a set of illicit activities (Shaw, 2015: 340–1).

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[5] Distinguishing between state and elite-sponsored protection rackets or economies is pertinent because, in many developing countries and especially in "fragile states", political power is not centralised and institutionally anchored in the state. Instead, political power is often held and exercised by different groups of elites that may or may not have a relationship with the state and formal political institutions and organisations. Under such conditions, the state is only one—and sometimes not the strongest—among several powerful actors participating in the protection economies.

It is important to note that, in cases of state- and/or elite-sponsored protection rackets and economies, criminal violence is not absent. However, its levels are likely to be lower and it is more targeted than in situations where the state confronts criminal organisations head-on. In this regard, it is crucial to recognise that the states in question—be they Afghanistan, Guinea-Bissau, Mexico, Myanmar or Nigeria—are characterised by differing degrees of state fragility. These range from very high in Afghanistan, Guinea-Bissau and Myanmar to relatively lower in Mexico, with Nigeria lying somewhere in between. Such states do evidently not command a Weberian monopoly of the legitimate use of force but are characterised by "oligopolies of coercion in peripheral areas" (Duncan, 2014: 19). Writing on two relatively developed southern states, Colombia and Mexico, Gustavo Duncan argues that "in an oligopoly of coercion the state does not disappear but instead participates in the exercise of local coercion […] oligopolies of coercion are subnational authoritarian systems that involve an additional distinction: the permanent and abundant role of organised violence in the relations of the local power with both the local population and the state" (ibid.: 20). However, in the case of significantly weaker states, such as Afghanistan and Guinea-Bissau, oligopolies may also extend to the central level of government and power.

1.3 Organised crime and development

The analysis presented in the previous section strongly suggests organised crime and the myriad unlawful activities and businesses it spawns in national and sub-national jurisdictions as well as transnationally pose serious—potential and real—challenges for development. Depending on the case, the members of, and participants in, criminal groups and networks, respectively, include professional criminals but also a broad range of other state and non-state actors, such as insurgents, warlords, businesspeople, lawyers, politicians, military and police officers and civil servants.

The activities and strategies of organised crime groups and networks and their organisational forms are multiple, adaptable and dynamic. They may involve the threat and use of violence but also varying types of non-violent interactions and transactions, such as corruption and bargaining and pact-making between a range of official and unofficial power-holders and their constituencies. The organisation of criminal activities and participation in them is motivated by the active quest for economic and other material gains by illegal means but also by economic, institutional and other opportunity structures, strategic choice, social and political relationships and the socio-cultural environment. The impact of organised criminal activities on licit markets, societies and states, particularly fragile ones, is (potentially) far-reaching, corrosive and destructive: economic, political and social institutions are undermined and/or transformed and reconfigured, accountability and democratic processes are hollowed out, vast amounts of public revenue are lost and stolen, social cohesion is fractured and the security of citizens and states is endangered.

Yet it was not until relatively recently that a small but influential group of bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, such as the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Germany's Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) and the World Bank, began to engage with the issue in more systematic fashion. This engagement has been spurred by mounting concerns that organised crime—just like armed conflict and insecurity—is holding back and/or undermining inclusive and sustainable development, particularly in the world's poorest countries and most fragile states.[6] According to the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, a global

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[6] Arguably, the international development community's delayed response to the issues organised crime has thrown up exhibits some similarities with the reluctance to engage with armed conflict and security issues in the

network of law enforcement, governance and development practitioners dedicated to seeking new and innovative strategies and responses to organised crime,

The international community has become increasingly aware of the extent to which organised crime serves as a spoiler of sustainable development. This realisation has been enshrined in a number of seminal reports. In 2005, the report of the UN Secretary-General, "In Larger Freedom," which identified the challenges preventing the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), highlighted organised crime as one of the principle threats to peace and security in the 21st century. The 2010 "Keeping the Promise" report of the Secretary-General recognised that in order to achieve the MDGs, there would need to be capacity to respond specifically to organised crime. The [World Bank] World Development Report 2011 concluded that both conflict and organised crime have the same detrimental effect on development, resulting in 20% less development performance. As such, combatting organised crime and promoting greater economic and social resilience to its most deleterious impacts has become an integral part of the 2012 "Action Agenda" of the Secretary-General, as a priority for achieving a stable world (Global Initiative, 2015: 3).

This incorporation of organised crime into international development discourse and practice acquired a new quality with the adoption, in 2015, of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN General Assembly, 2015). Although organised crime writ large is not a central element in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, "illicit financial and arms flows", "the recovery and return of stolen assets", the "combat of all forms of organized crime" and the reduction of "corruption and bribery" are all explicitly mentioned in Goal 16 and Targets 16.4 and 16.5. As the Global Initiative observes,

While organised crime's importance is recognised, [its impact on development is] extensive and diverse [and needs to be clearly acknowledged as such]. Organised crime cannot be viewed as a separate development challenge to be addressed in isolation. Rather, an effective response calls for the recognition that organised crime is an intrinsic element to a large number development challenges, and must be interwoven throughout broader development response frameworks (Global Initiative, 2015: 4).

While this is true, it is equally important to recognise that we have still limited knowledge on the specific negative impacts organised crime has on development—that is, through which mechanisms and processes it becomes "a spoiler to development" (Global Initiative, 2014: 1)— and how to measure this impact. By the same token, as Section 2 discusses, we also still lack effective tools to evaluate the outcomes and impact of counter-crime interventions, both regarding more "traditional" law enforcement and rule of law programmes as well as with respect to more integrated and encompassing approaches to reducing and/or mitigating the negative impact of organised crime on development. The remainder of this section summarises the evidence on how organised crime affects development in four dimensions: economic, political-institutional, socio-cultural and (human) security.

