HSx: CONVERGENCE OF TERRORISM & TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

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Argonne
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June 2017

CONTEXT: DEFINITIONS AND ORGANIZATION

- *Terrorism* is defined as "the unlawful use of—or threatened use of—force or violence against individuals or property to coerce or intimidate governments or societies, often to achieve political, religious, or ideological objectives."
  - This includes terrorist organizations, homegrown extremists, and like-minded (politically, ideologically driven) insurgents or guerrillas.

- *Transnational organized crime* groups are defined as "self-perpetuating associations of individuals who operate, wholly or in part, by illegal means and irrespective of geography."
  - Unlike terrorist groups, these groups are driven by economic motivation.
  - Examples of criminal activities are drug trafficking, human trafficking, money laundering, firearms trafficking, extortion, counterfeit goods, and cyber crime.

- These groups often adopt similar methods, but they may or may not share motivation. Crime is economically driven, while terrorism is fueled by ideological and political beliefs.

CONTEXT: BACKGROUND

- Over the past 25 years, terrorist and criminal organizations have developed successful working relationships, leveraging the expertise/skills of the other group.

- Terrorist groups and transnational criminal networks share many of the same characteristics, methods, and tactics.

- There has been an intersection of terrorist groups and criminal networks, which has led to an increased threat of this cooperation and convergence.
  - This intersection can be grouped into three categories:
    1. Coexistence: the groups operate in the same geographic region at the same time
    2. Cooperation: the groups find their mutual interests are both served by temporarily working together
    3. Convergence: the groups are likely to to engage in behaviors that are more commonly associated with the other

- Examining organizations' structures and nature of operations, researchers find that organized crime and terrorism are "bleeding" into one another.

CONTEXT: ORGANIZATIONAL AND OPERATIONAL CONVERGENCE

- There are many similarities and points of interaction between terrorist groups and criminal organizations. Both groups tend to:
    - Operate as rational actors.
    - Use extreme violence.
    - Use kidnappings, assassinations, and extortion.
    - Operate secretly.
    - Defy the state and the rule of law (except when there is state sponsorship).
    - Use fatal measures when a member leaves.
    - Present an asymmetrical threat to the nation-states they oppose and attempt to undermine.
    - Have "interchangeable" recruitment pools.
    - Be highly adaptable, innovative, and resilient.
    - Have back-up leaders and foot soldiers.
    - Have provided social services, though this is much more frequently seen with terrorist groups.

CONTEXT: FACTORS AND DRIVERS

- Research suggests there are four identifiable factors which have had a notable impact on the success of terrorist groups and organized criminal networks:
    1. Border porosity
    2. Population transfers (e.g., freedom of movement, migration)
    3. Financial and commercial developments (e.g., globalization)
    4. Communications technology

- There are also many drivers and enablers of transnational cooperation between terrorist groups and organized criminal networks including:
    - Corruption
    - A lack of democratic participation in a country
    - Chronic state failures
    - Crises in political systems
    - Deteriorating socioeconomic conditions
    - Civil and regional conflicts
    - Increased media attention

THE CASE OF AL QAEDA OPERATIONS IN EUROPE FROM 2000-2010

- Between 2000 and 2010, Al Qaeda had operations in Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia, France, FRY, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey, and the United Kingdom

- The group's operational success hinged on relationships with organized crime networks in Europe.

- Specific examples of cooperation were:
  - Commodity smuggling (diamonds): Al Qaeda depended on criminal groups for the provision of arms
  - Affiliated and independent cells commonly engaged in petty crime and credit card fraud
  - Drug trade.

- Recent terrorist attacks in Europe (such as *Charlie Hebdo*) used weapons from the Balkan region, specifically Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia.

- Al Qaeda likely had connections to Balkan-based criminal groups and Italian organized crime groups Camorra and Ndrangheta

Economist.com

THE HEZBOLLAH-SOUTH AMERICA NEXUS

- There is a nexus between Latin American organized crime and global terrorism.

- In 2016, a U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) sting uncovered a money laundering ring, which linked two unlikely organizations: Lebanese militants Hezbollah and Colombian drug traffickers.
  - Hezbollah associates were laundering money through Miami-based accounts. Following this investigation, U.S. authorities charged three alleged associates of Hezbollah with laundering money for Colombian drug cartels.
  - Officials also discovered other Hezbollah associates were seeking to purchase cocaine, weapons, and ammunition from a narcotics trafficker.

