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Organized crime in Asia: a review of problems and progress

'Organized crime in Asia: a review of problems and progress'

Abstract
This paper provides a preliminary overview of research on organized crime in Asia drawing on selected papers from the symposium held at the National University of Singapore in June 2007. We draw on these contributions to emphasize the enterprise nature of organized crime and the common problems encountered by law enforcement in controlling and preventing the many harms inflicted by serious criminal activity. Recent attempts to address the changing character and forms of transnational organized crime, especially through the strengthening of mutual legal assistance by regional bodies such as ASEAN are noted. These measures have yet to develop into the cross-border institutional frameworks now found in Europe and the level of effective co-operation can only continue to improve. Countering organized crime in Asia also face additional difficulties arising from the cultural diversity, relative weakness of law enforcement in some states and the lack of common strategies in respect to illicit markets.

Introduction
Historically organized crime has generated a mixture of fear, fascination and concern, and this remains no less the case today. In response to the extra-ordinary stimulus of twenty-first century global trade and the rapid development of information communication technology (ICT), criminal enterprises and 'gangs' have evolved in complex and novel ways. The structural forms and *modus operandi* of organized crime, serious criminal networks and syndicates keep changing as they capitalize on the opportunities provided by diverse socio-economic, political and global conditions. Nevertheless, their materialist goals and deadly behaviour remain constant. These changing conditions, especially the cross-border context of criminal enterprises, contribute to the difficulties faced by modern law enforcement agencies in effectively countering the corrosive impact of organized crime.

Despite a plethora of mainly United States (US) studies about organized crime since the 1950s, controversies remain regarding its definition, structure, functions, and how best to control it (Levi 2002). This controversy is reflected in the articles in this special issue and in the very interchangeability of the terms used to describe organized crime. Sensationalism, myths and misinformation created in part by its inherent secrecy have made the investigation of organized crime a topic much abused in the both popular and academic literature. Further, the rapid forces of globalization and their socio-political and economic impact have provided the impetus to reconceptualize our understanding of the dynamics of organized crime not only as a domestic social problem but as a 'transnational' social force and global threat.

In part, this quickening of interest in transnational forms of organized crime has also been connected to the increased concern about the potential interactions with terrorism since 9/11 as well as risks posed by 'failed' states and 'new wars' (Jung 2005). Multi-lateral responses to law enforcement have become increasingly important in order to improve the effectiveness of mutual legal assistance to address both longstanding (e.g. narcotics trafficking) and newer problems (e.g. cybercrime) of cross-border crime. Like the European Union (EU) and Council of Europe (CoE), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN[1]), has sought to co-ordinate the response to non-traditional security concerns such as organized crime. However, it is yet to develop joint institutional mechanisms such as the EU's EUROPOL. There is a also a lack of concrete programs in respect to maritime piracy, illegal drugs and counter-terrorism and pressing competing concerns about other human security issues such as avian influenza (ASEAN

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[1] China, Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, the US and the EU have observer status at ASEAN and indeed ASEAN + 3 (China, Japan, Republic of Korea) has a significant role to play in co-operation against transnational crime. Also notable is the central Asian countries that participate in the Shanghai 5 (now 10) grouping which includes the Russian Federation, China and India.

Secretariat 2006a). However, the growing importance of ASEAN plus three, and the continued and more frequent dialogue on crime are significant improvements and show the overlap between increased trade and cross-border crime. The appointment of police liaison officers to consular posts, 24/7 hotlines for senior designated officers and the sharing of criminal intelligence are no longer novel developments. Kleemans (2008) notes in the introduction to the special issue of the *European Journal of Criminology* (Volume 5) 'Organized Crime, Terrorism and European Criminology', developments in organized crime policy within Europe (with the notable exception of Italy), are relatively recent.

ASEAN and the broader Asia-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) have since the mid-1990s begun to establish multi-lateral measures to improve the law enforcement co-operation of member states. In respect to ASEAN the 1997 and 1998 Manila *Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Transnational Crime*; the 1999 Yangon *Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime* and, the 2004 Vientiane *Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons Particularly Women and Children* provide for dialogue and joint action. In addition ASEAN in 2004 has also entered into co-operative arrangements with China to:

> "…develop practical strategies in accordance with their national laws and regulations to enhance the capacity of each individual country and the region as a whole in dealing with such non-traditional security issues as trafficking in illegal drugs, people smuggling including trafficking in woman and children, sea piracy, terrorism, arms smuggling, money laundering, international economic crime and cybercrime"[2].

