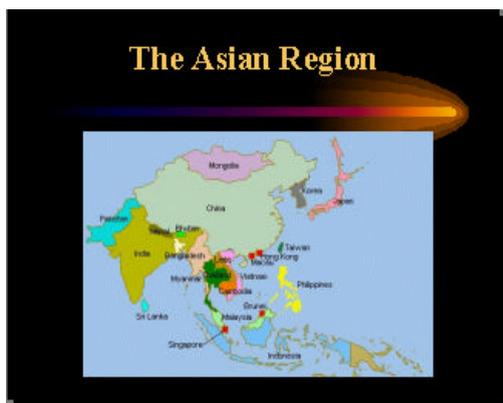


Threats to human security: terrorism, organized crime and drugs in Asia.

Presentation by Dr. Sandro Calvani
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for East Asia and the Pacific
At the United Nations Inter-Agency Security Network Group Meeting
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Ladies and gentlemen,

Since the birth of the first civilization, human security has been an integral part of societies across the globe. After the Cold war, new issues concerning global security emerged that represented some of the greatest challenges facing the international community.



But in Asia, recognition of the human security concept was a response to a more immediate catastrophe: the financial crisis in the later part of the 1990s. The crisis dramatically increased the incidence of poverty, undermined regional efforts of development, caused widespread political instability (the most dramatic case being Indonesia), and aggravated inter-state tensions over refugees and illegal migration. It also underscored the need for good governance and the crucial need for social safety nets for the poor. For the first time, human security was brought into focus. Countries of the region realized that to

pursue the notion of human security through economic growth and political stability without regard to human rights and political participation would be counterproductive. Indonesia presents a prime example and highlights the importance of this balanced strategy.

1. Threats to human security

With the acceleration of globalization, other external and internal factors threaten human security in the Asian region including the trafficking of illegal drugs, arms, and humans; terrorism; environmental degradation; armed political conflict; internal strife; and transnational organized crime.



Many individual states cannot fight these forces alone. In the last decade, most political crises, internal conflicts, dysfunctional development processes, and human rights abuses

have occurred in countries all over the world where societies and the economies have been distorted by the activity of various forms of organised crime. Corruption, financial scams, trafficking in human beings, and money laundering perpetrated by cross border gangs and extremely aggressive and well organised global predators have destroyed the traditional fabric of civil societies, threatening the very foundations of development and of peace processes.

Today, it is necessary to address such threats in its broader context of failed or failing states, where human security is at stake. The growth and potential growth of failed states is of primary importance to the international community in its effort to enhance international peace and security. It is after all no coincidence that some countries in the Asian region are targeted because they are among those most geographically marginalized or victims of failed governance. It is now evident that threats to security in Asia are symptoms of wider structural problems. The lack of internal regulation or the weakness of the rule of law presents many opportunities for organized criminal groups. As a result, corruption emerges and the rule of law deteriorates. Human security is further threatened. The law should promote good governance through accountability and transparency in decision-making and predictability in the political process.

Unfortunately, not all states have been created or have evolved according to the democratic ideal. In many countries, dictatorship and authoritarian politics have subverted the rule of law or have suppressed it before it could properly take root. Partisan and exclusive regimes and institutions like the military have been

used to persecute and expropriate vulnerable parts of society. In the Asian region, there are people living in an atmosphere of deep and enduring insecurity.

Violence, terrorism, and corruption generated by transnational organized crime also poses serious threats to human security. The roots of organized crime are deep and they frequently have powerful connections with politicians, government officials, and law enforcement officers. Criminals would rather influence and intimidate a government and undermine legitimate businesses rather than overtly destroy them. Once the government is powerless to fight against transnational crime, sovereignty is threatened and national social fabric deteriorates under the growing power of the organized criminal groups. The “dark side of globalization” must be acknowledged and addressed because every nation, irrespective of its geographical, political, or economic situation, is affected and human security is threatened.

Both failing and failed states are particularly vulnerable to the spread of organized crime and terrorism. Criminal organizations invariably search for weak links to exploit wherever they exist, both among and within states. Such groups bring their organization and their access to capital and deploy it in a way that is destructive for the cause of human security. They can establish alliances with authoritarian regimes. They can make weak regimes dependent on them for support and precipitate the collapse of failing states. Once established, criminal networks become an additional bundle of vested interests standing in the way of reform. Strengthening the rule of

law becomes harder and facilitating democratic efforts difficult.

