

THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE AGAINST TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

POLICY NOTE

Unexplored wars: When military assets are used to fight organised crime

October 2017



1. The (new) war on crime

Tackling organised crime is hard, perhaps one of the most complicated challenges for states in the evolving global order. Both within and outside of their territories, it requires a coordinated approach across multiple areas of government responsibility. And it also often involves the military. But the use of military assets in the fight against organised crime – and the process in which a choice is made to use the military over other options – is surprisingly undocumented and under analysed. It deserves a much more thorough examination, including discussing what the implications and consequences of the use of what might be termed “war talk” against organised crime can be.

Two current examples highlight how it can be easy to conflate militarised style responses (think of the shooting of drug dealers in the Philippines) in some places with the deployment of military forces in others (the deployment of warships in the fight against human smuggling in the Mediterranean). While there are interconnections between militarisation and the use of the military, these are issues that deserve a separate examination in their own right, and with far greater nuance to the distinctions. What is common between militarised responses and the deployment of military style assets, however, is political rhetoric that situates that process as a ‘war on crime’. A detailed examination of an array of such cases suggests that the political rhetoric that accompanies the deployment of military assets in a crime-fighting role may be as, if not more, damaging in the longer term than the militarised response itself.

Most importantly for military planners, it may lock military forces into a long-term crime fighting roles for which they are ill-prepared and which may, beyond the first joyous greetings on their arrival, may have less positive long-term consequences: it may create a costly dependency and stymie alternatives; it can undermine the efficacy of civilian security and justice institutions, and unnecessarily taint military actors in the eyes of the local population. Organised crime too, with its access to multiple resources and its tendency to seek out protectors in the security apparatus is likely to make military forces, depending on the nature of the deployment, vulnerable to corruption.

These are serious considerations for both policymakers and military leadership to consider when contemplating engaging military assets against illicit economies, or declaring a war on crime. In the worst case scenario, the costs for militaries that value their legitimacy at home and abroad may be high.





2. Soldiering on: when armies fight crime

We explore these and other related questions in the volume titled 'Militarised Responses to Transnational Organised Crime: The War on Crime', published by Palgrave in October 2017, which seeks to provide a cross-sectoral look at the use of military assets as a response to organised crime.

To this end the book examines case studies from four distinct sectors of the criminal markets: wildlife crime, maritime piracy, human smuggling, drug trafficking. Across 2016, the GI and RUSI held a number of workshops, based in Geneva and London, which brought together a multitude of experts in each of the distinct sectors to share approaches and experiences. Following this, fourteen authors drawn from private sector, civil society practitioners, academics and the multilateral system contributed to this volume, each an expert in their field and contributing a different perspective.

Taken as a whole they piece together a compelling narrative regarding the triggers of militarisation, together with the benefits and risks of such responses, leading towards a deeper appreciation of the rightful role of the military as an element of a wider, development-led integrated response. Case studies selected by the authors throw into sharp relief the disastrous consequences of prolonged military intervention, from spiralling casualty figures across Latin America in the 'war on drugs', to the proliferation of weapons across East Africa as a direct result of militarised efforts to counter elephant and rhinoceros poaching. It studies unintended consequences that should have been identified prior to implementing interventions.

The authors explore different manifestations of militarisation – from one end of the spectrum, where the military itself leads a 'boots on the ground' or ships on the sea operation, to the other where the military plays a supporting role, applying its resources and training to bolster law enforcement. Between these extremes lie the plethora of cases where law enforcement or other bodies, such as wildlife protection agencies, are armed and increasingly trained in military methods, effectively creating paramilitary forces. All fall within the broad classification of 'militarised responses' for the purposes of the volume, allowing the authors to explore not only the rightful role of the military, but to delve deeply into the types of tactics and strategies which prove effective in countering organised crime, regardless of the title of the organisation wielding them. This leads to an understanding of militarisation as a series of actions along a corresponding spectrum of actions, typically starting with blustery war talk and concluding in significant collateral damage. Integrated responses, where a militarised response is merely one component of a comprehensive strategy, are notable exceptions to this chain of events.



This volume looks to take a closer look at the lessons that should be learned from these case studies, drawing links between disparate sectors which rarely cooperate, encouraging a holistic response to organised crime networks. In crafting such holistic responses, the volume explores the most appropriate role for the military to play, which organised crime landscapes can benefit from military intervention as part of a comprehensive approach, and which contexts render military involvement inappropriate and indeed damaging.