These efforts are co-ordinated through the framework of the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) supported by meetings of the relevant senior officials (SOMTC) who are tasked with developing five-year plans and co-ordination with other ASEAN senior officials responsible for "drug matters", and the meetings of ASEANAPOL (Chiefs of National Police) and heads of customs and immigration. Such transnational cooperation and the role of agencies such as Interpol and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime Prevention are important since they help create the necessary climate to bring about a universal jurisdiction for many serious crimes. An important recent example is the United Nations (UN) Transnational Organized Crime Convention adopted in 2000 and ratified in September 2003 by 135 countries including China, Japan and most other Asian countries. Additional protocols addressing human smuggling[3] have also been rapidly adopted, but the protocol dealing with firearms smuggling has

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[2] Article 1 of the "MOU Between the Governments of the Member Countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Cooperation in the Field of Non-Traditional Issues", Bangkok, Thailand, January 10, 2004.
[3] ASEAN has also undertaken to develop a regional convention on trafficking in persons.

been ratified by fewer countries in the region.

According to the UN, international drug trafficking alone is estimated to generate US$500 billion per year, whilst counterfeiting goods reaps some US$60 billion, costing legitimate businesses around US$200 billion. The new growth industry of credit card fraud annually extracts close to US$15 billion from a gross bank volume of US $10 trillion, and reported losses due to maritime fraud are estimated at US$13 billion per annum. Four million human beings, including women and children, are trafficked around the world each year earning crime syndicates US$7 billion per annum, and so the list goes on. The exceptional growth of these phenomena, paradoxically, accompanied the growth of legitimate international businesses, with crime syndicates using many of the mechanisms that allow for increased trade to further their illegitimate aims (Shaw, van Dijk, and Rhomberg, 2003).

Aims and rationale
The articles which appear in this special issue (i.e. Part II and most of those published in 2007 in Part I; Volume 2 [2]) are derived from selected and revised papers from the proceedings[4] of the 'Organized Crime in Asia: Governance and Accountability' symposium held at the National University of Singapore in June 2007[5]. With a focus on Asia, and the Asian diaspora it brought together domain experts and leading international and regional researchers to address current issues in organized crime. The conveners also sought papers that also addressed state-sponsored criminality, political corruption, accountability and governance, transnational policing, international law, and terrorism. Due to constraints of time and treasure the scope of the essays presented in this and the preceding issue are limited: fewer national accounts are presented than desired and some interesting papers did not evolve from conference to publication. What is offered is a tentative reconnoiter – a brief survey of the progress and problems in understanding organized crime in Asia.

The region has perhaps an unjustified notoriety for organized crime because of the long-standing reputation of the *triads* (of Hong Kong) and *boryokudan* or *yakuza* (Japan) which have been the subject of much media attention and romanticism. The geographical proximity of the Golden Triangle and the role of the heroin trade in stimulating the growth of criminal networks have also played a key role; Ko-lin Chin's novel and intriguing discussion of the problems of researching in the

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[4] Broadhurst, R. and N. Ganapathy eds., 2007, *Organised Crime in Asia: Governance and Accountability*, Symposium Proceedings – June 2007, National University of Singapore/Queensland University of Technology, QUT Printing Services, Brisbane (ISBN: 978-1-74107-203-7).
[5] The symposium was jointly funded by the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore and the School of Justice, Queensland University of Technology with the assistance from a number of government and commercial sponsors.

contested Wa 'state' exemplifies this.   However, in the last decade the problem is now underlined by the phenomenal growth of Asia's economies which has had led to new and emerging forms of organized crime with characteristics peculiar to the region. Economically and politically, the region is dynamic and diverse and can be viewed as providing varied examples of social transition - from relative poverty to national wealth, from command to market economies, from conflict to reconstruction and, last but not least, from relative isolation to globalization. The blurring between legitimate market economies and illicit criminal activities offers a wide range of political, social and cultural contexts for the proliferation of organized crime. This special issue is intended to serve as a useful platform to examine existing conceptual models and rethink empirical inquiries in an effort to better understand organized crime in the region which, hitherto, have been predominantly dictated and determined by Anglo-Saxon perspectives. Thus an important motivation for both contributors and readers alike of this special issue is to not only promote intellectual exchange between scholars from 'inside' and 'outside' the region but also to develop regional alternatives, perspectives which are faithful to and arise from empirical investigation into the phenomenon of organized crime in Asia.

