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**STATE-CENTRIC SECURITY AND ITS LIMITATIONS:  
THE CASE OF TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME**

**Leo S. F. Lin**

**(Foreign Affairs Police Officer in Taiwan (R.O.C) and RIEAS Research Associate)**

**RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN STUDIES  
(RIEAS)**

**# 1, Kalavryton Street, Ano-Kalamaki, Athens, 17456, Greece**

**RIEAS [URL:http://www.rieas.gr](http://www.rieas.gr)**

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**Dr. John M. Nomikos**

**Director**

**RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR EUROPEAN AND AMERICAN STUDIES  
(RIEAS)**

**Postal Address:**

*# 1, Kalavryton Street, Alimos, Athens, 17456, Greece*

*Tel/Fax: + 30 210 9911214*

*E-mail: [rieas@otenet.gr](mailto:rieas@otenet.gr)*

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## **Abstract**

This paper scrutinizes Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) as a security threat from the perspective of State-centric Security concepts, including traditional security paradigm and non-traditional security. It is argued that, with the pace of globalization, TOC has become one of the prominent issues in security studies. Albeit that in traditional security concept it is recognized as an insignificant threat to states, TOC has been gaining ground in non-traditional security thinking. This paper also arrays a number of key state-centric security arguments, which to a large extent construct the picture of TOC from state-centric security perspective. Finally, this paper argues that, although in the post-Westphalian world where the international system is still predominated by state-centric thoughts, there are still several limitations and problems in interpreting the phenomenon of TOC in the globalized era.

## **I. Introduction**

With the pace of globalization for the past decades, Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) has become an increasingly important subject which needs to be adequately addressed both in practical world and academia, especially within the discipline of international relations and security studies. Given that the force of globalization has shrunken the world, TOC can no longer be considered as merely a domestic issue. The transnational nature of the criminal phenomenon affects not only one country but the other, owing to the spill-over effect. This sort of transnational issues are hardly well-explained by traditional criminologist or law-enforcement policy makers, which typically focuses on domestic crimes. Therefore, it is crucial to interpret TOC from the discipline of international relations and security studies. Therefore, this paper aims to scrutinize the concept of TOC from the perspective of international relations and security studies, particularly from state-centric security approach, in order to answer the following two questions:

*How and what is the interpretation to TOC from the perspective of state-centric security in the era of globalization? What are the limitations of the state-centric approach in explaining TOC?*

Bearing the research questions in mind, this paper will first define the security concept from the viewpoint of International Relations theory. Following that, the state-centric security approach will be laid out, including traditional security and non-traditional security. Finally, the interpretation to TOC from state-centric security approach and its limitations will be analyzed.

## **II. International Relations Theory and Security Concepts**

### ***Defining Security***

Security is the core concept in Security Studies and it also lies at the center of International Relations. The Security Studies includes security threats ranging from pandemics, environmental degradation, and transnational organized crime to more traditional security concerns such as weapons of mass destruction and inter-state conflicts.<sup>1</sup> The consensus has emerged on what Security Studies entails—it is to do with threats to survival (Collins, 2007). There is also a consensus that security implies freedom from threats to core values (Baylis, 2001; Buzan, 1983). However, the precise definition of security is still contested because there is a major disagreement about whether the main focus of enquiry (or referent) should be on ‘individual’, ‘national’, or

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<sup>1</sup> According to Collins, Security Studies is the sub-discipline of International Relations. It is the study of security that lies at the heart of International Relations. And the study of inter-state armed conflicts is actually a sub-field of Security Studies and is known as Strategic Studies (Collins, 2007).

‘international’ security (Baylis, 2001). Traditionally, the state has been the thing to be secured, what is known as *referent object*, and it has sought security through military might (Collins, 2007). Therefore, stressing international and national security, most of the scholars define security as preventing nations/ states from threats, attacks, or aggression. (Bellamy, 1981; Luciani, 1989; Ullman, 1983; Buzan, 1983); others focus more on individuals, or people, emphasizing individual emancipation and perceptions (Booth, 1991; Hough, 2004).

In terms of contemporary Security Studies, the starting point is to examine it along with the most prominent International Relations theories so far. They are *Realism/Neo-realism, Neo-liberal Institutionalism and Social Constructivism*. By doing so, it will be easier to have a clear picture about the security concept.

