IMPACTS OF ORGANISED CRIME ON CITIZENS AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Marjan Gjurovski, PhD[1]
Faculty of Philosophy, Saint Cyril and Methodius University,
Skopje, North Macedonia

INTRODUCTION

Unlike former times, when organized crime was primarily interested in gaining profit, today's criminals have other aspirations, too. Financial power and positions in the political, economic and local sector are being used for exercising non-institutional, non-legal, unethical and other influence on the state, i.e. in order to achieve a good position and status within society, as it cannot be achieved by participating in the regular democratic processes. The connections between organized crime and the political and business elite, but also new centres of financial power (so-called tycoons) are noticeable, resulting in certain types of political, economic and environmental crimes. Such connections are used for legalizing illegally gained profit, which makes it necessary to have contacts at all levels of power (government, ministries, police, judiciary, prosecutor, business structures), which help criminal groups in return for money.

Hence, it is clear that organized crime strives to infiltrate the political system of many countries by means of financing election campaigns, corruption, or intimidation of the voters and political parties. Thus, economic power is transferred into political power, and the achieved political position can be used for increasing economic power, while the dirty capital gets laundered and grows.

It has been noted that organized crime uses media to carry out destructive psychological and propaganda activities (radio, television, social networks). They found,

1 marjan.gjurovski@fzf.ukim.edu.mk

finance and control those media in different ways, thus exerting a certain pressure on the public opinion, as well as the legislative, the executive and the judiciary power as well as to rival criminal groups and organizations or potential witnesses.

Organized crime is particularly destructive regarding business and finance security. The capital of some criminal organizations is larger than the national budgets of several states together, which allows them to contribute to hindering the transition to democracy, restricting personal rights and freedoms, hampering open economy and legal foreign investments, restricting the freedom of choice and press freedom, and financially threatening countries.

Organized crime is also often linked to terrorism. Although, according to a thesis, terrorism is one type of organized crime, their connection should rather be described as relatedness than as congruence.

Today, the number of offences with a transnational dimension committed by organized crime is increasing. Hence, the international community has an interest in preventing all types of organized crime at a global level. Defining organized crime is the first and probably the most important step on the way to establishing a prevention strategy. In the broadest sense, organized crime describes a group of persons who have agreed on committing crimes together. An important element of this definition is that action is coordinated among a group of people. In a stricter sense, organized crime refers to offences committed by a criminal organization (a gang, group or criminal association) with a hierarchic structure, realized by an organizer and at least to more members.

Professional criminals are ever more often organized in different groups, gangs and other kinds of associations who cooperate in the process of committing crimes as their regular occupation. In such constellations, they often connect to officials responsible for implementing laws, which provides them with a huge advantage compared to criminals who do not enjoy such protection. Thus, organized crime developed is a special form of professional crime.

Criminal organizations can be distinguished according to various criteria: their tradition and the time of their existence, their character and origin, area of interest, level of organization, etc. Well organized groups of criminals who have been working together for years according to their own norms often have a solid hierarchic structure of organization that allows them broad operability in their action. Such organizations are led by a boss who directs the actions and activities.

He can be linked to two or more such organizations. All activity is based on strict discipline, obedience and personal loyalty, all the more if the group is strictly organized and integrated. These organizations usually have a broad radius of activity, they are highly operative and can rapidly manoeuvre and broadly relocate their activities, which is why their societal dangerousness is so sought after. Criminal

organizations make use of all means at their disposal: bribery, threatening, menacing, political connections, only to reach their goals and to thwart the impact of the laws. They often agree and coordinate actions among themselves, but can also be at war against each other, which sometimes leads to killings.

The general scope of action of organized crime is very wide, while the organizations themselves tend to have narrow specializations. Some specialize in organizing prostitution, others smuggle intoxicants, organize contract killings or blackmail, etc. Organized crime does whatever offers the possibility to gain money, like smuggling, prostitution, bribery, gambling, drug trafficking (heroin, cocaine, marijuana), arms smuggling, recruiting contract killers, carrying out terrorist actions, etc., but also crimes like organized art theft.

THREATS FROM ORGANIZED CRIME

Today's organized crime is becoming more and more international, which allows it to influence the security and stability of states from outside. The organized crime of the 21st century is characterized by the following features:
 › networking among criminal groups within state borders, i.e. criminal cooperation;
 › internationalization of criminal activities (from national to international level);
 › partnerships between criminal groups and networks from different countries, i.e.
 internationalization of criminal cooperation;
 › creation of transnational illegal markets of organized crime, i.e. globalization of the
 criminal market;
 › increasing destructiveness with regard to values and interests of individuals, society,
 states, and the international community.