While the authors explore the strengths and weaknesses of militarised responses, many also recognise that purely development-centric responses have also failed to achieve long-term solutions. Indeed, in some cases development solutions, typically characterised by incremental, slow progress, are inappropriate to the urgency of the threat. As organised crime is increasingly recognised as a key obstacle to development – explicitly referenced in Goal 13 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – the silo-ed one-dimensional responses which have proliferated in the past and continue to dominate discourse must be discarded. Consolidating lessons learnt across a range of organised crime sectors enables the authors to build an analytical toolbox to frame future actions which are not purely securitised or development-focussed, but integrate all available approaches to provide holistic, nuanced responses. Only if this is achieved is there a chance of successfully addressing some of the most pervasive, powerful and destructive organised crime threats, mitigating the harm meted out by them on communities, and helping vulnerable groups resist their influence in the future.

1. Triggers of Militarisation

a. War talk

By declaring ‘war’ on any facet of organised crime policy-makers effectively frame a military response as the default conclusion. Bellicose rhetoric is used freely by politicians seeking to demonstrate an understanding of the gravity of the situation, often blind to the militarised chain of events this can trigger. Maguire¹, in his discussion of elephant poaching in East Africa, comments upon the characterisation of ‘poaching as insurgency’, which demands counter-insurgency responses. Where funds are perceived to flow from organised crime to terrorist or insurgent groups, the threat of political instability bolsters the use of the military in defending the nation. Such links can be exaggerated by politicians or media to rouse public sentiment and garner support – Maguire notes that the largely unsubstantiated connection between Al-Shabaab and poaching in Kenya has created the ‘ivory-terrorism nexus’ which has justified the arming of wildlife agencies, and diverted attention from community engagement and anti-corruption drives. When poaching becomes synonymous with terrorism, the accepted use of the military in countering the latter, acts to shield from questioning its deployment against the former. Any link, or perceived link, between the organised crime group and terrorism is likely to incite yet more war talk, and likely result in rapid deployment of troops.

Nevertheless, although examples of war talk snowballing to boots on the ground abound, analysts too often label responses as ‘militarised’ when viewed through the lens of preceding rhetoric. In some occasions, particularly in the analysis of counter-poaching methodologies, combative discourse has remained largely that, but commentators have taken political statements at face value and not dug deeper to test whether they have played out in on-the-ground operations. However, once catalysed and entrenched within the popular rhetoric, it is difficult to predict where the chain of militarisation will stop.

b. Public pressure

There is no accepted or straightforward panacea to organised crime challenges. Consequently, as public pressure rises on politicians to take action, amplified by an ever more powerful press and social media, politicians turn to the default option of militarisation.

1 Maguire, Tom, Kenya’s ‘War on Poaching’: Militarised Solutions to a Militarised Problem, Reitano, Tuesday, Jespersen, Sasha, Bird Ruiz-Benitez de Lugo, Lucia (Eds), (2017), *Militarised Responses to Transnational Organised Crime – The War on Crime*. Palgrave Macmillan. All references in this brief are to this edited volume.



Even where the risk of collateral damage is perceived, war talk is difficult to back down from. Here it is key that actors countering different manifestations of organised crime learn from past and present responses across the organised crime sector. As Rizvi² notes, the discourse surrounding smuggling in the context of the current migration ‘crisis’, where Governments avow to ‘crack down’ on smuggling, forms an eerie echo to the much criticised War on Drugs. A real appreciation of the parallels, and the disastrous consequences across Latin America, could act to temper such early vitriol. The combative posturing of such language likely played a significant role in engendering the ludicrous but terrifyingly real proposal to bomb smugglers’ boats bearing refugees and migrants from the shores of Libya towards Europe, which thankfully was not adopted.³ Little consideration was given to either the scale of loss of life involved or to the likely impact of fuelling Islamist anti-European sentiment. Instead, the EU considered addressing the ‘explosion’ of migrant smuggling through bombing; truly fighting fire with fire.