Problems of method and evidence
The investigation into the nature, scale and seriousness of organized crime, however, is thwarted by methodological, political and ideological considerations (Cressey 1967; Kleemans 2008; Maltz 1976; Levi 2002). Organized criminal groups operate in conditions of relative secrecy and hostility, and access to reliable informants is rare. In addition, organized criminals often have associations with powerful and respectable social actors in legitimate society which enable criminal groups to shield their illicit activities from law enforcement. Knowledge about organized crime often draws on journalistic sources which may seek to sensationalize and decontextualize the phenomenon and often compromises accurate reporting, and combined with the lack of access to official data collected by government bodies or the selective censorship of such data provide, at best, an incomplete and distorted picture of organized crime (Cressey 1967; Block 1978; Nelli 1976; Schatzberg 1993; Calder 1992; Potter 1994; Salerno and Tompkins 1969). Scholars of organized crime recognize the lack of independent academic research on this topic because of an 'over-reliance' on official sources or the absence of any hard evidence. In addition there can be great difficulties in obtaining approval for meaningful research from university research ethics committees and funding agencies concerned about risk. Due to these access problems many academics have refrained from empirical research and entered into purely normative and ideological discussions, for example about the need to balance the privacy of suspects and the rights of the defence against oppressive policing techniques in order to secure successful investigation and prosecution (Fijnaut and Paoli 2004; Fyfe and Sheptycki 2006).

For want of a credible and first-hand account of organized crime (Reuter 1994: 91) Ko-lin Chin, in the introductory article of this issue, reflects on his experiences of having to improvise an "integrated research method" to study the drug trade in the Golden Triangle. This methodological approach comprised both traditional and "extreme research methods" where the latter "…involved either highly unusual or creative approaches to finding answers to difficult-to-answer questions" (Miller and Tewksbury, 2001: 1). The 'extreme' part of Chin's approach centered on how he gained access to the research setting through clandestine means. The research process, he admits, was frustrating because nothing was predictable, and whatever he took for granted as a researcher in the United States was almost unthinkably difficult in other research locations. Nevertheless, his ability to speak Burmese and his familiarity with Burmese culture, coupled with personal qualities of patience and the social capacity to network were instrumental to gaining an in-depth knowledge of the social organization of the drug trade in the Golden triangle. Chin's study on the drug trade in the Golden Triangle included more than five hundred formal and informal interviews with a diverse group of interviewees conducted with the aid of able local assistants guided also by a standardized questionnaire to collect quantitative data. Chin's approach exemplifies the adoption of a rigorous methodology which could also facilitate research not only on the organisation of the drug trade in other areas such as Afghanistan and Colombia but also organized crime in general.

The problem of methodology and the reliability of official statistics, categorization, recording and their variability across jurisdictions are again highlighted in the article by Mohd Kassim Noor Mohamed but in relation to the phenomenon of kidnapping for ransom in the Asian region. Although kidnapping has long been used as a valuable tool in the organized crime armoury, either to generate financial profits or as a weapon in battles against rival groups (Newman 2002), it is not possible to estimate with any degree of accuracy what percentage could actually be attributed to organized crime. Mohd Kassim Noor Mohamed also notes that the incompatibility between kidnapping statistics produced by the criminal justice agencies and state departments of ASEAN member countries currently renders any meaningful comparison at the state and regional level impossible and makes international cooperation problematic. Typical distinctions between economic and politically motivated kidnappings also may not be helpful (Tzanelli 2006). To address this 'gap' in knowledge, the author proposes the development of a heuristic tool that can be adopted internationally to assist with crime recording and comparative statistical research pertaining to kidnapping for ransom.

Despite regional efforts to standardize crime counting mechanisms, including kidnap for ransom, there exist two important obstacles to harmonization of

statistics (see for example the ASEAN Heads of Statistical Offices Meeting in 2006: ASEAN Secretariat, 2006b). First, the region contains many different legal, linguistic, cultural and religious traditions, and even if a comprehensive crime-recording standard could be devised in the English language, it might not be translatable throughout the region and a different conceptual system might provide a better starting point. Second, in considering the definition of an international crime syndicate, the issue becomes more complicated and begs the question of who should count the offence: (a) the country of origin of the majority of victims or perpetrators; (b) a supranational agency, because the crime is committed in international territory, or (e) according to some other formula taking into account political, ideological and cultural sensitivities. According to Mohd Kassim Noor Mohamed, these problems do not only apply to the crime type of kidnapping for ransom, but also holds important implications for the definition, categorization and counting of other serious crimes committed by transnational organized crime groups in the region.

