VIOLENT NON-STATE ACTORS (VNSA)

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VNSA - General Info

- Primary, secondary, and tertiary conflict actors

- Interstate, Intrastate and Non-state/Sub-state conflicts

- Violent Non-State Actors:

    a) use violence to achieve their goals

    b) are not integrated within formalized state structures

- Violence that involves violent non-state actors is often described as unconventional

- Violent non-state actors involved in a low-intensity conflict may prefer the status quo over negotiation and mediation because their power is much lower

Typology of War Participants

- 1. Members of the armed forces according to international law:
  - *Combatants – members of regular or irregular armed forces*
  - *Non-combatants - not intended for combat duties (medics, clerics).*
  - 2. Civilians

- Real fighters in modern wars:

a) Conventional soldiers/army

b) Insurgents, guerrillas and rebels/partisans

c) Terrorists

d) Mercenaries, PSC/PMC

e) Foreign volunteers

f) Warlords

g) Child soldiers

h) Paramilitary units and death squads

i) Militias

j) Marauders

Factors Affecting the Rise of VNSA

- End of Cold War and the emergence of a globalized world and modern technologies

- Socioeconomic factors and absence of goods

- Repressive politics

- Poverty and income inequality

- Weakness of security institutions

- State collapse

- Individual explanations (rural vs. urban, age, education, socio-economic status, unemployment, socio-psychological level)

VNSA Typology according to Williams

- Insurgency

- Militia

- Paramilitary units

- Terrorist groups

- Warlords

- Criminal organizations and gangs

- Motivations and purpose

- Strength and scope

- Funding and access to resources

- Organizational structure

- Role of violence

- Relationship between VNSA and state

- Functions of VNSAs for members and supporters

VNSA Typology according to Ezrow

- Insurgencies

- Warlords and Marauders

- Paramilitary units

- Terrorist Organizations

- Private military companies

- Organized crime and gangs

- Motivation

- Strategy and tactics

- Funding and access to resources

- Organizational structure

- Scope and power

- Victims

- Legitimacy and popularity

Table III.1 Types of Violent Non-state Actors and their Key Characteristics

Group	Motivation	Strategy and tactics	Key group threatened/ victim	Organizational structure	Scope and power	Legitimacy and popularity
De facto state	Political: set up a state	Provide state services and armed defence; hold territory	State	Tightly organized; hierarchical	Very powerful; territorial control	High legitimacy
Political organizations with militant wings	Political: influence policy	Provide party platform and armed defence	State	Tightly organized; hierarchical	Somewhat powerful	High legitimacy; public support
Insurgency	Political: varies	Mostly armed conflict; hold territory	State and society	Somewhat tightly organized; somewhat hierarchical	Somewhat powerful; some territorial control	Some legitimacy
Terror organization	Political: varies	Engage the media; psychological warfare; kill civilians	Society	Tightly organized; somewhat hierarchical	Not powerful	Little legitimacy
Terror network	Political: amorphous	Engage the media; psychological warfare; kill civilians	Society	Cellular/loose; somewhat hierarchical	Not powerful	Little legitimacy
Marauding rebels	Economic/ opportunistic	Loot and pillage; kill civilians	Society (state may have already collapsed)	Loose	Not powerful; temporary control of some towns or villages	Little legitimacy
Warlord	Economic/ opportunistic	Loot and pillage; predation	Society (state may have already collapsed)	Somewhat organized around charismatic warlord	Somewhat powerful; some control over territory	Little legitimacy
Organized crime	Economic/ opportunistic	Corruption, crime and violence	State, society, individuals	Tightly organized; formerly hierarchical, now flatter hierarchy	Very powerful; some territorial sphere of influence; may control transactions and flows of goods	Little legitimacy
Gang	Economic/ opportunistic	Petty crime and violence	Individuals and society	Somewhat loose; somewhat hierarchical	Not powerful but becoming more dangerous	Little legitimacy
PSC	Economic/ opportunistic	Gun-for-hire; earn profit and maintain stability	State, other violent non-state actors	Tightly organized; hierarchical	Somewhat powerful but does not control territory	Little legitimacy
Paramilitary	Economic/ political	Armed conflict; possibly hold territory	State, other violent non-state actors, individuals	Tightly organized	Somewhat powerful; sometimes controls territory	Little legitimacy