c. Political expediency

While militarisation of a response can be a consequence of public pressure, fighting talk can be wielded by politicians to shape the will of the public, engendering calls for military involvement where there were none. Politicians may leverage war talk to unite the electorate behind a frightening ‘other’, reaping the profits of upsurges in national pride and explosions of fear which, as we have seen in the 2016 US election, can carry leaders to power or help them survive periods of political instability. Donald Trump exemplifies such dog-whistle politics in terming America’s parks ‘bloodstained killing fields’ due to dangerous migrants who ‘prey on children’ ‘released’ into towns which must now be ‘liberated’.⁴ Where conventional enemies do not exist, organised crime actors form the perfect opponent, unifying the electorate behind the politician spearheading the response, blinding both to the collateral damage of such actions.

d. Urgency of threat

The urgency, or perceived urgency, of the threat posed by organised crime can trigger military deployment as development responses are, sometimes rightly, perceived to be too slow to reap effects quickly enough. This was the case in the Somali anti-piracy operation, where the spiralling cost of piracy on global trade mandated quick action. Of course, war talk can easily enhance the perceived urgency of the situation, further catalysing military action. Traditionally the military are deployed to defend a nation’s borders – it is perhaps unsurprising that the migration ‘crisis’, which effectively threatened the borders of the EU’s nation states, triggered such a securitised response focussed on border enforcement. This knee jerk reaction acts to empower the very industry it sought to destroy and, as Reitano⁵ concludes, shift the industry from its most benign form, as a community resilience mechanism, to a violent industry controlled by organised crime.

Similarly, nations will strive to ensure the threat does not come so close – as Jespersen⁶ notes, a number of the responses to the burgeoning drug trafficking trade in West Africa have been shaped by the desire of destination countries, like the US and EU, to halt the flow of illicit substances before it reaches their borders.

e. Institutional interests

Institutional interests may also be at play in shaping militarised responses. In peace-time countries where military officials are witnessing an incremental shaving of their allocation of the budget, justifying military involvement in fighting organised crime is likely to bolster spending and give the military a renewed *raison d’être*. Shaw⁷ documents



2 Rizvi, Sumbul, *The New Migration Landscape: The Implications of a Militarised Response to Smuggling*.
3 Reitano, Tuesday, *Situating militarisation as part of an integrated response to organised crime*.
4 Donald Trump Long Island Speech July 28 2017.
5 Reitano, Tuesday, *Smugglers Inc.: The Illicit Industry in Human Migration*.
6 Jespersen, Sasha, *Responding to Drug Trafficking: A Question of Motives*.
7 Shaw, Mark, *Soldiers in a Storm: Why and How do Responses to Illicit Economies get Militarised?*



the likely role played by such budgetary impetus in shaping the navy-led intervention against Somali piracy, noting some anecdotal evidence suggesting that the web of influence extends beyond the military to the private sector, which may also have a vested interest in a militarised, and consequently highly armed, response. Furthermore, where this is the case, it will be in the interests of both military and private sector to sustain the conflict they are seeking to address, engendering further collateral damage. Even more worryingly, corrupt elements within the military or political parties may have links to the illicit markets they are allegedly seeking to quash, creating conflicts of interest which may hinder the effectiveness of responses. In addition, the interests of donors or partner states may mould the response adopted, particularly where they are seeking to mitigate harm in some geographies but are less concerned about the harm effected in others – typically developing countries bear the brunt of the harm caused by both the organised crime, and the intervention. This is evidenced both in the efforts of Europe and the US to prevent drugs leaving West Africa noted by Jespersen, and in the disproportionate burden borne by the developing world in housing migrants and refugees documented by Rizvi.

Benefits of Militarisation

f. Signal to Partners and Public

While militarised responses are much maligned in the development community, they have a pivotal role to play in certain situations, and are uniquely placed to deliver a fast, highly specialised response. They send a strong signal to the public and strategic partners that action is being taken, satisfying the political need for highly visible, quantifiable steps taken in contexts where ‘something must be done’. However, although often prized for their publicity, they can also serve as an important message to the relevant criminal actors – that impunity is over. The military can, if used in a targeted and short-term manner, thus act as a necessary check to stop situations spiralling out of control. They can give development actors breathing space in which to implement long-term, durable solutions which accurately address the roots of the problem. Wielded as a stop-gap, they can prove extremely effective – following its meteoric rise and climax in 2009, Somali piracy was, on the surface at least, virtually non-existent by 2012 following military intervention.

