

YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025

Topic Descriptions

Committee: International Security and Crime

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Topic #1: Infiltration of State Institutions

Introduction & Background

Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) is defined by the United Nations as the serious profit-motivated criminal actions of an international nature where more than one country is involved. The rise in transnational organized crime is attributed to and facilitated by advancements in technology, transportation, and communication. Criminal organizations exploit gaps in law enforcement and take advantage of global supply chains to conduct illicit activities on an international scale. Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) pose significant challenges to global security, stability, and development. TCOs erode governance structures, and most importantly, fuel corruption. The interconnected nature of these international criminal networks makes them difficult to dismantle, requiring coordinated efforts at both national and international levels. In countries with weak governance, there are corrupt officials who turn a blind eye to TOC activity. TOC networks insinuate themselves into the political process in a variety of ways. This is often accomplished through direct bribery, setting up shadow economies (infiltrating financial and security sectors through coercion or corruption), and positioning themselves as alternate providers of governance, security, services, and livelihoods. As they expand, TOC networks threaten stability, building alliances with political leaders, financial institutions, law enforcement, foreign intelligence, and security agencies.

Current Status

TOC is increasingly infiltrating states, further weakening governance by stifling growth towards the afflicted countries' economies. The growing connection between TOC groups, government institutions (including intelligence services), and high-level business figures in some states poses a significant threat to economic growth by obstructing the proper flow of funds to a nations' development. In Somalia, the militant group al-Shabaab has exploited the country's prolonged instability and lack of effective governance. Events in Somalia with the al-Shabaab group, for example, have demonstrated how criminal control of territory and piracy ransoms generate substantial illicit revenue, promoting further government instability.

Themes to Consider

Transnational organized crime contributes to violence, instability, and social harm in communities. It fuels drug addiction and exploits vulnerable populations through human trafficking. TCOs often originate in impoverished nations, leaving them in a perpetual cycle of violence. Corruption often takes advantage of these violence-crippled nations. The economic cost of transnational organized crime in the context of state infiltration specifically is substantial, with loss estimates reaching trillions of dollars annually. TOC stifles legitimate economic activity, distorts markets, and disrupts efforts for sustainable development. This committee must focus on tackling these intricate issues in the view of government cooperation, and specific actions. The situation regarding TCOs is extremely volatile, and must be handled as such for the safety of both a country's people and international ties.

Discussion Questions

1. What regions of the world require the most attention for these various issues, and how does tackling the penetration of corruption positively impact the rest of the world?
2. How big of a problem are criminal organizations in your country, and is it to the point where your country's own representation would view the topic differently?
3. What benefits does your country see with dismantling criminal organizations in countries penetrated in their governments by corruption.

Resources

1. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). "Transnational Organized Crime: The Globalized Illegal Economy." UNODC, n.d.
<https://www.unodc.org/toc/en/crimes/organized-crime.html>.

Description: An overview of Transnational Organized Crime from a wide lens covering the general aspects of it.

2. Lahneman, William J., and Omar Serrano. "Organized Crime and Corruption of State Institutions." Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland (CISSM), n.d.
<https://cisism.umd.edu/research-impact/publications/organized-crime-and-corruption-state-institutions>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: An overview of organized crime as it is present in various regions, looking at each region individually, such as Latin America and Europe.

3. Chêne, Marie. "Organised Crime and Corruption." U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, n.d. <https://www.u4.no/publication/organised-crime-and-corruption.pdf>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Looking into the linkage of organized crime and state institutions, and describing how that connection is formed.

4. Naím, Moisés. "Mafia States." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2012.
<https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2012/04/mafia-states?lang=en>.

Description: An overview of the many misconceptions of organized crime and the background of how organized crime comes to power.

5. *Edgardo Buscaglia and Jan van Dijk*. "Controlling Organized Crime And Corruption In The Public Sector." UNODC, n.d.
https://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/forum/forum3_Art1.pdf.

Description: Covers the ties of the political sphere and various social-economic factors, looking at both the causes and areas to which corruption spreads.

6. Catalina Perdomo and Catalina Uribe Burcher "Protecting Politics: Deterring the Influence of Organized Crime on Local Democracy." International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), n.d.

<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/protecting-politics-deterring-the-influence-of-organized-crime-on-local-democracy.pdf>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: A specific breakdown of the political ties organized crime has, both in the source of the problem and its implications.