The issue of links between drugs and organized crime on the one hand and terrorism on the other is a sensitive one because of the legal and political implications of the nature of these links. There are a number of countries which consider terrorist organizations as criminal organizations that do not differ from ordinary organized crime groups. Another group of countries, on the other hand, while not denying the criminal nature of acts of terrorism, regard terrorist groups as essentially different in nature – they are seen as politically-motivated rather than profit-driven. The distinction between the two perspectives becomes salient when it comes to extradition requests. Extraditing non-national criminals to the country of origin of perpetrators of crimes is usually non-problematical. Extraditing political refugees and exile politicians who are accused of acts of terrorism in their home country is another matter, especially when the regime which demands extradition is one that engages in torture and is using tactics of repression which are little better than those of the armed opposition group which is accused of acts of terrorism.

An added problem is the fact that while there is finally some international agreement about the definition of 'organized crime', there is still no consensus in the United Nations as to what 'terrorism' is.

2. Definitions of terrorism

When it comes to terrorism there is the controversy between those countries which feel that activities of the state should not be labelled 'terrorist' while other countries want to address 'terrorism in all its forms

and manifestations', including state terrorism. Most, if not all, governments want to exclude any acts of their armed forces from falling under any international convention against terrorism.



Then there is a dispute between those countries which wish to include all serious political violence in a convention, no matter what the motive, while other countries want to exclude 'acts committed by peoples in their struggles, included armed struggle, against aggression, colonialism, and, in brief, foreign domination as constituting terrorism'. The links between something defined (organized crime) and something ill- or undefined (terrorism) which some consider as equal to the already defined, then, are a matter of controversy between states for both legal and political reasons. To make matters more complicated, there is the empirical problem of unearthing trustworthy information about the nexus between criminal and political underground organizations. Such information is to a considerable extent buried in the secret files of intelligence agencies while the United Nations Terrorism Branch works only with open sources.

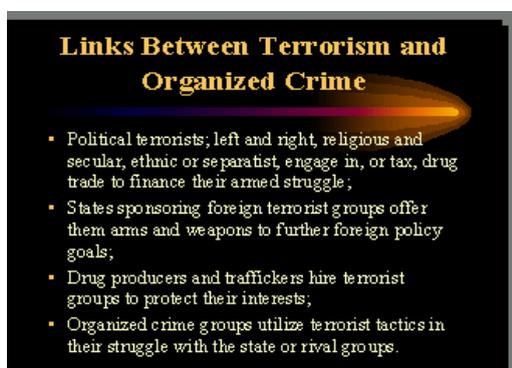
3. The links between organized crime and terrorism

The relationship between organized crime to groups dealing in drugs, state-sponsoring terrorism and terrorism organizations usually takes the following forms:

Political terrorists; left and right, religious and secular, ethnic or separatist, engage in, or tax, drug trade to finance their armed struggle;

States sponsoring foreign terrorist groups offer them arms and weapons to further foreign policy goals;

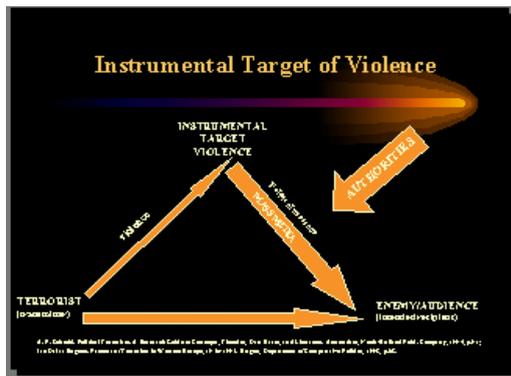
1. Drug producers and traffickers hire terrorist groups to protect their interests;
2. Organized crime groups utilize terrorist tactics in their struggle with the state or rival groups.
3. Drug producers and traffickers hire terrorist groups to protect
4. Organized crime groups utilize terrorist tactics in their struggle with the state or rival groups.



