

Security and Organised Crime : Causes and Consequences

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Abstract:

Organized crime has posed a threat to both individuals and the security and economies of states, due to the severe negative impacts it leaves behind, which have affected the entire world across various political, economic, and social fields. These crimes are carried out by organized groups that seek to achieve profit, and this danger has gone beyond the national level to encompass international security and peace

Keywords: Transnational organised crime, causes of organised crime, effects of organised crime

Introduction:

Security is one of the most important pillars upon which stable societies are built, as development or the flourishing of human life cannot be achieved in its absence. With the development of societies and the increasing complexity of lifestyles, organised crime has emerged as a dangerous phenomenon threatening the security of individuals and states, due to its tight organisation, sophisticated methods, and ability to infiltrate various sectors. This phenomenon has become one of the most prominent challenges facing contemporary societies,

owing to its multiple causes and profound negative effects on social and economic stability, which necessitates its study, an understanding of its dimensions, and ways to combat it

The importance of the topic of security and organised crime stems from the fact that it affects the foundations of social stability and the safety of its members, as security is a prerequisite for achieving development and progress in various fields. Its importance also lies in revealing the danger of organised crime and the direct threat it poses to public order, the undermining of the state's authority, and the spread of fear and instability among citizens. This topic helps to understand the real causes of the spread of such crimes and their negative social, economic and political consequences, thereby contributing to finding effective solutions to curb them and raising public awareness of the importance of cooperation between the individual and the state in order to consolidate security and build a safe and stable society

Accordingly, the problem posed by this study can be formulated as follows: **What are the causes and effects of organised crime?**

To answer this research question, the study addressed the following: the concept of organised crime, the causes of organised crime, and the effects of organised crime. This was achieved by dividing the study into three main themes, which we address as follows:

The first theme: The concept of organised crime

To understand the reality of organised crime, its causes and its effects, we must first examine its concept through its jurisprudential, international, regional and national definitions, using the following elements:

First: The legal definition of organised crime

US President Nelson Rockefeller defines organised crime as the result of a criminal agreement characterised by growth and proliferation, with the aim of siphoning off the greatest possible amount of profits generated by society, relying on unfair and unjust methods, some of which take on a legitimate appearance whilst others do not and conceal their unlawful nature. In all cases, there is a reliance on instilling fear and corruption, as well as the criminal group's adherence to strict rules and regulations led by a minority seeking to appear honest and upright.¹

¹ Salem Sharmat, 'Transnational Organised Crime: Its Concept, Impact and Obstacles to Combating It', *Academic Journal of Legal and Political Research*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 2021, p. 532.

There is a broad jurisprudential interpretation of the concept of organised crime, which holds that the primary criterion for defining organised crime is illicit gain. Consequently, this jurisprudential view classifies organised crime into three types, as follows: ¹

*Organised crime of an aggressive nature or characterised by violence, such as armed robbery and extortion

*Engaging in unlawful activities to obtain a specific income, such as gambling, prostitution and drug trafficking

*White-collar crimes committed by individuals of high social standing who exploit their professional and social positions to achieve personal ends, including fraud, tax evasion, corporate crimes and bribery

Secondly: International and regional definitions of organised crime

The international definition of organised crime has been debated by various parties; we address the most important of these below:

A. Interpol's definition of organised crime:

Interpol defined organised crime as a group of individuals formed for the purpose of committing unlawful acts on a continuous basis, primarily aimed at making a profit without regard to national borders. This followed criticism that the definition did not refer to the organisational structure.

Interpol has redefined organised crime as: any group of persons with an organisational structure, aiming to make a profit by unlawful means and typically using intimidation and corruption²

b) The European Union's definition of organised crime:

Organised crime was defined by the European Union's Committee on Drug Control in 1993 as: a group of more than two persons engaged in a criminal enterprise involving the commission of serious offences over a long or indefinite period, in which each member has a

¹ Sofiane Kaarar, Transnational Organised Crime and its Impact on Human Security, Master's thesis in Human Rights and Human Security, University of Setif 2, Faculty of Law and Political Science, Department of Postgraduate Studies, Human Rights and Human Security Section, 2013, 2014, p. 21.

