

## Book Review

**Edwards, M. and Gill, P. (2006) *Transnational Organised Crime: Perspectives on global security*, London: Routledge.**

Transnational organized crime has many faces – drug and human trafficking, money laundering, terrorism financing, corruption of public officials, etc. There is controversy over the very existence of the transnational organized crime phenomenon. However, at certain times in history this type of criminal activity acquires a lot of attention from politicians and policy-makers as they try to implement a number of more or less theoretically grounded and successful policy solutions. Therefore, identifying proper criminals and victims, correctly assessing the damage caused by this type of crime and selecting a proper response strategy based on knowledge produced by criminologists can be a challenging task. Transnational organized crime has become one of the primary focuses for criminologists and policy-makers on international level at the end of the XX century. Since then a number of volumes have been written about organized crime, but the editors of this particular book managed to collect essays that reflect and provide understanding of the most controversial debates on the origins, definitions, identification, measurement, and evolution of policy responses to transnational organized criminal activities. Initially the papers published in the book were presented at a series of six seminars held in 1999-2001 funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). These seminars were headed ‘Policy Responses to Transnational Organized Crime’ and were aimed at exploring theoretical and practical issues related to transnational organized crime with a view to cultivating a dialogue between academics involved in researching organized crime and policy-makers and producing knowledge relevant to governing security threats.

The origins and historical evolution of the concept of organized crime are explored in the first section of the book. Contributors to this chapter discuss how the notion of organized crime and understanding of the threats related to organized criminal activities first emerged in the US, how transnational organized crime has become a major policy issue in the EU since the middle of 1990s and is being used nowadays by the modern Western political elites as a tool for promoting their visions of political and social order.

There is no doubt that the concept of transnational organized crime is quite controversial and the book shows how disagreement about the essence and definition of it complicates the policy-making process. Transnational organized crime is no longer associated with piracy, smuggling of goods, and fraud – these crimes are left for the ‘weak’ states to deal with. It is often recognized as a prolonged Mafia-type collaboration of individuals of specific ethnic or national

origin whose activities threaten the economy of a otherwise prosperous state and do not allow for the full economic and political integration of those countries that view this integration as their major objective. Organized crime is rarely viewed as an integral part of the society; much more often it is portrayed as an external threat to peaceful and law-abiding institutions. Authors of the first chapters suggest that this concept, although lacking evidence of its adequacy, has not only been successfully exported from the US but became an integral part of the security discourse in Europe. As a consequence the attention of the policy makers has been completely shifted away from recognizing the real causes of organized crime to suggesting various strategies and technologies of control that were grounded in assumptions about the nature, origins and scope of this phenomena. These policies were adopting criminal law enforcement and even military means of control.

But is it possible to measure organized crime and properly quantify its threat? The second part of the book provides several methodological approaches to measuring various types of activities of the groups considered to be representatives of the world of organized crime. These approaches were used in various parts of the world, they differ in scope and goals, but they prove that the widely recognized notion of organized crime and its reality are not at all the same. The UK findings of 1999 despite being limited in some ways show that, contrary to the theory that organized crime groups are composed mainly of the non-native aliens, only 7 percent of the members of the organized groups in the UK had non-European origins. These findings also show that transnational organized crime is not that transnational as it seems – only around 42 per cent of organized groups were known to be active not just in the local markets. In addition to that the findings prove that illicit and licit markets are well connected and are interdependent.

The reader learns that social network analysis can be quite helpful in researching organized crime. It shows the importance of focusing on informal ties between members of organized groups and allows the understanding of these groups as criminal co-operatives rather than organizations with fixed leaders and structures. It also facilitates the analysis the process of recruitment into these cooperatives, and enables understanding of the reasons for their resistance to various law enforcement and intelligence strategies.

One of the possible reasons for such resistance is discussed further in the second chapter of the book. It is argued that law enforcement efforts are capable of raising the costs for organized groups to operate in the market, but high prices make the market even more attractive to criminal entrepreneurs. Therefore, as authors suggest, effective policy measures should be theoretically grounded in opportunity reduction and routine activities theories that could provide ideas on how to use local police agencies and create partnerships for organized crime and disorder reduction. Criminal opportunity framework is also explored in detail in one of sections of the last part of the book.

The third part of the book contains fascinating case studies of the countries responses to the perceived threat from organized crime and shows how different methodological approaches can be utilized to study organized crime. However, except for the case of sex trafficking (that draws attention to the problem of identifying the victims of organized crime), the scope of countries was limited to those of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) that experienced particular challenges

in combating organized crime since the key prerequisites of their accession to the EU were significant improvements in the policing and judicial capacity. These case studies clearly explain how misconceptions about the origins of and effective responses to organized crime as well as externally set agendas influence the policies in CEE countries shifting them away from efficiently responding to local threats of organized crime to promoting measures aimed at transnational crimes such as money laundering, drug trafficking, etc. The case studies show also that there is no hard evidence for the suggestion that organized crime is more prevalent in these countries than in other EU member states. However, in their efforts to respond to the requirements and standards of the EU-designed law enforcement reform CEE countries still had to face a number of serious challenges including lack of financial and managerial resources.

The last part of the book deals with current and prospective responses to transnational organized crime: from traditional law enforcement methods to alternative policy measures. In this chapter authors are attempting to link philosophical foundations of criminal law-making, the study of crime and its origins and the study of its control. Some articles focus on particular types of organized criminal activities and their control – money laundering and terrorism financing; others choose to explore in detail particular types of legal control or specific policy measures. Transnational organized crime is represented as an internal and external security threat that requires cooperation and adequate response from policy makers, legislators, law enforcers, and researchers from different fields. Contributors are also trying to assess the adequacy and success of current policy measures.

The volume is concluded by the final piece written by the editors where they present their own observations on the ideas presented by other authors of the book. They argue that security is not a technical issue, but also political and moral. Therefore, designers of any policy strategies have to bear in mind political consequences of the proposed policy measures. Authors of this chapter believe that ontological disagreement about the essence of transnational organized crime makes it useful to explicate the underlying governmentality of policy responses to it. They distinguish three narratives of transnational organized crime and discuss their implications for prospective policy change.

The book would be of interest to researchers in the fields of criminology, security studies, sociology, law, and political science, and also to policy makers since it raises important questions about the very existence of transnational organized crime and possibility for successful policy interventions. It shows the impossibility of addressing this problem without taking into consideration moral, political, and economic factors. Although several years have passed since the book was first published the questions raised in it are still of current importance and remain relevant for policy debate.

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