

As criminals and terrorists continue to innovate, the lines that distinguish the two become increasingly blurred and the crime and conflict nexus becomes stronger. Terrorist groups have begun to dive deeper into the drug trade, subsequently morphing into transnational criminal groups; while transnational criminal groups are now using their wealth to influence the politics of a region in a similar manner as terrorist groups. The crime and conflict nexus is the convergence of terroristic practices and motivations with the practices and motives of criminal groups. This convergence often happens along a continuum, allowing groups to play to their strengths in various situations and environments (Makarenko 2004). The crime and conflict nexus is important because of the similarities in recruitment and management styles of the groups as well as the impact that financing has on motivations of terrorists and transnational criminal organizations.

It is important to analyze the crime and conflict nexus because terrorists and transnational crime groups recruit and maintain members in the same manner. Both sets of organizations recruit new members by collecting costly signals that prove a recruit's trustworthiness and commitment to the cause but are too dangerous for mimics to copy. During the 1990's, Al-Qaeda operating in Afghanistan sought out new members who had previous jihadi experience in Pakistan (Hegghammer 2012). Similarly, street gangs in London will test a recruit's propensity for violence and criminality by having them participate in a crime before they can become a member of the group (Densley 2012). Furthermore, the crime and conflict nexus is important because terrorists and

transnational crime groups maintain their membership by providing social services and isolating them from mainstream society. Berman (2009) outlines in his book how terrorist groups employ the club model by providing their members with social services such as health care and religious training in order to ensure that the members will rely on the group for all their needs. Furthermore, to ensure that their membership does not defect they demand that new members assist them by committing small crimes in preparations for attacks (Berman 2009). Transnational criminal organizations participate in a similar practice; many require members to get face tattoos to limit their options if they were to leave the group (Wainwright 2016). Moreover, transnational criminal groups also often recruit based upon familial relationships and friendships which limits a member's incentive to leave a group since their community exists solely within the group (Wainwright 2016).

The crime and conflict nexus needs to be closely considered because terrorists and transnational criminal groups both employ offshoring and franchising as expansionist strategies. Terrorists and transnational criminal groups benefit from the corruptibility of weak states by moving the production of illicit drugs to such areas. During the early 2000's, Al-Qaeda moved most of their operation into Pakistan in order to evade the United States and its allies as well as to benefit off the on-going corruption in the country (Peters 2009). Mexican drug trafficking organizations have also begun to move their operations to Guatemala and Honduras to operate in the power vacuum of those two nations and to evade the Mexican and US government (Wainwright 2016). Furthermore, terrorist groups and transnational criminal groups "franchise" their names and missions to

other smaller or younger groups in order to have a wider impact with less resources. Al-Qaeda after the removal of Osama bin Laden, unsuccessfully franchised out their organization in order to achieve their goal of a unified resistance by the Islamic community (Mendelsohn 2011). Los Zetas took a similar path by selling their name to smaller and younger groups throughout Mexico to expand their reach and impact within the drug market of Central America (Wainwright 2016).

The most impactful aspect of the crime and conflict nexus is the influence that profit-making can have on both terrorist groups and transnational criminal organizations. Terrorist groups and transnational criminal organizations traffic drugs or other lootables to fund their organizations' operations. The Taliban in Afghanistan has been in control of the poppy and heroin trade in Pakistan for decades and they have used those funds to carry out massive attacks (Peters 2009). Similarly, transnational crime groups have begun to use the money they have earned from their drugs sales to bribe and corrupt local governments into compliance. Arias (2018) details how criminal groups in South America have bribed and corrupted local law enforcement in order to exert control over a local area or population. More importantly though, profit-making has altered the motivations of terrorist groups and transnational criminal groups. Terrorist groups who were original motivated by political goals have experienced a transformation in their motives to profit-making after trafficking drugs (Cornell 2005). These types of terrorist groups still rely upon their appearance as politically motivated groups but are actually driven by profit-making. An example of this can be seen in Al-Qaeda during the destruction of their leadership framework after the removal of Osama bin Laden

(Rosenthal 2008). Similarly, transnational criminal groups, who have always been motivated by profits have begun using their funds earned from the drug trade to gain political power within the areas they operate (Dúran-Martinez 2018).

The crime and conflict nexus is a crucial concept to understand because terrorists and transnational criminal groups use the same methods to recruit and maintain their membership. Similarly, the nexus is important because terrorist groups and transnational criminal organization use offshoring and franchising as expansionist strategies when managing their groups. Finally, the crime and conflict nexus is significant because financing has a similar impact on the motivations of terrorist groups and transnational criminal organizations. The similarities within recruitment and management as well as the impact of financing within terrorists and transnational crime groups proves the existence of an ongoing convergence between these two groups. Therefore, understanding the crime and conflict nexus allows the national security enterprise to craft proactive counter-terrorism and counter-narcotic policy that can effectively combat these evolving networks. If the national security officials do not begin analyzing the complexities that are presented by their adversaries in the 21st century, they are bound to fail. To craft effective policy that targets each group individually as well as the continuum where they meet, the first step is to acknowledge the similarities between terrorist groups and transnational criminal organization (Makarenko 2004). Once the similarities are recognized, differences will be evident, and policy can be modified to directly target each type. The most effective policy though will be crafted when both terrorist groups and transnational criminal groups have been taken into consideration.

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