Introduction

Organized crime is a major threat to international peace and security. There are many different types of internationally organized crimes, from drug trafficking and human trafficking all the way to illegal firearms and natural resources trade. These organized crimes have proliferated in the past years because of the lack of government regulations and high market demands. There is a strong demand to reduce such international organized crimes due to the malignant effects they have on international security, economic growth, population health, and many other important conditions.

As of now, many government’s effort to combat organized crime have not been successful. Governments of countries such as Ghana, Colombia, and Kenya have not been able to stifle the growth of crimes. This is because criminal organizations have large influences within such governments. As a result, governments are unable to effectively curb criminal activities. In addition, such governments lack funding to combat criminal organizations, many of which have large source of wealth from their criminal activities. Altogether, international effort is crucial to reduce international organized crimes.

International efforts have been lackluster. While inter-governmental organizations such as European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) have been partially successful in combating crimes such as human trafficking, other efforts have not been as successful. As of now, the United Nations have not yet devoted sufficient resources to combatting internationally organized crimes. While many UN sub-organizations have been newly created, much more work remains to be done to combat international crimes.

Definition of Key Terms

Transnational Organised Crime (TOC)

Transnational organised crime (TOC) is when international groups coordinated across national borders, work in more than one country to systematically plan and execute illegal business ventures. This can include money laundering, human trafficking, and the trade in illicit drugs and firearms. This is a
Illicit Drugs

Illicit drugs are classified as substances that are illegally produced, manufactured, transported and consumed by individuals. This includes cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin. These illicit drugs are generally produced in LEDCs that have loose law enforcement but are sold and consumed mainly in MEDCs.

Money Laundering

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, money laundering is defined as "the method by which criminals disguise the illegal origins of their wealth and protect their asset bases, so as to avoid the suspicion of law enforcement agencies and prevent leaving a trail of incriminating evidence."

Background Information

"Organized crime has globalized and turned into one of the world's foremost economic and armed powers," said Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. This highlights the significance of addressing transnational organised crime (TOC) amongst member states but also allows for the recognition that it encompasses a wide range of areas including human trafficking, illicit drug trafficking, flows of firearms, counterfeit products, endangered species and stolen natural resources. These sorts of organised crimes are not only involving less economically developed countries (LEDC's), but the G8 and countries alike who form the biggest markets for illicit trade. The United Nations (UN) finds that despite the crackdown on TOC groups in recent decades (in particular the Medelin and Cali cartels in Colombia), new groups have emerged that contain diversified portfolios that include drug trafficking, money laundering and cybercrime making them more difficult targets to pinpoint.

However, in the past few decades many member states have neglected this rise in TOC groups. This is highlighted by Terje Rød-Larsen, the President of the International Peace Institute (IPI) highlighting in 2012 that "states and international organizations had largely failed to anticipate the evolution of TOC into a strategic threat to governments, societies, and economies."
Illicit Drug Trafficking

It is estimated that around $426 to $652 billion out of a total transnational organized crime income of $1.6 trillion to $2.2 trillion flowed through the hands of drug trafficking organisations in 2014. This large trade in illicit drugs across the world is further highlighted by the fact that drug money constituted the second largest source for criminal revenue in the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Italy. These organised crime groups not only jeopardise the livelihoods of individuals consuming these drugs, but also disrupt state affairs by engaging in tax evasion, money laundering, and corruption.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a humanitarian issue that has failed to be tackled effectively in recent decades largely due to benign action from the world’s biggest economies. In 2010, there was an estimated 140,000 sexual exploitation associated human trafficking victims in Europe alone, generating a gross annual income of US$3 billion for their exploiters. For example, Eastern European children may be trafficked to Western Europe for the purpose of begging; young girls from Africa could be deceived with promises of modelling jobs only to find themselves trapped in a world of sexual and pornographic exploitation.

The European Union (EU) in 2017 also finds that migrant smuggling has become one of the most profitable and widespread criminal activities for organised crime in the EU. They highlight that the migrant smuggling business developed into a large, profitable and sophisticated criminal market comparable in size to European drug markets. Many children are let go by families such as in Ghana for immediate income to combat their deepening poverty. This prevalent issue is constantly violating the human rights of individuals and needs particular attention.