VNSA Typology according to Schneckener

Table 1: Types of Armed Non-State Actors

	Change vs. Status Quo	Territorial vs. Non-Territorial	Physical vs. Psychological Use of Violence	Political/Ideological vs. Profit-Driven Motivation
Rebels, Guerrillas	Change	Territorial	Physical	Political
Militias	Status quo	Territorial Non-territorial	Physical Psychological	Political
Clan Chiefs, Big Men	Status quo	Territorial	Physical	Political
Warlords	Status quo	Territorial	Physical Psychological	Profit-driven
Terrorists	Change	Non-territorial	Psychological	Political
Criminals, Mafia, Gangs	Status quo	Non-territorial	Psychological	Profit-driven
Mercenaries, PMCs/PSCs	Indifferent	Territorial	Physical	Profit-driven
Marauders, 'Sobels'	Indifferent	Non-territorial	Psychological	Profit-driven

Insurgency

- The primary raison d'être of these groups is to achieve some political goal

- Territorial control

- Strategy - irregular attacks and war of attrition

- Hierarchical structure, in recent years there has been decentralization

- A threat to the legitimacy of the state

- Four basic types: **liberationist, separatist, reformist/revolutionary, and religious/traditional.**

Summary Points

- Insurgencies have often been mistaken for terrorist groups.
- Insurgencies are much more powerful than terrorist groups, but they are also more constrained.
- Insurgencies often use terrorism as a tactic, but their primary strategy is to engage in armed struggle and to win over the hearts and minds of a constituency.
- Insurgencies have had to change how they fund themselves due to losses in state sponsorship.
- Insurgencies that want to secede from their host state and have control over a defined territory become de facto states.

Insurgency

Insurgencies that commit acts of terrorism (hold territory)	Terrorist groups (do not hold territory)
Boko Haram (Nigeria)	ETA
IS (Syria and Iraq)	Baader-Meinhof Gang
FARC (Colombia)	Weather Underground
Al-Shabaab (Somalia)	Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN)
Taliban (Afghanistan)	Red Brigades
PKK (Turkey)	Aum Shinrikyo
LTTE (Sri Lanka)	Abu Nidal Organization
Naxalites (India)	Abu Sayyaf
Haqqani Network (Afghanistan)	Jemaah Islamiyah
Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (Philippines)	Japanese Red Army
Shining Path (Peru)	Egyptian Islamic Jihad

Terrorist Organizations

- A deliberate form of politically motivated violence

- Lack of territorial character

- Low threat to state legitimacy (very little public support)

- Strategy - psychological impact, shock a wide audience, attacks mainly on civilians

- Structure - currently mainly network

- Arquilla a Ronfeldt (2001) - Networks and Netwars: The Future of Terror, Crime, and Militancy

