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CRIME TRENDS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA: THE CONTAGION EFFECT*

1. INTRODUCTION

The concepts of transnational organised crime and cross-border crime have increasingly received prominence as one of the global security threats, linked to the rapidly growing global market and global supply and distribution. Narcotics trafficking; human trafficking; and arms trafficking are viewed as some of the main activities linked to transnational organised crime.

Organised crime syndicates can of course target a country from abroad or establish themselves in the target country (legally or illegally) or a hybrid syndicate consisting of both foreigners and locals can be established.

There is especially in the latter context, another meaning of the concept transnational, and similar to the distinction which is emerging between international and transnational terrorism, with the former re-

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ferring to attacks on foreign nationals or property and the latter specifically referring to co-operation between various groups of individuals in different countries, and the 'demonstration' or 'contagion' effect of acts of terror or crime which spill over borders. Unlike some manifestations of terror, there is mostly not a common ideology or religion linking different perpetrators of crime, other than criminal intent or ties to specific syndicates.

2. COMPARING CRIME IN SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

Comparing incidences of crime (crime statistics) in a regional or global context has been described by the South African Police Service (SAPS) Crime Report of June 2007, as difficult and sometimes impossible, based on the following:

> This is because (a) definitions of crime differ among countries; (b) reporting levels of crime depend on various factors which might fluctuate over time and are affected by cultural differences in various ways from one country to another (the South African Government e.g. went out of its way over the past 14 years to encourage all citizens to come forward and report the crimes committed against them); (c) crime registration systems differ among states (the Crime Administration System (CAS) in South Africa is a centralized and controlled system with built-in checks and balances. In most countries with decentralized police agencies, statistics are sent to a central point (e.g. the FBI in the USA) for consolidation, without any checks and balances at a local level; and (d) less than **50%** of even the **INTERPOL** member countries reported their crime statistics to **INTERPOL** Head Office in Lyon, France.

In the comparative analysis that follows, trends and patterns are identified rather than statistical comparisons, although some ranking of countries is provided in the Corruption Perceptions Index.

Based on the Central Investigation Agency (CIA) World Factbook data and the US Department of State Country Specific Information for American Citizens respectively, two comparative tables can be presented, *Table 1* depicting the main aspects of the drug trade, and *Table 2* providing an overview of similarities in some crime patterns in

Southern Africa. In the case of *Table 2*, it should be taken into account that the types of crime depicted are not necessarily the only more prevalent crimes, but especially those where United States (US) citizens in any of these countries could be victims.

The causes of crime are not always specifically identified in the case of each of the countries included in the *Table 2*, but factors such as the deteriorating economy (Zimbabwe); and a high un-employment rate and social upheaval due to high HIV/AIDS rates of infection (Lesotho), are some of the reasons provided in some of the cases.

TABLE 1: THE ILLICIT DRUG TRADE	
Country	**Drugs**
Angola	Transhipment point for cocaine to Western Europe and Africa
Botswana	-
Lesotho*	-
Malawi	-
Mozambique	Transit point for South Asian hashish and heroine and cocaine destined for Europe and South Africa; cannabis producer and methaqualone (exported to South Africa)
Namibia	-
South Africa	Transhipment centre for heroine, hashish and cocaine, and a major grower of marijuana. Large market for methaqualone, mainly from India but also now producing synthetic drugs for own consumption
Swaziland	-
Zambia	Transhipment point for smaller quantities of methaqualone, heroine and cocaine to Southern Africa and possibly Europe. Major consumer of cannabis
Zimbabwe	-
* In Lesotho, for instance, some production of marijuana occurs as well. Where no indication is given for a specific country, this does not imply that there is no trade in some drugs at all.	
Source: USA, Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*, 2008.	