Topic #2: Gene Theft

Introduction & Background

Gene Theft (or DNA theft) is the act of acquiring the genetic material of another individual, usually from public places, without his or her permission. Genetic material is left behind everyday in public places, whether it be on a used coffee cup or tissue sent to a company for analysis. Any of these methods of gaining genetic material poses a high risk of facilitating identity theft and other security concerns in citizens and public officials. Gene theft is mostly unregulated, but will be easily linked to further crimes in the future such as blackmail or the interception of biometrically secure material. The exposure of medical information or genetic ties also pose a threat to privacy.

Current Status

In December 2023, 23andMe reported that hackers accessed ancestry profile data from 6.9 million users. About 5.5 million of these profiles contained information on the percentage of DNA shared with genetic matches. This issue today is not moderated through international law. This issue presents itself as a modern day security concern which will grow to have international concerns. Both addressing this problem and preventing this problem is of great importance in the present. In the past, DNA theft was of a much lesser concern, as DNA testing was prohibitively expensive and inaccessible to the vast majority of individuals. However, today, direct-to-consumer (DTC) genetic testing is becoming increasingly accessible through being relatively inexpensive and widely available. Since 2006, gene theft has been a criminal offense under U.K law under the Human Tissue Act of 2004. Similarly in 2009, Germany passed the Human Genetic Examination Act which restricts genetic testing in employment, insurance, and prenatal diagnosis. Consent of the sharing of these genetic materials can result in a prison statement. Other countries have put in place similar measures. For example, the United States passed the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA). However, even this does not address the nonconsensual collection and analysis of DNA. When this theft crosses international borders, there is no regulation as of today, and must be addressed before further implications run their course.

Themes to Consider

Currently, within individual borders, progress has been made, although no actions today have been taken to tackle or pursue those guilty of gene theft through direct or preventative measures. Current laws in place act more so as a deterrent as opposed to punitive measures. Furthermore, across international lines, no move to address the issue has been made, and especially no action to pursue the issue. No steps have been taken to address gene theft, nor any action to pursue the issue. Consider the modern relevance of genetic data security, the benefits of addressing gene theft, and whether to focus on preventative or actionable measures. Weigh the trade-offs, such as privacy concerns versus security, and consider potential challenges in implementing popular solutions, like data sharing and consent complexities. In the scope of this committee, the perspective of the United Nations acting as a grand moderator for these actions should be considered. The relatively new nature of this crime warrants extra caution in how the situation must be handled. Individual countries should also address the

relevance of this issue to them as well. The question if traditional laws are expansive enough to cover the issue or if specific laws and actions need to be taken is also important to be considered.

Discussion Questions

1. Given the increasing concerns about gene theft, how relevant is this issue to your country?
2. Should Gene Theft require long-term solutions through preventative measures, or is Gene Theft a rapidly escalating problem that requires immediate intervention?
3. With a developing and relatively new issue such as gene theft, what is the best way to tackle the issue? What kinds of preventive or corrective measures need to be taken for this unique issue?

Resources

1. Joh, Elizabeth. "Dna Theft: Recognizing The Crime Of Nonconsensual Genetic Collection And Testing" Boston University Law Review, n.d.

<https://www.bu.edu/law/journals-archive/bulr/documents/joh.pdf>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: An overview of the types of gene theft, and an argument for the need for law to enforce it.

2. Kmietowicz, Zosia. "An Argument for the Pressing Need for Laws Against Gene Theft." NCBI, September 20, 2004. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1122387/>.

Description: An argument for the pressing need for laws against gene theft.

3. Hunt, Katie. "Human DNA can now be pulled from thin air or a footprint on the beach. Here's what that could mean." *CNN*, May 15, 2023.

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/05/15/health/human-dna-captured-from-air-scni/index.html>.

Description: An explanation of the threat gene theft poses, and the implications it may have.

4. "Gene testing firm 23andMe confirms legitimacy of stolen data sold by hackers: Report." *The Hindu*, October 2023.

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/gene-testing-firm-23andme-confirms-legitimacy-stolen-data-hackers/article67398901.ece>.

Description: A coverage of the 23 and Me genetic theft incident.

5. "China's Collection of Genomic and Healthcare Data from America: Risks and Actions." Office of the Director of National Intelligence, February 2021.

https://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/SafeguardingOurFuture/NCSC_China_Genomics_Fact_Sheet_2021revision20210203.pdf.

(Highly Recommend) Description: An overview on China's genetic collection and acts of theft on US healthcare databases.