Apart from a wider geographical scope, the former narrow specialization on separate types of crime has now given way to the so-called criminal corporations which represent different criminal groups who carry out different types of crimes. The criminal corporations offer "different illegal services in one place", like a "one-stop shop".

There are numerous types of organized crime. The main types are economic and corporate crimes, the drug mafia, arms smuggling, human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, the sex mafia (prostitution and pornography), the car mafia, art and antique theft and smuggle, the gambling mafia, the urban and building mafia, the organ mafia, the baby mafia, the pharmaceutical mafia, the funeral mafia,

counterfeiting of money and bonds, extortion, robbery, crime within the military structures, the education mafia, the road mafia, the bankruptcy mafia, the customs mafia, the tobacco mafia, the oil mafia, the energy mafia, the waste mafia, etc. Since organized crime has infiltrated almost all spheres of society, it is realistic to expect the "development of new criminal businesses".

THE REGIONAL SITUATION

Organized crime has a long history on the Balkan peninsula. It contributed to crushing the state structures in different parts of the former Yugoslavia, in different ways that have not been sufficiently cleared up to date. At certain times, the underground cooperated with political elites in order to destroy the foundation of the very state. Abuse of office with criminal aims and political motives included murders of political adversaries, government ministers and renowned dissidents, kidnappings of well- known persons and similar crimes, in which the security agencies of the then republics were involved, all for the sake of the so-called patriotism.

By means of cooperation with the political elites, the Balkan organized crime penetrated state structures and in that way improved its strategic positions and gradually took control over certain parts of the state apparatus, first and foremost the repressive structures, thus paving its way to long-term political and actual influence on society.

With regard to drug trafficking, there cannot be the so-called Columbian scenario in the Balkans, since it is not an initial but rather a transit region for drugs on the route from the Near East to Europe. Marijuana, however, is produced in Albania and transported everywhere via the Balkan region. In the last few years, via European ports, more and more cocaine from Latin America has been ending up in the Balkans.

Serious criminal organizations engaged in human trafficking, killings, cigarettes, antiques and money laundering, but also in activities in the area of politics, media, and public life have been disclosed in the Balkans. Investments and transfers of illegally gained money in real estate, casinos and banks (money laundering) have been registered, as well as the transport of cash money in cars. Criminal clans have been noticed to be linked to various persons, especially from politics and the security structures. The Balkan criminal organizations strive to legalize the profit from their illegal activities (money laundering) by feeding it into the legal financial system of the region.

There are at least three dimensions of organized crime negative impact:

› the human dimension: violating the human rights of direct and indirect victims of
organized crime;
› the economic dimension: impacts of organized crime that worsen the unfavorable
factors of economic transition;
› the security dimension: threats to national security, slowing down the democratization process.

In the area of foreign policy, organized crime can indirectly provoke disintegration by hampering and making impossible the integration of the state into international institutions and organizations, which in turn can lead to sanctions and interventions by the international community, due to the incapability of the government to stand up against organized crime. The effects of organized crime on internal policy are highly complex and latent, representing a strategic risk to the security of the state. Possible effects are:

› destabilization of the economy and the legal markets;
› threats to the operability of some state portfolios;
› networks of organized and other types of crime, most often political crime;
› infiltration of the political system by organized crime;
› economic destabilization of the state due to money laundering and tax avoidance;
› less influx of funds into the state budget;
› demographic destabilization due to degradation of the environment and disruption of the economic and social security of families;
› increased racism and xenophobia;
› increased corruption in the public sector;
› destabilization of the family as the basic entity of society; etc.

Organized crime represents the most severe danger to security. Like terrorism and corruption, it is a complex phenomenon present in all phases of a society's development. It makes the progress of society impossible, creates distrust of citizens towards the state and its institutions, blocks reforms, causes financial harm, destroys the economy, etc. Hence, it is indispensable to fight organized crime with all means that the state and democratic society have at their disposal. Activities need to be planned, organized and based on realistic premises, as well as agreed on by all state institutions and political stakeholders.

