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TERRORISM AND ORGANISED CRIME NETWORKS – DIFFERENT OR SIMILAR?

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the examination of similarities and differences in the functioning and structures, applied measures of transnational organized crime and terrorist groups. The main point of view is the thesis that after the end of the Cold War the possibility of effective cooperation between organized crime and terrorist groups highly increased. Both organized crime and terrorism use similar modes of operation as well as means of achieving goals. Paper expose the primary difference between the activity of terrorists and criminals, which is motivation. Nevertheless both organization realize two different forms of criminal activity.

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International terrorism as well as organized crime are incorporated into category of so called group crime¹. They are both categorized as non-individual violent group, where factor of community has a significant meaning especially in transitional organized crime. As well as organized crime

¹ P. Letizia, *The Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2014.

groups and terrorist structures they use the violence as a strategy communication to threaten the society².

According to Erik Alda and Joseph L. Sala terrorist groups and organized crime transnational networks share similar characteristics like methods and tactics of operating³. As groups that violate the social sense of morality, terrorist groups and organized crime networks broadly use techniques of psychological impact on the environment and societies. Violence is becoming a natural strategy of communication with community. Therefore violence is a tool of achieving specific goals by crime groups and terrorist structures also the ethnic-national one⁴. The only difference is in motivation and modus operandi of these groups. However violence is one part of communication strategy as well as important mean of achieving the will and goals of terrorist and criminal groups and should not be ignored regarding the possible linkages between terrorist groups and organized crime networks.

In addition, both categories in their *modus operandi* often refer to acts of violence and terror to induce atmosphere of fear between members of the societies. We can not rule out the fact that terrorist organization is an organized criminal group and vice versa. This phenomenon can be identified in the South Caucasus. It appears that groups in South Caucasus are significantly important in Eurasian nuclear smuggling networks.

Such significant geopolitical events like the end of Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union led to formation of a new balance of forces in international relations. Due to the fact that bipolar order of the international relations has been eliminated as well as the growing trend of eroding of the idea of nation state it is reasonable to say that this geopolitical, historical events simply favor the emergence of non-state actors in international relations like ISIS and transnational organized crime networks. In the post-Cold War era they are becoming more important as structures counterbalancing the influence of states in international relations⁵. Nevertheless in post-Cold

² F. Bovenkerk, M. Levi, *The Organised Crime Community*, Springer Science, New York 2007.

³ E. Alda, J. L. Sala, *Links Between Terrorism, Organized Crime and Crime: The Case of the Sabel Region*, "Stability: International Journal of Security & Development", 2014, 3(1): 27.

⁴ A. P. Schmid, J. de Graaf, *Violence as communication: insurgent terrorism and the Western news media*, Sage Publishers, London-Beverly Hills 1982.

⁵ M. J. Rochester, *Between Two Epochs: What's Ahead for America, the World, and Global Politics in the Twenty-First Century*, Prentice Hall, New York 2002, p. 17.

War era non-state actors like organized crime groups and terrorist organizations like Boko Haram and Islamic State of Iraq and Levant are significant threat to the stability and predictability of international relations and at the same time they challenge nation-states in XXI century.

Despite all existing similarities and linkages organized crime groups and terrorist organizations are different, especially regarding the issue of motivation, modus operandi and aims. Therefore to fully interpret the dynamics of Post-Cold War era international relations and role of non-state actors it is reasonable to analyze the similarities and differences between transnational organized crime groups network and terrorist organizations.

As stated in many intelligence community documents as well as in media reports there is a growing and noticeable trend of international convergence of organized crime groups and terrorist organizations. They take advantage of their skills and assets of each other. OCGs and terrorist structure, their experiences, modus operandi can be a worthy asset for each other. Current organized crime networks can be characterised as fluid and they benefit from allegiances with terrorist groups, therefore they can be involved in supporting terrorist's activities. According to D'Alfonso during the last 25 years organized crime groups have developed certain type of relationship and due to that they can increase their effectiveness in achieving their goals by using expertise and specializations of each other⁶. However the scale of references and differences between organized crime and terrorist's structures seems to vary depending on region. Sometimes the kind of relationship appears to have many meanings and aspects regarding the specific experiences, financial assets and eventual similarities in motivations.