1990s. This may be related to a perception among development practitioners and scholars that organised crime and its control are subjects that are beyond the "natural" remit of development and are therefore difficult to handle for development organisations that are not equipped with the expertise and tools for this job. Furthermore, research and policy work on organised crime is arguably more difficult than, say, that on conventional development issues, such as education, health or even governance. Primarily, this is so because it is challenging to collect robust data about criminal and illegal activities and groups that are hidden from public view. Political considerations and constraints also come into play. It is not easy for international donors to conduct political economy analyses meant to guide interventions that explicitly include a focus on organised crime and the involvement of senior government officials and representatives of the local elite and of the transnational business community in illicit and/or outright criminal affairs.

Economic issues

As mentioned at the outset of this Topic Guide, organised criminal activities as diverse as extortion, drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, oil theft on an industrial scale, illegal gold and diamond mining, cybercrime and counterfeiting, among many other "lines of criminal business", generate huge amounts of money every year. Such activities are essentially geared at stealing natural, intellectual and other resources, depriving states of very large amounts of revenue and serving as "massive drains on the productivity of nations, for the potential for equitable and sustainable economic growth, and for the capacity for governments to provide services to their citizens" (Global Initiative/SWP, 2014: 4). This lost revenue comes in the guise of taxes and other duties that are not accrued by states and massive illicit financial flows out of developing countries, which in 2015 surpassed the $1 trillion mark, to offshore tax havens or bank accounts in industrialised countries in Europe, the Americas and Asia (Kar & Spanjers, 2015; OECD, 2014).[7]

Corruption rings involving public officials, sometimes at the highest level of the government and state, often play an important role in the siphoning of public revenue. In this regard, Margaret Beare observes that,

> It is essential to appreciate the interface between the legitimate and illegitimate operations within criminal enterprises. This interface is to varying degrees facilitated by corruption. However, the one important dimension in which the processes employed by different organized criminals vary is their ability to garner support and assistance via corruption. […] The ability to corrupt enables one to buy protection from enforcement, eliminate competition and therefore amass capital. […] The greater the ability to corrupt, the greater the ability to remain invisible, or to be seen to be legitimate – unless the entire system is blatantly corrupt and has redefined pay-offs and the like as publicly recognized business procedures. The problem arises that at the most sophisticated integrated level, the ability to corrupt enables one to control the definition of what is or is not defined as corruption (Beare, 1997: 158).

It is under such conditions that the conventional distinction between corruption and organised crime risks becoming meaningless. As Ellis and Shaw observe with regard to Africa, "corruption is […] the objective of the most serious organized criminal groups in Africa, not a facilitating activity as it is often held to be in the literature on organized crime elsewhere" (Ellis & Shaw, 2015: 510).[8]

The estimated value of this global illegal-criminal economy is truly startling. According to the Global Initiative, organised criminal activities and networks are

> […] stealing the future: it is estimated that one trillion dollars is diverted into the illicit economy by organized crime. This siphoning of funds away from the legitimate economy and licit actors has considerable impact on the viability of sustainable markets […]. […] With growing illicit activity and the creation of protection economies, the illicit economy can crowd out the legitimate economy. By flooding [licit] markets with illicit capital, by protectionism, price fixing and rent seeking, criminal groups push out genuine economic activity and distort

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[7] Recent estimates are that "illicit financial flows in some countries can equate to 25% of all goods imported" (Global Initiative/SWP, 2014: 4). However, it is extremely hard to come by information on whether illicit financial flows from the developing world are being invested in productive/industrial activities in developed countries. Furthermore, we do not know what role emerging markets, such as China, Brazil and other BRICS, are playing in this global illicit economy.

[8] This is starkly reflected in the famous statement of Nuhu Ribadu, a former Nigerian anti-corruption chief: "the Nigerian state is not even corruption, it is organised crime" (cited in Watts, 2007: 650). Keeping in mind context-specific variations and differences regarding the order of magnitude, the same can presently be said for a number of other developing countries, including Afghanistan, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau and Iraq.

markets. […] Through the provision of social and economic goods, [they] siphon social capital and reduce trust in the state (Global Initiative, 2014: 5).

However, it would be mistaken to assume that criminal activities and protection economies do not create livelihoods and generally reduce economic growth (Dawid et al., 2002). The point is that they do contribute to income and livelihood generation but at the same time they destroy and/or undercut licit livelihoods that would be sustainable and development-enhancing in the longer term (Global Initiative/SWP, 2014; Schultze-Kraft, 2014).

In this context, it cannot be emphasised enough that poor and vulnerable people and communities are not among the "winners" of these criminal and illicit economies. On the contrary, they constitute the groups that are most exposed, even if not always in direct ways, to market distortions as well as extortion, intimidation and violence wielded by drug trafficking outfits, insurgent and terrorist organisations and corrupt political and economic elites. At the same time, poor and vulnerable people and communities—such as coca and poppy growers in the Andean region of South America and Afghanistan, respectively, or artisanal oil thieves in the Niger Delta of Nigeria and illegal timber loggers in Nepal—are first in line to be "criminalised" by governments and national and/or international law, making them subject to harsh law enforcement interventions. Because of the lack of or suboptimal and non-viable economic alternatives, this can—and in fact does—result in endangering the livelihoods of these communities. However, it is also pertinent to note, in the words of drug policy expert David Bewley-Taylor, that,

> In Afghanistan, as in other fragile states (drug producing or otherwise), the "legal" economy is pervaded by criminal behaviour, with actors floating between worlds. Within such an environment, most Afghan farmers engaged in poppy cultivation are doing so as the result of a complex mix of drivers and thus should not simply be classified as rational economic actors merely seeking maximum returns. Nonetheless, a relatively low "risk premium" certainly incentivises involvement in the illicit opium economy, for both producers and traffickers (Bewley-Taylor, 2013: 7).