- Zelinsky a Shubik (2008) - hierarchy, franchise, venture capital, a brand
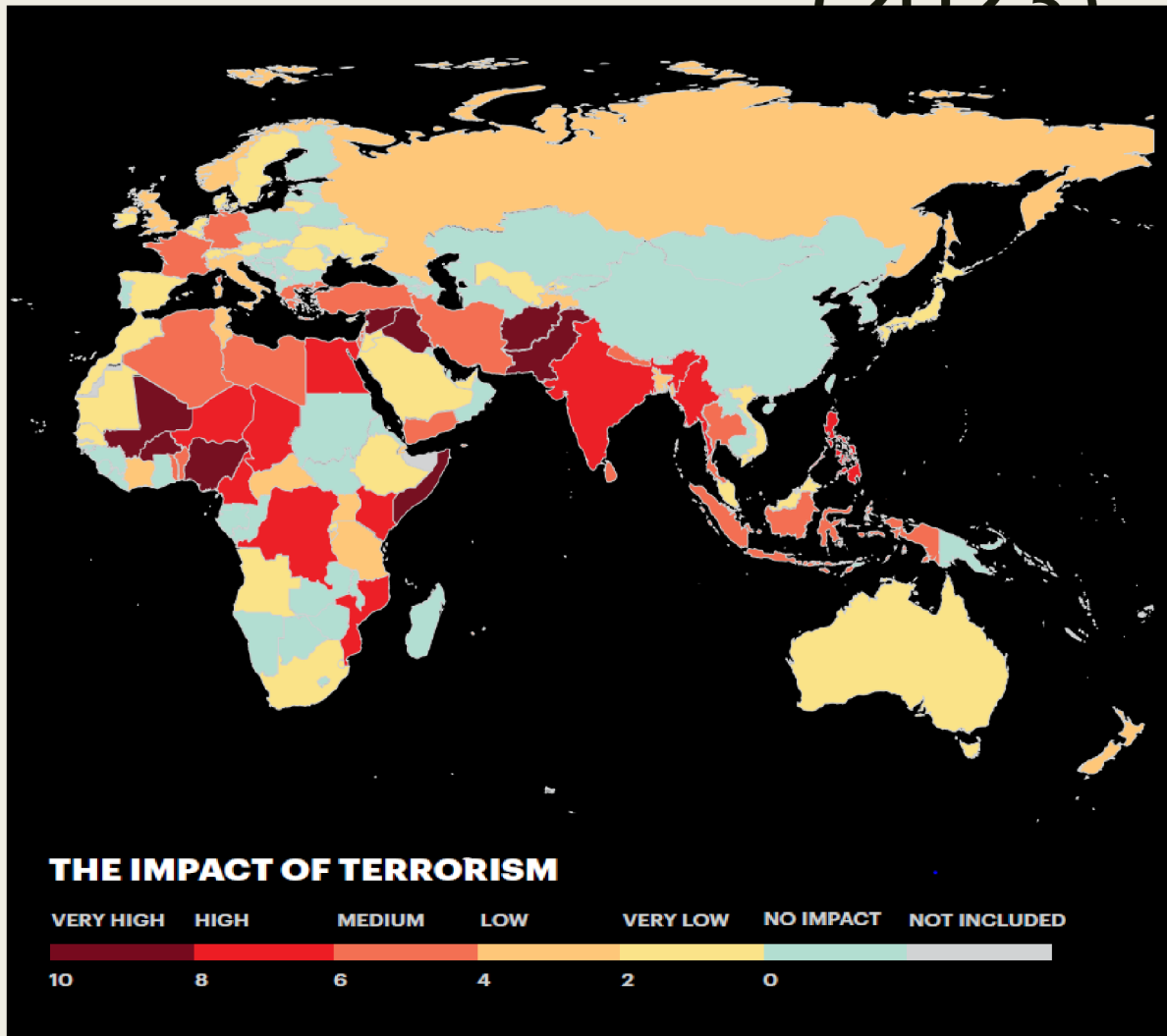

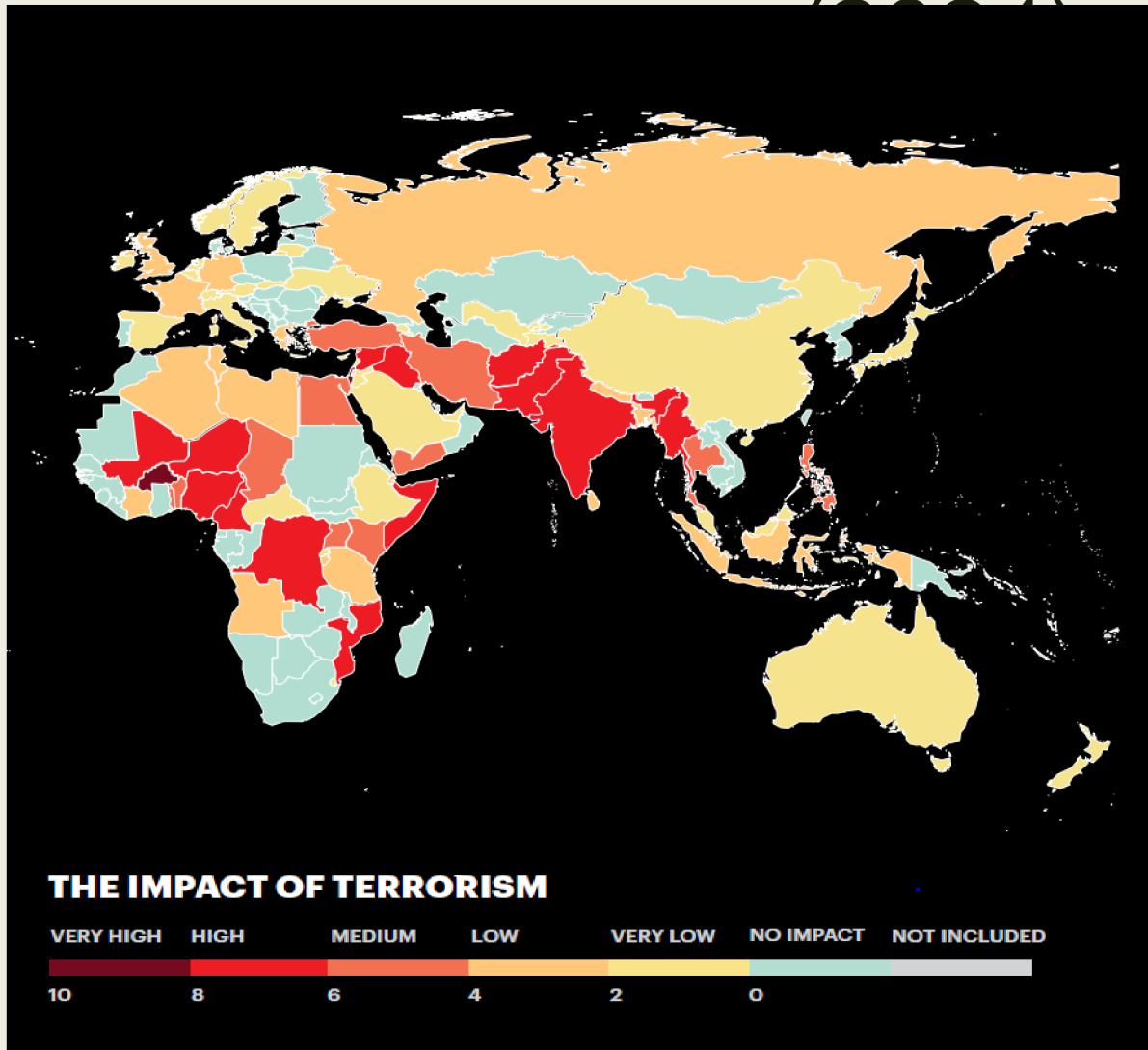Chain network   Star or hub network   All-channel network