Comparative Issues
Sheptycki (this issue) begins his analysis of the relationship between Asian organized crime, orientalism and transnationalism by posing a rhetorical question about whether western criminologists are equipped to theorize about Asian organized crime (AOC). This presupposes in part that AOC is different from western or say Italian organized crime rather than merely a geo-political aspect of universal phenomena as suggested by the conveners. He argues that this is an important starting point for any scholar either from 'outside' and 'inside' the region. For Sheptycki the very notion of AOC raises complex questions, and offers a crucial test for positioning criminological theory between the universalism of human rights and the particularism of cultural relativism. The desire to empirically chart the transnational and comparative criminological field ought to be normatively grounded in a concern for human rights and the general commonwealth. Elsewhere, the author has tried to argue that transnational and comparative criminologists should employ a methodology that simultaneously blends a variety of social scientific methods together with a variety of theoretical perspectives in order to achieve reasonably rigorous 'second best' accounts of crime phenomena (Sheptycki 2000, 2005). Yet, paradoxically, under conditions of transnationalization, comparative criminology begins to refract because it becomes extremely difficult for 'national cultures' to remain pristine as if in splendid isolation: the cultural differences that remain are diffuse and finely intermingled and also tend to be spread transnationally. This has resulted in a shift in the criminological agenda as there is no longer the presumed natural affinity between criminological knowledge and the nation-state. In this sense comparative criminology perhaps is better understood as the criminology of the governance of new spaces emerging beyond the state and involving more often non-state actors (see for example Edwards and Hughes 2005). Despite the 'erosion' of comparative

criminology, Sheptycki observes that transnationalization has somewhat extended the criminological horizon with the advent of 'green criminology' which has put crimes against the environment, environmental harm and environmental justice on the agenda. In reference to organized crime in Asia, Sheptycki underlines the importance of considering its political context. Studies of crime and crime control in Asia reveal that organized crime throughout the region thrives in the interstices of power that exist in the 'grey' area between licit and illicit markets where gangsters and state authorities in effect compete over market share in the provision of 'protection' and 'regulation' of illicit economic activity. In the circumstances of 'fragile' states the protection offered by law-enforcement or other agencies over-supplied with violent entrepreneurs creates its own demands and protection may advance to plunder (Mehlum, Moene, and Torvik, 2002)

In a useful example of the difficulties and rewards of a comparative criminological focus, Henry Pontell and Gilbert Geis investigate the phenomenon of economic crime in the US and Japan. Recognizing the problems of conducting transnational research Pontell and Geis chart important benefits arising from such an investigation. They identified three problems: first, the ability of the foreign scholar to truly comprehend the social and linguistic nuances of a different culture in undertaking cross-cultural inquiries; second, in appreciating the relativity of the concept of crime in time and space; and third, in recognizing the disjuncture between law in books and law in (in)action. Fundamentally, they argue that comparative work can be used to unravel differences and similarities in legal culture and ideology, statutory laws, enforcement patterns, legal procedures, court structures, and punishment systems. This sense of sameness and difference is the contexts for understanding crime and law generally and in different societies. In the current research, Pontell and Geis attempt to comprehend the reasons for the strikingly low rate of common crime in Japan as a starting point for inquiry into similarities and distinctions in regard to white-collar crime in the US and Japan. They, echo Miyazawa's assertion that,

> "….with an apparently contradictory combination of tremendous economic development and consistently low crime rate, lower than those in most other developed countries, Japan has become an enigma for criminologists... [and] an ideal testing ground for any approach in comparative criminology" (Miyazawa 1997).

Considered broadly, Pontell and Geis's investigation reveals that Japanese social patterns regarding white-collar crime appear similar in many respects to those found in the United States. Yet, the characteristics and regulation of white-collar and corporate crime have spawned an extensive research literature in the United States while the subject has produced only a slight amount of scholarly work in Japan despite the apparent widespread corruption, financial fraud, and corporate

illegality that have caught the attention of the Japanese media.