- The Hezbollah-South America connection is not a recent development.
  - In 2011, a Lebanese man was charged for selling cocaine to the Zetas cartel and laundering money for the group, and then using the profits of those laundering activities to finance Hezbollah.
  - In 2014, Brazilian police accused a prison gang in the country of providing protection for Lebanese inmates in exchange for Hezbollah providing the gang access to the international arms markets.

THE CASE OF DAWOOD IBRAHIM: GLOBAL TERRORIST AND CRIMINAL

- Dawood Ibrahim is the most wanted man in India and is on Interpol's wanted list for cheating, criminal conspiracy, and running an organized crime syndicate.

- As the leader of D-Company, an organized crime group, Ibrahim has been responsible for crimes ranging from narcotics trafficking to contract killing.
  - The group works mostly in Pakistan, India, and the United Arab Emirates.
  - He is suspected of having organized and financed the 1993 Bombay bombings, which resulted in 257 fatalities and 713 individuals injured.

- Ibrahim shares smuggling routes and collaborates with al Qaeda, according to the U.S. Government.
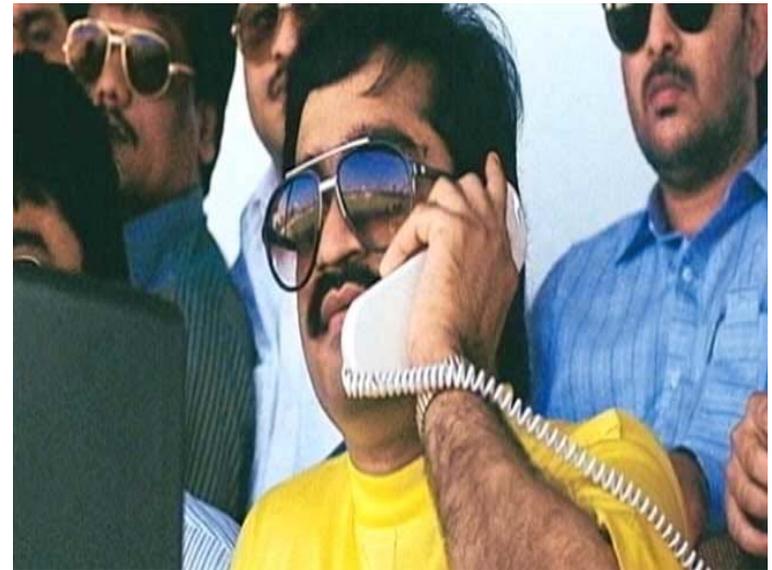
File photo of Dawood Ibrahim

Image source: NDTV. http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/dont-have-dawood-ibrahims-address-but-know-he-is-in-pakistan-minister-haribhai-chaudhary-760929

POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM AND CRIME CONVERGENCE

- Political instability is a driver resulting in the increased convergence/cooperation of terrorist and criminal organizations.
  - Illicit transnational networks pose a threat to political stability, capitalizing on it where it already exists.

- Democratic participation, or lack thereof, plays a significant role in the success of terrorist and criminal groups and their potential for convergence.
  - The absence of a democratic process, which encompasses a system in which citizens feel a lack of trust in their ability to legitimately and fairly select leadership, increases the likelihood of a group's ability to influence a region.

- Increase in disenfranchised members of society increases the recruitment pool for both organized crime and terrorist groups and increases the potential for influence and coordination.
  - Unemployment/underemployment, resource scarcity, demographic shifts, and migration all could increase the desire for the two types of groups to work together.

TECHNOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM AND CRIME CONVERGENCE

- Technological advancements and globalization have allowed for simple, somewhat informal cooperation.
  - These advancements allow for terrorist and organized crime groups to communicate without detection (using encrypted messaging), sharing methods and increasing potential convergence.

- Terrorist groups use social media to share its mission and grow its base, regionally and internationally. Their online presence increases the chances that a criminal organization might find common ground and begin cooperating on methods and targets.

- Increased cyber capabilities provide new revenue sources, and terrorist organizations might look to cooperate and align with organized crime groups already using cybercrime.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM AND CRIME CONVERGENCE

- Combatting terrorism and organized crime today presents many legal challenges domestically and internationally.
  - As these organizations increasingly cooperate and converge, it becomes more difficult to determine which legal means to prosecute (e.g., which jurisdiction is responsible when transnational activities, require cooperation between law enforcement and intelligence agencies).