Firearms

The largest issue with the global firearms trade is that they are produced and traded both licitly and illicitly, making it a large challenge for global governing bodies to identify and trace illegally trafficked firearms. The fact that most firearms are produced legally and then shifted into the illicit market further complicates the situation. These illicit arms are subsequently present in most forms of violent crimes and increase the strength of many organised criminal groups.

New channels for trade are being adopted by these organised crime groups for firearms, in particular the internet and it’s encrypted networks. Whilst utilising these new technologies, criminals also continue using old channels such as parcels. For example, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found police reports suggesting that some organized criminal groups have been using
parcel services to smuggle firearms into countries, by sending their parts and components separately because they are harder to detect.

Furthermore, because firearms are durable goods, its global turnover is limited and it’s trafficking is generally episodic depending upon regions falling into a crisis. This complex nature of the firearms trade makes it easier than ever to wage war, violence and civil conflicts.

**Natural Resources**

Natural resources exploitation by TOC groups have not only economic but environmental repercussions. In the Philippines, of the 1 million troy ounces of gold that was produced in 2011, 90 percent of the gold was smuggled out of the country and into the black market; with customs officials noting that they cannot control this continuous large scale smuggling.

The UNODC also reported that timber from Asia to Europe accounts for criminal revenues of $3.5 billion dollars annually, which contributes to deforestation, loss of habitat and species, an increase in rural poverty, and climate change. Moreover, the global trade in animals parts such as rhino horn, elephant ivory, and tiger parts are estimated to be worth $75 million, whilst oil smuggling leads to an illicit income of approximately $1 billion.

The challenge with combating this exploitation is that many nations do not have sufficient resources or finances to patrol their borders by on land, sea or air. Such exploitation also continues in those nations rampant with corruption and a weak criminal law system.

**Counterfeit Products**

The production and sale of counterfeit goods is a global issue, and is one that has serious economic and health ramifications for governments, businesses and consumers. Counterfeiting is a highly lucrative business, with continued high demand from consumers for cheap and affordable goods; a method of wearing the latest fashion trends.

One of the most compromising and dangerous forms of counterfeit goods is medication. In recent years, there has been a rise in the distribution and purchase of fraudulent medicine, where is it reported sale of fraudulent medicines from Asia to South-East Asia and Africa alone amounts to some $1.6 billion per year. Moreover, the World Health Organisation finds that around 30 per cent medicines in parts of Africa, Latin America and Asia are fraudulent. The most alarming statistic, however, is from the medical journal Lancet, which reported in 2012 that one third of malaria medications in East Asia and Africa were fraudulent.

These is a serious issue, as these medications are found to contain wrong or incorrect doses of ingredients. They have also in some cases been found to contain toxic substances. The medication
found with aforementioned problems include those for purposes of weight loss, sexual dysfunction, depression, blood pressure, heart disease, malaria, and cancer.

**Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

**United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC)**

The United Nations Office on Crime and Drugs (UNODC) is an office of the UN that is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. They provide assistance to member states on TOC, corruption, crime prevention and criminal justice reform, and terrorism prevention.

**World Health Organisation (WHO)**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is a specialised agency within the UN, that works with member states to combat diseases and to improve health standards. This also encompasses looking into counterfeit and substandard medicines that have the potential to harm individuals. The WHO found in 2017 that 1 in 10 drugs sold in developing countries is fake or substandard, leading to tens of thousands of deaths.

**Ghana**

According to the International Organization for Migration, hundreds of children are sold by their parents in Ghana for the need of direct income; a surprise from one of Africa’s most stable nations. This child trafficking crisis can be directly associated with high levels of poverty and unemployment in Ghana. In addition, a lack of law enforcement within Ghana has allowed for criminal organisations to exploit its people; this pulls many further down the poverty cycle.

**Colombia**

In Colombia, cocaine cultivation has skyrocketed in 2018 to levels never seen before. The use of an estimated 179,000 hectares of land for cultivation reflects a 23% increase compared to 2017, when the government implemented two narcotics strategies to halt the illicit industry. This failed attempt by the government is attributed to their fight against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), who dominate many of the coca cultivation sites. This not only leads to increased deforestation within Colombia, but detrimental effects to users in countries such as Australia and the United States which are amongst the largest hotspots for coca purchases.

