


Chapter 5

Organised Crime and the Role of Law and Law Enforcement Agencies in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This chapter brings together the various components of organised crime in Ghana and analyses the role of law and law enforcement agencies. It is argued that organised crime in Ghana undermines the emerging fragile democratic institutions in the country. Rooted in transparency, press freedom, rule of law, and free and fair elections, some elected and/or appointed officials who have taken oaths of office to defend the Constitution without fear or favour have largely been compromised to do the bidding of criminal syndicates at the expense of citizens. Despite the improvement in legislation and the coordinated efforts of mandated state agencies, the influence of affluent organised criminal syndicates on some law enforcement agencies has weakened state-agency collaboration. The undermining role of politicians presents a paradox of power subversion that aids and abets organised criminal activities. Sophisticated technology, political preparedness, and individual alertness are crucial in dealing with organised crime in Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

Organized crime is a structured, centralised, and sustained criminal enterprise that rationally engages in illicit profitable activities (Catino, 2020; Wright, 2013; Miraglia, Ochoa, & Briscoe, 2012), mirroring otherwise a formal capitalist enterprise. Such criminal enterprises engage in various forms of crime including financial fraud, human trafficking, drug trade, etc. (Kar, & Spanjers, 2017). In its pursuit of markets and maximization of profit, organize crime disregards national and international boundaries (Livey, 2017; Wright, 2013).

The roots of organised crime in Ghana can be traced to the colonial era (Ellis, 2016). The engagement in illegal gold, diamond, and other natural resources trade was prevalent. There were other forms of unauthorized trade such as the smuggling of food produce to neighbouring countries for high prices. Additionally, trade in human beings for the slave market in the Americas also constituted organised crime in the colonial period (Wannenburg, 2005). The British colonialists in Ghana used law and order as a tool of manipulation, perpetuation, and preservation of organised criminal activities (Killingray, 1986). Following British colonial rule in Ghana, the government under Dr. Kwame Nkrumah inherited the governance structure, cultural makeup, and the associated criminal practices of the colonial regime. The post-colonial era, from the first republic to the present-day fourth republic, still witnesses varied forms of organised crime.

Besides the colonial consequences, the strategic location of Ghana along the Gulf of Guinea, as well as its status as a key transit point for drug trafficking and other illegal operations, has made it a rich target for criminal networks (Ogunniyi, & Akpu, 2019; Brown, 2013). The coastlines and borders of Ghana are generally porous. The Navy and Coast Guard lack the necessary patrol boats, planes, surveillance drones, and radar to track suspicious ships and individuals. This makes it easy for Latin American drug traffickers to use Ghana's coastlines and borders as transportation points to Europe (see Figure 1 on cocaine flows and seizures). The involvement of external actors reveals the role of international criminal networks in the growth of organised crime in the country.

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