Notwithstanding such links, a study that was completed by Alex Schmid for the United Nations in the mid-1990s, he came to the conclusion that "...despite some common ground organized crime and terrorism are

distinct phenomena that should not be confused. While there is overlap in the modus operandi of terrorists and organized criminals, there are several important differences". Terrorism is usually a mixture of politics, propaganda and warfare. Organized crime shies publicity, does not want to confront the armed forces of a state and, while trying to infiltrate the political establishment, has generally no political ambitions. Terrorists, on the other hand, often see themselves as rebellious political actors and portray their crimes as acts of acts of insurgency or resistance. Their acts, while criminal are often also political. Many legal systems in the world do not recognize political crime as a distinguishable class of crime in their law books – at least they do not do so for their own citizens. However, de facto, they often make a distinction between political and criminal offenses when it comes to granting or refusing the extradition of foreign citizens. Hence the political exemption clause in most terrorist conventions. Some states which recognize the category of 'political crime' either use the concept to refer to crimes that offend against the political interests of the state and the political right of citizens or use it for crimes which in whole or in part derive from political motives. A distinction between the common criminal and the politically motivated actor engaged in acts which are contrary to penal law is sometimes constructed on the basis of the ends sought by the respective actors – personal gain or private revenge on the one hand versus unselfish pro-social drives on the other. However, there has to be some proportionality between ends and means in the waging of political conflict and it is here that acts of terrorism tend to exceed normal practices. The analogy between legitimate acts of war and illegitimate war crimes is helpful to differentiate

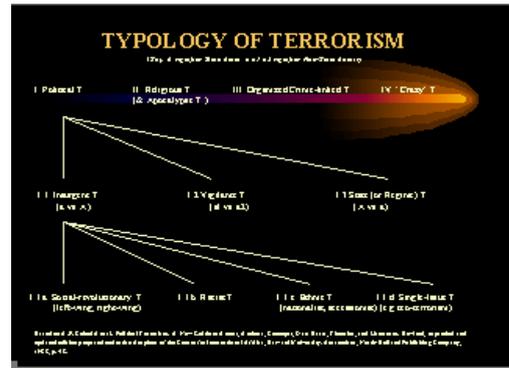
terrorist atrocities against innocent noncombatants from more acceptable tactics of waging armed conflicts. I have therefore proposed to define acts of terrorism as ‘peacetime equivalents of war crimes’. The fact is that fundamental standards of warfare such as the prohibition to torture and kill prisoners, the prohibition to take hostages and use them for blackmail and intimidation, and the prohibition to kill noncombatant civilians are violated as a matter of strategy to produce a psychological impact on a target – often the government and society. The terrorist actor plays to various audiences using the victims as skin on the drum to reach either - the political opponent or his constituency; - the terrorist’s own constituency; - rival groups; - national or international public opinion.



There are several types of terrorist groups. In terms of motivation one can distinguish between political, criminal, religious and pathological groups. Political terrorism can be subdivided into insurgent, vigilante and regime terrorism. Insurgent terrorism, in turn, can be subdivided into social-revolutionary, racist, ethnic-separatist, and single-issue terrorism.

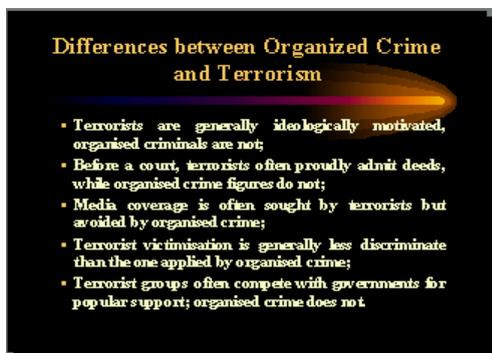
4. Typology of terrorism

The place of various terrorist groups vis-à-vis state and society is also to be taken into account. Are the terrorists in liaison with a foreign state actor and instrumentalized by it?



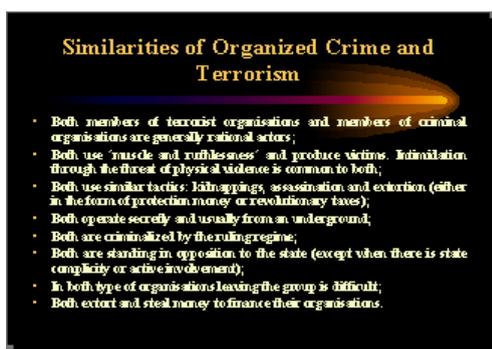
Are they acting as strong arm of a political party or some wing of government? When we look at Asia we find, according to some observers, examples of both. However, in the following remarks I will largely concentrate on links with organized crime and drugs. The situation is complicated by the fact that some terrorist groups use drugs and other illegal products of organized crime as money maker while, on the other hand, some organized crime groups use tactics of terrorism as coercive instruments. The following two overheads show both the differences and similarities between organized crime and terrorist groups.

