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SECURITY MANAGEMENT IN BULGARIA – A NEW MODEL OF GOOD PRACTICES

ABSTRACT

The rise of transnational organized crime poses a significant threat to national security frameworks worldwide. In Bulgaria, the intersection of these challenges with political instability, economic transformations, and technological advancements necessitates a reevaluation of existing security practices. This study proposes a conceptual framework that integrates international standards and localized adaptations to address these challenges effectively. Utilizing a combination of literature review, qualitative analysis, and case studies, this paper identifies the critical gaps in current security policies and presents evidence-based recommendations. The findings emphasize the importance of innovative technologies, stakeholder collaboration, and comprehensive policy reforms to enhance Bulgaria's capacity to combat organized crime.

KEYWORDS: Security management, Organized crime, Policy framework, Bulgaria

JEL: F52, H52

INTRODUCTION

The increasing complexity of transnational organized crime represents one of the most critical challenges to the sovereignty and stability of nations. Bulgaria, as an EU member state, finds itself at the forefront of this global issue due to its geographic position and socio-economic conditions. While the country has adopted several measures to address organized crime, the effectiveness of these initiatives remains under scrutiny.

This paper explores the dimensions of transnational organized crime in Bulgaria and evaluates the adequacy of the existing security frameworks. By analyzing the shortcomings in current practices, this study provides a roadmap for developing a strategic model that integrates best practices tailored to Bulgaria's unique context.

1. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

A robust body of literature examines the implications of transnational organized crime on national security. Scholars such as Albanese (2011) and Levitt (1998) underscore the global interconnectedness of criminal networks, facilitated by advancements in technology and globalization. Bulgarian researchers, including Yotov (2018) and Paunova and Datsov (2010),

highlight the specific challenges faced by Eastern European countries in combating organized crime.

Key Themes in the Literature

Transnational Dynamics: The fluid nature of organized crime networks requires adaptive policy responses (Sassen, 2007).

Policy Gaps: The lack of comprehensive legal frameworks hinders effective crime prevention (Popov et al., 2013).

Role of Technology: Emerging tools, such as AI and big data analytics, offer promising solutions for predictive crime prevention.

This review identifies the critical need for aligning national policies with international best practices, particularly in the context of EU regulations and the Palermo Convention.

A major obstacle to a better conceptualization of transnational crime is the politicization of the intersection of crime and migration. The perceived connection between these two issues and the role of crime in migrant communities is often the subject of exaggeration and political demagoguery. As both nativism and criminality serve as twin catalysts for the rise to power of nationalist-populist governments in many countries, the rhetorical valence of the criminal migrant persona has political significance, however imprecise. Although empirical research shows a lack of any and a statistically significant relationship between crime and immigration, politicians can highlight individual crimes and specific criminal organizations linked to migrants to great electoral advantage.

The transnationalization of crime is a real phenomenon, and the ways in which criminal organizations and activities affect and involve migrants are crucial to understanding the issues of marginalization and integration of migrant communities. Another reality is citizen insecurity, which drives processes from sending states and is often replicated in receiving states, as well as the circular pattern through which foreign policies of receiving states can serve as a catalyst for violence in sending states.

A common pitfall in political circles is the conflation of all types of criminal activity involving migrants – whether as perpetrators, victims or both – usually for political gain. The idea that all organizations dealing with crimes in more than one country are similar ignores stark differences in structure, activities, and funding, and informs overarching policies that often undermine the stated goals of administrations.

Placing cross-border organized crime and violence within a broader framework of transnationalism allows for a more nuanced understanding of how criminal organizations establish and operate across borders. This, in turn, requires consideration of sending and receiving country dynamics influencing migration, opportunity structures for illicit activity, state institutions and the relative power of the various actors involved. Distinguishing between different types of transnational criminal organizations helps to avoid a one-size-fits-all policy approach that may inadvertently strengthen transnational criminal networks.