The main difference between organized crime groups and terrorist organization is character of their motivation. Terrorist groups like ISIS – aspiring state and Al-Qaeda care about the media coverage of terrorist attacks in Western Europe. Publicity seems to be a great tool of creating the psychological atmosphere of fear. There is a great deal of applicable and undeniable truth in Margaret Thatcher's stated in 1985 conviction that "publicity is the oxygen of terrorism" and terrorist do not believe

⁶ S. D'Alfonso, *Why Organised Crime and Terror Groups are converging?*, Retrived May 24, 2017, from <https://securityintelligence.com/why-organized-crime-and-terror-groups-are-converging/>.

in achieving their goals, implementing their will by using democratic means⁷. According to Crenshaw terrorist groups seems to be more resistant to the state structures and western ideologies and values than organized crime groups, and due to that terrorist activity can be motivated by lack of the opportunity for political participation. Moreover, one of the most significant – connected with argument about not participating in political life – motivation of engaging in terrorist activities can also be dissatisfaction⁸. Terrorism can also be identified as an effect of anger and dissatisfaction with economic situation and feeling of being discriminated in majority.

Nevertheless it is broadly known that religion – to be more precise the radical interpretation of Qoran – is the greatest motivation of terrorist groups like Al-Qaada and ISIS, Ash-Shabab is religious imperative, specific ideology which determine the perception of world and other civilizations and cultures. In reference to conception of “holy terrorism” conducted as a form of total war with infidels distinct the terrorist activity from the regular and basic motivation of organized crime groups which is to obtain the economic benefits not achieving the political or ideological goals⁹.

According to David C. Rappaport terrorism is ingrained in some religious traditions like Thugs, Assassins and Zealots-Sicarii. They use the terror as a method of achieving goals regarding the highest utility of assassinations in terms of religious duty¹⁰. Taking into account the U. S. Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism from 2007 ideological motivated terrorist groups are the most serious and immediate threat to the United States of America¹¹. It can be also applicable to other western states and societies. Due to that fact transnational radicalism which is connected with indoctrination of individuals remains also a sig-

⁷ M. Thatcher, *Speech to American Bar Association* (“we must try to find ways to starve the terrorist and the hijacker of the oxygen of publicity on which they depend”). Retrived April 7, 2017, from <http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/106096>.

⁸ M. Crenshaw, *The Causes of Terrorism*, “Comparative Politics”, 13(4), 1981.

⁹ E.T. Hoffman, *The Links between organized crime and terrorism in Eurasian Nuclear Smuggling*, Retrived April 6, 2017, from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/the-links-between-organized-crime-and-terrorism-eurasian-nuclear-smuggling>.

¹⁰ D. C. Rappaport, *Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions*, “The American Political Science Review”, 78(3), 1984.

¹¹ *Country Reports on Terrorism*, U.S. Department of State, 2007.

nificant threat to infrastructure of western world and liberal democracies with global reach, the ideological and religious imperative appears to play a significant role in modeling and shaping the terrorist activity.

To manipulate the common perception terrorist takes advantage of ideology as shield of interests of particular group. The media coverage is in fact transmitting the ideology of global violence. According to Donald Reed it is symptomatic for fifth generation warfare¹². In spite of the fact that terrorist activity is motivated by non-material factors like ideology or religious imperative it can be described as a peculiar politics but operating with other means¹³. Nevertheless ideological motivations influence the most of terrorist groups as well as determine the target selection. Ideology is a great part of process of making decision in many terrorist groups. Ideology, values are the driving force and a main factor of terrorist activity in the Western Europe. Regarding Western Europe as a theatre of terrorism it is obvious that in this particular part of the world many attacks against civilians as well as on critical infrastructure have been carried out. Therefore West and liberal democracy as ideology is depicted as the greatest enemy and threat to Islamic civilization and due to that the ideological West is the main target of terrorist attacks¹⁴.