**Kenya**

goods, wildlife products, humans, firearms, as well as money laundering have increased in Kenya and become more pervasive between 2002 and 2012. It notes that criminal organisations have been able to penetrate political structures within the country, offering bribes as well as receiving impunity from crimes. The lack of a strong criminal justice system as well as strong government makes solving aforementioned issue challenging.

**European Union**

In 2013, Europol reported the presence of at least 3,600 internationally operating Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) in the EU. However in 2017, the European Union’s “Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA)” identified approximately 5,000 international OCGs that were under investigation in the EU. This increase can be attributed to an improvement in intelligence while an increase in criminal activity taking place online. This report also finds that the illicit drugs market remains the largest criminal market in the EU, closely followed by the market for migrant smuggling. This market for migrant smuggling, has led to the exploitation of labour in the EU, with the report also indicating that this is expected to rise with ongoing migrant crisis.

**Afghanistan**

The UNODC in 2017 found in their report “The Drug Problem and Organised Crime, Illicit Financial Flows, Corruption and Terrorism” that up to 85 percent of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is under territory controlled by the Taliban. The Security Council also estimated in 2011 that the overall annual income of the Taliban is at around $400 million, half of which is likely to be derived from the illicit drugs trade. This highlights the threat that the illicit drugs trade sourced from Afghanistan has on developing criminal organisations that undermine peace and security around the world.

**Timeline of Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description of event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 20, 1988</td>
<td>The United Nations Conventions Against Illicit Traffic In Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances was passed and has more than 87 signatories today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 24, 2008</td>
<td>The United Nations General Assembly passed A/RES/63/240 that works towards the eventual creation a treaty that will internationally standardize arms trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 16, 2009</td>
<td>The United Nations General Assembly drafted a report of the working group on an international arms trade treaty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
International Peace Institute’s report found that Kenya’s TOC has increased massively between 2002 and 2012. This shows Kenya’s need for international assistance towards its TOC-combatting effort.

In 2014, drug trafficking organizations earned around $426 to $652 billion out of a total TOC income of $1.6 trillion to $2.2 trillion, demonstrating that drug trafficking plays a major role in TOC.


Migrant smuggling becomes the most profitable and prevalent TOC in the European Union.

The United Nations General Assembly passed A/RE/72/198 that calls for international cooperation in order to counter drug trafficking.

Cocaine production reaches record high in Ghana, showing the spreading and prevalent nature of illicit drug production and the need for greater effort against drugs.

### Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- International cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem, 29 January 2018 *(A/RES/72/198)*
- On the Trafficking of Persons in Conflict Situations, 21 November 2017 *(S/RES/2388)*
- United Nations Conventions Against Illicit Traffic In Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 20 December 1988
- Towards an arms trade treaty: establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, 24 December 2008 *(A/RES/63/240)*

### Previous Attempts to solve the Issue
There have been several past attempts to solve the issue of Organized Crime, which poses as a threat to international security and overall peace. For example, in 2000, the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) was founded. The UNTOC underwent pivotal development from a treaty agreed upon by member states to a formal convention later that year that is recognized by the General Assembly. This convention identified three main areas that are essential when it comes to the subject of mitigating the issue of transnational organized crime. These areas include human trafficking, illicit firearm trafficking, smuggling of migrants, and counterfeit goods.

Each area that is identified by the UNTOC has impacted the implication of the Millennium Development Goals, such as eradicating hunger and extreme poverty and producing gender equality. The reason behind this is that organized crime results in the destabilization of socio-economic factors, and activities such as human trafficking and drug rings can also impact a region’s security and human rights. Particularly, women are impacted severely by this crime, as they are often the victims of rape and trades. It is, therefore, important to recognize the aspects that must be taken into consideration when solving the problem of organized crime as well as the implications that the crimes have on the society, which was what the UNTOC has attempted to accomplish.

Other than the UNTOC itself, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as well as other dedicated committees have also discussed and attempted to alleviate the issue of organized crime. The UNODC, for one, regularly develops new strategies that aim to combat organized crime, including drug trafficking and others aforementioned. The UN addressed the issue through a new updated list of Global Goals; the 16th goal being that in order to end organized crime, countries need to promote peaceful and inclusive societies and protect those who are at risk of sexual violence and exploitation. To make sure that the goals need to be reached at some point, the deadline for these goals has been set to 2030.