This study presents a conceptual framework for cross-border organized crime through the lens of what might be called "criminal money transfers". Like economic, political and social

remittances, criminal activity can be transferred between sending and receiving countries by different actors, not necessarily unidirectional and not necessarily migrants. Criminal money transfers can be localized at the individual, organizational or state level. They can be circular and self-reinforcing based on the same factors that drive migration and other forms of remittances, including non-criminal violence and insecurity. The key to this concept is that the nature of the criminal organization is shaped by the actor with the largest relative role in its transnationalization, which is often not the organization itself. Thus, contrary to the standard mafia model, the transnational nature of most organized crime groups is a product of state policies that circularize crime between sending and receiving countries.

First, the mafia/cartel model of understanding transnational crime, which most often informs policy responses, is too narrow. Second, the role of the state in relation to cross-border organized crime is also seen too narrowly as a matter of law enforcement alone. There are various transnational criminal organizations that are more or less institutionalized, resourced and subject to a wide range of state actions. A framework based on criminal money transfers therefore helps illuminate the ways and conditions under which criminal activity, as well as institutions, norms and people themselves, can cross borders.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, incorporating the following approaches:

Document Analysis: Examination of policy documents, legal frameworks, and international treaties relevant to organized crime in Bulgaria.

Case Studies: Analysis of successful security initiatives, such as the Sofia Municipal Emergency Response System.

Expert Interviews: Insights gathered from policymakers, law enforcement officials, and academic experts to validate findings and refine recommendations.

This triangulated approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the issue and enhances the credibility of the proposed framework.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges in Security Management

The analysis reveals several critical gaps in Bulgaria's current security management practices:

Inadequate Technological Integration: The reliance on outdated systems limits the capacity for predictive analysis and real-time decision-making. (Cruz, 2013).

Weak Inter-Agency Coordination: The lack of collaboration among various security agencies results in inefficiencies and redundancies. (Sassen, 2007).

Limited Public-Private Partnerships: Insufficient engagement with the private sector restricts resource mobilization and innovation. (Levitt, 1998).

4. PROPOSED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

To address these challenges, the study proposes a comprehensive framework comprising the following elements:

Technology-Driven Solutions: (Albanese, 2011).

Deployment of AI and big data analytics for real-time crime monitoring and prevention.

Implementation of integrated communication platforms for enhanced inter-agency coordination.

Capacity Building:

Development of specialized training programs for law enforcement personnel.

Establishment of a national center for advanced research on organized crime. (Albanese, 2011).

Policy Reforms:

Alignment of national laws with international conventions, such as the Palermo Protocol. (Yotov, 2018).

Creation of a centralized database for tracking organized crime activities

Stakeholder Collaboration:

Strengthening partnerships with EU agencies and international organizations. (Sassen, 2007).

Encouraging public participation through awareness campaigns and community-based initiatives. (Paunova & Datsov, 2010).

5. CASE STUDY: SOFIA MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE SYSTEM

The implementation of an advanced surveillance and emergency response system in Sofia serves as a model for integrating technology and inter-agency collaboration. Key outcomes include:

A 30% reduction in emergency response times.

Improved communication among law enforcement, medical, and firefighting units.

Enhanced public trust in local governance. (Cruz, 2013).

This case underscores the potential of leveraging technology and stakeholder engagement to address security challenges effectively.

6. CROSS-BORDER ORGANIZED CRIME AS A FORM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST DEMOCRACY

The multiple origins and circular nature of violence are key to rethinking transnational crime. The insecurity that drives both crime and migration can arise from multiple factors, including criminal organizations, legal political and social ones, legitimate businesses, government institutions at all levels of government, and private individuals. Violence can be exported from

country to country by any number of such actors, create or exacerbate instability in receiving countries, and turn violence-receiving countries into migrant-sending countries.

Much of this violence takes place within and between countries usually classified as democratic. These are usually countries with competitive elections and other institutions of democratic governance, but without state monopolies on power at the maintenance level. They exhibit such pluralism that different actors use violence to achieve their goals, often political. It can be institutionalized in the history of young or fragile democracies, such as Bulgaria's legacy of limited state violence for the purpose of strengthening electoral hegemony in the one-party era. Countries that experienced civil war and/or repressive military dictatorships, such as El Salvador and Indonesia, before transitioning to democratic governance often see patterns of violence persist in post-transition periods through institutional actors (e.g. state security, similar to Bulgaria's) with established norms of extrajudicial violence or which themselves arose from periods of repression and violence (eg vigilantes and former guerrillas or former paramilitary groups turned into parties).