Two sets of factors could account for this state of apparent scholarly neglect of 'white collar' crime in Japan. The first is legal. As David Johnson (2003) points out, laws directed at powerful people and organizations are weaker in Japan than in the United States. Laws concerning corporate criminal liability are much more restrictive in the former than in the latter. The major distinction between the laws defining corporate criminal liability in the United States and those in Japan is that Japanese corporations cannot solely be criminally liable except when a member of the firm is convicted for an offense carried out on the company's behalf. As such, the infrequent discovery and criminal labeling of white-collar crime in the U.S. may well be more institutionalized in Japan as witnessed in the weak official law enforcement response to the banking scandals in the 1980s. The second factor is the cultural context in which white-collar crime takes place. Elements of Japanese culture, including timidity in the face of authority have been responsible for the general neglect of white-collar offenses. Here, the Komiya's (1999) concepts of *uchi* and *yoso* which refer to inner and outer personalized worlds might be useful to understand the Japanese toleration of corruption and more lenient treatment of white-collar and corporate criminals. This toleration has not extended to the involvement of *boroyokudan* and new laws in 1992 and in 1999 have created a more hostile environment for yakuza (Hill 2006).

Organized Crime and Gangs

Three articles deal with what has been documented and studied extensively for the last five decades or so as traditional forms of organised crimes, with reference to drug syndicates and criminal gangs. In the first, Vincenzo Ruggiero and Kazim Khan (previous issue) examine the structure and modus operandi of the organisation of drug supply in British South Asian communities (BSA) as the demand for illicit drugs among BSA communities has grown along with concerns around the development of organized forms of criminality within those communities. Based on their extensive review of existing definitions of organized crime, the authors contend that it might be more helpful to conceptualize organized crime as essentially a social organisation, either as a network of relations among individuals who form a culturally homogeneous group, or as a series of transactions among individuals in a common activity, whether or not they are socially and culturally homogeneous. While the study underscored the importance of membership amalgamation through ethnicity, and cultural and geographic proximity, market dynamics may still overshadow the ethnic component. The study revealed an important irony in that while users and small dealers were often engaged in the strenuous affirmation of ethnic identity those above them conducted business in total multi-ethnic harmony. Large importation operations, as the authors noted, are likely to involve multi-ethnic partnerships,

thus correcting the existing (prejudiced) official view that South Asians are in the business of importing drugs leveraging on their mono-ethnic networks. This official recognition has also led the police to increasingly perceive such communities as sources of criminal activity, disorder, and above all as enclaves of dangerous 'Islamization' (Webster, 2004). Police practices inspired by stereotypes and other forms of institutional racism are also reproduced at the transnational level, where certain visible minorities and some specific trafficking routes are unequally targeted through national and transnational law enforcement efforts.

Recognizing the absence of a universally accepted definition of gangs in the literature, Hua-Lun Huang (previous issue), proposed a comprehensive typology based on the defining characteristics of gangs. He notes that in the past four decades, theories of gang activities have suffered from two fundamental weaknesses. First, modern typologies on gangs imply that the boundary between different forms of 'gangs' is clear. For example, based upon the basic features of delinquent subcultures, Cloward and Ohlin (1960) claimed that gangs could be divided into three categories: criminal, conflict, and retreatist. As a result, nearly all of these typologies entail the hypothesis that gangs of a certain type are totally (or almost entirely) different from those of another. Such an argument is dubious because gangs usually differ in the extent/frequency of delinquency involvement, instead of a reified structure. Second, besides mutual exclusion, scholars who have proposed gang typologies tended to use only one factor (such as gang activity, social position, or organizational complexity) to differentiate between gangs. An important example would be Knox's (2000) gang typology where he suggested that gangs can be differentiated by the variable of organizational development alone. Huang objects to such classification typologies and argues that differences between gangs are relative, not absolute. Using different combinations of three factors of political belief, organizational layout, and political connection, a nomenclature for Asian gangs is suggested. Each of these factors can be divided into two different components: salient/inconspicuous ideology for political belief, tiered/egalitarian organizational arrangements for organizational layout, and patron-client /no patron-client relationships for political connection. Asian gangs, as Huang notes, can be conceptually categorized into eight types. These variations can help gang researchers explore questions like why certain gangs, under the interaction (or collective effects) of salient ideology, hierarchical structure, and political support, find it easier to recruit members, control more material resources, and enjoy longer life spans than other gangs. A prospective application of the typology, stripped of some of the so-called origins of the gangs described by Huang, remains to be done.