Political and governance issues

While crucial, the political dimension of organised crime and its impact on the state, political institutions and governance in developing countries has long not received the attention it warrants. As discussed above, criminal organisations have typically been portrayed as somehow detached and alienated from the state or, at the most, representing some kind of parallel state or force that seeks to "capture" it.[9] In this conception, organised crime is framed as deepening state fragility by further undermining already weak state capacity, authority and legitimacy as criminal groups resort to violence to defend their interests, distort markets and siphon off scarce resources. In this vein, fragile and conflict-affected states are seen as convenient theatres of operation for transnational criminal groups and networks, such as Latin American drug trafficking organisations in West Africa. The affected countries are thus stylised as vulnerable places located on the large trans-continental smuggling and trafficking routes. These are essentially controlled

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[9] Arguably, this perspective is informed by the experience of modern industrialised countries in Europe and North America, where states command relatively stronger political authority, legitimacy and institutional capacity, which enables them not only to withstand criminal pressures but also to prevent criminal activities from taking root and dismantle organisations and networks as they arise. Of course, this is not to say that (transnational) organised crime is not a challenge for developed states too. It evidently is, and there are indications that, instead of diminishing, the problem is actually growing at present (see, for instance, Europol, 2013; Finklea, 2010; US National Security Council, 2011; von Lampe, 2008).

by external criminal actors who make use of the opportunities ungoverned spaces and existing local corruption rings among the government and security forces offer.[10]

However, the relationship between state fragility and organised crime is more complex than is commonly portrayed. For instance, too little attention has been paid to the intricate ways in which organised criminal groups and networks have sought to influence the outcomes of electoral contests at the municipal and even the national level in developing countries. Their methods include coercion, but importantly also the establishment of alliances with political parties, and the injection of funds into the electoral campaigns of "willing" politicians. For these processes to work, it takes two to tango, as it were: organised crime is acting in concert with political and other elite sectors in the context of political systems and governance structures often characterised by clientelism, patronage, informality, corruption and illegality. This analysis poses a number of intricate challenges for current conceptions of state fragility and development in fragile and conflict or violence-affected settings (see, for instance, Miraglia et al., 2012).

According to a recent study by the Center on International Cooperation at New York University,

> [...] organized crime poses enormous governance challenges for developing countries. All of the countries [Nepal, Ghana, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Guyana and Jamaica] studied for this project (except Nepal) are formal multi-party democracies. However, in most of the cases (including Nepal), formal institutions are underpinned by extensive informal systems sustaining patronage and corruption, and a political economy providing limited services and protection for citizens. In each of the case studies, organised crime takes advantage of systemic weaknesses, for example, through corruption of the electoral, legislative, and public procurement processes, and corruption of local administrations. Coercion of politicians and public service officials by organized criminals also plays into this situation, as does the reverse side with political actors taking advantage of organized crime for political gain. In most cases, a weak or politicized civil society and media, or an academia with limited voice, provide limited checks on government complicity with organized crime (Kavanagh, 2013: 17).

In the era of globalisation, large illicit flows of (illicit) goods and money can therefore have very significant effects on the political economies of developing countries. "Criminal groups are generally more nimble than government regulators in exploiting new markets, but in African cases the growth of organized crime is not primarily because of deficiencies in regulation so much as in the willingness of politicians to envisage relationships with professional criminals" (Ellis & Shaw, 2015: 515).[11] Once large-scale drug markets, for instance, have become established, such as in West Africa in the past decade,

> Political marketplaces [...] are prone to undergo significant change. Group loyalties that hitherto were negotiated within, and structured by, patronage and clientelistic relationships of a 'traditional' kind, that is, without significant external influences, become vulnerable to breaking up or being transformed. [...] New relationships of loyalty and patronage emerge that are likely to involve a larger number of groups, including subaltern ones. In extreme cases, such as in Guinea-Bissau, this can result in the staging of coups by factions of the military and

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[10] The World Bank's World Development Report 2011 employs the concept of "external stressors" to capture this relationship of vulnerability, including in respect to transnational illicit flows. For a critical discussion of the concept, see Schultze-Kraft (2014).

[11] Here, it is important to emphasise the point made by Ellis and Shaw that, "even in Western democracies, where respect for law is comparatively stronger, the relationships between politics and crime has changed" (2015: 515–16), with politicians and businesspeople co-engaging more frequently in illegal and/or outright criminal activities. Hence, "there now exists a connection between the types of crime characteristic of African states, on the one hand, and high finance and big business in rich countries, on the other hand. Both are associated with the off-shore world, used by multinational businesses to avoid taxes and to make the payments necessary to secure contracts as well as by crime bosses laundering their money" (ibid.: 518).

political elites that compete over drug trafficking rents, as well as in the capture of the entire state by drug-trafficking interests (Schultze-Kraft, 2014: 18–19).

There can be other, though in the longer term not less pernicious, variations of these dynamics: "Importantly, elite bargains that underpin existing political settlements and provide a degree of stability can be shaken up when, for instance, one powerful faction becomes involved in an illicit business and switches alliances. […] Other powerful groups which are left out of these criminal bargains will have strong incentives to follow suit and establish their own alliances with traffickers [or other criminal entrepreneurs] so as not to end up in a disadvantaged position *vis-à-vis* their competitors. A vicious circle can result in which progressively more groups that hold sway over their country's political and economic affairs are drawn into the trafficking networks and become beholden to criminal interests" (Schultze-Kraft, 2014: 19).

In sum, from a political and governance perspective, organised crime represents something of an anti-thesis to inclusive and sustainable development. Rather than "development in reverse", as has been said about violent conflict, organised crime is non-development, as it undermines and/or transforms political institutions and governance structures while at the same time creating its own rules and modes of governance. These are, however, essentially non-democratic, non-accountable, non-transparent and exclusionary; and, depending on the involved illicit markets and the particular configuration of the associated protection economies, have a propensity to be upheld by the illegitimate use of coercion.

