



**AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES**

Political Economy Approaches for Analyzing Transnational Organized Crime

Countering Transnational Organized Crime Seminar

Dr. Catherine Lena Kelly

Africa Center for Strategic Studies (ACSS)

Niamey, 13 January 2020

Defining Transnational Organized Crime

Organized criminal groups



three or more people

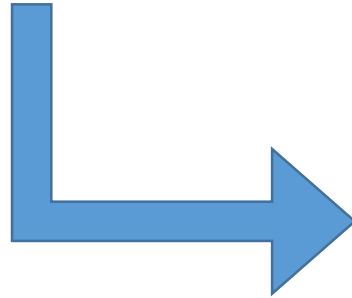
existing for a period of time

Defining Transnational Organized Crime

Organized criminal groups
have specific **intents and purposes**:



three or more people
existing for a period of time



acting in concert with the aim of
committing at least one crime punishable
by four years' incarceration

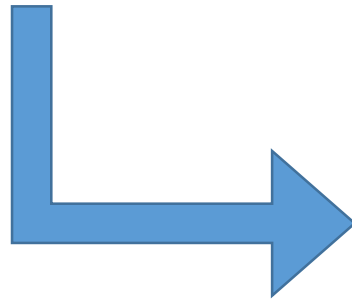
in order to obtain (directly or indirectly)
a financial or other material benefit.

Defining Transnational Organized Crime

Organized criminal groups
have specific **intents and purposes**:



three or more people
existing for a period of time



acting in concert with the aim of
committing at least one crime punishable
by four years' incarceration

in order to obtain (directly or indirectly)
a financial or other material benefit.

Organized crime is
transnational when it is...

planned, prepared, committed, or has significant
consequences in multiple states.

Defining Transnational Organized Crime

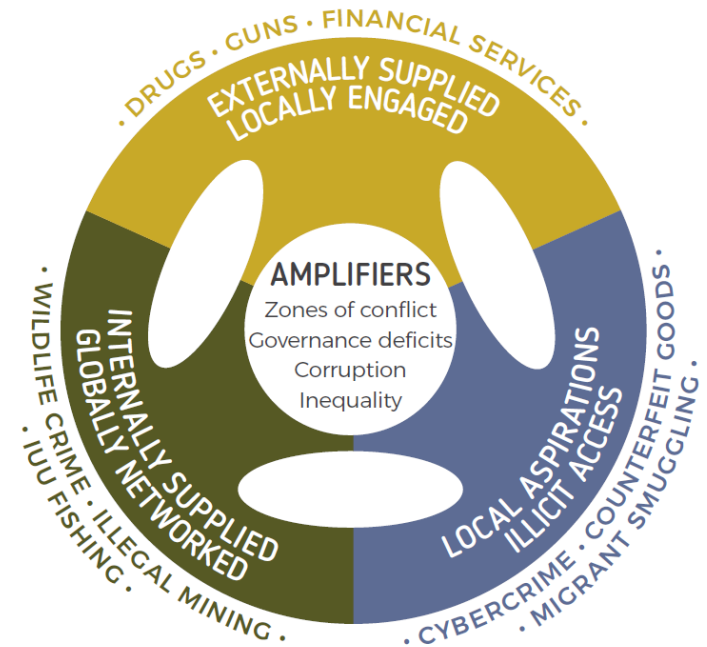
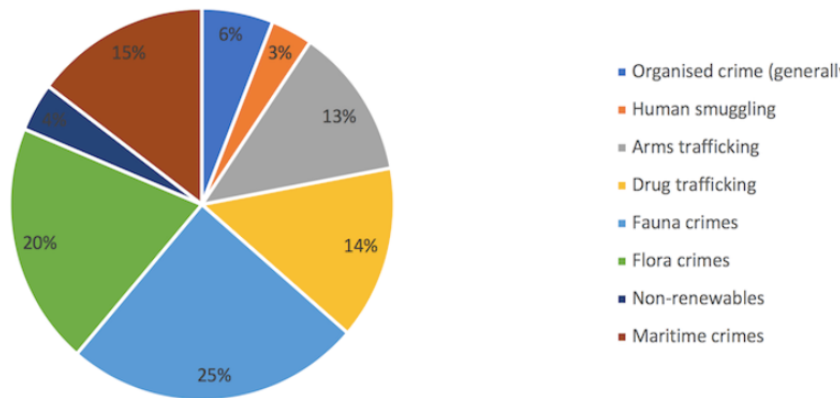
“...a number of illegal activities, often within an illicit economy, conducted by organized groups or networks of people over time and for profit,” often fueled by the use of violence and/or corruption in high levels of government.