Organised crime networks as well as terrorist organizations try to accomplish various goals by similar means but their motivational backgrounds are distinguished. While terrorist activity is motivated by ideology factor and political aspirations, the organized crime groups seem to have been driven by an opposite, more material force. Criminal groups are engaging in illegal activity most commonly because of economic reasons and profits. Economical motivation is the crucial one, although some criminal organizations can be influenced by ideology. According to rational choice theory for many criminal groups the most appealing thing in illegal activities is to maximize utility of the choices and interests. Criminal activity often include potential risk or imprisonment, but still is very attractive for certain type of persons. In the course of rational choice theory criminals have free will and due to that they are able to make rational choices as

¹² D.J. Reed, *Beyond The War on Terror: Into the Fifth Generation of War and Conflict*, "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism", 31(8), 2007.

¹³ T. Quiggin, *Terrorism as Politics by Other Means*, Retrived April 7, 2017, from <http://globalbrief.ca/blog/2010/10/13/terrorism-as-politics-by-other-means/>.

¹⁴ J. M.C. Drake, *The Role of the Ideology in Terrorist's Target Selection*, "Terrorism and Political Violence", 10(2), 1998.

well as engaging in criminal activity if needed considering the risk of detection and punishment¹⁵. Moreover another significant distinction between organized crime groups activity and terrorist's motivation is the fact that terrorist incidents can be described as symbolic ones staged to attract international media attention in attempt to influence agendas all over the world by publishing and broadcasting the terrorist attacks. In the perspective of terrorists this symbiotic relation between terrorist organization and media agendas are designed to exploit media infrastructure to gain global attention¹⁶.

Unlike terrorist groups, criminals are keen to avoid media interest. Their aspiration is to cover the illegal activities because media attention can be a great threat to interests pursuing by them. Organised crime frequently refers to gangs, mafia, crime syndicate is defined as underworld. Conducting unlawful activities organized crime groups can be motivated not only by monetary gain but also are willing to engage in or for political gain or acceptance. Similar to the terrorist organization criminal groups seek to develop sense of control, however they use the violence to establish their own power and status. Nevertheless terrorist groups can engage in criminal activity. They might not share the same aims, they might be driven by different motivations but at the same time organized crime groups and terrorist organization but they both are constraint by aims and motivations. According to Stratfor analysis organized crime groups needs to develop peripheral network including politicians, bankers etc., while terrorist groups are motivated mainly by achieving political aims don't need it necessarily to operate effectively¹⁷. Comparing terrorist group activities and illegal actions of crime groups there is another difference distinguishing one from the other. The important thing is finance. In the case of terrorist organization source of financing the operation has no significant meaning. According to Europol Public Information report "Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorists attacks" financing has not undergone any market changes and the sources

¹⁵ M. D. Lyman, G. W. Potter, *Organised Crime*, Prentice Hall, New York 2007.

¹⁶ B. L. Nacos, *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: Mainstream and Digital Media in Terrorism*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Nowy Jork 2016.

¹⁷ Stratfor Analysis, *Dispatch: Organised Crime vs. Terrorism*. Retrived April 8, 2010 from <https://www.stratfor.com/video/dispatch-organized-crime-vs-terrorism>.

of funding the operatives in the European Union remain unknown¹⁸. By the contrast in the activity of criminal groups source of money plays a crucial role. According to study “Europe’s Crime – Terror Nexus: Links between terrorist and organized crime groups in the European Union” contemporary security environment creates the opportunity of establishing linkages between organized crime and terrorism. Moreover as well as organized crime groups and terrorist organization took advantage of post-Cold War dynamic environment which gave them almost unrestricted access to newest technological advancement and world market¹⁹. Organised crime groups and terrorist organizations developing more complex relation which is determined by the environments in which they operate. According to Makarenko the first type of relationship between OCG’s and terrorist organization is alliance. It can be established as long-term or short-term. Due to the alliance paradigm OCG’s cooperation with terrorist group may bring huge benefits for OCG’s. Main advantage of cooperation with terrorist groups for criminals is destabilizing and undermining the law enforcement security services²⁰.