Socio-cultural issues

The socio-cultural dimension is perhaps the aspect of the relationship between organised crime and development that so far has received the least attention in the academic and policy literatures. While the evidence base needs to be broadened, it seems undeniable that, for subaltern and underprivileged groups, particularly young people, in many development settings there is a social attractiveness to being part of a criminal organisation and engaging in illicit and/or illegal activities. Increasingly, this includes young women, for whom "successful female criminal bosses have become 'role models'" (Siegel, 2014: 62). Living and working in the "underworld" provides social status where other legitimate avenues for social advancement and mobility either do not exist or are very hard to break into. As "crime has become more and more embedded in social life" (ibid.: 63), the lure of quick and easy money is omnipresent and both young men and women are vulnerable to giving in to it. Consider, for instance, the young captains of the go-fast boats that are setting out from different locations on Colombia's Pacific coast to destinations as far away as Central America or even China. If they manage to avoid getting caught by the US Coast Guard or the navies of other countries and if they do not sink on the journey or are killed, they can be pretty certain that back at home they will receive a hero's welcome and a payment for their services that they would never have been able to obtain in a lifetime's work.

Out of this grow sub-cultures, which, depending on the circumstances, may become the "official" culture in a given locality and among large groups of young people living in peri-urban and destitute areas of large cities. Consider, for instance, the musical subculture of the *narcocorridos* in Mexico, the symbolism of tattoos among street gang (*mara*) members in Central America and the so-called cult groups and fraternities in Lagos and the large cities of the Niger Delta in Nigeria (Bargent, 2014; Eberlein, 2006; Simonett, 2004). In this regard, it is important to note that women do not typically figure in larger numbers in the hierarchies of organised criminal groups and gangs. While recent research has refuted the notion that women have traditionally been subordinate part players in a male-dominated system of organised criminality (Arsovska & Allum,

2014),[12] they, as mentioned above, are nonetheless at risk of becoming victims of gender-based acts of criminal violence and other abuse. Further, participation in illicit or illegal activities is not always perceived to be outside of, or in contravention with, social norms. This is the case in, for instance, West Africa, where drug trafficking is not seen as a crime but rather as a "decent" way to earn a living (Schultze-Kraft, 2014). The same can be said about other regions, such as the Andes in South America, and Afghanistan, where illegal activities are tolerated or even actively supported by sectors of the population. This may be either because there is very little trust in the—fragile—state and its adherence to the law (reflected in repressive state practices and serious human rights violations) or because there are no viable alternative and licit economic opportunities, particularly for the poorest households (Mansfield, 1999).

Yet this social tolerance of illicit or outright criminal activities and behaviours comes at a cost, as social cohesion is affected, generational conflicts erupt between elders and youths, conflicts between and within communities are spurred, family and clan relationships are transformed and public health problems are aggravated. According to a recent study,

> […] not only do criminal networks garner billion dollar profits from dealing directly in the counterfeiting and trafficking of medical and pharmaceutical goods […] but also a number of the most virulent organized crime practices: drug trafficking and human trafficking, contribute significantly to denigrating public health. For example, injecting drug use is responsible for one in ten of every new HIV infection globally, and in some countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia this runs as high as 80% (Global Initiative/SWP, 2014: 4).

Further, in certain—likely extreme—circumstances, social tolerance of illicit and criminal activities and behaviours can be reflected in the emergence of what has been described as a "culture of lawlessness". According to Williams, "Iraq after the collapse of the Ba'athist regime was characterized by anomie – a behavioral sink, a degeneration of rules and norms and the emergence of forms of behavior unconstrained by standard notions of what is or is not acceptable. […] the decline of behavioral norms and standards feeds into the spread of crime and violence" (2009: 327).

(Human) security issues

Security has likely been the international community's top concern in relation to organised crime in the past two decades or longer. Following the end of the Cold War and in the context of accelerating globalisation, Western governments and international organisations identified organised crime as a new threat to the security of states and the international system, a driver of violent conflict in the developing world and in the transition countries of the former Eastern bloc and a spoiler of peace. While mounting concern about the insecurity generated by transnational organised crime was articulated in a series of key documents issued by the UN, other international organisations and national governments (mostly in Europe and North America), it proved challenging to integrate the issue into national and multilateral defence and security policy agendas and peace operations. The default position has generally been one of tackling organised crime through enhancing domestic law enforcement capabilities and increasing international cooperation in tracking and disrupting illicit flows and seizing illegally acquired assets and "dirty money" (see Cockayne & Lupel, 2009). For a number of reasons that for lack of space cannot be discussed here, international peace operations in settings as diverse as

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[12] In this regard, Jana Arskova and Felia Allum write, "since the late 1990s, police agencies across the globe, including INTERPOL and Europol, have noted that on the one hand, women have gained more prominent roles in transnational organized crime networks, in particular human trafficking […] and, on the other hand, the number of female offenders is substantial and growing. […] The roles of female offenders in human trafficking networks have become central" (Arskova & Allum, 2014: 3–4).

Afghanistan, Bosnia, Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, etc. have on the whole not been effective at reining in and reducing organised criminal activities.

In a manner similar to its reluctance to engage with violent conflict and security (on the terms of the security community) in the 1990s and early 2000s (see, for instance, Duffield, 2001; Waddell, 2006), until recently the international development community has not systematically responded to the problems that organised crime throws up for development. As mentioned, this changed when, at the turn of the last decade, several key international development agencies began to work on organised crime. A milestone in this regard is the World Bank's 2011 World Development Report, which refers to organised crime as one of several "new" security threats in fragile and conflict-affected states. Developing the earlier debate about the nexus between security and development, the report starts with the key observation that "insecurity not only remains, it has become a primary development challenge of our time. One-and-a-half billion people live in areas affected by fragility, conflict, or large-scale organized criminal violence" (World Bank, 2011: 1).