### ***Realism/Neo-realism***

Realism has been the dominant theory of international relations since the outset of the discipline. *Statism*<sup>2</sup> is the centerpiece of realism. In this approach, the “state” as the only referent of security and state sovereignty is particularly stressed. Since the signing of the Westphalia treaty in 1648, states have been regarded as the major actors in the international system. Writers such as Hobbes, Machiavelli and Rousseau viewed the international system as a brutal arena in which states would seek to achieve their own security at the expense of their neighbors (Baylis, 2001). After WWII, scholars of the realist school such as Hans Morgenthau and E. H. Carr, and of neo-realist school, such as Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, all shared a rather pessimistic view of the international system. They consider the main feature of the world to be characterized by

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<sup>2</sup> Realists believe that nation states are the main actors in international politics.



no central government within it, and no supreme authority that could rule state behaviors, settle disputes, or conduct punishment. This is called the *anarchy*.<sup>3</sup> Because of this feature, warfare between the states is therefore constituted and more possible. Hence, every state in this anarchic environment pursues its own security through *self-help*<sup>4</sup> in order to protect its nation. *Survival*<sup>5</sup> thus is the primary objective of national security. Moreover, in the anarchic international environment, states tend to have the lack of trust and are fearful of each other, because of mutual misunderstandings; security consequently becomes the top priority. All states try to gain security, obtain military superiority, and improve one's own security status by increasing military expenditure so as to pursue balance of power. Under the abovementioned situation, facing the "security dilemma"<sup>6</sup> is inevitable.

For realist/neo-realist, they recognize that globalization posts new challenges for national security; however, they deny that the states are being pushed aside by new global actors.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Neo-liberal Institutionalism***<sup>8</sup>

Neo-liberal institutionalism is considered by many scholars to present the most convincing challenge to realist and neorealist thinking. The roots of this version of neo-

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<sup>3</sup> For more explanation about the meaning, the structures, the virtues of anarchy, see Waltz, 1979, pp. 79-106.

<sup>4</sup> The anarchy involves two features that make up the self-help system: first, no authority to enforce agreements, and second, possible recourse to force by actors. In such a system, self-help means that each actor must provide for his own defense. Therefore, each actor would seek to acquire the means to maintain enough power for their own security.

<sup>5</sup> In realist thinking, survival is the supreme national interest to which all political leaders must adhere. All other goals are secondary objectives.

<sup>6</sup> This term was first articulated by John H. Herz.

<sup>7</sup> According to Waltz, globalization is the fad of 1990s. It is exaggerated and much of the world has been left out of the process. The state has not lost power; in fact, the state has expanded its functions and its control over societies and economies at home and abroad (Waltz, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> The precursor to liberal IR theory was "idealism." Neo-liberalism, liberal institutionalism or neo-liberal institutionalism is an advancement of liberal thinking.

liberalism are found in functional integration scholarship of the 1940s and the 1950s and regional integration studies of the 1960s (Lamy, 2001).<sup>9</sup> The third generation of liberal institutional scholarship was the trans-nationalism and complex interdependence of the 1970s (Keohane & Nye, 1971). Neo-liberal institutionalism theory shares many of the assumptions of neo-realism, but it criticizes that neo-realists minimize the importance of international interdependence, globalization, and the regimes created to manage these interactions (Baldwin, 1993). The core assumptions of neo-liberal institutionalism include: First, Neo-liberal institutionalism recognizes that states are key actors in international system, but not the only actors. Secondly, states have mutual interests. The neo-liberal view may have less relevance in areas in which states have no mutual interests (Lamy, 2001). Thirdly, ‘institutions’ and ‘regimes’ are the mediator, significant forces and the means to achieve cooperation between actors in the system (Baldwin, 1993). Fourthly, cooperation is easy to achieve in areas where states have mutual interests. Therefore this school is more concerned with non-military areas such as international political economy, or international environmental concerns (Baldwin, 1993). Finally, liberal democracies have never (or almost never) made war on one another and have fewer conflicts among themselves (democratic peace theory) (Rosato, 2003). Accordingly, Neo-liberal institutionalism considers security as a goal that can be best achieved through interdependence/cooperation, institutions/regimes and democratic peace. Besides states, liberalists also focus on other important actors.

On the issue of globalization, most of the discussion among neo-liberals falls into two categories: (1) a free market commercial neo-liberalism that dominates policy circles

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<sup>9</sup> The European Union is one such institution that began as regional community for encouraging multilateral co-operations.

throughout the world (Fukuyama, 1992) and (2) academic neoliberal institutionalism that promotes regimes and institutions as the most effective means of managing the globalization process (Lamy, 2001). Most neo-liberals believe that globalization will encourage further economic integration among public and private actors in the economy. Neo-liberals predict that globalization's momentum will increase due to the declining costs of transportation and communications. Distance is disappearing (Burtless, 1998).