- Typical criminal law enforcement is not sufficient when dealing with transnational terrorism. If organized crime groups converge and cooperate with terrorist organizations, it could become more challenging for traditional law enforcement to prevent their actions and enforce the law.

- There is the potential within failed/failing states for a organized crime/terrorist network to operate free from legal prosecution, especially if they control resources and are working alongside a corrupt government.

EFFORTS TO COMBAT THE THREAT

- Efforts to combat the evolving threat have increased both domestically and internationally.

- At a high level, states' efforts include increased cross-border cooperation between policing and intelligence agencies and intervention in the form of international aid and financial and law enforcement support to government.

- On 25 July 2011, the Obama administration released a strategy document to combat organized crime.
  - The strategy outlines priority actions including enhanced intelligence and information sharing, protecting the financial systems and markets against transnational organized crime, strengthening investigations and prosecutions, disrupting drug trafficking, and building international capacity/cooperation.

- A specific example of U.S. government efforts includes the attempt to disrupt networks through targeting critical non-state political actors – "global guerilla" or "super fixer" – who facilitate global connectivity among networks.

RESOURCES

The following resources provide further information on this topic:

- Alda, Erik, and Joseph Sala. "Links Between Terrorism, Organized Crime and Crime: The Case of the Sahel Region." *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 3, no. 1 (2014).

- Brown, Katherine E. "Transnational Terrorism." E-International Relations. January 19, 2017. http://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/19/transnational-terrorism/.

- "Europe's Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between terrorist and organised crime groups in the European Union." European Parliament. 2012. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201211/20121127ATT56707/20121127ATT56707EN.pdf.

- Makarenko, Tamara. "Transnational crime and its evolving links to terrorism and instability." *Janes Intelligence Review* 13, no. 11 (2001): 22-24.

- Gachúz, Juan Carlos . "Globalization and Organized Crime: Challenges for International Cooperation." *Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy*, July 06, 2016. http://www.bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/37efaacf/BI-Brief-070616-MEX_Globalization.pdf.

- Hesterman, Jennifer L. "Transnational Crime and the Criminal-terrorist Nexus: Synergies and Corporate Trends." (2005).

- Miklaucic, Michael, Jacqueline Brewer, and James Stavridis. *Convergence: illicit networks and national security in the age of globalization*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2013. http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/convergence.pdf

Additional research materials and information sources regarding this topic can be found in the associated Literary & Scholastic Resource List.

Literary and Scholastic Resources – Convergence of Terrorism & Transnational Criminal Organizations

Date of information: April 2017

Overview: While not exhaustive, the following resources provide a roadmap to understanding the intersection of terrorist groups and criminal networks. Providing a high-level overview of the evolution of cooperation, the resources also detail drivers and enablers of cooperation. These resources provide a baseline of understanding, but as the strategic environment continues to evolve, new data will become available and resource lists will require updates.

Module Resource Lists to Cross-Reference: Regional Powers Attaining Global Influence, Managing Global Issues as Actors Multiply, Middle East Instability, Increasing Ideological Polarization

Organizations:

- Council on Foreign Relations: The Council on Foreign Relations frequently publishes reports related to criminal networks, transnational crime, and the intersection of terrorist groups and criminal networks. See its main page: http://www.cfr.org/

- E-International Relations: E-International Relations is the world's leading open access website for students and scholars of international politics. Its articles provide interesting ideas, debates, and policy issues in international politics and often highlight this topic. Articles can be found at: http://www.e-ir.info/

- George Mason University, Terrorism, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC): The first center in the United States devoted to understanding the links among terrorism, transnational crime and corruption, and to teach, research, train and help formulate policy in this area, TraCCC provides information and academic articles on corruption, crime-terror nexus, transnational organized crime, and terrorism. http://traccc.gmu.edu/

- RAND Corporation, Crime and Terrorism: The RAND Corporation routinely publishes reports on both transnational crime and terrorism, and in many cases their intersection. Information and links to publications by topic area can be found at:

    - Crime: http://www.rand.org/topics/crime.html
    - Counternetwork: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1481.html
    - Terrorism: https://www.rand.org/topics/terrorism.html

Recent Publications and Journal Articles:

- Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization: Published for the Center for Complex Operations (CCO) Institute for National Strategic Studies by the National Defense University Press, this book delves into multifaceted transnational crime and illicit networks. It includes chapters authored by many senior experts both within and outside the U.S. Government, and it covers the environment in which terrorist and organized criminal groups are able to operate and cooperate, the methods utilized, the impact of coordination on counties' stability, and how states can and should work against these groups and their combined efforts.
  - *Citation:* Miklaucic, Michael and Jacqueline Brewer, eds. *Convergence: Illicit Networks and National Security in the Age of Globalization*. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2013. http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/Books/convergence.pdf