Sources: Stephen Ellis & Mark Shaw, “Does Organized Crime Exist in Africa?” *African Affairs*, p. 511; AU/ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development, “Report of the High Level Panel on Illicit Financial Flows from Africa,” p. 43.

Context: Transnational Organized Crime

Forms and methods of transnational organized crime can change over time, and organized criminal groups learn and adapt to new conditions.

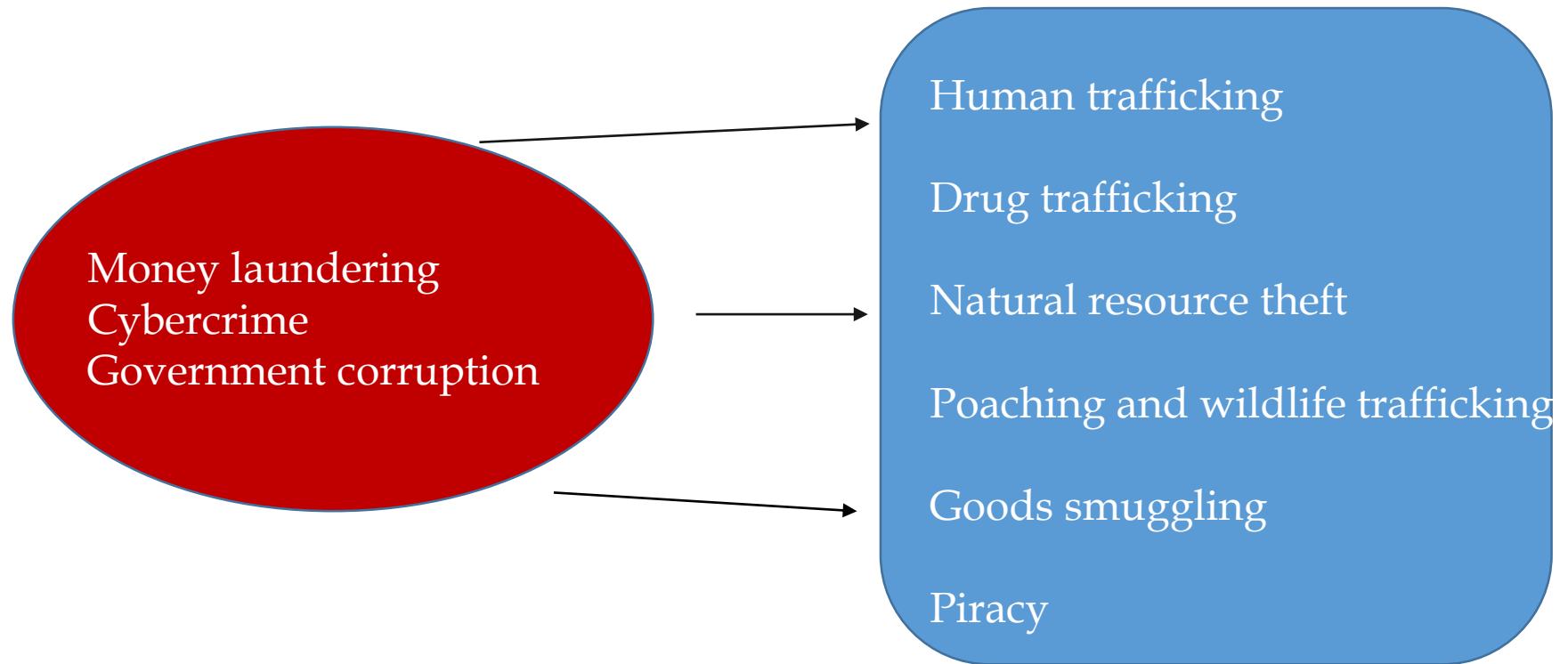
Figure 1: Percentage breakdown of all laws / provisions by criminal market



Sources: [left] “Weak Laws Make Tackling Organized Crime Harder,” ENACT Africa, 2018 ; [right] Mark Shaw, “Africa’s Changing Place in the Global Criminal Economy,” ENACT Continental Report 1, September 2017, Figure 2.

Context: Transnational Organized Crime

Enabling or gateway crimes facilitate transnational organized crime.



A Recent Intensification

- Cold War influx of small arms and light weapons
- Megatrends (digital revolution, urbanization, youth bulge)
- Shifts in international and domestic law enforcement regimes
- Political instability



[Weapons seized from suspected terrorists, high way robbers and poachers are displayed in Garoua, Cameroon, Dec. 15, 2019. \(Moki Edwin Kindzeka/VOA\)](#)

Political Economy Frameworks

Political economy is “the study of rational decisions in the context of political and economic institutions,” which shape people’s incentives to behave in certain ways.