In this emerging conception, organised crime is thus framed as a driver of new forms of violent conflict that undermine the chances for inclusive development:

> The tendency to see violence as interstate warfare and major civil war obscures the variety and prevalence of organized violence – and underestimates its impact on people's lives. The organised violence that disrupts governance and compromises development also includes local violence involving militias or between ethnic groups, gang violence, local resource-related violence and violence linked to trafficking (particularly drug trafficking). […] This violence is often recurrent, with many countries now experiencing repeated cycles of civil conflict and criminal violence (World Bank, 2011: 53).

Moreover, the boundaries between different types of violence and between the actors employing it are becoming increasingly blurred. For instance, in the 2000s, the militant groups in the Niger Delta of Nigeria were both laying siege to the country's vital oil infrastructure and the operations of the transnational oil majors in the name of "resource control", and very actively engaging in association with regional and federal political and military elites in the theft of crude oil on an industrial scale (Schultze-Kraft, forthcoming; Watts, 2007).

However, it is important to realise that organised crime's negative impact on development in terms of (in)security is not necessarily and mostly a result of criminal violence. As discussed above, there is no strong correlation between organised crime and violence. Organised criminal activities may, at times, lead to high or even extreme levels of violence. But there is equally sufficient evidence showing that illegal markets can be relatively peaceful depending, for instance, on whether they are "closed" or "open", whether they involve the control of "territory" or not or whether they are "co-managed" or not between criminal organisations and state authorities. Examples of the former scenario include contemporary El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico—that is, key Latin American drug trafficking hubs on the route to the US. The latter scenario can be found in, for instance, Ghana and Guinea-Bissau—key West African drug trafficking hubs on the route to Europe.

Where criminal activities and illegal markets are non-violent, their negative impact on development does not result from the violence they spawn but is transmitted through other vectors that produce insecurity. The crucial question here is thus whether we are talking about the security of the state or rather about human and citizen security in developing countries where organised crime has gained a strong foothold (see Luckham, 2015). In other words, is organised crime a development problem because it generates insecurity for states or because organised criminal activities and groups undermine human and citizen security? The available evidence from across Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia indicates that organised

criminal activities throw up both types of problems for development. Depending on the case, it may be the security of the state and the stability of a country's political institutions that are threatened, or it may be the security of citizens and the full enjoyment of their fundamental rights that are under threat from organised crime. In reality, both scenarios can and do overlap in practice.

2 Approaches, tools and interventions to tackle organised crime

Tackling organised crime and mitigating its negative, corrosive impacts on communities, societies and states has typically been viewed as a law enforcement task. Around the world, fighting organised crime is primarily the remit of police forces and judicial institutions, which have been supported or sometimes even supplanted by the military where security conditions have become particularly difficult, such as in Mexico and Nigeria.

In the past two decades, national governments and regional and international organisations have all responded to organised crime by conducting threat assessments of varying kinds.[13] However, these "measure the crime itself, rather than its impact" and "try to capture what is moving [and] how much is moving, [but] look less at why it is moving along a specific path and who has enabled it" (Global Initiative, 2016: v).

In a mirror image, organised crime control interventions and strategies across the world tend to emphasise the disruption of illicit markets and the dismantling of criminal groups and networks through law enforcement means. In this battle, authorities seize all sorts of illicit and licit smuggled commodities every day—in airports, at border crossings and on board ships, trains, trucks and cars— virtually everywhere in the world. Every day, people are apprehended by law enforcers and—less often—sentenced by judges for their involvement in illicit and illegal trades.

Yet, despite the enormous amount of public revenue spent every year on these interventions, we cannot be sure of their effectiveness. As organised crime expert Jay Albanese observes,

> There generally has been a shocking lack of attention worldwide to documenting and accurately measuring or estimating organized crime. As one author put it, "organized crime has been defined in the relative absence of knowledge" about its true dimensions (Castle, 2008, p. 139). Few countries make any effort to systematically count it, measure changes from year to year, or objectively determine the impact of laws and policies intended to reduce its incidence. Therefore, organized crime "control" efforts generally occur in a vacuum, so that reasonable questions such as the following cannot be answered: Has this policy had any impact on organized crime groups? Has it affected the incidence of organized crime activity? What is the precise cost benefit analysis of the approaches taken in terms of cost, impact on citizens, markets, and organized crime? The situation is comparable to marketing a new anticancer drug, but failing to measure in any systematic way whether the drug actually has any impact on cancer! (Albanese, 2009: 413; see also Castle, 2008).

It is not unreasonable to argue that this unfortunate state of affairs owes, at least in part, to the difficulties of defining and conceptualising organised crime, as Section 1 discussed. Moreover, different policy communities have different interests in, and tools for, tackling organised crime,

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[13] Prominent examples of such threat assessments include the EU Serious and Organized Crime Threat Assessment, UNODC's Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessments and the Canada/US Organized Crime Threat Assessment. These and similar threat assessments are regularly updated and made available online.

ranging from "hard" law enforcement and crime control interventions to "soft" developmental approaches to reduce societal harm organised criminal activities and groups cause.[14]

A cohesive body of policies to counter organised crime does not exist. Given the chameleonic and dynamic nature of the phenomenon and the diverging ways different domestic and international policy communities perceive and seek to address it, this is not likely to emerge any time soon. Thus, it is true that "there is now significant scope for further exploring the role of development actors in countering organised crime and building communities and state institutions that are resilient to its deleterious impacts" (Global Initiative, 2014: 1). But the question remains whether development interventions should be countering organised crime by targeting it directly using means other than law enforcement, or using proven development tools to change the broader social, economic, political and governance conditions that enable organised criminal activities to emerge and thrive.