Figure 3.11 Basic types of networks (Arquilla and Ronfeldt).

Trends of Contemporary Terrorism (2023)

THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM

VERY HIGH | HIGH | MEDIUM | LOW | VERY LOW | NO IMPACT | NOT INCLUDED
10 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE
1	Afghanistan	8.822	↔
2	Burkina Faso	8.564	↑ 2
3	Somalia	8.463	↔
4	Mali	8.412	↑ 3
5	Syria	8.161	↑ 1
6	Pakistan	8.160	↑ 3
7	Iraq	8.139	↓ 5
8	Nigeria	8.065	↓ 3
9	Myanmar (Burma)	7.977	↑ 1
10	Niger	7.616	↓ 2
11	Cameroon	7.347	↑ 1
12	Mozambique	7.330	↓ 1
13	India	7.175	↔
14	Democratic Republic of the Congo	6.872	↑ 2
15	Colombia	6.697	↓ 1
16	Egypt	6.632	↓ 1
17	Chile	6.619	↑ 1
18	Philippines	6.328	↓ 1
19	Chad	6.168	↔
20	Kenya	6.163	↔
21	Iran	5.688	↑ 5
22	Yemen	5.616	↓ 1
23	Türkiye	5.600	↔
24	Indonesia	5.502	↔
25	Israel	5.489	↑ 5
26	Thailand	5.430	↓ 4
27	Togo	4.915	↑ 49
28	Benin	4.840	↑ 23

Trends of Contemporary Terrorism

THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM

VERY HIGH | HIGH | MEDIUM | LOW | VERY LOW | NO IMPACT | NOT INCLUDED

10   8   6   4   2   0

RANK	COUNTRY	SCORE	RANK CHANGE
1	Burkina Faso	8.571	↑ 1
2	Israel	8.143	↑ 24
3	Mali	7.998	↑ 1
4	Pakistan	7.916	↑ 3
5	Syria	7.890	↔
6	Afghanistan	7.825	↓ 5
7	Somalia	7.814	↓ 4
8	Nigeria	7.575	↔
9	Myanmar	7.536	↔
10	Niger	7.274	↔
11	Iraq	7.078	↓ 5
12	Cameroon	6.98	↓ 1
13	Democratic Republic of the Congo	6.514	↑ 1
14	India	6.324	↓ 1
15	Mozambique	6.267	↓ 3
16	Colombia	6.188	↓ 1
17	Chile	5.679	↓ 1
18	Kenya	5.616	↑ 1
19	Philippines	5.383	↓ 1
20	Egypt	5.221	↓ 3
21	Chad	4.987	↓ 1
22	Palestine	4.966	↑ 6
23	Yemen	4.951	↓ 1
24	Benin	4.898	↑ 3
25	Togo	4.67	↑ 5
26	Iran	4.464	↓ 1
27	Uganda	4.377	↑ 22