However, as Shortland⁸ and Forbes⁹ note, the success of the Somali anti-piracy operation was predicated on its transformation from a purely military endeavour to a public-private partnership embedded in broader structural change – the private sector adhering to best practice and heightening security measures in a context of tightening legal reforms to prosecute pirates captured by the navy. Furthermore, although the short-term impact of the navy-led operation is undeniable, its long-term success is less clear. The lack of successful hijackings between 2012 and 2017 delighted the world press and military officials alike. However, attempts continued. Success followed shortly after in March 2017, heralding a spate of low profile hijackings in what constituted a minor resurgence. This supports the view expressed by Shortland, von Hoesslin and Bird¹⁰ that the pirates had not gone for good – they were merely biding their time. Somali piracy, a land-based problem, could only be eradicated in the long-term by a land-focussed solution. If such a solution had been implemented in the breathing space created by the naval intervention, the Somali counter-piracy operation could truly have been heralded as a success story for the use of the military as one element of an integrated response. However, as is most commonly the case, where the time bought is not utilised, the response remains temporary and flawed. Inversely, where the involvement of the military is, as is almost inevitably the case, prolonged, it unleashes a cycle of violence, creating an arms race between military and criminal actors, as noted by Humphrys and Smith in the ‘weaponisation’ of Kenya and South Africa’s wildlife protection,¹¹ which accelerates towards a violent impasse with significant collateral damage.

8 Shortland, Anja, Dangers of Success: The Economics of Somali piracy.

9 Forbes, Glen, Replicating Success? A Military Response to Maritime Piracy, the Somalia Experience.

10 von Hoesslin, Karsten and Bird Ruiz-Benitez de Lugo, Lucia, South East Asia Piracy: Have we Learnt from Somali Counter-piracy Operations?

11 Humphrys, Jasper and Smith, M.L.R, Militarised Responses to the Illegal Wildlife Trade.



g. Changes crime group calculations

Although organised crime networks are highly flexible and quick to adapt to changing contexts, military interventions can nonetheless act to significantly disrupt operations, forcing changes in strategy and modus operandi which can serve to temporarily weaken the group. On the other hand, it can also force groups further underground and deeper into criminality. Furthermore, precisely because of the flexibility inherent to most criminal organisations, localised and targeted military interventions carry a high risk of triggering the balloon effect – merely acting to geographically displace the network to an area with weaker law enforcement or governance systems. The harm effected by the organised crime group, unhindered by fragile law enforcement structures, can actually increase. The substantial displacement of the South America drugs trafficking route, and in particular from the Caribbean transit hubs, to West Africa constitutes one such example, where extremely experienced organised crime networks have flourished in an under-resourced and capacitated context. The deployment of the navy in Operation Mare Nostrum triggered a similar shift in modus operandi of smugglers moving people from Libya towards Europe. Flimsier and less seaworthy dinghies and minimal fuel reflected the smugglers' awareness that vessels only needed to reach international waters for migrants to be rescued. Smuggler costs decreased, profits soared, so did casualties.

h. Bolster civilian capacities for law enforcement and development

In both the Latin American context, and in Mare Nostrum, the military was wielded as a blunt tool in isolation, with disastrous effects. However, the military has a unique and valuable skill-set, together with significant resources. Where these are wielded to enhance or extend the reach and capacity of civilian law enforcement and judicial bodies, they can strengthen a response. The anti-piracy response across West and Central Africa emphasised regional cooperation which, together with the significant geographic reach of law-enforcement-led counter-piracy operations, prevented the balloon effect while garnering incremental success in countering piracy. Ralby¹² takes care to distinguish such military-backed cooperation initiatives, which focus on development, from traditional counter-piracy operations. The military acted to support law-enforcement, playing a significant role in capacity building and helping to craft the legal and operational architecture to address piracy in the long-term, providing hope for a future of greater stability, due process and rule of law. Although it is in this role that the military may be particularly valuable, a degree of caution must be exercised in lauding this involvement, as unregulated mission creep may erode the capacities of civil institutions, rather than strengthen them in the long run.