Meanwhile, one of the most essential Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) that is committed to eliminating organized crime is the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime, which comprises of a group of specialists who aim to find new ways to combat organized crime, including developing research, identifying aspects of great concern, and increasing global collaboration. The NGO is also hoping to increase the dialogue between countries in order to reach a global strategy.

Nevertheless, due to its extreme spread, organized crime is difficult to combat, on top of the fact that the U.N has not taken immediate actions before the year 2012. Data shows that the framework set out by the Secretary general for combating organized crimes from 2010-2011 was barely supported. The General Assembly only allocated less than one percent of the regular budget of the U.N. to the office of UNODC, which was an indication of negligence on this matter that should have been treated with more attention. As the threats continue, the UNODC has required more sustainable, predictable, and stable
funds that could enable it to conduct more research and devise new solutions. At the same time, it is important to consider other possible solutions beside the existing ones concerning the issue of organized crime.

Possible Solutions

When it comes to the question of combating organized crimes, there are several possible solutions that can be considered by governments. First, it is essential to realize that organized crime targets the regions that have underdeveloped law institutions and rules, extensive corruption, as well as marginalized population groups that are more likely to participate in illicit wrongdoings. In response to this issue, many governments have set concrete goals to define the problem in absolute terms, such as “stopping” illegal drug flows. However, such goals are mostly just perfunctory ones since they are not easily attainable and the issue cannot be solved permanently. It is, consequently, necessary to acknowledge the importance of reducing the violence and corruption around specific organized crimes, such as drug trafficking. Societies that often times experience uncontrolled and continued violence tend to lose the little faith they had in the government, which can lead to a shift in their loyalties to the criminal groups that offer only an iota of safety. Governments that can reduce violence effectively does not rid the country of organized crimes completely, but it does give citizens greater confidence in the present government and encourages the cooperation of citizens with the laws.

Speaking of law enforcement, an effective law enforcement strategy can focus on several aspects. First, the government can prioritize the most violent group or focus its efforts in a specific region and come up with different criteria with varied benefits, costs, and tradeoffs (for example, it is important to recognize the area that needs the most help and direct its efforts there, instead of employing an unfocused approach that attempt to round up all the criminals that would simply be overwhelming). Second, there can be the building up of police force that specifically target the middle section of criminal organizations. This middle layer refers to the lieutenants and possibly lawyers that are of core importance to the operations of the organization. Once the middle layer is being blown harshly and therefore weakened, the criminal group’s operational and functional capacity will be lowered, making it easier for troops and forces to carry out a takeover. Third, governments can prioritize common crimes including kidnapping and theft by developing effective police forces. This effective response, once carried out, to street crimes not only strengthens the bond between the state and the community, but also satisfies a public demand.

On other issues under the umbrella term of “organized crimes”, such as counterfeits and human trafficking, there is a need to build more awareness of the exact scale and alarming implications of the problem. For example, on the issue of counterfeit products, responsibility is shared across a number of fields, including international organizations, public health authorities, and consumer groups. It is pivotal
that people realize the dangers of counterfeit products to one’s health, and in order to emphasize this point more, companies that are known to be involved in illicit trades should be named publically and the laws more strictly enforced. For the issue of human trafficking, countries need to continue implementing protocols that work toward integrating legislations on anti human-trafficking into the law systems, while more effective implementations at the national level and improved cooperation internationally can be carried out.

Bibliography

Organized Crime Module 3 Key Issues: Firearms Trafficking,

Counterfeit Goods – A bargain or a costly mistake?,

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,


Open-ended Working Group towards an Arms Trade Treaty: Establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, 2009,


Serious and Organised Crime Threat Assessment (SOCTA), 2017,


**Appendix or Appendices**

Towards an arms trade treaty: Establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms: [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Arms%20A%20RES%2063%20240.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/Arms%20A%20RES%2063%20240.pdf)

United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic In Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances: [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/DT%20UN%20Conv%20Narc%20Psych%201988.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/DT%20UN%20Conv%20Narc%20Psych%201988.pdf)