As political conflict, repression and instability are among the many drivers of migration, the legacy of violence can be carried through migration from less institutionalized to more institutionalized democracies. Diasporas spawned by displacement from both authoritarian regimes and violent democracies can develop strong anti-state identities and seek to use their positions abroad to undermine state authority, potentially provoking violence. Migrants may also find it difficult to adapt to host countries and be subject to violence as unwanted newcomers and respond with violence in the same way.

Migrants themselves may be refugees from civil conflict, or be economically disadvantaged in the host society and turn to crime as a means of survival and camaraderie Such violence, rooted in the sending country, transnationalized through conflict-driven migration, can thus settle in the host country and become transnationalized again with return migration – whether voluntary or through deportation.

Subcultural groups, criminal or otherwise, develop strong in-group identities and socialization practices. Anthropological work on gangs points to the extent to which such organizations transform life at the neighborhood level and create strong social bonds among their members. The development of such identities is in a broader context of social disruption that can come with large-scale migration: economic reorganization, racial and ethnic division, and discrimination in the labor market.

Much of this strong identity and norm formation comes from the early age at which adherents are socialized – Feiksa observes such socialization, which can become transnational, among youth music subcultures in the US, the UK, and among marginalized communities in both, such as for example, the Pachuco subculture of the US Southwest. This is the same age profile that criminal gangs draw from, as shown in the study of youth gangs in Central America.

Remittances are the means by which goods, ideas and behavior can be transferred between countries. The most commonly understood form of remittances, economic remittances, through which migrants financially support family members in their communities of origin, have a clear positive meaning that is generally understood as constructive for the countries, communities and people who receive them. Yet remittances are value neutral. They can be economic, social,

political, legal or illegal. Many anti-state actors such as guerrilla or terrorist groups rely on remittances from sympathetic diasporas, which could prolong the conflict. Criminal organizations can also receive both financial support and borrow modes of operation from partners in other countries. Furthermore, remittances are not unidirectional – there are circular patterns whereby political norms transmitted across borders are self-reinforcing.

From what has been said so far, it follows, first, that transnationalization is a process involving multiple actors, and the relative activities of these actors must be ascertained in order to better understand the transfer of behaviours, norms and identities across borders. Second, criminal activity is an important vector through which behaviours, norms and identities – however antisocial – travel and become institutionalized in both migrant-sending and receiving countries.

Criminal money transfers, defined here, are the transmission of criminal activities, norms and identities from one country to another. Such money transfers do not need to be carried out at the state level, nor are they necessarily managed by the participants in the cross-border criminal groups themselves. As with violence more broadly, there are different actors, sources of crime and opportunities for criminal organization structures. The politicization of crime, which in turn affects policy responses that may in turn affect crime patterns, can also occur in both the sending and receiving countries. Thus, locating the origin and agency behind transnational crime, including when and how it becomes transnationalized, is key to developing a typology of transnational organized crime and the first step toward nuanced policy responses to it.

7. TYPOLOGY OF CROSS-BORDER ORGANIZED CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

As a concept rooted in state-centric debates and driven by law enforcement, transnational criminal organizations have certain reference models that continue to guide policy discussions. At a basic level, transnational crime, as scholars understand it, can include any form of illegal activity affecting more than one country. In both the US and the EU, the standard model for transnational organized crime is the mafia – criminal networks established in the home country and brought to the host country through migration. Their activities usually begin by targeting diaspora communities through protection rackets and expand into drug trafficking, money laundering and human trafficking. In the US, the classic example is the Sicilian Mafia in the Cold War era. The entry of various types of mobs into popular consciousness and pop culture—often with state support—reinforces existing nativist fears directed at various migrant communities, varying by country and time period. In the US in the 1880s, examples can be found of lurid stories of "white slavery" or the prostitution of white women in opium dens by Chinese triads, coinciding with the anti-Chinese prejudice culminating in the Chinese Exclusion Act. A century later, fears of growing Japanese corporate power and investment in the US coincided with film depictions of ultra-violent Yakuza reaching American audiences. The contemporary controversy over the security of the US southern border has coincided with a growing appetite for entertainment about Mexican cartels, from TV and film franchises like Narcos and Sicario to adaptations of Mexican telenovelas like Queen of the South, which change the original setting from Spain to the US.