² Sayyid Kamel Sharif, Organised Crime in Comparative Law, Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiya, Egypt, 2001, p. 53.

specific role within the criminal organisation, with the aim of gaining control or making a profit, and which deliberately uses the following to commit the offence:

- commercial activities;
- Violence and other means of intimidation.
- Exerting influence on political circles, the media, public administration, judicial bodies and the economy¹

C. The United Nations definition of organised crime:

The United Nations has defined organised crime as a group with an organisational structure comprising 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 criminal acts in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, financial or other material benefits²

The second theme: Causes of organised crime

The emergence and spread of transnational organised crime has been driven by a range of causes, the most significant of which can be summarised as follows:³

1. The demand for illicit goods and services over which organised criminal groups from outside the state's territory compete, and the lucrative profits these groups derive from such activities

2. The democratic capitalist system that currently prevails in most countries, which relies on free trade and open borders without controls or restrictions, thereby enabling organised criminal groups to extend their activities across national borders

3- The need of developing countries for foreign capital, which has led them to encourage foreign investment without restrictions or conditions to ensure the legitimacy of the sources of the funds invested in them

4-Scientific and technological development across multiple fields, which organised crime groups have exploited to refine their methods, expand their activities and devise new forms of crime that span national borders

¹ Sayyid Kamel Sharif, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

² Salem Sharmat, *op. cit.*, p. 533.

³ Khalid bin Mubarak Al-Qurawi Al-Qahtani, *International Security Cooperation and its Role in Combating Transnational Organised Crime*, PhD thesis, Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, Naif University for Security Sciences, 2006, p. 84.

This means that the emergence of transnational organised crime has economic, political, social and cultural causes,¹ which we address below:

First: The political causes of organised crime:

Although organised crime is not a political crime, it has numerous political causes, the most important of which are: the rigidity of systems and legislation, and the poor performance of state authorities or constitutional institutions.

Second: The social and cultural causes of organised crime:

Organised crime, like any other crime, is nothing more than a social phenomenon, or a phenomenon whose causes can be traced back to social and cultural conditions. The most significant social and cultural factors leading to the emergence of organised crime are: a low level of education among individuals, weak educational programmes, and a shift in values and the perception of crimes as normal behaviour.

Thirdly: The economic causes of organised crime:

Economic causes are among the most prominent factors leading to the commission of organised crime. The most significant economic causes of the spread of this crime are: poverty, economic crises, low incomes among individuals and nations, high unemployment rates, and the prevalence of economic exploitation of one nation by another.

Fourth: Legal and administrative causes of organised crime:

Contemporary administrative systems in many countries suffer, on the whole, from the problem of administrative corruption, with the majority of Arab states ranking highly globally in this regard. It can be said that the administrative sphere is fertile ground for the spread of administrative corruption, given the weakness of the legal system, which suffers from legal loopholes and poor enforcement.²

Consequently, the administrative factors leading to the spread of corruption are the very same factors that lead to the spread of organised crime, making the spread of administrative corruption a contributing factor to the spread of this crime.

¹ Salem Sharmat, *op. cit.*, pp. 537, 538.

² Mabrouk Kahi, 'Organised Crime in the Arab Region: Factors of Spread, Forms of Manifestation, and Mechanisms of Combating', *Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2021, p. 640.

Fifth: The digital causes of organised crime:

Scientific, technical and technological development has been the factor that has turned the world into a small, interconnected village, breaking down all old borders and barriers.

This has contributed to the spread of organised crime across many countries, as well as to the emergence of what is known as cybercrime, which may itself take on the characteristics of organised crime.

Sixth: Security-related causes of organised crime:

Many countries around the world suffer from fragility, particularly in their security structures; this has facilitated their infiltration by international criminal organisations, thereby strengthening and contributing to the influence of such organisations.

Security factors and the weakness of national security systems are among the most prominent causes that can lead to the spread of organised crime, as the latter cannot take root in the presence of advanced security systems; and whilst it is impossible to completely eradicate this crime, its increased prevalence is invariably linked to the weakness of the security systems of the states suffering from its spread.

The reasons for the fragility or weakness of the security system are many and varied; these include, by way of example but not limited to, the distinctive geographical location of the Arab regional system at the heart of the Old World, which facilitates organised crime and makes it a major conduit for its activities, thereby exposing these states to international illegal activities¹

The third axis: the effects of organised crime

Organised crime is not confined to within states but extends across borders; it is therefore described as cross-border or transnational crime.