2.1 What is the current experience/thinking on entry points for development actors?

It is important for development agencies to recognise that "understanding in this area is difficult from the outset, unlike health or education-related work, for example";[15] and that, as "newcomers" in this field, development donors have few tested policy responses to build on. By the same token, in a manner similar to the earlier debates about how (and whether) development interventions could be linked to and support security strategies in fragile and conflict-affected states, development actors will have to tread carefully with respect to engaging with organised crime and strategies to counter it. Considering the broad range of challenges involved, some of them very serious, there is certainly more than a grain of truth to the observation that.

> A combination of the extent of the impact of organised crime, but also the acknowledgement that many of its causes relate to a wider set of governance, social, developmental and other factors, has highlighted incontrovertibly that a narrow security approach will not be effective in countering the problem. If an effective and sustainable solution to organised crime is to be found, it is imperative that the weight of the development response is brought to bear (Global Initiative, 2016: 2).

The key question that then arises is how a development response can be brought to bear and make a difference in a complex, fast-evolving and not well-understood policy field that traditionally has been dominated by law enforcement and security actors and agendas, and where there is little evidence on what actually works or could work. A milestone on the road of the development community's engagement with organised crime, the World Bank's 2011 World Development Report on conflict, security and development approaches the issue by linking what

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[14] This is evidenced in a recent study on approaches to counter-crime programming. The result not of an evaluation of specific interventions to counter organised crime but of a desk review of a wide range of academic and policy documents that speak to many different aspects of crime, this identifies "six high level theories of change that taken together were considered to account for the majority of approaches and strategies employed to address [transnational organised crime]" (Midgley et al., 2014: 7): deterrence; severing the links between politics, the state and crime; managed adaptation of crime to minimise negative impacts on violence, security and conflict; cultural change; economic transformation; and global regulation. Perhaps not surprisingly, the authors find that "many of these theories are overlapping and share common characteristics", but "there are also contradictions between the different theories of change. [...] It is also clear that programmes focused on [transnational organised crime] are guided by a wide range of assumptions. Assessing the robustness of the assumptions (and measuring impact of these programmes) based on available evidence is challenging. The evidence base for many of these issues remains largely under-developed" (ibid., 2014: 40).

[15] Email communication of the author with one expert reviewer of a previous version of this Topic Guide.

it calls "large-scale, organized crime" to the persisting and even increasing insecurity of a quarter of the world's population: "insecurity not only remains, it has become a primary development challenge of our time. One-and-a-half billion people live in areas affected by fragility, conflict, or large-scale, organized criminal violence. […] New threats – organized crime and trafficking, civil unrest due to global economic shocks, terrorism – have supplemented continued preoccupations with conventional war between and within countries" (World Bank, 2011: 1).

While not inaccurate, this framing of the development–organised crime nexus focuses the attention on (in)security and violence, glossing over the many other challenges posed by organised criminal activities and groups for inclusive and sustainable development. It is important to remind ourselves that there is no "automatic" relationship between organised crime, insecurity and—particularly—violence. Further, as Scheye (2016) observes, the political and economic challenges arising from organised crime are at least as important as law enforcement challenges – in some cases perhaps more so. Therefore, especially given state actors' involvement in organised crime,

> it appears that political and social responses to organised crime in fragile, conflict-affected and post-conflict states need to rise to the top of the agenda. In fact, it may be best to think of law enforcement as a discrete tool and a means by which to acquire increased leverage within an overall political and economic anti-organised crime strategy (Scheye, 2016: 4).

So an integrated approach to organised crime is needed. However, as the Global Initiative (2014) points out, while this idea is increasingly discussed it is less common in practice. In addition:

> Development actors remain concerned about a subordination of development to security priorities caused in part by some early experimentation of an "integrated approach" used in Afghanistan, where development aid was both delivered by and held contingent upon military access (Global Initiative, 2014: 3).

As mentioned above, "this has parallels to […] earlier debates on the need to apply integrated approaches to post-conflict state-building within the paradigm of fragile states" (Global Initiative, 2014: 3) and to debates about the problems inherent in joining up development and security interventions in international peacebuilding scenarios, such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and Sierra Leone.[16] It has therefore been highlighted that, "without an overarching conceptual framework or approach, programmatic interventions are likely to be scattershot, or return to the default responses that often fund law enforcement capacity building or border security with little understanding of how that fits within the socio-economic or governance framework, or the linkages to a wider set of activities" (Global Initiative, 2016: 2).

Fundamentally, "the efficacy of an integrated approach is affected by the way the challenge is originally cast. Organized crime is caught within the framework of law enforcement, justice and security" (Global Initiative, 2014: 4). Yet this framing of the problem "vastly [underestimates] the extent of the threat. Organized crime is an evolving, innovative network, which leverages on economic, social and political opportunities to integrate into institutions of the state and to

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[16] In a meeting with development practitioners convened by the Global Initiative, participants expressed that they felt the "perception of the 'securitization of development' that has come to fruition in other areas where development has been mobilized to counter security threats, and this has been a key driver in the reluctance of development actors to engage with organized crime. This concern has been exacerbated by the 'war on terror' and the 'war on drugs' rhetoric that has permeated the lexicon of international cooperation in recent years. The development practitioners present expressed that they felt that there is often a dichotomy between security goals, which is target oriented and prioritizes quick wins and external action, where development is a more incremental process of sustained engagement to build capacity and sustainable change in national partners and institutions" (Global Initiative, 2014: 3).

crowd out legitimate activities in its wake" (ibid.). "It has been proven now in a number of theatres that investments concentrated on building the capacity of security institutions […] cannot alone provide a sustainable solution" (ibid.: 1). "One of the characteristics that makes organized crime challenging to respond to is that its negative impacts are so broad […] The erosion of state institutions, the dampening of legal trade and the threats to human security […] make it a multi-faceted threat" (ibid.: 4).