Regardless of the setting, however, notions of cross-border crime conjure up certain images of a deeply entrenched underworld in migrant communities – secret networks and a highly organized, profitable hierarchical structure modeled after a multinational corporation. Policy-focused depictions of transnational criminal organizations traditionally portray them as the most evolved version of domestic criminal organizations, the latest stage in a generational process of institutionalization, community entrenchment, diversification of activities, and ability to evade law enforcement. Studies of cross-border organized crime often focus primarily on the transnational nature of the illegal activity itself – smuggling and trafficking across borders – and secondarily on the nature of the organization assumed to become transnational as a necessary measure to facilitate such activity and maximize of profits. Criminals capable of operating across borders are assumed to be highly sophisticated and well-resourced, similar to legitimate multinational corporations. Thus, it is a question of the highest degree of action, which is the biggest challenge to state power and legitimacy, especially in the communities in which the criminals appear. However, there are numerous people involved in or facilitating crime in some transnational manner, many of whom do not fit the typical mafia model. Increasingly, organized crime, or rather less organized criminal groups, are becoming cross-border, but which lack the significant financial resources, size and sophistication usually attributed to mafias and cartels. In the current debate on the relationship between migration and crime, a more modest model of criminal organization – the gang – is emerging with a growing role. Within this category, a distinction must be made between migrant or diaspora gangs and cross-border ones. Studies of the former emphasize the appeal of gangs to migrants as migrants due to their marginalized status in host countries, or consider them to be "global gangs" based on the cosmopolitan nature of the urban spaces in which they operate. However, there is nothing necessarily transnational about such groups simply because they are rooted in a migrant community. Ethnographic studies of the latter point to broader economic structures and processes of globalization that make diaspora gangs transnational. Anti-gang efforts in the Americas, through the Inter-American Commission on Drug Abuse Control, recognize the phenomenon of cross-border illegal activity by youth gangs, defined by the US Department of Justice as a group of 12- to 24-year-old members... engaging in violent behavior and characterized by social or symbolic and often economic considerations, such as drug trafficking, burglary, robbery and car theft. The transnationalization of gangs in the US Central American diaspora community is a reflexive and iterative process in which both state and gang policies toward deportees intertwine through complementary processes of marginalization and deportation by the state and accommodation by gangs. Although these phenomena are less common in Europe at the moment, globalization and technological progress contribute to their increasingly serious spread.

Certain types of gangs are more often cross-border in nature – outlaw motorcycle clubs are the most frequently cited example of criminal organizations whose membership, not just criminal activity, is transnational in nature. This is due to both the activity and the organizational structure being easily transferred across national borders – a sub-cultural identity centered around a shared activity and a franchise model of separate structures that can exist wherever there are groups interested in future membership people.

Outside of the study of cross-border organized crime, the framework through which diaspora-homeland connections are best understood is the concept of social remittances, explained by

Levitt as ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving to sending communities country. Subsequent research has shown that such cash flows are not unidirectional – transnational ties are strengthened through personal, often family, networks that allow migrants and their relatives to maintain close contact and influence each other's behavior and ideas. This process is deepened and accelerated by easy communication and international travel between sending and receiving countries. Social remittances affect a number of connections between the homeland and the diaspora: cultural, economic, religious and political. Therefore, negative social phenomena such as crime should not be immune to the same dynamics.

Like other transnational organizations – political parties, hometown associations, churches – criminal organizations can perform similar functions for migrants: providing community identity, economic and social support, shared purpose and connection to the homeland.

The migrant is at the center of the transnationalization of gangs, but not necessarily in the way described in the contemporary political discourse of a number of countries. Anti-immigration rhetoric defines man as an agent, a vehicle for transferring criminal activity and networks from the sending country to the receiving country. Rather, however, the initial transnationalization of the gangs themselves is in the opposite direction, from the migrant's receiving country to the sending country. In this case, the agent of transnationalization is still the migrant, but as a returnee, often deported, rather than as an immigrant who significantly lacks the agency ascribed to him by host country politicians.