The international nature of this crime has heightened its risks and repercussions, which manifest as economic, social and political consequences at both the local and international levels. The World Ministerial Conference on Transnational Organised Crime, held in 1994 in Naples, Italy, highlighted the comprehensive threat posed by transnational organised crime, as this crime poses a direct threat to security and stability at both local and international levels, given its remarkable ability to cross and transcend national borders by exploiting advanced technology, the growth of global trade, and the emergence of major markets within the

¹ Mabrouk Kahi, op. cit., p. 640.

international economic system. Furthermore, the global communications revolution has enabled organised crime to move and operate across international borders with ease¹

The threat of transnational organised crime is no longer confined to a limited number of countries; rather, it has become a threat to humanity as a whole. The comprehensiveness and extent of this threat are reflected in the multitude and diversity of its manifestations and its impact on economic, social and political aspects of life.

The following are the most significant effects of organised crime:

Firstly: The political implications of organised crime:

Organised crime syndicates infiltrate political parties and leadership positions within administrative structures and government bodies in order to exert control through them. This makes the threat of organised crime all the more serious when it reaches the elites within a state's political parties, due to the far-reaching and profound negative consequences that result. In many countries, organised crime groups resort to funding the election campaigns of politicians loyal to them or of politicians who subsequently become their supporters.

Organised crime groups do not hesitate to attempt to infiltrate the highest echelons of political leadership to ensure the facilitation and execution of their criminal activities, and these groups use money as the primary means to achieve this (such as the case of organised crime groups involved in drug trafficking providing the Colombian president with approximately six million dollars to fund his election campaign in 1994). The scope of organised crime and its influence on politicians has expanded, particularly in Latin American countries and Italy²

Organised crime fuels the ongoing unrest and armed conflicts occurring within certain countries through its criminal activities, notably the illicit trade in arms, as well as its desire to prolong conflict and security instability in order to carry out other criminal activities such as trafficking in women and children and drug smuggling. This makes it difficult for the political authorities in these states to maintain public order and control their internal situations

The collapse of political stability in countries where criminal gang activity is on the rise leads to a loss of public confidence in their leaders and a reluctance to participate in politics,

¹ Al-Tayeb Belouad, Organised Crime: Impacts and Ways of Combating It, Al-Ijtihad Journal of Legal and Economic Studies, Issue 4, Tamenghast University Centre, 2013, p. 62.

² Al-Tayyib Belouad, op. cit., p. 68.

as well as a breakdown in harmony between social groups and between these groups and the political bodies within them. The result is a weakening of the state's public institutions¹

Secondly: The economic consequences of organised crime

The generation of financial returns (profit and money-making) from criminal activities is the primary objective of organised crime groups; through this objective, one can understand the scale of the danger and the impact of organised crime on economic life in general. Organised crime, in its new form, represents a method of controlling international trade and subjecting it to illegal practices, to the extent that suspicious transactions between organised crime syndicates now constitute a significant proportion of total international trade. Organised crime therefore undermines economic development through its diverse criminal activities aimed at generating or maintaining financial profits.²

Money laundering is considered one of the organised crimes with the most significant negative impacts on both the local and international economies. Money laundering acts as the conduit through which the proceeds of organised crime and illicit activities flow, enabling these funds to be converted into a legitimate source or activity that can be used to continue criminal activities without risk of confiscation.

Among the most significant economic consequences of organised crime are those resulting from money laundering, as money laundering is one of the most prominent forms of organised crime. Below, we shall attempt to address the most significant risks or consequences of this form of organised crime, for example, as follows:³

- **Damage to banks:** The use of banks for money laundering causes severe damage to banks, including:

* Sudden withdrawals of funds, which cause disruption and a shortfall in the bank's available cash

* Corruption within the banking system as a result of bribing some of its senior staff to ensure the instructions of money launderers are carried out

* Damage to the bank's reputation and a loss of trust in it, as the principle of trust in banks is based on the integrity of the funds they manage

¹ Salem Sharmat, op. cit., p. 543.

² Al-Tayyib Belouad, op. cit., p. 63.

³ Salem Sharmat, op. cit., pp. 543, 544.