5. Differences between organized crime and terrorism



(1) Terrorists are generally ideologically motivated, organized criminals are not;. (2) Before a court, terrorists often proudly admit deeds, organized crime figures do not; (3) Media coverage is often sought by terrorists but avoided by organized crime; (4) Terrorist victimization is generally less discriminate than the one applied by organized crime; (5) Terrorist groups often compete with governments for popular support; organized crime does not.

6. Similarities of organized crime and terrorism

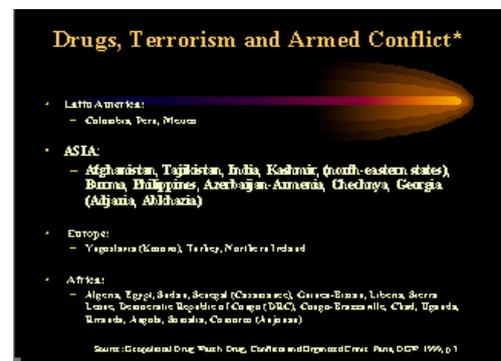


(1) Both members of terrorist organizations and members of criminal organizations are generally rational actors; (2) Both use 'muscle and ruthlessness' and produce victims Intimidation through the threat of physical violence is common to both; (3) Both use similar tactics: kidnappings, assassination and extortion (either in the form of

protection money or revolutionary taxes); (4) Both operate secretly and usually from an underground; (5) Both are criminalized by the ruling regime; (6) Both are standing in opposition to the state (except when there is state complicity or active involvement); (7) In both type of organizations leaving the group is difficult; (8) Both extort and steal money to finance their organizations.

There are, then a number of similarities. Terrorist groups generally need activities associated with organized crime for financing their political activities. Organized crime groups sometimes use tactics of terrorism – bombings, kidnappings – to put force behind their extortionist demands. Often there is a symbiosis between the two. Terrorists provide protection to drug traffickers who, in turn, pay them a tax for this service. The situation differs from country to country. Illegal drugs are the chief commodity of organized crime and we find drug money as fuel in at least 30 ongoing terrorist campaigns.

7. Drugs, terrorism and armed conflict



When we look at Asia we have to understand some of the geostrategic dynamics. The Indian subcontinent is in the north flanked by Afghanistan and Myanmar, the two largest producers of heroin in the world. India itself is the largest producer of legal

heroin and morphine. India is also engaged in border disputes with Pakistan and China and has gone to war with both of these, now nuclear, powers over disputes about the status and borders of parts of Kashmir, and Assam¹.

The nuclear stalemate between India and China and India and Pakistan powers has, according to some observers, encouraged a war-by-proxy strategy whereby representatives of the armed oppositions in the opponent's state are either tolerated and given a safe haven or even encouraged ideologically, logistically or operationally². This is most clearly the case in Kashmir but the phenomenon of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' is much more widespread. Strange bedfellows are not only found among political actors but also among criminal actors like organized crime groups. Geopolitique des Drogues concluded last year that: In some cases in some countries it is difficult to distinguish criminal from political actors. "In several countries, such as Cambodia, China, India, Pakistan, and Vietnam, some sectors of the military or of the intelligence community are involved in the drug trade. Practically

everywhere in the region, politicians and senior officials participate directly in drug activities or protect them"³.



A case in point is the coup d'etat that toppled the Fijian government in May 2000. Hidden behind a fight for ethnic solidarity and Fijian supremacy, was a struggle for natural and financial resources. Illicit profit from the timber industry was an opportunity for George Speight to exploit the economy and political system of the country.