6. Cotto, Johnathan. "Jewish Community Concerned After 23andMe Data Stolen." KSAT, October 2023.

<https://www.ksat.com/news/local/2023/10/10/jewish-community-concerned-after-23andme-data-stolen-exposing-genetic-data-of-millions/>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Coverage of the 23 and Me incident and the racial threat it posed to communities.

Topic #3: Arms Smuggling

Introduction & Background

Arms Trafficking is the illegal movement, transfer, or sale of firearms across national borders or within a country, often associated with criminal networks, terrorist groups, and other illicit activities. Arms trafficking poses a significant threat to international security by fueling conflicts, empowering criminal networks, and worsening humanitarian crises globally. Conflict zones specifically attract the stock of illicitly smuggled weapons. Firearms are the fuel which allow conflict groups to rise and incite violence both domestically and abroad. In regions already afflicted by conflict, firearms only act as an accelerant.

Current Status

Globally, there were approximately 857 million firearms in the hands of civilians in 2017. Of this total, only 12% were reported as registered. Furthermore, the growing issue of modern methods of firearm creation and enhancement must be addressed. The 3D printing of firearms, for example, is an example of a new way unregistered and smuggled firearms are diversifying. The common thread linking the rise in violence has been the wide availability of firearms across Latin America. Firearms can be purchased through messaging apps and criminal groups can easily exchange them for drugs. However, gun violence still occurs even in countries with more constricting firearms laws. Sweden, for example, a country known for its high living standards and social cohesion, has a gun homicide rate of 0.44 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants. The Arms Trade Treaty passed in 2001 sought to internationally tackle the illicit arms trading of small arms and light weapons. However, its effectiveness is limited by state parties' violations of the treaty. Similarly, other efforts have been attempted, but have failed to effectively provide an increased international security in regards to the illicit smuggling of firearms.

Themes to Consider

To contain illicit firearm trading, a holistic and coordinated response, involving the cooperation among states and national law enforcement agencies, is essential. Corruption involving state officials, military personnel, and law enforcement is often intertwined with the illegal arms trade, posing significant challenges to combating Arms Smuggling. The shortcomings of weapon registries must also be addressed from an international lens. Various efforts have been put in place in the past, but the lack of coordination and cooperation across nations has been one of the greatest pitfalls in tackling the issue in the modern day. Letting arms smuggling run rampant results in unmoderated violence and stifles economic growth through the handicap of conflict. Prioritizing both an effective and agreeable active course of action to tackle these networks regarding firearm smuggling is essential to tackling this threat to international security. The focus is on attacking these networks specifically, as well as monitoring and addressing the pressing issue of international conflict and how arms smuggling plays a role in those conflicts across the world.

Discussion Questions

1. As a country in the position to fight arms smuggling, what positive impacts would it have on the economy, turmoil, and general stability of the world?

2. What threats could attacking arms smuggling have on other countries or your own country result in?
3. How would areas of conflicts react to measures placed on them, and what is the best way to navigate those situations?

Resources

1. "Illicit Firearms Trafficking." Europol, 2022.

<https://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas/illicit-firearms-trafficking>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Recent and developing efforts against firearms trafficking.

2. Department of Homeland Security. "Weapons Trafficking." DHS, 2024.

<https://www.dhs.gov/hsi/investigate/weapons-trafficking>.

Description: The illegal export of U.S. weapons, its global impact, and the efforts to combat these activities, as well as understanding and preventing arms smuggling.

3. Amnesty International. "Arms Control." Amnesty International, 2024.

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/arms-control/>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: The Amnesty International Arms Control page highlights the human rights impact of unregulated arms trading and the importance of an Arms Trade Treaty, advocating for stricter weapons regulations.

4. United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs. "Arms Trade." UNODA.

<https://disarmament.unoda.org/convarms/att/>.

(Highly Recommend) Description: Information on the Arms Trade Treaty, which aims to regulate international trade in conventional arms and prevent their illicit trade and diversion.

5. Woolcott, Peter. "Arms Trade Treaty." UN, April 13, 2013.

<https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/att/att.html>.

Description: International law, including historic archives, lectures, and research materials on various legal instruments and treaties.

6. Vázquez del Mercado, Guillermo. "Arms Trafficking Report." GI-TOC, August 2022.

https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/GI-TOC-policy-brief_Arms-trafficking-web-1.pdf.

Description: This policy brief by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime explores issues and trends in arms trafficking, with a focus on policy responses and implications.