While organized crime was developing and becoming international towards the end of the 20th century, the security systems of many states were not able to react appropriately. When the special services for the fight against organized crime were established, irreversible damage had already been done. Hence, reforms of the security sector have to be continued. Back then, groups of organized crime took advantage of the situation and infiltrated all levels of society. Relations with representatives of political and   economic power were particularly

destructive. Networks of criminal groups on a national level and partnerships with groups from other countries followed, resulting in the creation of trans-national illegal markets of organized crime. A preventive measure in the fight against organized crime is the seizure of illegally gained profit, with the aim to make organized crime and corruption useless. This measure is targeted at the very peak of the criminal pyramid.

Meanwhile, we have to bear in mind that today's organized crime is tightly linked to different types of international crime, mainly economic and financial crime, as well as illegal production and trafficking in drugs, weapons and other dangerous materials, human trafficking, money laundering, and financing international ter-rorism. In close relation to corruption, new types of highly profitable organized crime are developing, such as cybercrime and trafficking in hazardous waste, one of the most dangerous types of environmental crime.

THE CHARACTER OF SECURITY RISKS[2]

Risks have always captured our attention and shaped our everyday behavior. For the last few decades, we have been witnessing serious, maybe even dramatic shifts in our understanding of the relation to risks. In most contemporary societies, risks are almost entirely understood and defined as security risks or potential dangers. Today, under the conditions of globalization and postmodernism, the modern, or neutral concept of risks, which characterizes modern societies and their rational economic world view, is being replaced by the so-called negative concept of risks, or security risks, as we name them in security studies.

Additionally, not only the very character of today's risks has changed, but at the same time the general understanding of the relation and handling of security risks within contemporary security studies is changing. The shift from repression to prevention as a primary approach within security studies and as a security prac-tice is mainly caused by security risks being the most significant security phe-nomenon, which requires intervention as early as possible. Every well-devised and successful security policy should be mainly focused on the correct determi-nation, assessment and handling of security risks, prior to being concerned with the threats and dangers to security.

Today, we are living in a time of globalization and a postmodern understanding of society (Waters 2003; Scholte 2008). The dynamic of development is non-linear and characterized by many ambivalent processes, such as the paradigm change concerning security and freedom as core values, which might even be key. Con-ditions within societies create an atmosphere and culture of life in which people

2 https://fb.uklo.edu.mk/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2021/12/Securiy-Risks-and-Threats-ENG.pdf

strive to maximize their freedom, and the realization of individual liberty is seen as a social, cultural and societal achievement. Nevertheless, in these times of globalization, the complex network of social relations and interdependence, which has greatly contributed to the breakthrough of freedom, at the same time has led to a security boost, in particular to a worriedness concerning security risks. (Bauman 2016; Bauman 2005; Beck 2001; Giddens 2002; Giddens and Hatton 2003: 14-21; Lyotard 2007; Godard, Henry, Lagadec and Michel-Kerjan, 2002; Svendsen 2010).

Today, not only security institutions, but also citizens themselves are permanently preoccupied with understanding, assessing and coping with security risks. Some of the most prominent scholars, such as Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, have defined this phenomenon as *risk culture*. For societies in which risks are omnipresent and define relations within society, they coined the term risk society. Today, we can assume that most societies and cultures, including the Macedonian one, are affected by these contemporary changes and processes to a certain degree. The true question is whether and to what extent that impact can be observed. Most often, the answer depends on the involvement of the society or culture in question in the process of globalization and today's postmodern neo-liberal society. The views of Beck and Giddens are laid out in their theoretical paradigms which form part of the so-called reflexive risk theories (Gerasimoski, Nikolovski, Gjurovski, 2018: 1-8; Gerasimoski, Mojsoska, Trajkovska, 2013: 214-225).

We have to differentiate between research on the public opinion, views and perceptions of citizens concerning security risks, on the one hand, and research on opinions, views and perceptions concerning security risks within security institutions, on the other. Basically, we can assume that the results of both kinds of research will differ, mostly because security professionals with their everyday experience in working with security risks can have different opinions, views and perceptions on security risks. Therefore, the research on security risks carried out within security institutions has advantage as well as downsides. A realistic picture of the character of security risks could be achieved by comparing the data on opinions, views and perceptions from within security institutions, on the one hand, and the broader public, on the other. Hence, the research on security risks as viewed by Macedonian security institutions carried out by the team from the Faculty of Security is no exception to this general statement, which the research results will further confirm. The limited possibility of generalization of the findings with regard to a broader statistical mass and the descriptive character of the statistical data processing are the most serious restrictions to the research at hand. Nevertheless, the significance of its primary findings, quantitative and qualitative, is not lessened by these restrictions.

