

18 March 2025

CALL FOR PAPERS

Journal of Illicit Economies and Development (JIED), LSE Press

Special Issue: Geocriminality – state instrumentalization of criminality abroad

Deadline for Submission of LOIs and abstracts: 21 April 2025

Having detected a steady increase in state-directed instrumentalization of organized crime and criminal actors abroad to achieve foreign and domestic policy priorities, the GI-TOC has introduced the concept of geocriminality. This special issue will explore the concept and its wide-ranging ramifications for crime and crime prevention. While state instrumentalization of crime in general is as old as statehood itself, the forces of globalization and adversarial geopolitical conditions have led to an evolution in its form. Just as rapid progress in fields of communication, travel and technology have underpinned development in business, so too has it nurtured capacity in state-crime relationships. This increased capacity for cooperation with criminal elements is utilized by states beyond their own borders to pursue a range of objectives, for example, resource acquisition, intimidation of opponents, and cultivation of elites. Moving beyond more isolated state use of crime associated with clandestine diplomacy, some examples from the state-crime nexus now evidence far greater scale, entrenchment and integration. This call for papers therefore seeks to enhance the understanding of the phenomenon of geocriminality – clarifying its definition, elaborating case studies, documenting its impact, and identifying potential responses and challenges.

Though any state is capable of geocriminality, we **tend** to witness it in conditions where there is **low constraint on regime activity domestically alongside elevated constraint on state activity internationally**.

What does this mean? First, “low constraint on *regime* activity domestically” refers to conditions where those in power are able to instrumentalize criminal elements abroad with less risk of penalty for such actions. Penalties might involve, for example, censure by an effective judiciary or criticism from an independent media. The absence of such constraints on power makes the type of deeper, longer-term state-crime geocriminal relationship more likely. Second, “elevated constraint on *state* activity internationally” refers to conditions that make more conventional modes of state activity abroad less feasible. This includes material constraints, for example the effect of sanctions, international law, and a lack of conventional means. But it also refers to perceived constraints, for example situations where the state employs criminal actors to maintain distance between the activity and the state itself.

With greater scope for the regime to use criminals towards state objectives in an environment of mounting constraints on a state’s conventional international activity, that state’s calculus tilts towards geocriminality.

The concept was first deployed in a GI-TOC report [published](#) in May 2024, and the article “[Of kingdoms and crooks: The rise of geocriminality](#)” offers more detail about the phenomenon. Recent GI-TOC research discusses activity that could also be considered geocriminality, such as the Kremlin’s [integration](#) of organized crime into statecraft and Iranian state [reliance](#) on criminal networks to smuggle oil and launder money. While the longer-term state-crime entrenchment associated with geocriminality may be more widespread in countries that lack well-established political, journalistic and judicial scrutiny of government, the phenomenon is not necessarily limited to these countries. With no sign of conditions conducive to geocriminality dissipating, it promises to be an increasingly prominent feature of the geopolitical landscape.

Contributors are invited to submit pieces on geocriminality, crime-linked clandestine diplomacy, and wider research into the state-crime nexus (both contemporary and historical). Submissions may include (but are not

limited to) further examples of apparent geocriminality, individual aspects of geocriminality (for example, the enabling dynamics), appropriate responses to geocriminality, the future of geocriminal collaboration, the (extent of the) centrality of the state in geocriminal networks, and wider activity from the state-crime nexus.

In order to offer a broad empirical, qualitative approach, we welcome contributions from various disciplines, including (but not exclusively) sociology, economics, criminology, anthropology, history and international relations, as well as policy analyses from activists, NGO leaders, or practitioners. We particularly encourage submissions by women and contributors from countries and regions not frequently represented in academic journals. We may be able to provide language and translation support for original contributions not in English. Please contact the co-editors (below) to discuss possibilities if required.

JIED calls for three types of contributions:



RESEARCH ARTICLES

based on unpublished original research that makes a substantial contribution to knowledge and understanding to this special issue. Length: 8,000 words (abstract 250 words).



POLICY COMMENTARIES

which cover commentary on novel policy interventions, or review pre-existing interventions. Length: 3,000 words (abstract 250 words).



METHODS ARTICLES

outline and test new techniques and discuss potential applications and significance of the technique (or articles that critique or modify extant methodologies and approaches. Length: 3,000 words (abstract 200 words).

If you wish to respond to this call for papers, please submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) including the following information:

- Article type: __Research Article / __Policy Commentary __ / Methodology Article
- Tentative title of article
- Name, affiliation, and place of residence of author(s)
- Abstract (max. 250 words)

Deadline for submission of Letters of Intent (LOI) including abstracts (250 words maximum) is on **21 April 2025**. Submissions received after this deadline will not be considered. Decisions will be communicated by **19 May 2025**, for article manuscripts due on **14 July 2025**. Invited papers will be subject to the usual JIED peer review processes (based on a double-blind peer review). Authors commit to produce a final manuscript in JIED house style by **6 October 2025**. Planned date of publication is fall 2025.

LOIs should be sent to the editors:

- *Dr Martin Thorley, Senior Analyst & JIED Special Issue Guest Editor, GI-TOC,* martin.thorley@globalinitiative.net;
- *Dr John Collins, Director of Academic Engagement & JIED Editor-in-Chief, GI-TOC,* john.collins@globalinitiative.net.