Trends of Contemporary Terrorism - Africa
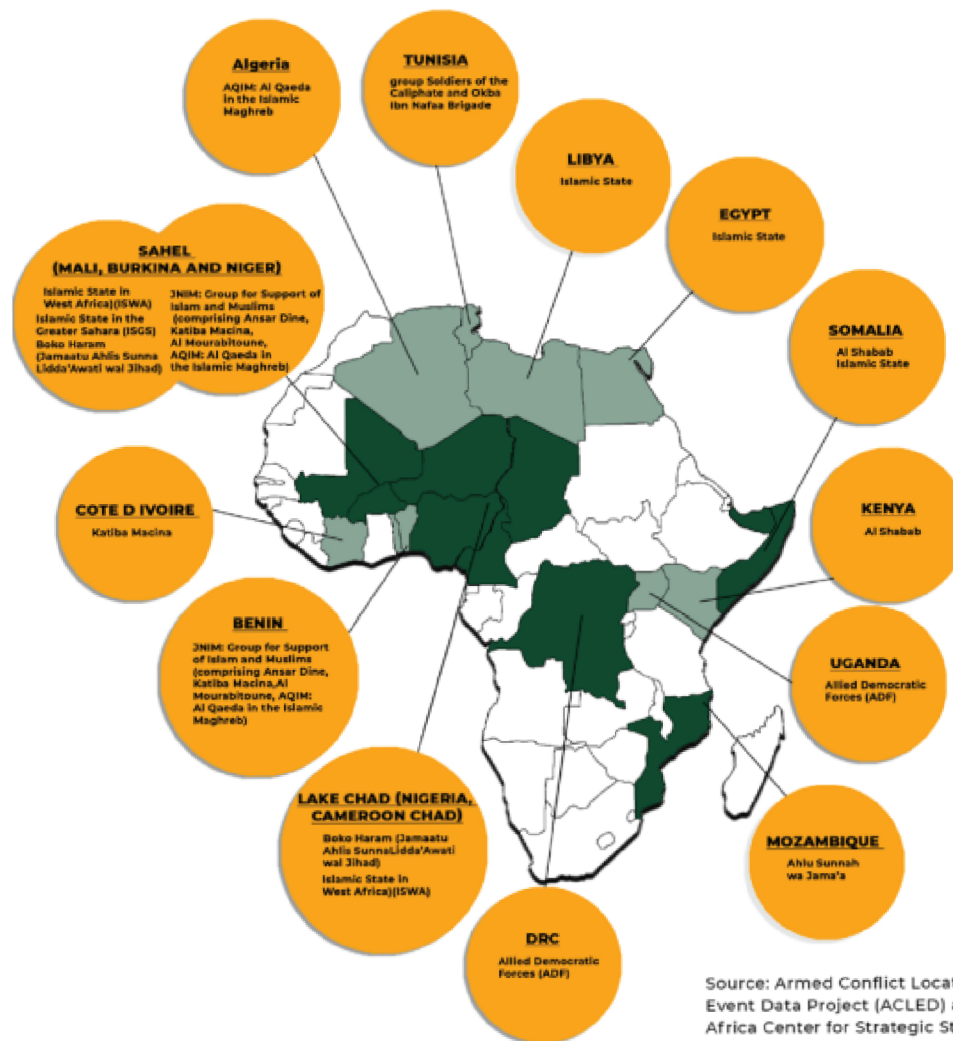
Warlordism

- Primarily economically motivated violence

- Strong territorial character

- Hierarchical structure - headed by a charismatic leader

- A threat especially to weak states

- Strategy - marauding terror, unpredictable and random violence

Summary Points

- Warlords and rebels emerge in states that are failing or have collapsed; they emerge in post-conflict zones.
- Warlords and rebels offer few political benefits and mostly prey on their populations.
- Warlords and rebels undermine state legitimacy but have no ability to administer.
- Warlords and rebels create tremendous security and instability though they claim to offer protection.
- Warlords and rebels have an interest in prolonging a low-intensity conflict to take advantage of the war economy.

