

The Global Criminality Age

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To conceptualize twenty-first century crime, we need to start by setting it in a wider framework, a longer time perspective. Crime has considerable historic depth. The phenomenon is anything but new and not just a matter for large cities or national governments. Identity theft, illegal immigration, drug trafficking, terrorist attacks, human trafficking, and financial crime are developing between continents and hemispheres. Yet, there is too often a tendency to overestimate just how new these world problems are. Without a historic perspective, it is difficult to judge how the problems are changing.

The generation living just before World War I was the first to have to tackle crime on an international scale. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, governments, commentators, and opinion-makers had begun to ponder over the shrinking world ushered in by technologies and their cultural, social, and economic impact on criminal behavior. They noticed that alarming changes in ordinary criminal behavior were occurring, alongside the emergence of new forms of crime, such as anarchism, white slavery, and imported criminality. A new breed of experts that went by the name criminologists used the language of science in attempt to obtain a planetary vision of the phenomenon.

Initial Globalization of Crime

In a remarkable, little book that passed largely unnoticed, the English Professor, Paul Knepper, describes the emergence of international crime¹ in imperial

Great Britain in the years between 1881 and 1914. He explores how the international dimension is the only practical way of understanding crime in Great Britain in this period and beyond. To do so, we need to look back over the progress made in transport, communication, and trade relations, resulting in an interconnected world. This is the era in which policemen, journalists, novelists, and other commentators described the rise in professional criminals and international fraudsters who used the new technologies of the age against their victims.

However, this internationalization was not purely technology-based. It also had an imperial dimension. This means that the conditions in which the political authorities of the British Empire encouraged this international-scale crime decoding work needs to be kept in mind. As a result of this, the Colonial Service turned to analogies to comprehend individuals and communities that could not be understood according to conventional patterns of thought. The "colonial" investigations resulted in comparisons between domestic criminality and the sense of a "globalized criminal class".

Fear of International Conspiracy

The process should be completed by research into migrations. In response to a wave of Anti-Semitism following the assassination of Czar Alexander II in 1881, millions of Jews fled to the West. This huge migration fostered foreign criminality, persecuting the persecuted, surfing the wave, profiting from, or revealing true self through it. Anti-Semites raised the specter

¹ *The Invention of International Crime—A Global Issue in the Making* (1881–1914), Palgrave

of this type of criminal behavior and stirred up fear of a population imported from within the protective borders of the Russian Empire. This led to the passing of the Aliens Act, the first legal attempt to control immigration in Great Britain and the first step toward an international policy seeking to establish identities by making passports and identity papers obligatory. The fear of foreign crime was based not only on the poverty of these communities and where they came from but on an alleged international conspiracy.

They were suspected of controlling a large portion of the "white slavery" market and trafficking in women and girls for prostitution. In fact, Jewish philanthropists invested a great deal of money in the fight against this scourge. One measure was the creation of a Jewish Association for the Protection of Women and Girls. This problem quickly attracted international attention and prompted a coordinated international response. The National Vigilance Association, founded in 1885, organized the first international conference to discuss the problem which resulted in the signature of the first international treaty on the subject in 1904. Supporters of this legal framework saw immigration, accelerated by steamship travel, as the principle source of this scourge, coupled with the market in "artists" and the new acceptance of women moving around alone in the modern world.

A First "Londonistan"?

The assassination of the Czar in 1881 also marked the beginning of a new type of criminal behavior: the anarchist attack. In the early 1880s, anarchists or those who claimed to follow this political movement began to launch bomb attack campaigns in Europe and North America, murdering half a dozen heads of State, including US Pres-

ident William McKinley in 1901. London became an anarchist refuge and the era was marked by the tension produced by their presence. We could call it the first "Londonistan"... A first foiled attack was recorded in 1894 when a French anarchist was killed as he tried to destroy the Greenwich Observatory. The "International Anti-Anarchy Defense Conference" held in Rome in 1898 to respond to these threats ended without a final agreement being reached.

For the Record: Chicago and Marseille, Textbook Cases

At the end of the nineteenth century, in a developing trade in white women and other forms of international trafficking, Marseille, located at the heart of trade routes between Africa, Europe, America, and Asia, was ideally situated as a center for criminal forms of trade. The authorities became concerned about hired thugs with their tightening grip on the city. The sharp rise in drug trafficking tipped the balance: in the 1920s, this highly structured underworld, headed by gang bosses, their enforcers and henchmen, and governed by its traditions (the law of silence) prospered with the help of rampant police force corruption, close ties between criminals and local politicians and, above all, a boom in alcohol and drug trafficking. Marseille became the nerve center of the trade between North America (an important growth area for consumption) and Asia (for production). Although for a long time, the leading Western countries and Japan took on a role of "lawful dealers", waging an opium war to reestablish the drug trade in China despite it having recently been outlawed there (between 1839 and 1842, then 1856 and 1860), changing attitudes were fuelling a trend toward prohibition almost everywhere and led to the signature, in January 1912, of the

first international drug control treaty, the Hague International Opium Convention.