### ***Social Constructivism***

Constructivism, social constructivism or idealism has been described as a challenge to the dominance of neo-liberal and neo-realist international relations theories (Hopf, 1998). This theory bases its idea on two main assumptions: First, the fundamental structures of international politics are socially constructed by cognitive structures which give meaning to the material world (Alder, 1997). Social structures are made up of elements, such as shared knowledge, material resources and practices. Second, changing the way we think about international relations can help to bring about greater international security (Baylis, 2001). Social constructivists accept many of the assumptions of neo-realism. They accept that states are the key referent in the study of international security (but they recognize the importance of non-state actors); that international system is anarchic; that states have a fundamental wish to survive; and that states attempt to behave rationally. However, they reject the view that 'structure' consist only of material capabilities. They stress the importance of social structure defined in terms of shared knowledge and practices as well as material capabilities (Baylis, 2001).

There are many constructivists, but the best example is Alexander Wendt who published his work *Social Theory of International Politics* in 1999, challenging the

International Relations theory of neo-realism and neoliberal Institutionalism. Wendt's key claim is that international anarchy is not fixed, and does not automatically involve the self-interested state behavior that rationalists view as built into the system. Instead, he believes that anarchy could take on several different forms, because the selfish identities and interests assumed by rationalists are in fact the products of interaction and are not prior to it (Smith, 2001). Wendt argues that the security dilemma is a social structure composed of inter-subjective understandings in which states are so distrustful that they make worst-case assumptions about each other's intentions, and, as a result, define their interests in 'self-help' terms (Wendt, 1999). Consequently, the best way to obtain security should be through social and culture construction, given that the key principle of social constructivism is that international politics is shaped by collective values, persuasive ideas, culture identities, and social norms.

### **III. State-centric Security**

#### ***Traditional Security Paradigm***

Traditional security paradigm refers to a *realist* construct of security in which the referent object of security is the state (Bajpai, 2000). In this approach, it focuses on security relations among states (the unitary actor) and on the state's endeavor against external threats. This view presumes that if the state is secure, then so too will those that live within it (Bajpai, 2000). As discussed in the previous section, traditional security relied on the anarchistic balance of power, a military build-up between states, and on the absolute sovereignty of the nation-state (Owen, 2004). It focuses on geo-politics,

deterrence, power balancing and military strategy (Siddqui, 2008). This realist perspective reached a peak during the Cold War, where the US and the Soviet Union—the two superpowers back then—competed with each other and perceived that only through building-up of its military might can it achieve security. The state defense from external military attacks was the primary focus of American and Soviet Union security policy.

However, the traditional security was being challenged at the end of Cold War. In 1980s, the traditional view of security started to be altered. Barry Buzan tried to broaden the scope of security, arguing that the security studies should not be limited to military. There are many aspects that are important to state security such as politics, economy, society and environment (Buzan, 1983). The collapse of the Soviet Union was a wake-up call for realists. First, the international system was transformed from a bipolar world to unipolarity (hegemony), which is not currently agreed by realists about the durability of unipolarity, because many realists expected the end of the Cold War to result in some version of multipolarity (Morgan, 2007). Second, the reason of the collapse of the Soviet Union was due to the internal political and economic factors, not because of the military confrontation. Thus instead of an external factor, the survival of a state seems threatened from an internal factor. The realist perspective didn't predict and couldn't explain this phenomenon.

Under such a situation, the liberalist perspective gradually replaced the realist thinking. The liberalists are flexible about the impact of anarchy on governments' behavior, and they emphasize the existence of internal cleavages over control of the state and its policies—states are not unitary actors (Morgan, 2007). As the aforementioned liberal thinking, liberalists anticipate state cooperation over mutual interests, interdependence through