Organized Crime and Gangs

- Economic motivation

- Often transnational

- Hierarchical and network structure

- „Organized criminal group' shall mean a **structured group** of **three or more** persons, existing for a **period of time** and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more **serious crimes** or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other **material benefit**."

- Strategy - use of violence to achieve economic goals, attempt to avoid media attention, violence especially in times of uncertainty

- The effort to subvert the structures of the state - they do not want to completely destroy the state

Summary Points

- Organized criminal groups are capable and complex organizations.
- Gangs have evolved and become much more violent and powerful, but they are not as sophisticated as organized criminal groups.
- While gang members are incredibly young and seek out gangs due to a need for camaraderie, organized criminals are often older and more skilled.

Organised Crime - Definition

- OCG defining characters according to Šmíd:

  a) hierarchical structure/organisation

  b) business continuity

  c) corruption

  d) violence

  e) illegal activity

  f) penetrating economic markets

  g) membership exclusivity

  h) non-ideological

- Mafia - type of OCG, arbitration of disputes/illicit agreements between criminals, political dimension.

- Gang - territorial character, less sophisticated methods and activities.

- Syndicate - illegal businesses on a larger, also international scale.

Typology of Organized Crime Groups

- **UNODC defining features**: structure, size, activities, level of transborder operations, identity, level of violence, use of corruption, political influence, penetration into the legitimate economy and level of cooperation with other organizations.

- **A) Standard Hierarchy**   **B) Regional hierarchy**
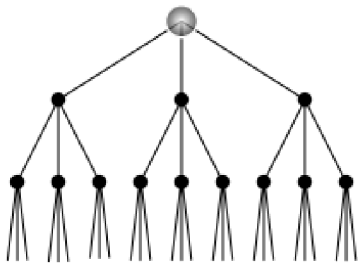
- Single leader
- Clearly defined hierarchy
- Strong systems of internal discipline
- Known by a specific name
- Often strong social or ethnic identity
- Violence essential to activities
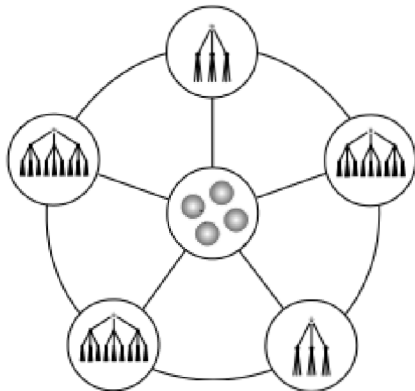- Often have clear influence or control over defined territory
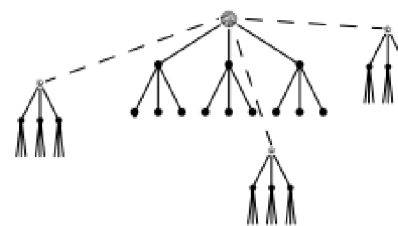
- Single leadership structure
- Line of command from centre
- Degree of autonomy at regional level
- Geographic/regional distribution
- Multiple activities
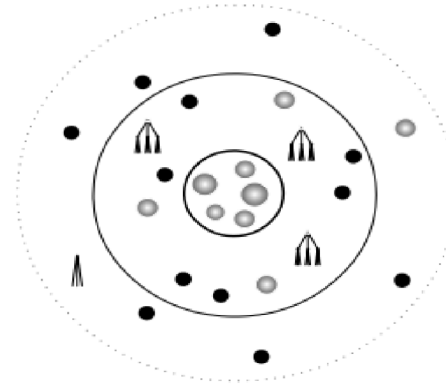- Often strong social or ethnic identity
- Violence essential to activities

Typology of Organized Crime Groups

■ **C) Clustered Hierarchy**

- Consists of a number of criminal groups
- Governing arrangement for the groups present
- Cluster has stronger identity than constituent groups
- Degree of autonomy for constituent groups
- Formation strongly linked to social/historical context
- Relatively rare

D) Core group

- Core group surrounded by a loose network
- Limited number of individuals
- Tightly organized flat structure
- Small size maintains internal discipline
- Seldom has social or ethnic identity
- Only in a limited number of cases known by a specific name