The character of a risk can be defined as the contents and appearance of a risk in a given society or culture, the consistency of its characteristics with regard to its

origin and type, its predictability, scale, and intensity. Defining the character of security risks as seen by Macedonian security institutions will allow us to gain direct insight into the specifics of security risks in North Macedonia, their features and structure. After defining their character, the security risks can be ranked according to the importance of the values which they are related to, and the most adequate means of prevention and management can be determined.

Contemporary security studies and theories on coping with, managing and assessing risks focus on the primary significance of correct detection of security risks and their prioritization (ranking by importance). The latter is carried out with regard to the values that the security risks are related to. Hence, the importance of the value determines the extent of the security risk, and thus its significance and its handling in reference to other security risks. Prioritization is important in order to define the priorities of security policy concerning security risk management if we are facing various security risks at the same time. Prioritization of security risks is followed by analysis (assessment and forecast), and then by handling (Vogan 2014; Gemović, 2011; Gerasimoski, 2018: 327-338; Keković, Bakreski, Stefanovski, Pavlović 2016).

In the framework of the study at hand, security risks were determined and prioritized, based on a specific approach defined by the research team. Namely, the questionnaire, which was distributed among public, state and private security institutions, included a semi-open-ended list of security risks, which included 18 security risks, with the possibility for the respondents to add risks that were not included. The respondents were free to choose as many options as they wanted as an answer to question No. 4, the aim of which was to find out which security risks get the most mentions from the respondents. In the next question No. 5, the respondents were asked to compile a priority list, i.e. a list of the security risks they had chosen in question 4 according to their importance. Based on these two questions, we could sum up the security risks from all 151 questionnaires, i.e. respondents, and received a list of security risks according to their priority as seen by security institutions. Thus, we could prioritize the security risks (list them according to their significance, starting from the significant one).

As an answer to the question "Which security risks affect security most?" the respondents could tick as many security risks from the given list. Based on the respondents' choices, we could single out the top five out of the 18 security risks from the list. Out of 151 respondents, 53 (22%) chose the option "terrorism", 52 (21%) "deteriorated system of societal values", and, as high as third, "inappropriate security policy", chosen by 48 respondents (20%). 47 respondents (19%) considered the option "corruption", and 43 (18%) "danger of an inter-ethnic conflict" as the most important threats to the security of North Macedonia.

From the answers to this question, we can see that manufactured security risks, i.e. risks that follow from inappropriate decisions and interventions in society, prevail over a much smaller number of external risks, i.e. security risks that we cannot influence, or that we can influence only to a minor degree. Thus, we can see that with the exception of the risk that was chosen by most respondents, terrorism which is originally external, all most significant risks are manufactured (Gerasimoski, 2018: 14). This accounts for the fact that we are actually facing a shift from external to manufactured risks, while according to the impressin of the research team the basic distinction of risks and the shift which is taking place are not sufficiently recognized by the respondents from the security institutions. The high rank of terrorism can be attributed to two factors, which have to be further analyzed in future research. The first factor is the very perception of terrorism as a risk, i.e. the fear and subjective dimension linked to it, which does not necessarily correspond with the actual threat and danger. The second factor is quite clearly professional bias, or the professional prejudices typical of persons who work with security institutions all around the world, which have to be more sensitive to some types of security risks because they are dealing with them every day. The subjectivity of this factor can be determined and overcome only by means of a comparative research on the opinions, views and perceptions of the public, on the one hand, and security professionals, on the other.

Another striking feature of the answers is that "inappropriate security policy" came in third. Some security incidents that happened during the last few years bear witness to the fact that there is a strong correlation between inappropriate security policy and our reality. Those incidents showed that inappropriate security assessment and security policy, which are tightly linked, were among the main factors that lead to a relatively unsuccessful handling of the risks in question.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

The character of the risk defined under the circumstances of globalization and postmodern societies has an impact on the character of security risks in today's Macedonian society and state. Globalized and postmodern definitions of the character of risks as negative (security) risks have an impact on the definition of the character of risks as security risks in today's Macedonian society and state. The complex globalized and postmodern societal relations contribute to the so-called privatization of security risks in today's Macedonian society and state. As a result of modern globalized and postmodern changes in the character of risks, manufactured security risks are predominant over external security risks in today's Macedonian society and state.

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