2. Risks of Militarisation

a. Downgrades Human Rights concerns

Militarised responses, and even the war talk which often precedes them, typically act to downgrade human rights concerns, multiplying casualties and blurring lawful redress mechanisms. Health Poverty Action¹³ notes the impunity which followed the 2003 Thai reported 'shoot-to-kill' policy whose victims rose to 2,300 within three months of inception. Afterwards, many of the victims were found to have no links to drugs trafficking. No credible investigations followed such deaths, and suspicions abound of drugs planted and bullets being removed from murder scenes. Similarly, Rademeyer¹⁴ notes that figures of poacher deaths at the hands of rangers in Kruger national park in South Africa are kept under wraps, and no ranger has yet been convicted of unlawful killing. The securitisation of the response

12 Ralby, Ian, Approaches to Piracy, Armed Robbery at Sea, and Other Maritime Crime in West and Central Africa.

13 Health Poverty Action, The Development Impacts of the 'War on Drugs'.

14 Rademeyer, Julian, An Unwinnable War: Rhino Poaching in the Kruger.



effectively sidesteps judicial process, creating a widespread culture of impunity and aggravating relations with the communities who see their lives being valued at less than that of the animals the rangers are seeking to protect. Where the response is characterised as a 'war', casualties become an accepted part of the calculation.

Moreover, a failure to place human rights at the centre of a response to organised crime can have catastrophic long-term consequences, not only because casualties are likely to soar, but because it may engender resentful and marginalised populations, heightening the risks of societal discontent and, consequently, of terrorism. Short-sighted interventions have repeatedly created ongoing societal tensions which dwarf the magnitude of the initial problem.

b. Undermines role of law enforcement

Similarly, in the 'battle' against organised crime, the military typically spearhead the response, thereby undermining the role of law enforcement, the body most often legally vested with the power and duty to counter crime. Sellar¹⁵ scrutinises militarised anti-poaching responses, analysing how they impinge on the role of law enforcement and highlighting the flaw at the core of any national anti-poaching operation which excludes the police force. Sellar advocates intelligence-led responses, which the military are typically ill-placed to deliver, lacking the expertise and contacts needed to acquire and utilise intelligence. Intelligence sharing between military and wildlife agencies, who do have the necessary intelligence sources, is minimal. Furthermore, where information sharing exists, it only flows one way – from wildlife agency to military – engendering resentment in the former and hindering future collaboration.

Similarly, McDermott¹⁶ notes the mission creep of the military in South America, which has supplanted many traditionally law-enforcement functions, resulting in increasingly limited resources being assigned to the latter, and sky-high corruption across the underpaid police force. In Mexico, the deployment of the military against organised crime was explicitly framed as a temporary solution. Ten years later the army remain at the centre of Mexico's organised crime responses, while the promised reform and support of law enforcement bodies stagnates. This can build the legitimacy of the military in the eyes of the public at the expense of the long-term civilian capacities.

c. Corruption

The use of the military in addressing organised crime issues often triggers significant increases in corruption levels. Erickson¹⁷ documents how militarising the US-Mexico border has led to a spike in the corruption of border guards, many of whom have become facilitators in the cross-border transit of weapons, drugs and people. Similarly, McDermott notes that in Venezuela the army constitute the heart of the 'Cartel of the Suns', the most powerful of the organised crime networks they were originally intended to combat. Indeed, their very name refers to the golden stars adorning the epaulettes of Generals of the National Guard.

In Venezuela, as in many other case studies, the flow of funds from criminal networks has acted to foment political instability, as in the alleged 'ivory-terrorism' nexus mentioned above. The case study of South East Asian Piracy detailed by von Hoesslin and Bird stands in stark contrast. A significant proportion of profits garnered from South East Asian piracy bolster domestic power structures through exorbitant levels of corruption. As this acts to stabilise the status quo, it has garnered significantly less attention from politicians and press alike. However, by fomenting corruption levels it presents a similarly insidious problem, blocking progress and ensuring that organised crime groups continue to flourish as their interests are neatly aligned with those of military and civil officials paid to counter them.

d. Blocks long term solutions, creating costly dependency

Military interventions, whether on land or sea, are eye-wateringly expensive. One conservative estimate calculates that the total cost of military efforts to counter Somali piracy in 2012 alone stands at circa US\$ 1.1 billion.¹⁸ The reference

15 Sellar, John M., 'A Blunt Instrument': Addressing Criminal Networks with Military Responses, and the Impact on Law Enforcement and Intelligence.