■ **E) Criminal network**
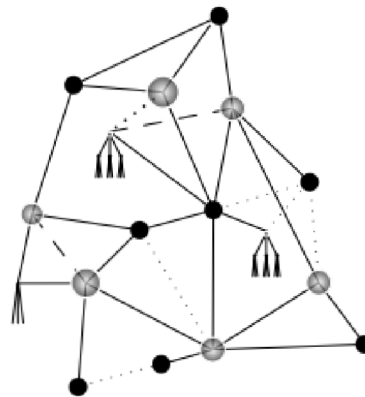
- Defined by activities of key individuals
- Prominence in network determined by contacts/skills
- Personal loyalties/ties more important than social/ethnic identities
- Network connections endure, coalescing around series of criminal projects
- Low public profile – seldom known by any name
- Network reforms after exit of key individuals

Global Organized Crime Index – Measurement and Typology

FIGURE 1.1
Criminality indicators
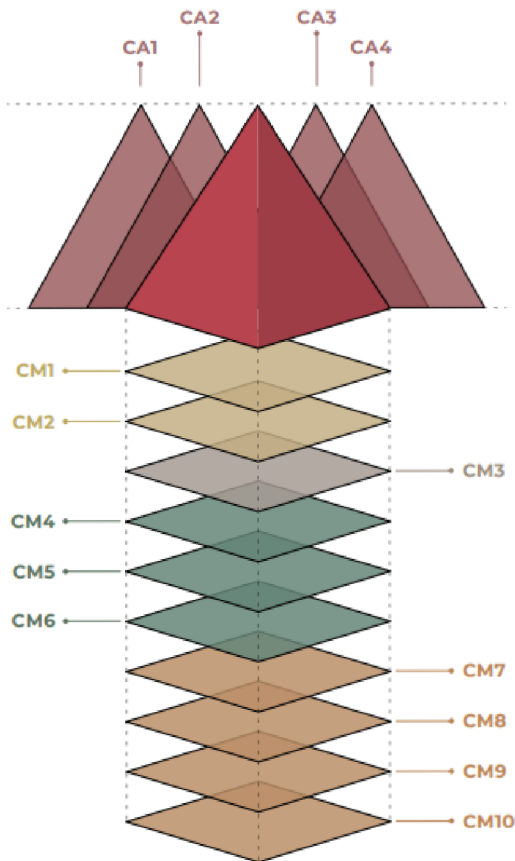
Criminal Actors

▲ **CA1.** Mafia-style groups

▲ **CA2.** Criminal networks

▲ **CA3.** State-embedded actors

▲ **CA4.** Foreign actors

Criminal Markets

◆ **CM1.** Human trafficking

◆ **CM2.** Human smuggling

◆ **CM3.** Arms trafficking

◆ **CM4.** Flora crimes

◆ **CM5.** Fauna crimes

◆ **CM6.** Non-renewable resource crimes

◆ **CM7.** Heroin trade

◆ **CM8.** Cocaine trade

◆ **CM9.** Cannabis trade

◆ **CM10.** Synthetic drug trade

Scoring thresholds – criminality

| 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
NON-EXISTENT TO LITTLE INFLUENCE			MODERATE INFLUENCE		SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE		SEVERE INFLUENCE		

Criminal markets

◆ **CM1.** Human trafficking

◆ **CM2.** Human smuggling

◆ **CM3. Extortion and protection racketeering**

◆ **CM4.** Arms trafficking

◆ **CM5. Trade in counterfeit goods**

◆ **CM6. Illicit trade in excisable goods**

◆ **CM7.** Flora crimes

◆ **CM8.** Fauna crimes

◆ **CM9.** Non-renewable resource crimes

◆ **CM10.** Heroin trade

◆ **CM11.** Cocaine trade

◆ **CM12.** Cannabis trade

◆ **CM13.** Synthetic drug trade

◆ **CM14. Cyber-dependent crimes**

◆ **CM15. Financial crimes**

Private Military Companies

- Economic motivation

- Territoriality is related to the type of task/contract

- Hierarchical structure

- Strategy - they do not have long-term strategies, it always depends on the contract

- Can threaten the state's monopoly on the use of violence, ineffective as a long-term solution

- Executive Outcomes, Blackwaters/Academi, Wagner Group

- United Nations Mercenary Convention 2001 (The convention extends on the Geneva Conventions Protocol I which in Article 47(1) states that a mercenary cannot be a lawful combatant or prisoner of war)