Internet, 'new crimes' and globalization

Articles by Peter Grabosky (previous issue), and Russell Smith and Raymond

Choo (this issue) shift the focus from traditional organized crimes to the organized criminal exploitation of digital technology. Developments in technology have been responsible for the dramatic transformation of organizational life in the last decade as much as they have also 'created' new organized criminals and new criminal organizations. There seems little doubt that all organizations, legitimate and criminal, will depend increasingly on digital technology for their continued existence. Grabosky, explores the exploitation of digital technology in *furtherance* of organized crime as it becomes increasingly pervasive in altering traditional organizational forms. He identifies three dimensions of cybercrime: computers as the instrument of crime; computers as the target of criminal activity; and computers as incidental to ordinary crime. The various types of cybercrime include electronic piracy, counterfeiting and forgery, credit card fraud, child pornography, money-laundering, terrorist organizations and cyberspace. Grabosky contends that there are at least three ways to distinguish between forms of criminal organizations in cyberspace: first, traditional criminal organizations such as triad societies that use digital technology in furtherance of their traditional practices; second, organizations that have come into existence into cyberspace and whose organizational activities occur almost exclusively in the on-line environment; third, organizations that exist for otherwise legitimate purposes, but which become corrupted; and finally, the more ephemeral organizations that exist only briefly in the virtual world and then disperse.

Raymond Choo and Russell Smith, note that with the ease of accessing and sharing content electronically, the key issue to consider is whether crime follows opportunity, particularly with the criminal exploitation of online auctions, payment systems, gaming, social networking sites and blogs. In addition to the categories of criminal organizations (and their motivations) that operate in cyberspace as identified by Grabosky, Choo and Smith have also identified yet another form of cyber groups which are organized ideologically and politically. Prior to 9-11, terrorism and organized crime were usually considered separate entities because they did not share the same motivating factor (e.g. making a political statement versus profit). However, in recent years, as the authors argue, there has been a noted convergence between terrorism and organized crime where criminal organizations can become ideologically driven overtime and acquire political and religious predispositions. The authors also point out that organized ideologically-motivated cyber groups (including terrorist groups) could, potentially, use online chat rooms and social networking sites such as Friendster, Facebook, MySpace and Jihad-oriented forums, as vehicles to reach an international audience, solicit funding, recruit members and distribute propaganda. It has also been noted in recent months that individuals sympathetic to terrorists' cause are hooking onto the internet to engage in what has been described as 'self-radicalisation'. This newly emerging phenomenon is of concern to the authorities in countries like Singapore.

Mark Findlay commences his analysis with a discussion of terrorism as one of the contemporary forms of organized crime in the context of globalization. While organized crime has had been historically represented as a 'menace' attacking the integrity of the democratic state and its institutions, terrorism has become to be seen more of a threat to global governance and trade. Essential in both globalization and globalized crime is the internalization of capital, the generalization of consumerism, deregulation and the unification of economies. Where states are stronger and legitimate markets more resilient, capital generated through organized crime may support terrorism as it works to undermine state forms which in turn will create unstable market conditions in which organized crime will further flourish. The globalization of crime represents the potential to view many crime relationships unburdened by conventional legal and moral regulation. According to Waters (1995: 57-58), "…spatial barriers have collapsed so that the world is now a single field within which capitalism can operate, and capital flows become more and more sensitive to the relative advantages of particular spatial locations". Yet, in examining the nexus between organized crime, terrorism and globalization, Findlay identifies the problem of finding sufficient persuasive evidence beyond operational 'intelligence' to confirm organized crime as the major source of terrorist funding. This leads to the insight that any commonality between organized crime and terrorism is likely to be confined to the level of enterprise (as distinct from any shared ideologies). The link between crime and terror is often no more than circumstantial, however, terrorist groups may have little restraint in using crime to raise the necessary funds need to support their goals.

In view of the lack of scientific 'evidence' linking the two social phenomena, it is time to stimulate empirical research on organized crime and terrorism both within and beyond the region. Without a sound evidence-based research program the capacity not only to foster more advanced discussions on specific policy measures, but also to expand criminology's empirical and theoretical domain is greatly hampered. As noted by Kleeman (2008), such research has the potential to enrich traditional criminology on issues such as criminal careers, co-offending, ethnicity and crime, and a 'situational' analysis of the various crime phenomena.