* Undermining confidence in the banking staff working in banks as a result of the bank's poor reputation

* Money laundering through the bank could lead to its complete collapse

- **Deterioration in the value of the national currency:** As money laundering relies on foreign currency due to its ease of movement from one country to another, demand for foreign currency increases, leading to its misuse. This results in a depreciation of the national currency, a balance of payments deficit and a foreign exchange liquidity crisis, thereby threatening the state's foreign currency reserves held at the central bank

Consequently, the most significant economic consequences of money laundering, as a form of organised crime, are reflected in:¹

* The country from which the dirty money generated by organised crime is transferred is deprived of the opportunity to use it for development

* Crimes involving the theft of credit card details for fraudulent use, as well as the trafficking and smuggling of counterfeit goods, which cause significant financial losses to legitimate businesses through the decline in sales of their genuine products

Thirdly: The social consequences of organised crime:

Crime in general has negative social consequences for the individual and society; however, transnational organised crime has broader and more far-reaching effects on society, as the proliferation of organised crime and its various activities leads to the creation of social class conflicts through the divisions and gaps it causes between those classes. The rapid accumulation of wealth and the dominance exercised by those who profit from organised crime, such as drug and arms trafficking and money laundering, lead others seeking a decent livelihood and stability to lose faith in the social system and the values and traditions that should be upheld. This may drive many of them to resign themselves to their circumstances and join criminal organisations²

In some countries, smuggling gangs have established centres of power by controlling areas used for the cultivation and processing of drugs, rendering them inaccessible to government forces, and have recruited young people and even children into activities involving the smuggling and trafficking of weapons, This has prompted the Algerian legislature to

¹ Al-Tayyib Belouad, op. cit., p. 65.

² Khalid bin Mubarak al-Qurawi al-Qahtani, op. cit., pp. 110, 111.

combat the phenomenon of smuggling by enacting the Anti-Smuggling Law 05/06 of 23 August 2005, as amended and supplemented by Decree 06/09 of 16 July 2006.

Furthermore, the proliferation and availability of weapons through illegal channels fuels violent crime, armed robbery and feuds within society. The same applies to the trafficking of women and children, as this activity spreads vice and moral corruption, resulting in weak generations incapable of preserving the nation's achievements and unable to contribute to their society scientifically or practically¹

Furthermore, the corruption of certain weak-willed public officials and police officers by organised crime gangs undermines the values of justice and fairness, leading to the spread of injustice and tyranny, which in turn destroys the fabric of values and morals in society

In the field of organised crime targeting online pornography, the grave consequences for members of society are particularly evident, given its pervasiveness and the ease of exposure to it, leading to social decay, a decline in values, and a rush towards forbidden sexual practices with adverse consequences for both the individual and society

As a result of the widespread frustration among sections of society, particularly among young people, the world has witnessed the phenomenon of illegal migration, and this criminal activity has escalated as a form of organised crime from the Global South to the Global North. Algeria has recently suffered from the phenomenon of illegal migration, or 'harraga', which has drained the resources of society. The Algerian legislature has criminalised illegal migration under Article 175 bis 1 of the Penal Code²

. More generally, since 2005, there has been an international consensus on the need to highlight the negative effects of transnational organised crime on development, peace, security and human rights, and on the achievement of sustainable development, particularly with regard to health, the environment and governance³

Conclusion:

In conclusion to this study, it is clear that the relationship between security and organised crime is complex and intertwined, as organised crime arises as a result of multiple factors, foremost

¹ Al-Tayyib Balouad, op. cit., p. 67.

² Al-Tayyib Balouad, op. cit., p. 67.

³ Salem Sharmat, op. cit., p. 544.

among which are poverty, unemployment and a weak moral compass, alongside the shortcomings of certain security and legal systems.

This crime has had serious consequences that undermine the stability of societies, hinder the progress of development, and threaten the security of both individuals and states alike. Hence the importance of strengthening comprehensive security, intensifying preventive efforts, developing legislation, and fostering community awareness in order to combat organised crime, mitigate its risks, and build a society characterised by stability, justice and safety

We therefore conclude our study with a number of recommendations, the most important of which are summarised below:

- **Strengthening the role of security agencies** by training personnel and equipping them with modern technology to effectively pursue criminal networks.

- **Developing laws and legislation** and imposing harsher penalties for organised gang crimes to ensure deterrence and limit their spread.

- **Combating poverty and unemployment** by providing job opportunities and supporting youth projects, as difficult economic conditions are among the main causes of crime.

- **Raising public awareness** through the media and educational institutions about the dangers of organised crime and its negative effects on individuals and society.

- **Strengthening international cooperation** between countries to exchange information and expertise, particularly as organised crime often transcends national borders.

- **Supporting the role of the family and schools** in instilling moral values, respect for the law, and the rejection of violence and crime in individuals.

These proposals contribute to building an integrated security system capable of combating organised crime and protecting social stability

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