# Explain the seven forms of transnational criminality that are in the wheel of terrorism, and explain their relationship to terrorism

Terrorism refers to the threat or exploitation of violence targeted at governments or people as punitive retaliation for past wrongdoing or to effect policy changes favorable to the terrorists. For a long time, terrorism has been a major concern for domestic and international security. September 11 attack in the United States in 2001 marked the hallmark of terrorism threat to global security. The 9/11 attack redirected the global attention to the fight against terrorism as the foremost concern of international security. Other attacks that marked the escalation of terrorism security threat include the bombing of United States embassies in East Africa in 1998 by Al Qaeda terrorists’ operatives, the Pan Am tragedy in Lockerbie, and the 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City. Escalation of terrorists' attacks makes the fight against terrorism a primary goal for foreign policy and homeland security. Criminologists are on the frontline in the fight against terrorism. The main concern of criminologists about terrorism is the study of the link between criminality and terrorism. This paper looks at the relationship between the seven forms of transnational crimes, which provide the “heptagonal wheel” that drives terrorism across the globe.

The "wheels of terrorism" paradigm" posit seven types of transnational criminality, which form a heptagonal wheel that drives terrorism across the globe. These seven types of transnational criminality include money laundering, computer/cybercrime, human trafficking, illicit drug trafficking, legal business infiltration, illegal arms trafficking, and cultural property destruction. Wheels of terrorism theory propose that the seven spokes of the heptagonal wheel of transnational crimes individually and collectively drives terrorist activities. The seven transnational crimes provide terrorist organizations with the money for financing their terrorist operations.

Illegal drug trafficking is a cash cow for many terrorist cells across the globe. The Taliban, for instance, finance their terrorist operations using their vast opium industry in Afghanistan. Similarly, terrorist groups in Colombia earn money from the coca business in Latin America. Human trafficking similarly bankrolls terrorists’ cells across the globe. Human trafficking involves recruitment, transport, transferring, keeping or receipt of people through means such as coercion or threat or any other means of kidnapping, coercion, deceit, fraud, or abuse of vulnerability position or power to gain a person’s consent to control for exploitation. Exploitation of trafficked persons takes the form of prostitution and similar sexual exploitation, slave labor, forced labor or practices, organs removal, or servitude.

Computer crime/cybercrime encompasses credit card fraud, extortions, and cyber breach. Terrorists not only use cyber crime as a source of financing but also as a weapon for both psychological warfare and physical destruction. State and non-state terrorist actors stage terrorists' attacks for political reasons. Although cyber terrorists have not yet injured or killed anybody in the real sense, they are responsible for disruption of government networks and anonymous infiltration of police departments in places such as Estonia and Ferguson in the United States. Cyber terrorist mainly stages cyber attacks as a psychological warfare tool with similar effects like conventional terrorist attack (Shelley, 2005). Some hacker criminals have a political terrorist motive behind their attack. Several cyber criminals are affiliates of online or conventional terrorists' organizations known as a cyber activist or "hacktivists" groups. Among the typical examples of "hacktivist" terror groups include state and non-state terrorist actors such as the Anonymous, Iran, Islamic State, North Korea, Hamas, and Russia (Shelley, 2005).

Unlike other transnational criminals, these "hacktivists" criminals are not often interested in money, but the furtherance of a political goal to agitate social change, obtain political concessions, or bring the enemy to its knees. Occasionally, cyber criminals are peaceful, but in most circumstances, they are viciously violent. There is a thin line between peaceful cyber criminals and vicious cyber terrorists. In fact, some “hacktivists” groups double as peaceful and hostile terrorists. For instance, the Anonymous hacktivists are responsible for hacking of the Ferguson police department as well as an “electronic Holocaust” attack targeted at Israel in protest against Israelis treatment of Palestinians. Similarly, Islamic hacktivists exploit the internet for recruitment of terrorists as well as raising finances for social welfare programs, and also for fraud to get money for terrorist operations or spread information to stir fear and discourage civilians. State terrorist actors also use the internet for spying and also to destroy enemy states by crashing several systems. For instance, Russia staged a cyber terrorist attack against Estonia in 2007 using mass denial-of-service viruses on government systems. Russia also staged a cyber terrorist attack on Ukraine’s power and airport infrastructure in 2016. The motive behind these cyber crimes was to coerce political concessions through fear. As such, cyber terrorism mimics conventional terrorism, although it is more subtle in its methods (Gross, Canetti, & Vashdi, 2016).

The synergy between transnational crime and terrorist operations has evolved over the years to produce a nexus of crime-terror interaction. Scholars of international organized crime posit the convergence of transnational terrorism and international organized crime (Makarenko, 2004). In particular, scholars underscore the congruence of the operational and behavioral methods of transnational and terrorist criminals. Nevertheless, scholars of transnational organized crime maintain their position on the incongruence of the goals of terrorists and organized criminals. They point out that the main goal of organized criminals is for personal profit, while terrorists’ goal is for political conflict. Accordingly, the intelligence and law enforcement agencies focus their attention on mainstream theories of investigating terrorists’ methods with no attention on the motive in their quest to survey and spot the two types of criminals.