Counter-measures

Nicholas Dorn and Michael Levi (this issue) draw on reports from international and regional bodies, and from both academic and operational sources to critically assess the anti-money laundering (AML) and anti-terrorist finance (ATF) policies in Asian and European countries. Their comparative account of organized crime by takes into account the different nuances in Asian and European policy practices regarding illegal timber logging, 'informal' transfers and security, and terrorism.

The focus here is on how differing policy emphases - the Asians on economic and financial issues while the Europeans on political dialogue relating to issues of security and values - may serve as technical barriers to improved international cooperation against money laundering and terrorist financing. It is precisely the problem of emphasis that Margaret Lewis (previous issue) documents in the context of China's response to transnational organized crime. While China's domestic laws are substantially in compliance with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime's (UNTOC) requirements, she notes that its legal reforms since signing the UNTOC are not driven solely by a fear of organized crime, let alone transnational organized crime. There are ample concerns about the reach of organized crime within the PRC and the role of foreign crime syndicates (Xia, 2006). However, China's legislative reforms are better understood in the light of the government's more pressing goal of combating financial crime, both domestic and transnational, whether or not organized. Lewis also stresses that China's engagement with the problem of transnational organized crime is not only motivated by enlightened self-interest but real concerns it has about its internal security and threats from "separatists". However, this is not to say that the aforementioned authors have ignored the nuances of the various types of organized crimes. Rather, they emphasize the need to consider current efforts at the international, institutional, political and economic levels when comparing organized crime in different geographical regions.

Rebecca La Forgia and Marinella Marmo (this issue) take up one crucial aspect of the problem of countering the harsher forms of transnational organized crime – women trafficked or 'traded' for the sex industry. In doing so they bring us back to one of the fundamental reasons that organized crime, criminal enterprise and violent gangs persist: they thrive on the prohibition of pleasure and the attempts by law to promote morality. By exploiting illicit consumers and sex workers the sex industry attracts organized criminals and corrupts officials. A major concern for La Forgia and Marmo is the lack of rights, indeed the re-victimization accorded to Asian and other trafficked women who end up in the 'safe' hands of the law. In one sense the legal system consumes them as moral ambiguous actors in a functionalist drama. In their article they look at the response of a typical destination country for Asian women trafficked for sex – Australia. Here the demand side of the business of selling sex may be one where reasonable safeguards might be expected. Demand itself, in their view, needs to be addressed – with demand reduction there would be less harm. However, the commodification of women as sex objects does not render the business or 'trade" status any less subject to the compulsory 'protection' and violence associated with shady enterprises such as the organized sex industry's incessant demand for new flesh. Perhaps contrary to expectations, the efforts of the Australian authorities in both recognizing the reality for trafficked women and addressing the consequences for them have been weak. These authors touch upon the apparent smugness or

"otherness" accorded to exotic victims of the sex trade by the public as 'voyeur' and they draw little comfort from the apparent window dressing associated with the signing of international agreements to end the worse aspects of these forms of modern slavery.

Conclusion

The articles contained in this special issue deal with a wide range of methodological, conceptual and theoretical issues of organized crime in Asia and in the broader Asia-Pacific region. A crucial problem remains the limited range of empirical research on organized crime. The continued absence of a world class centre in Asia for the study of crime and the lack any serious multi-national support for comparative (or even national) studies drawing upon the many disciplines (e.g. criminology, economics, political science, anthropology) that can shed light on the problems of criminal enterprises is a serious deficiency.

As much as the authors seek to locate organized crime in the social, political, economic and cultural diversities of the region, they also signal a need to stimulate further research on the phenomenon as the region experiences dramatic economic, political and social changes. A large dose of the skeptical and reflective is also necessary when dealing with the complex relationships and political economies that arise from the darker side of capitalism. With the rise of the new economic giants China and India, there is little doubt that the landscape of organized crime will change for the worse. In Asia potentially devastating diversions from traditional security concerns such as avian influenza, HIV infection, climate disasters coupled with continuing high levels of poverty (despite impressive gains by some countries) and environmental degradation can readily occupy hard-pressed agencies. In these circumstances maintaining hard won gains against trafficking (drugs, persons, and arms), economic and environmental crime, money laundering, sea piracy and cybercrime may be easily jeopardized. The implications for the region and beyond could become much graver and readers need not be reminded of the terrible costs that rampant criminal enterprise may impose upon individuals and civil society. It is hoped that this special issue is one step towards the empirical documentation and scholarly engagement with the problems and challenges posed by organized crime in Asia.

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