- Mercenaries: foreigner, independence – not a member of the army, economic motivation, obscure recruitment, short-term/ad hoc tasks, engaged in combat

- Military Providing Firms, Military Consulting Firms, Military Supporting Firms

United Nations Mercenary Convention
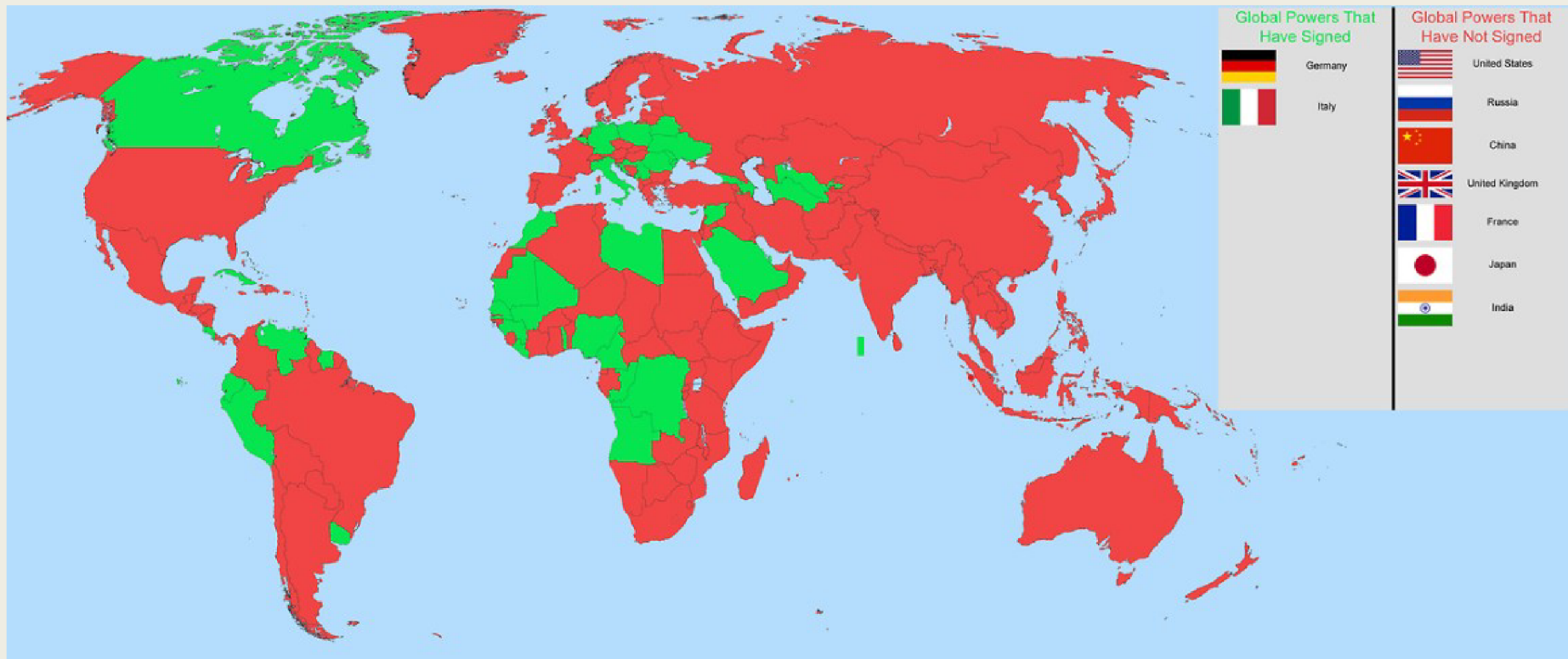
Paramilitary units vs. Pro-government militia

- Organized groups that operate alongside or in support of formal military forces, often composed of civilians or former military personnel. They are typically structured similarly to military organizations and may engage in combat, security operations, or law enforcement activities. While they may support state objectives, their operations can sometimes fall outside the jurisdiction of conventional military law, leading to varied levels of oversight and accountability.

- Typology of Pro-government militias: Competition, Provider and Emergency.

	Paramilitary Forces	PGMs
Government link	Official	Semi-Official, Informal
Functions	Regular and Irregular Activities	Rather Irregular Activities
Autonomy	Low	High
Example	National Gendarmerie, France	Janjaweed, Sudan

Thank you for your attention