TABLE 2: COMPARATIVE MANIFESTATION OF SERIOUS CRIME TRENDS	
Country	**Crime Patterns**
Angola	Crime is a serious problem. Petty street crime, vehicle theft, vehicle break-ins. Armed muggings, robberies and vehicle hijackings also occur
Botswana	Crime is a serious problem. Petty street crime, home invasions, and 'smash-and-grab' from vehicles
Lesotho	High crime levels. Armed and unarmed confrontations, vehicle hijacking and home invasions. A number of armed gangs have been reported
Malawi	Armed vehicle hijacking and residential break-ins. Petty street crimes common
Mozambique	Petty street crime, vehicle hijacking
Namibia	Crime a serious problem. Petty street crime, vehicle theft and vehicle break-ins. More non-violent than violent crime
South Africa	Violent criminal activity high. Assault, armed robbery, vehicle hijacking and 'smash-and-grab' attacks. Blowing up of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), cash-in-transit robberies and credit card fraud. Gang conflicts and vigilante violence in the Western Cape
Swaziland	Both petty and violent crime are of concern. Vehicle hijacking also occurs
Zambia	Vehicle thefts, burglaries, armed robbery, and vehicle hijacking
Zimbabwe	Street crime a serious problem. Most crimes non-violent but criminals are generally armed with weapons
Source: USA, Department of State, *US Country Specific Information for American Citizens, 2008*.	

In the case of three countries, namely South Africa, Mozambique and Zambia, human trafficking is identified with these countries serving

as sources, transit and destinations for men, women and children trafficked for labour and sexual exploitation. In the case of South Africa and Mozambique, both are also identified as holding some attraction for money launderers.

What is also notable, is that violent crime perpetrated by armed criminals occurs in much of the region. One of the more recent examples of contagion is an ATM bombing in Mozambique, following a recent significant decrease in a spate of ATM bombings in South Africa. In both countries, armed robbery of financial institutions and stripping of for instance railway lines for the scrap metal market are also problematic. Lack of visible policing and large numbers of illegal firearms also negatively affect both countries, with the latter also being a serious problem in Angola. Another example of contagion is the theft of cables containing copper in South Africa, which has now also reached epidemic proportions in Namibia.

TABLE 3: 2008 CORRUPTION PERCEPTION RANKING: SOUTHERN AFRICA (out of 180 countries in increasing order of corruption)		
Country	Rank 2008	Rank 2007
Botswana	36	38
South Africa	54	43
Namibia	61	57
Swaziland	72	84
Lesotho	92	84
Malawi	115	118
Zambia	115	123
Mozambique	126	111
Angola	158	147
Zimbabwe	166	150
Key: Lower score, lower corruption and higher score, higher corruption.		
Source: *Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*, 2007 and 2008		

The annual *Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index* for 2008 in *Table 3* is also compared with the previous report for 2007, to provide some indication of corruption in Southern Africa. The corruption perceptions index relates to the "degree of corruption as seen by business people and analysts". It is also noted that certain countries

have become virtually synonymous with corruption, and that it remains one of the biggest challenges in Africa, while public services are of poor quality and civil servants often so underpaid that corruption becomes a matter of survival. Many governments are also either unwilling or unable to address corruption more effectively.

Six of the countries in Southern Africa received a higher corruption ranking in 2008 compared to 2007, and excepting for to some extent, Botswana, the perceived levels of corruption are seen as serious.

3.   CONCLUSION

Crime, and especially organised crime, is a global phenomenon and a global threat. While much of crime analysis tends to focus on levels of crime (either in terms of raw crime data or crime ratios per 100 000 of the population) it is obviously also important to look at global and regional crime trends when addressing crime in any given country, as the 'contagion' effect (either *via* organised crime syndicates, examples or precedents set and involvement of legal and illegal foreigners in crime), will undoubtedly spill over borders. In the Southern African region specifically, violent crime and drug trafficking seem to be common problems facing most countries. Obviously this also requires a co-ordinated approach to combating crime (as for example through the Southern African Regional Police Chiefs Co-operation Organisation — SARPCCO), but it also requires vastly improved border control and a much more effective campaign against corruption than what has currently been the case.

SELECTED SOURCE LIST

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