- how formal and informal rules, norms, and practices shape people’s choices

Source for definition: Allan Drazen, *Political Economy in Macroeconomics* (Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 4, citing James Alt & Kenneth Shepsle, eds. *Perspectives on Political Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Political Economy Frameworks

Political economy is “the study of rational decisions in the context of political and economic institutions,” which shape people’s incentives to behave in certain ways.

- how formal and informal rules, norms, and practices shape people’s choices
- how context shapes the incentives and disincentives of state and non-state actors to participate (or not) in transnational organized crime

Source for definition: Allan Drazen, *Political Economy in Macroeconomics* (Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 4, citing James Alt & Kenneth Shepsle, eds. *Perspectives on Political Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Political Economy Frameworks

Political economy is “the study of rational decisions in the context of political and economic institutions,” which shape people’s incentives to behave in certain ways.

- how formal and informal rules, norms, and practices shape people’s choices
- how context shapes the incentives and disincentives of state and non-state actors to participate (or not) in transnational organized crime
- how individual choices shape collective outcomes

Source for definition: Allan Drazen, *Political Economy in Macroeconomics* (Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 4, citing James Alt & Kenneth Shepsle, eds. *Perspectives on Political Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Use #1: Diagnosing Drivers, Patterns, Consequences

Several elements to analyze:

- Types of actors involved in governance (state and non-state; national and local...)
- Resources of these actors (financial and human capital; local and international linkage; coercive and soft power...)
- Laws, policies, norms, perceptions, and processes that shape governance, development, and security in everyday life
- Types of markets available (licit and illicit; local and transnational...)
- Structures of markets for different goods and services



Use #2: Informing State-Led Responses

Several theories of change that political economy frameworks can help us evaluate

Militarized responses:

Military engagement in kinetic operations and/or in the support of law enforcement in “cracking down” on transnational organized crime as a hard power deterrent

Use #2: Informing State-Led Responses

Several theories of change that political economy frameworks can help us evaluate

Militarized responses:

Military engagement in kinetic operations and/or in the support of law enforcement in “cracking down” on transnational organized crime as a hard power deterrent

Development-based responses:

Generation or amplification of “alternative livelihoods” to those that people can gain through transnational organized crime as a soft power deterrent

Use #2: Informing State-Led Responses

Several theories of change that political economy frameworks can help us evaluate

Militarized responses:

Military engagement in kinetic operations and/or in the support of law enforcement in “cracking down” on transnational organized crime as a hard power deterrent

Development-based responses:

Generation or amplification of “alternative livelihoods” to those that people can gain through transnational organized crime as a soft power deterrent

Human rights, rule of law, and governance oriented responses:

State officials’ transparent provision of services and engagement in rights-respecting interactions with residents, citizens, and communities as a way to prevent participation or legitimation of transnational organized crime

For deeper discussion of militarized and developmental responses, as well as human rights consequences, see Tuesday Reitano, “Situating Militarisation as Part of an Integrated Response to Organised Crime,” in *Militarised Responses to Transnational Organised Crime*, ed. Reitano, Lucia Bird Ruiz-Benitez de Lugo & Sasha Jespersen, 2018, Palgrave Macmillan.

Takeaways

- No single definition of transnational organized crime, but several core characteristics of organized criminal groups, including **intents and purposes**.

Takeaways

- No single definition of transnational organized crime, but several core characteristics of organized criminal groups, including **intents and purposes**.
- **Forms and methods** of transnational organized crime can change over time, and organized criminal groups learn and adapt to new conditions.

Takeaways

- No single definition of transnational organized crime, but several core characteristics of organized criminal groups, including **intents and purposes**.
- **Forms and methods** of transnational organized crime can change over time, and organized criminal groups learn and adapt to new conditions.
- **Political economy frameworks** can help practitioners understand drivers/patterns/consequences and develop informed responses.

Takeaways

- No single definition of transnational organized crime, but several core characteristics of organized criminal groups, including **intents and purposes**.
- **Forms and methods** of transnational organized crime can change over time, and organized criminal groups learn and adapt to new conditions.
- **Political economy frameworks** can help practitioners understand drivers/patterns/consequences and develop informed responses.
- Careful **calibration of militarized, development-focused, and human rights-based elements of a state response** are critical.



AFRICA CENTER
FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

www.africacenter.org