

Corruption – A social disease

Part 18

Alliances of organised crime and their impact

Strategic institutions are important targets of organised crime because "central state institutions" are critical for quality, levels of corruption as well as organised crime in the public sector (Buscaglia and Ratliff).

Such institutions include Inland Revenue (tax offices), procurement (tenders and quotations), works and transportation (construction of dams and roads) and national security (intelligence, police and defence). The procurement of armaments, e.g. weapons, with the protection provided by the secrecy of defence tenders and other large capital-intensive projects is a favourite area of lucrative benefits for individuals and groups active in organised crime. The Arms Deal in South Africa, in which both Presidents Zuma and Mbeki were implicated, serves as example.

Organised syndicates form "alliances" to infiltrate and facilitate illegal production, lower operational costs, allow the advantage of local knowledge, as well as to cooperate rather than to compete with one another. Examples of such alliances between transnational syndicates include the Sicilian and Italian mafia (cocaine and heroin), Nigeria and the Japanese yakuza (heroine), the Turkish and Danish mafia, and the Dutch and Turkish mafia.



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Alliances are threats to national security, e.g. social and food security in Kenya, regional security, e.g. human trafficking and asylum seekers from some war and poverty-stricken countries such as Syria to European Union (EU) countries, and international security, e.g. Somalian pirates that threaten industrial and container ships at the horn of Africa. Insurance companies do not want to provide coverage to ships and if they do, it is an add-on cost to products transported in an area with extremely poor people.

'Hollowing out' of states

Alliances challenge the national security of states and can be more destabilising than terrorist groups (Williams) because of their combined economies of scale and influence at the highest political level and international security forums such as Interpol and the United Nations Peace Force. Such alliances undermine the effective functioning of legitimate states and regional federations of states such as the North Atlantic Federation of States (NAFTA) and Latin America Federation of States (LAFTA). Trade in marijuana (a very popular and commonly used drug), heroin (a powerful drug

made of morphine that people can become addicted to and passed on through the DNA of users) and other chemical drugs are part of the huge Central and North American countries' demand for these drugs. South American countries challenged by poverty, produced these drugs, e.g. Columbia, Bolivia and Venezuela.

Increased trade in women and children, partly due to human rights abuses in some developing states, are challenging the national security of states. Human traffickers enter EU member states with relative ease, e.g. via Greece, a country stretched to its limits in terms of law enforcement due to her national debt. Alliances "hollow out" the authority of national and regional federation of states, meaning the morality of leaders and enforcement institutions are compromised.

Weak leaders and weak institutions are prone to syndicates where politicians sometimes take control of such syndicates, for example in Somalia and Eritrea. When politicians control syndicates, citizens do not have protection from abuse by the government of the day and/or any national institution.

• References

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Williams, P. (1994). *Transnational Criminal Organisations and International Security, Survival, 36(1).*