16 McDermott, Jeremy, Militarisation of the Drug War in Latin America: A Policy Cycle Set to Continue?

17 Erickson, Brian, How US Customs and Border Protection became the World's Largest Militarised Police Force.

18 Oceans Beyond Piracy, 'The Economic Cost of Somali Piracy 2012' (2013). Available at: http://oceansbeyondpiracy.org/sites/default/files/ecop2012final_2.pdf



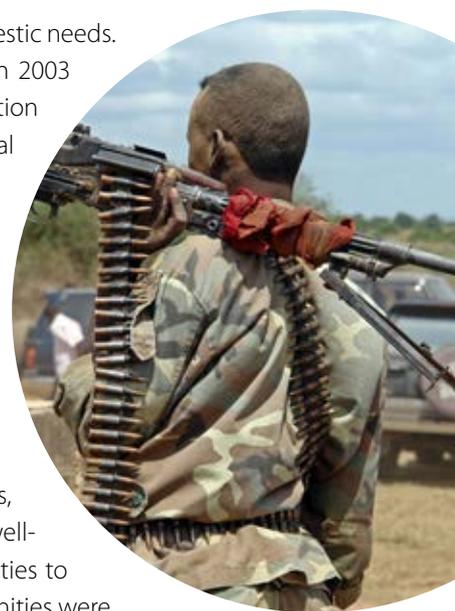
amount for the common costs of Operation Sophia, the military intervention intended to disrupt 'the business model of human smuggling and trafficking networks in the Southern Central Mediterranean', and widely recognised as a failure, is €6.7 million for the period between July 2016 to July 2017.¹⁹ Moreover, actual costs tend to dramatically exceed estimates.

Not only do military interventions act as a significant drain on national budgets, they divert finite resources from law enforcement, creating a costly dependency where increasingly under-funded and under-capacitated law enforcement bodies are forced to rely on military support. This self-perpetuating cycle can form the basis for extending military involvement, even in cases where it is tangibly unsuccessful, with disastrous consequences. McDermott's analysis of South America's criminal markets clearly highlights that military intervention is governed by the law of diminishing returns – as involvement is prolonged the cost/benefit relationship is inverted, and the intervention becomes counter-productive, bleeding the public purse while representing a source of insecurity, creating institutional problems and engendering spiralling levels of collateral damage. Although alluring in their inception, the very nature of military interventions, trading in short term wins for long term gains, makes it crucial that military responses are not perceived to be a comprehensive answer, or even a politically expedient solution.

Resources are diverted not only from law enforcement bodies, but from other crucial domestic needs. Health Poverty Action scrutinises the expenditure of Latin American countries between 2003 and 2015, tracking overlapping spikes in military spending, falls in healthcare and education expenditure and explosions in murder rates. Honduras illustrates this trend: a rise in social spending triggered progress in social development indicators between 2006-2009; a decline following the 2009 coup resulted in a 26.3 per cent increase in extreme poverty rates from 2010 to 2012 which corresponded with a 22 per cent increase in military expenditure across the same period. Currently Honduras is the second poorest country in Central America, while having the highest police expenditure as a percentage of GDP in the entire region.

In addition to acting as a resource drain, militarised responses can divert attention from development-lead solutions focussed on engendering long-term change, masking root causes and blocking targeted responses. The link between over-fishing of Somali waters, damaging the livelihoods of poor coastal communities, and an upsurge in piracy is well-documented. Shortland explores the relationship between the ability of such communities to access alternative livelihoods and their support for pirates, citing instances where communities were seen to chase out pirates when other livelihoods became viable. A land-focussed response to Somali piracy, fostering alternative income streams for these communities which both shelter pirates and swell their ranks, was in the latter stages of development when the navy made the pirates seemingly vanish, and with them the funds and impetus to implement such a policy. Instead military involvement extended beyond its natural end-date, dwindling slowly as the appetite of nations to fund such costly endeavours in a backdrop of financial austerity diminished. As noted above, the pirates are seemingly back. The failure to utilise the 'breathing space' created by the navy resulted in a vacuum of long-term solutions, fostering a resurgence which has already triggered calls for repeated military involvement – the cycle continues unbroken as policy-makers ignore what should be lessons learnt.

Militarising responses can also act to mask root causes, focussing attention on visible consequences – Rizvi suggests that the migratory 'crisis' which has captured headlines and demanded securitisation of borders, should be seen as a symptom of a seismic shift in global structures and a fundamental change in the role mobility plays across the world. Securitising the response to movement diverts focus from trying to understand why people are moving, and consequently is bound to fail.



¹⁹ Council Decision 2016/993 of 20 June 2016 amending decision 2015/778 on a European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED operation SOPHIA), OJ L 162/18 (21 June 2016).