Although the motives of organized criminals and terrorists are divergent, some studies demonstrate congruence of the motives of the two forms of criminality from a transnational perspective. Latest studies in criminology demonstrate congruency of motives between terrorists and organized criminals dismissing traditional criminology theories that posits an exclusive “methods” congruency between terrorism and organized crime (Makarenko, 2004). In particular, latest studies in criminology identify situational contexts in developing and developed states, which fosters crime-terror interactions. Criminals and terrorists usually exploit similar methods. However, although the motives of the two criminals are often divergent, sometimes the goals of criminals and terrorists converge at some point. In some instances, the terrorists merely replicate the criminal behavior they witness in their neighborhood, borrowing methods such as extortion and credit card fraud. Although the example demonstrates shared methods rather than real interaction, the mimicking of criminals by terrorists usually results in more intimate relationships in a short period. Although such scenarios are uncommon in developed states or developing states with functioning democracies, the combination of ethnic separatism, traditional criminality, and bad governance foster crime-terror interactions as evident in war-torn regions, urban neighborhoods, failed states and penal institutions.

A terror-crime interaction demonstrates the evolution of transnational crime-terrorism synergy to a terror-crime relationship. Shelly and Picarelli (2005) propose five stages of evolution of transnational crime-terrorism synergy into a blossoming terror-crime relationship dubbed "terror-crime interaction spectrum." The spectrum begins with criminals and terrorists mimic of each other’s methods. The criminals and terrorists then begin to trade with each other on goods and services. Trade between criminals and terrorists thrives due to the efficiency of outsourcing services like forgery of passport to an experienced expert than attempting to try and master the required methods personally. Such trade relationships produce a "nexus" built around personal transactions and might not last in the long-run. The subsequent stage of convergence naturally progresses after the establishment of the "nexus" whereby the terrorists and criminals start to work together more consistently and also share individual goals and working techniques.

Shelly and Picarelli (2002) give examples of terror-crime interactions in places such as Chechnya, Brazil, Paraguay's Tri-Border area, and Brazil, where concentrated forms of organized crime and terrorist operations flourishes with blurred distinction between the two groups. The majority of people in the mentioned areas are members of both organized crime and terror groups and carry out different terror and criminal activities (Makarenko, 2004). In such context, the convergence process progresses to the point whereby the terrorists and criminals become one group forming a hybrid group. Terrorism and organized crime are less or more equally significant to the “hybrid” group. Extortion, fraud and similar organized criminal activities finance the group activities. In several instances, the hybrid groups get more concerned with one activity dropping all the other activities completely. Shelly and Picarelli (2002) refer to this as the “transformation” process. However, Shelly and Picarelli (2005) observe that most terror-crime relationships don’t proceed to intimate cooperation and therefore do not reach the merger point. Shelly and Picarelli (2005) further points out that intimate proximity does not necessarily result in collaboration between terror and crime groups. Instead, the terror-crime links is merely a hypothesis for analysis and investigation of the transnational criminality and terrorism link for a holistic understanding of terrorism.

Shelly (2005) posits an antagonistic relationship between established transnational crime and terrorism. Shelly (2005) posits a different link between transnational criminals with state and terrorism. She contends that transnational organized crime flourishes in long-established states. Shelly and Picarelli (2005) observe that transnational organized crime develops parallel to the development of the state and therefore it is dependent on established financial and institutional structures for the transit of its products and investment in their profits. Except in the case of Colombia, Shelly and Picarelli (2005) contends that large established transnational criminal groups rarely associate with terrorist cells. They point out that the long-term financial goals depend on state structures' preservation. She observes that the transnational organized crime groups flourish on corruption and investment in the lawful economy, which limits prosecution risks. Accordingly, transnational criminals are less fearful of state institutions’ power.

However, Shelly and Picarelli (2005) acknowledge that newer transnational crime organizations usually emerge in post-conflict contexts, and flourishes on chaos state and continuous conflict. In such regions characterized by the predominance of the shadowy economy, the criminal organizations are the main actors of the shadow economy. Shelly (2005) cites the existence of established crime organizations in Latin America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the United States. She observes that the functional democracy and good governance in these regions have never stood in the way or attempted to suppress these organized crime groups and therefore no need for the group to retaliate through terrorist attacks.

Shelly (2005) observes that transnational crime groups have flourished in Japan, Columbia, Nigeria, Italy, China, Mexico, Russia, and the United States despite repression from fascist regimes in Soviet Union, Italy, and China as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the United States. She contends that the survival of these transnational crime groups results from their service to the state through corrupt or collusive relationships with state institutions, or their evolution to fill gaps left by the state in the provision of public services such as security. Established transnational organized criminals have no link with terrorism due to their reliance on the secure state for laundering of large money via real estate and financial institutions, and state contracts.  Like Shelly and Pcarelli (2005), Shelly (2005) observes that the newer crime groups in unruly states are currently pursuing partnerships with terrorist groups. Shelly (2005) cites the main driver of this terror-crime alliance as the lack of long-term political horizons and financial strategies by the two groups. She observes that both the criminals and terrorists are not in fear of corrupt and ineffective law enforcement authorities in war-torn regions.

Since the end of the bipolar world in the 1990s, the subsequent plummeting of state financing of terrorism rendered transnational organized crime as the cash cow for financing terrorist cells across the globe. Terrorists borrowed the narco-terrorism model of Latin America in the 1980s to exploit crime as the main force behind terrorism evolution. Therefore, the 1990s consolidated crime-terror nexus. The parallel metamorphosis of transnational organized crime and terrorism underscores the organizational and operational similarities between the two groups. Terrorist and criminals read the same manual and also acts as role-models to each other through adaptation of success of each other. The knowledge of the terror-crime continuum is therefore important for an effective fight against the evolving and repeatedly converging threats from terrorists and transnational criminals. Newer groups have no interest in secure state and therefore most often partner with terrorist as their shadowy economy thrives on chaos.

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