2.1 How can development interventions help contain and/or prevent the spread of organised crime and mitigate its negative impact on development processes?

The relationship between development and organised crime has at least two dimensions: development interventions can help contain and/or prevent the emergence and spread of organised criminal activities and groups; and they can seek to protect development processes from being negatively affected by organised crime. In the first type of intervention, development is a function of counter-crime measures, at least in part. In the second type, it is the object of intervention that needs to be protected against the corrosive and debilitating effects of organised crime on development processes. As in the case of the relationship between development and violent conflict, in practice both types of interventions overlap and are ideally mutually reinforcing. This approach has recently been articulated by Shaw, Reitano and Hunter of the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime Secretariat (Global Initiative, 2016):[17]

> This framework is an attempt to shift to a situation where development actors are proactively acknowledging and addressing crime and criminal actors in their work, recognising that while not all interventions may be directly targeted at organised crime itself, [… they] may require working in environments where criminal actors and the externalities of their presence are increasingly a feature of the programming landscape. […] This framework is therefore equally as relevant for *organised crime specific* programming, as well as *organised crime relevant* measures (Global Initiative, 2016: 22).

What sets this approach to programming apart from law enforcement and other strategies that essentially aim to re-establish security is that it frames organised crime not as some sort of external threat that has to be minimised or neutralised. Rather, organised crime is perceived as reflecting a set of diverse societal and developmental challenges—increasingly linked to global issues—that can be addressed effectively only if they are tackled together and not in isolation from one another. Such challenges include, for instance, protection economies that emerge in developing countries around criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and oil theft but also human smuggling and environmental crime like wildlife poaching. Moreover, in a similar manner to current drug policy reform debates, this perspective parts from the premise that, just as it is impossible to conceive of a "drug-free world", it is likewise impossible to conceive of an "(organised) crime-free world".

This conception of an integrated approach appears to be particularly pertinent as it "focuses less on the *modus operandi* of criminal groups, but instead looks at the market in a specific locality or along a supply chain, [mapping] the entities involved in the criminal market [and] their inter-relationships and interests" (Global Initiative, 2016: 5). In this perspective, which is in line with the framing of organised crime used in this Topic Guide,

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[17] It draws on a process facilitated by the Global Initiative known as the "Development Dialogue", which includes representatives of the development donor community as well as independent experts from think-tanks and multilateral institutions and has been funded by contributions from the governments of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the UK and the US.

The study of power has […] become increasingly important in the analysis of organised crime, as 'power syndicates' have developed whose role is to exert control over illicit business and to extract rent from their perpetuation through protection or extortion. Accordingly, […] organised crime and criminal enterprise can no longer be viewed as being distinct to the state or legitimate enterprise (Global Initiative, 2016: v-vi).

Among the key proposed programming responses associated with this approach are

(a) direct interventions "designed to directly weaken organised crime groups or networks by reducing their ability to operate through the arrest of people or undercutting the legitimacy of criminal actors in the wider society; (b) indirect interventions targeted at building the capacity of community and state actors to be resilient to the risks posed by organised crime, including through building the integrity of state institutions and protecting communities from criminal influence and threats: and (c) mitigating interventions, a specific set of options related to mitigating the impact and harm of crime in different sectors, including reducing violence and enhancing social and environmental protection (Global Initiative, 2016: 22).

While some elements of these distinct approaches to tackling organised crime as part of developmental efforts have been put into practice, as yet we lack any systematic assessments and evaluations of their impact. It is beyond the scope of this Topic Guide to undertake this important pending task.

3 Implications for policy, programming and research

3.1 Key issues and lessons

The evidence presented in this Topic Guide is unequivocal in showing that organised crime poses serious challenges for development. Rather than "development in reverse", organised criminal activities promote what could be called non-development. Illegal and criminal interests that span the public–private divide and involve non-state and state actors upend, transform and reconfigure the rules of the game—that is, the institutions that govern the economic, political and social affairs of societies and states and the prevailing distribution of power and wealth.

Legality and formal institutions do not normally collapse entirely under the pressure of organised crime, and governments are fighting organised criminal groups and networks. Yet in the past two to three decades organised crime has spread across the globe, particularly affecting developing countries and fragile states. In this vast process, illicit markets have multiplied; criminal operations have become ever more globally networked; huge proceeds from criminal activities are siphoned away from the legitimate economy and lawful markets are distorted. The political economy of crime-affected developing countries is altered significantly. Social cohesion is fractured as criminal subcultures emerge and replace traditional values and norms, and the security of both citizens and states is endangered.

Depending on several factors, such as the type of illegal-criminal activity involved and the degree and nature of state fragility in a given country, organised crime can be associated with violence, sometimes even with war-like "new" forms of violence, such as in the 2000s in the Niger Delta of Nigeria and currently in Mexico.

However, we cannot assume that organised crime always leads to violence and instability. For instance, the cases of Afghanistan, Myanmar and the Niger Delta of Nigeria reveal that a measure of stability and relatively low levels of violence can be compatible with huge high-value criminal operations, such as transnational drug trafficking and oil theft on an industrial scale. Such "stability" in crime-permeated environments may be due to the existence of state or elite-sponsored protection rackets and effective corruption rings. But it may also arise from other types of (local) governance arrangements and agreements involving both criminal organisations and legitimate political, economic and social groups, such as in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

This analysis reveals that it is not appropriate and useful anymore, if ever it was, to conceive of organised crime as some sort of "alien" threat that is external to states, licit markets and legitimate, law-abiding society. The alternative framing of organised crime as a development challenge used in this Topic Guide aims to help analysts and policy-makers overcome a bias towards prioritising law enforcement and security interventions when tackling problems that stem from organised criminal activities.