- Links Between Terrorism, Organized Crime and Crime: The Case of the Sahel Region: This article proposes that the increased interaction between organized criminal organizations and terrorist organizations falls into three categories: coexistence, where they occupy the same geographic space by coincidence; cooperation, where the organizations decide to at least temporarily work together to serve their mutual aims; and convergence, where the organizations begin to use methods that are more commonly used by the other (i.e., terrorist organizations begin selling drugs to fundraise).
  - *Citation:* Alda, Erik, and Joseph Sala. "Links Between Terrorism, Organized Crime and Crime: The Case of the Sahel Region." *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 3, no. 1 (2014). http://doi.org/10.5334/sta.ea

- Transnational Terrorism: This chapter from the International Relations e-textbook discusses transnational terrorism and the methods, motivations, and structures that increasingly make terrorist organizations transnational. The chapter lays out the connections between transnational terrorism and organized crime as being the methods of fundraising and acquiring equipment. The author states that criminal groups will provide terrorist organizations with whatever materiel support they need as long as they have the funds, and terrorist organizations will allow criminal activities to take place within their area of control when it serves their interests.
  - *Citation:* Brown, Katherine E. "Transnational Terrorism." E-International Relations. January 19, 2017. http://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/19/transnational-terrorism/

- Transnational terror and organized crime; blurring the lines: This article highlights the similarities between terrorist organizations and organized criminal groups' organizational and operational characteristics. It lists global political pressure, globalization, increased speed of travel and communication, increased access to information, and growth of weak and failing states as elements that enable or encourage terrorist organizations to utilize criminal activity as a revenue source or to work with organized crime groups. The ease of obtaining light arms also enables the convergence between the two types of groups as the light arms can be used as a fundraising means or operationally. The article also noted that cultural, operational, and practical differences do exist that block the two types of groups from fully converging. Terrorist organizations often are based on ideological, religious, or political motivations, whereas organized criminal groups' motivation is to make money. The article concludes with a discussion on what is being done to understand and prevent the convergence.
  - *Citation:* Sanderson, Thomas M. "Transnational terror and organized crime: blurring the lines." *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 24, no. 1 (2004): 49-61. http://www.shirleymohr.com/JHU/Sample_Articles_JHUP/SAI_2004_24_1.pdf

Other Resources:

- Europe's Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between terrorist and organized crime groups in the European Union: This study, developed for the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, lays out the links between organized crime and terrorist organizations within the European Union's boundaries. It provides a theoretical framework for the relationship between the two types of organizations, as well as giving several case studies of actual linkages. The report concluded that this coordination between organized crime and terrorism generally existed in areas of instability. Charts provide lists of alliances between organized crime groups and terrorist organizations worldwide.
  - *Citation:* "Europe's Crime-Terror Nexus: Links between terrorist and organized crime groups in the European Union." European Parliament. 2012. http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201211/20121127ATT56707/20121127ATT56707EN.pdf

- Methods and motives: Exploring Links between Transnational Organized Crime & International Terrorism: This report's main argument is that the idea that terrorist organizations and organized crime groups can merge their methods but not their motivations is too restrictive. It asserts that terrorists might adapt criminal activities to meet their needs and that it often leads to stronger connections, but this last assessment was not shared by law enforcement and the Intelligence Community at the time of writing. The process of convergence goes from borrowing each other's activities to working together to sharing goals, becoming a symbiotic relationship.
  - *Citation:* Shelley, Louise I., John T. Picarelli, Allison Irby, Douglas M. Hart, Patricia A. Craig-Hart, Dr. Phil Williams, Steven Simon, Nabi Abdullaev, Bartosz Stanislawski, and Laura Covill. "Methods and motives: Exploring Links between Transnational Organized Crime & International Terrorism." Report funded by the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice, June 23, 2005. https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/211207.pdf

- Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime: A document released by the Obama administration on 25 July 2011, the document outlines priority actions including enhanced intelligence and information sharing, protecting the financial systems and markets against transnational organized crime, strengthening investigations and prosecutions, disrupting drug trafficking, and building international capacity/cooperation to disrupt transnational organized crime.
  - *Citation:* "Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime." July 2011. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/Strategy_to_Combat_Transnational_Organized_Crime_July_2011.pdf