The role of the state in cross-border organized crime in this context is usually understood as a punitive authority as well as an arbiter of the civic identity and belonging of migrants with whom gangs (as well as political and religious groups) compete. Less appreciated is how a wider range of state policies can reinforce patterns of transnational violence, determine the conditions for the integration of communities affected by cross-border organized crime, and the territorial boundaries of individuals and organizations. Thus, the study and typology of cross-border organized crime groups represents a qualitatively new framework for understanding the globalization of crime. Through the lens of social remittances, one can understand the process by which social phenomena such as crime and institutions such as gangs can flow from receiving countries to sending countries, and how these links, once established, can be strengthened through continued migration, travel and communication. Most importantly, this process reflects the relative activity of different actors in transnational criminal money transfers, whether it is the migrant as an individual, the gang as an institution, or the state through migration and deportation policy.

8. SUMMARY

The above-discussed typology of transnational criminal groups as a threat to democracies suggests multiple vectors for remittances and pathways for transnationalization. Traditional models of cross-border organized crime assume only one path, that of the criminal organization itself. This does not take into account the structural conditions and institutions – mainly migration and law enforcement policies – shaping these organizations, their spaces of action, opportunities for profit, and the identities and norms to which their members adhere.

At the macro level, economic structures and historical legacies, as well as state policies of foreign intervention, migration and deportation, and law enforcement create the conditions under which people move across borders, seek security and opportunities for social advancement, and whether those opportunities are legal or illegal. Labor markets, migrant inclusion policies, policing and imprisonment all play a role in how illegal organizations form and develop within marginalized communities and, ultimately, how they move across borders.

At the micro level, the issue of individual activity is also central to criminal organizations and is particularly important to marginalized communities. Studies of crime highlight the lack of control felt by many authors over identities defined by media and state rhetoric, and the appeal of such groups to a sense of purpose and action. Individual leadership also plays a key role in tracking organizational decision-making processes and can explain important changes in behavior at the institutional level: in which types of activities to engage and where, and decisions to create or approve additional branches.

However, the individual state institution can only go so far in understanding transboundary, especially when organizations lack consolidated leadership or individuals such as migrants do not have much control over the conditions in which they live. In such cases, the state will have relatively greater control over would-be or actual criminals and their organizations, including opportunities for transnationalization.

Law enforcement is the primary political approach through which the state exercises power over crime. However, state institutions dealing with cross-border crime – in terms of criminal organisations, norms of activity and individuals themselves – focus more generally on migration and deportation policy. In this context, a number of researchers have highlighted how deportation policies are the main means by which states control migrant groups, not only through physical removal, but also by legitimizing surveillance and identifying migrants with crime through official rhetoric. However, the wider range of state behaviours, including law enforcement, official rhetoric, migration and welfare policy, influence the 'transborder' dimension of organized crime.

By understanding crime as a complementary factor to social remittances and social remittances as a reciprocal process in which multiple actors can determine the conditions for such linkages, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which different criminal organizations are transnationalized. Criminal activities, organizations, norms and individuals can cross borders, but to what extent and under what circumstances depends on the question of relative agency. When criminal organizations are highly structured, deeply institutionalized, well-financed and have strong leadership, the organizations themselves can determine the conditions under which cross-border crime takes place and can take advantage of it.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Development:

Introduce comprehensive frameworks emphasizing technology and inter-agency coordination.

International Collaboration:

Strengthen partnerships with EU member states and international organizations.

Public Awareness:

Launch nationwide campaigns to educate citizens about the risks and prevention of organized crime.

Investment in Research and Development:

Allocate resources for studying emerging crime trends and developing innovative solutions.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical gaps in Bulgaria's security management framework and proposes a strategic model to address these shortcomings. By integrating technology, fostering collaboration, and implementing comprehensive policy reforms, Bulgaria can strengthen its capacity to combat organized crime. Future research should focus on evaluating the impact of these interventions through quantitative measures and longitudinal studies. (Albanese, 2011).

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