Evidence that law enforcement and organised crime control policies are effective is scant at best. Arguably, such approaches are even less promising and useful in developing countries, where states typically do not have sufficient law enforcement capacity and do not hold the monopoly on the use of force. Things are complicated further because in such settings the rule of law is weak or non-existent, corruption and human rights violations are rife, and political and social institutions, both formal and informal, are not separated by the membrane of legality from organised criminal activities. Wider society—affected by rampant inequalities in income and well-being—may not even consider such activities illegitimate.

3.2 Towards integrated approaches?

Accepting that conventional law enforcement and security approaches to tackling organised crime are insufficient (and at times also unrealistic and counterproductive) and recognising that the evidence shows that such approaches can have unintended consequences, such as promoting violence and deepening poverty, a question arises as to the alternative. Some development actors are moving towards integrated approaches, which address organised crime as a complex matter and aim to combine law enforcement and security with diplomatic and development actions. The basic idea is that law enforcement, justice and security interventions are used as discrete tools in a broader effort to limit the harm caused by organised criminal activities in developing countries. This point is driven home by Ellis and Shaw, who argue with respect to contemporary Africa (though this also applies to some countries in Asia and Latin America), that "understanding the meaning in African contexts of the type of large-scale, political-criminal entrepreneurship that we have evoked will increasingly drive both internal and external policy discussions [...]. What is clear [...] is that law enforcement interventions alone will do little to make a difference" (Ellis & Shaw, 2015: 528).

While the development of alternative approaches remains a work in progress, three key issues are pertinent.

First, we need to determine whether development programming in crime-permeated settings should be geared towards supporting law enforcement/security efforts to contain and/or prevent the emergence and spread of organised crime; or whether programming should prioritise protecting development processes from the negative effects of organised crime.

Second, what types of development programmes should be prioritised as part of an integrated approach? The big challenge here is that organised crime is today such a far-reaching, encompassing and multifaceted phenomenon. It transcends the boundaries of national jurisdictions, is globally networked and has economic, political, social and (human) security implications. In all likelihood, international development actors would need to review basic operating procedures, tools and mandates to acquire the capability to design and implement effective programmes in organised crime-permeated development settings. In this regard, Ellis and Shaw suggest that the "key function of development interventions must be to change the incentive structures" that underpin the illegal-criminal protection economies in developing countries. "Indeed", the authors conclude, "this may be all that development interventions are able to do" (Ellis & Shaw, 2015: 528).

Third, there are strategic trade-offs involved in an integrated development response to organised crime. Perhaps the most obvious one is the diverging aims and interests of development and law enforcement/security actors, as witnessed in armed/post-conflict settings like Afghanistan, Haiti and Iraq. There is no reason to believe that these tensions would not also boil up in the context of integrated interventions in organised crime-permeated settings (which are often also affected by armed conflict or locked into complex and uncertain war-to-peace transitions). Moreover, introducing a strategic focus on organised crime, while certainly important in many developing countries, would not be entirely congruent with the SDGs. Crime-sensitive development actors would have to increase their efforts significantly to build a strong coalition of international development agencies to pursue this cause. Yet, it is not clear who would be the developing country counterparts who would cooperate with international development agencies on organised crime issues. Neither is it clear whether high-income countries would be prepared to reform their banking and foreign trade sectors, as well as global governance mechanisms such as the UN-administered international drug control regime, which are inadvertently boosting organised crime around the globe (see, for instance, Bewley-Taylor, 2005).

3.3 Evidence gaps and questions for further research

The evidence presented in this Topic Guide shows (1) that organised crime is a highly complex and dynamic economic, political and social phenomenon that comes in many different guises and is spreading across the globe; and (2) that organised crime affects a number of both low- and middle-income countries and fragile states in particularly serious ways. Public awareness of the challenges and threats posed by organised crime for the security of citizens and states and inclusive and sustainable development is growing, including among the international development community. This is reflected in the inclusion of organised crime on the SDG agenda and the work conducted by new global expert and practitioner networks, such as the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime. Our knowledge about organised crime, including in low- and middle-income countries, is today quite advanced, and the body of research on different aspects of organised crime is growing. Further, the networking capacity in the organised crime research community across the globe has increased in recent years.

However, a number of areas need more research attention to strengthen our capacity to reduce the negative impacts of organised crime on development. Here, it is important to reiterate the point made earlier that research on organised crime is inherently challenging. Access to reliable data is limited and we lack robust evaluations of the impact of counter-crime programmes. This is the case for conventional law enforcement action and for crime-sensitive interventions by development actors in the fields of strengthening governance, the rule of law and human rights in crime-permeated settings and fragile states.

The following list of questions for consideration in future research is therefore not exhaustive. It focuses on issues crucial for the design and implementation of integrated approaches to countering and mitigating the impact of organised crime on development processes.

- How can we evaluate the impact of conventional, law enforcement-focused counter-crime interventions in low- and middle-income countries and in fragile states?

- How can we measure organised crime's multiple impacts on development in both low- and middle-income countries?

- When integrated development interventions aim to reduce the harm caused by organised crime, and to tackle the problem's transnational and international dimensions, what should they prioritise? How can such interventions be linked to other, more conventional, governance, rule of law and development programmes? How can trade-offs between law enforcement/security imperatives and human development goals be minimised?

- How can we strengthen attention to gender issues in the analysis of organised crime and in the design of programmes to reduce its negative effects on development?

- What issues should be prioritised to strengthen the knowledge base on the relationship between organised crime and state fragility?

- How can we systematically link the emerging research agenda on political settlements and development with that of protection economies and the wider political economy of organised crime?

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