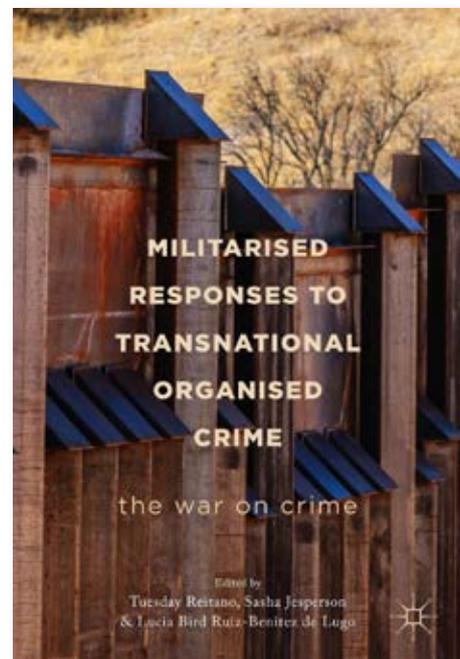
3. Recommendations

In order to ensure responses to ongoing and new organised crime threats are appropriately tailored and targeted it is key to improve the capacity of policy-makers to analyse criminal markets. Quashing the use of war talk, which both closes down the space for rational analysis and deliberation of options, and increases the use of 'militarised' rather than 'military' approaches, is an important element of this for which both politicians, press and military leaders themselves must take responsibility. The former must cease to use it as a political manoeuvring tool, the second should consider the possible damage to reputation and legitimacy of being coopted into crime fighting, while the latter must resist the urge to sensationalise and instead publicly identify where war talk is being wielded strategically. It is crucial to sensitise policy-makers to both the risks of bellicose language, and of the military responses they so often engender. By developing a lexicon for politicians to use, development practitioners may temper their tendency to use war rhetoric, facilitating the implementation of more nuanced responses.

Part of the analysis which must precede implementation must be devoted to delineating the objectives of the planned intervention – is it to directly intervene directly in the criminal market, or is it to mitigate the impact of the criminal activities. As Forbes notes, the militarised response to Somali piracy was an example of the latter and should be viewed as a success in safeguarding the passage of ships, rather than assessed, or lauded, as a counter-piracy operation. Confusion between the two has engendered numerous ill-advised calls for the duplication of the same strategy across different fact matrices. Clarity of focus at the outset, and in post-intervention analysis, will ensure the response is appropriately tailored, and that results can be accurately evaluated against goals.

Harm mitigation assessments should inform the priority, timing and sequencing of interventions. For example, while drug seizures seek to prevent the substance reaching the user, and thus prevent harm, seizures of ivory tusks or rhino horns have no impact on the harm effected – it is too late. As Collins²⁰ explores, the discourse surrounding the drugs market has experienced a seismic shift, moving away from war rhetoric towards harm mitigation focussed on demand reduction and experimentation with decriminalisation. This correctly focusses responses on the nature of the threat posed by the criminal market, the aspect of the criminal enterprise which is triggering the harm and consequently which should be targeted. In crafting harm-centric responses it becomes key to define and measure harm. A 2017 OECD report examining the impact of criminal economies in West Africa sets out a helpful analytical framework by proposing five scales of harm: physical; societal; economic; environmental and structural or governance related harms.²¹ Holistically analysing the impact of the relevant criminal market through this matrix of harm should craft focussed and integrated responses, maximising effectiveness and mitigating collateral damage. While this process may well identify the military as a key element of an integrated response, it is very unlikely that it would ever be proffered as panacea.

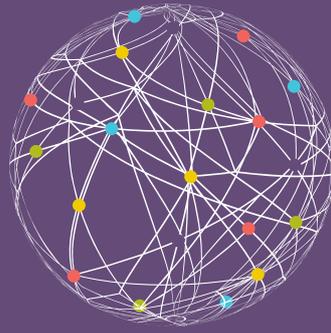
The book does not by any means advocate a blanket ban on the use of the military in countering organised crime threats, however the analyses conducted by each author, across each sector analysed, moves irrevocably to an understanding that only integrated approaches have a change of forging long-term success.



20 Collins, John, Beyond UNGASS 2016: Drug Control Multilateralism and the End to the 'War on Drugs'.

21 AfDB/OECD (2016) Illicit Financial Flows: Criminal Economies in West Africa, Paris: OECD.





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