In 1925, the "Marseille Godfathers", Paul Carbone and François Spirito (one Italian, the other Corsican) held a meeting in Egypt. They formed a prostitution, trafficking, racketeering, and extortion partnership and invented the first case of criminal activity "industrialization" in the West. The first factories producing heroine from opium imported raw from Indochina, and later Turkey (processed in France and distributed in the United States) were established in Marseille in 1937. In Chicago, Alphonse Capone took full advantage of the perverse effects of Prohibition, investing in the bootlegging of black market alcohol and industrial-scale money laundering. Following the purest rules of an advanced free-market economy, they set up business on the shores of the Mediterranean and on the other side of the Atlantic, practiced vertical and horizontal integration, invested in research and development, developed staff incentives, extended their trade areas, and engaged in tax planning. Their treatment of their competitors seems to be the only facet of their business that was a great deal more "final" than in honest sectors of the economy.

At the time of the French Liberation, their successors, the Guérini brothers, who were more successful in their choice of political allies during the Occupation, made new alliances, extending their empire and diversifying their businesses, investing in cigarette smuggling to supplement their international narcotics trade, swelled by their close relationship with the New York Godfather, Lucky Luciano. The French Connection was born. The first international trading agreement for the distribution of industrially-produced heroine was made in the 1960s.

In Marseille, it took the Liberation to end the Carbone and Spirito Empire.

It was taken over by the Guérini Brothers whose political alliances had been more astute. In Chicago, Elliott Ness, a Prohibition Bureau agent, put an end to Capone's career with charges of tax evasion. Franck Nitti, then Tony Accardo, took over operations without great difficulty, but with less provocation and lower visibility.

The Guérini Brothers lost their stranglehold over Marseille at the beginning of the 1960s, after their attempt, with others, to extend their hold over Parisian gaming circles. The result was the "gambling war" of the mid-1960s, resulting in Antoine's murder and Barthélémy's imprisonment. A new figure, Gaëtan Zampa, then came onto the scene. Marseille became the setting for a bloody gang war. In 1972–1973, Zampa's ambitions clashed with the aspirations of Francis Vanverbergh, or "Francis Le Belge", who was deeply involved in narcotics trafficking. The conflict resulted in bloody street battles resulting in many deaths but creating the heyday of the "scandal papers" until Zampa's arrest and imprisonment in November 1983.

The first decade of this century was particularly dark for the Marseille underworld. On September 27, 2000, Francis Le Belge, who had taken the Marseille Mafia in hand despite living in Paris, was murdered. Two years after his death, the Marseille criminal scene burst into violence in a merciless war between gypsy criminals, for a time led by Farid Berrahma, the "Rôtisseur", Corsicans from Bastia and homegrown criminals from Marseille. The increasing competition between rival gangs led to revenge murders and reckonings but they were also fuelled by the ever-younger protagonists involved in these rousts, who lacked the professionalism, cool composure, and code of conducts of the old Mafia Godfathers.

Since then, the blows inflicted by the police to a number of gangs (arrest of

the Campanella Brothers and Bernard Barresi in 2010 and imprisonment of Jacques Cassandri in January 2011) have helped to open the way to other groups from the housing projects. They are waging outright war to safeguard their territory and protect their business interests.

A war of succession and a war of secession are being waged simultaneously, which, with the accidental death of Jean Gé Colonna, the last gangland peace mediator, has resulted in the fragmentation of the local criminal territory.

There have been similar developments in the United States with the arrival of powerful criminal gangs from Latin America, including Mexico and Guatemala. As is often the case, there is evidence of a "postcolonial" effect on changes to the criminal environment.

Therefore, without us realizing it, globalization and crime have progressed together, at first in parallel and later through direct cross-connections, with each fuelling the other. The era of international criminal behavior is now in full flow.

Unfortunately, in criminal matters, like terrorism, which is just another facet of crime, the new is too often just the forgotten.

Yet, it is still possible to be surprised. Controlling territories, conquering other spaces, attracting attention through bullying and bragging, provoking governments like Capone or Escobar, creating strategies of fear through the murders of General Della Chiesa, or judges Borsellino and Falcone, before adopting a lower profile, criminal organizations, especially in the financial sector, have learned how to be forgotten.

However, more recently, some have taken another path of "freeing up" entire regions to create "Narco-States". On an entirely different scale to petty score-settling, there is a higher level of conflict mobilizing veritable armies: criminal warfare.