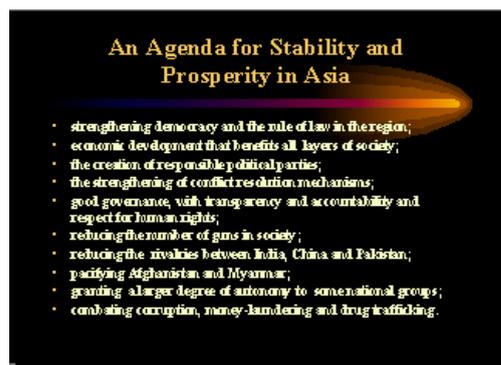
Had the military not turned against him in July, Speight's plan to use government power to gain control over Fiji's natural resources might have succeeded. However, the rule of law had become dysfunctional and organized crime immediately exploited the opportunity to stockpile 357 kilograms of heroin on the island. Another, more recent example, is the current border clashes between Burmese and Thai troops in northern Thailand. In mid February, the Myanmar Government launched a military operation targeted at the Shan State Army (SSA) and accused Thailand of assisting Shan State Army rebels. Accusations have also been made by the Thai Government who publicly stated the Myanmar military to be heavily involved in the drug trade and were supported by the soldiers of

¹ China also makes territorial claims on Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, while India claims Aksai Chin, now held by China. In 1962 the two countries went to war over a border dispute. – *The Economist*, 10 February 2001, p. 65.

² Futures and U.S. Strategy. St. Monica, RAND, 1998. Zalmay Khalilzad and Ian O. Lesser (Eds.). Sources of Conflict in the 21st Century, p.156. The authors write: "The first driver is Indian, Pakistani and Chinese decisions with respect to supporting insurgencies in each other Countries" (...) China has supported insurgencies in the Indian northeast off and on for more than four decades, and India, historically has assisted the Tibetan insurgents in their struggle against Beijing". Op. cit., Futures and U.S. Strategy. St. Monica, RAND, 1998, p. 156-157.

³ Observatoire Geopolitique des Drogues, The World Geopolitics of Drugs 1998/1999. Paris. OGD, April 2000, p. 34.

the Wa State Army, who are responsible for the majority of the methamphetamine production in the border areas. The Thai authorities further stated that the sole reason for the military offensive against the SSA was because it had fought with the Wa and disrupted the drug trade.



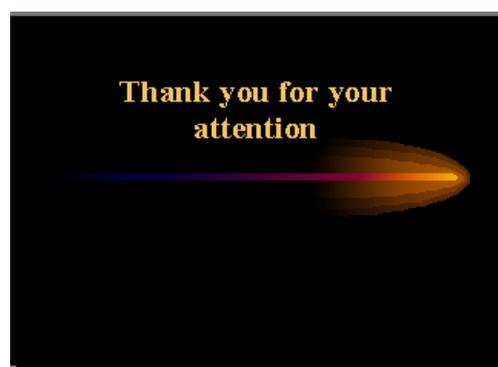
CONCLUSION

Given the size of the population, the border problems, the poverty, the corruption, human rights abuses, the level of drug addiction, religious sectarianism, the presence of refugees abroad and internally displaced persons, the quality of government or lack thereof, and high crime levels and the presence of armed forces in politics, it is no wonder that there is much conflict in Asia. That this conflict often takes violent forms has to do with the political culture and the fact that some political establishments are not responsive to ordinary political lobbying and conventional politics. Many political parties in the region maintain troops of young militants who can be instrumentalized for demonstrations, rioting and intimidation. Some of these groups use their strong-arm tactics for both political and criminal purposes and the borderline between organized crime and acts of terrorism becomes at times fuzzy. What makes the situation much worse is the alleged involvement of domestic security forces and foreign intelligence services in both drugs trafficking and repressive as well as agitational violence.

The tasks ahead to change all this are clear:

- strengthening democracy and the rule of law in the region;
- economic development that benefits all layers of society;
- the creation of responsible political parties;
- the strengthening of conflict resolution mechanisms;
- good governance, with transparency and accountability and respect for human rights;
- reducing the number of guns in society;
- reducing the rivalries between India, China and Pakistan;
- pacifying Afghanistan and Myanmar;
- granting a larger degree of autonomy to some national groups.
- combatting corruption, money-laundering and drug trafficking.

This is admittedly a heavy agenda but then the situation is serious and will get more serious if no bold initiatives are taken on the national and regional level.



Thank you for your attention.

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