Analyzing possible linkages between OCG’S and terrorist groups the context of post-Cold War environment plays a crucial role. After end of the Cold War widely emerged so called “Narco-Terrorist” who broadly engage in drug trafficking to gain some economical benefits²¹. In reference to rational choice theory OCG’s and terrorist groups are both rational actors and in the terms of ideology they both defy rule of law. Regarding the new kind of wars that emerged after disintegration of bipolar world order they both are significant asymmetrical threat to nation state.

Due to that OCG’s as well as terrorist organizations could be main assets in dynamics of international relations. They can both be supported by the state, so-called weak state which developed after collapse of the Soviet Union. They both defy the rule of law and are beneficial for each other. In reference to connection between organized crime groups they simply are

¹⁸ Europol Public Information, *Changes in modus operandi of Islamic State terrorists attacks*, 2016.

¹⁹ A. Makarenko, *The Crime – Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised Crime and Terrorism*, “Global Crime”, 2004, 6(1).

²⁰ L. Shelley, *Identifying, Counting and Categorising Transnational Organised Crime*, “Transnational Organised Crime”, 1999, 5(1).

²¹ P. Weng, *The Crime – Terror Nexus: Transformation, Alliance, Convergence*, “Asian Social Science”, 2010, 6(6).

engaged in destabilization activities aimed at state institution, law enforcement agencies. Considering the relationship between terrorist groups and organized crime, it is important to keep in mind that they both are rational players. Both organizations are looking to recruit new members, although the organized crime networks appear to be more choosy and cautious with recruiting new members. Nevertheless terrorist organizations and organized crime groups have some strict recruitment pools. In reference to recruitment issue an important document is EU Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment was published in 2005. The document contains of joint measures aimed at preventing terrorist radicalization and recruitment. The strategy is designed to neutralize the activity of ideology that attract people to engaging in terrorist activity and mostly to promote democracy and chances for all regardless of the nationality. Latest EU's Strategy amendment from 2014 took into account the fact that trends, means, patterns of radicalization are evolving and broadening²². All the measures are design to strengthen the resilience against radicalization.

Considering the relationship between organized crime groups and terrorist organization there is another one similarity. OCGs and terrorist structures like ISIS provide the social services and establish their own social systems²³. As long as the relationship between OCGs and terrorist groups appear only at some levels it should be regarded as a serious possibility of tactical and strategic transnational communication.

Organised crime groups as well as terrorist organizations may share some similarities, characteristics and tactics. In the post- Cold War era they are able to establish a strong and beneficial for both of them relationship on transnational level. Despite the differences regarding motivational background they both realize their interests with broad use of violence and extortion, pressure and creation of atmosphere of threat. In reference to new kinds of conflicts and warfare strategies that emerged after collapse of bipolar world order, fluency of state's borders and decreasing role of nation – state OCGs and terrorist organizations should be regarded as

²² Council European Union, *Revise EU's Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism*, Retrived May 8, 2014, from <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9956-2014-INIT/en/pdf>.

²³ T. M. Sanderson, *Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines*, "SAIS Review", 2004, nr 24(1).

a serious threat to stability and predictability of international relation in XXI century.

Possible convergence and cooperation should be taken into account during the process of designing and implementing the state policies designed to neutralize illegal activity of OCGs and terrorist groups as well as their recruitment potential. Cooperation potential is not only a new asymmetric threat to state's security but it is also an indicator of a shift in international relations after the end of Cold War.

OCG's and terrorist organizations having the open access to newest technology advancement, new ways of influencing the international agendas and socio-political stability are more radical and aim-oriented than any other groups using the violence. Dissipation of radicalism and inequality favors the process of emerging radical movements that aspire to be a power force of political or economical change like ISIS. Nevertheless it is important to keep in mind that there is no definite proof that OCGs and terrorist organization intersect at the same level. Crime-Terror nexus that emerged after Cold War and it will depend on aims, motivation and strategies of OCGs and terrorist groups.

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