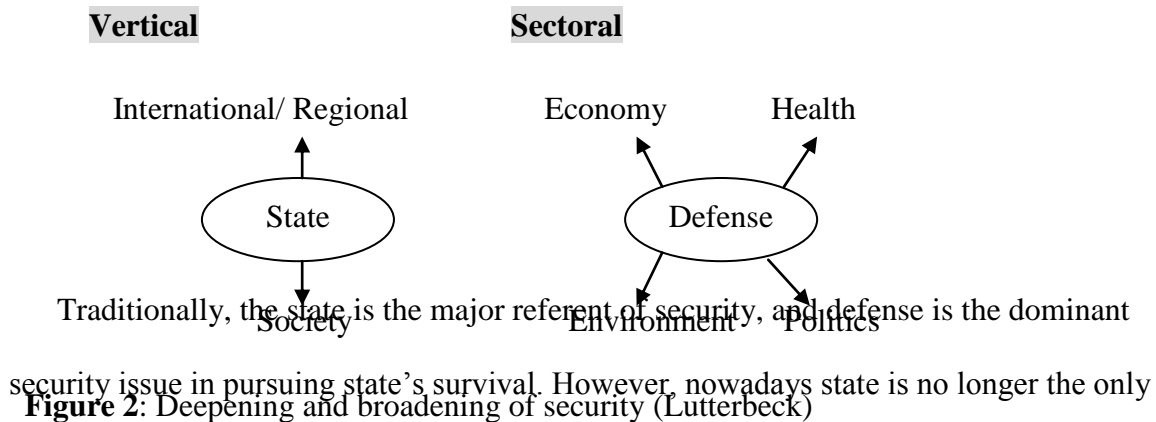
the establishment of institutions and regimes, and the spread of democracy. The liberalist approach is currently the dominant perspective in the *practice* of international politics (Morgan, 2007).

### ***Globalization and its Impact on Traditional Security Concepts***

There are two forces that reinforce the development of security concepts. The first is the collapse of the Soviet Union, where the international political system became a unipolar hegemonic world which largely changed the realist thinking of security and, therefore, the liberalist approach became popular. Nevertheless, this is not the only force that affects the concept of security. After the Cold War, globalization became faster than before and made countries more interdependent on each other (Xuotong, 2005). The globalization and the revolution in communications, transportation and technology, has dramatically and permanently changed the social, economic and political environment, not only in the so-called industrialized world, but also in the developing countries and in countries in transition (McFarlane, 2000). Globalization increased the mobility of goods, services capital and people throughout the world, but at the same time it also increased the vulnerability of nation states and their societies to external events and threats and it is this increased vulnerability that has the potential for massive societal disruption (McElwain, 2005). The newly emerged challenges includes economic and financial security, pandemic, environmental degradation and transnational organized crime, etc. These changes accelerated by globalization have also ushered in challenges to state sovereignty as nations have surrendered some of their traditional powers in the interests of collective political, economic or security arrangements (McFarlane, 2000). Thus people may not have suffered from outright nuclear attack, but they were being killed by

the remnants of proxy wars, environmental disaster, poverty, disease, hunger, violence and human rights abuses (Owen, 2004).

In other words, in the Post-cold War era, the possibility of military confrontation has tremendously decreased, the traditional security challenges featuring in state-based, military, external, direct, territorial, enemy strength and military stability are less important. Instead, with the assist of globalization, the new challenges featuring in non-state actors, socio-economic, internal, transnational, diffuse, non-territorial has emerged. As a result, *deepening and widening/broadening* of security are considered. For example, Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wild (1998) argue that security can be broadened to include other threats beyond the traditional military and political domain (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). Thus states no longer only focus on traditional security issues, they begun to highlighting the *non-traditional security* issues. According to Derek Lutterbeck, the deepening and widening of security can be visualized as the table below:



**Figure 2:** Deepening and broadening of security (Lutterbeck)

health and politics. The range of included harms has been broadened to include other serious threats.

### ***Non-Traditional Security***

The term of “non-traditional security (NTS)” was coined after the Cold War but there was no common accepted definition for it by now (Xuetong, 2005). It is accepted that the NTS is often associated with the rapid pace of globalization (Emmers, *Globalization and Non-traditional Security Issues: A Study of Human and Drug Trafficking in East Asia*, 2004). The various definitions can be categorized into two schools. One group of scholars defines “non-traditional security” as comprehensive security including military, political, economic and social security.<sup>10</sup> The other school considers “non-traditional security” as an opposite concept to traditional security concept.<sup>11</sup> Although the second school is terminologically clearer than the first group, it also agrees that nontraditional security issues may result in military clashes. This agreement makes the second group vulnerable to the critique by the first school (Xuetong, 2005). This paper takes an alternative approach: NTS is basically non-military threats; however, if the military clash is caused by *non-state actor* instead of state, it can be incorporated into NTS category. Non-traditional security concept has two features: first, the referent object of security is not only the state itself, but sometimes can be other objects, like a society. Second, it does not emphasize on traditional military challenge but other low politics issues.

NTS is more related to social constructivist thinking, where transnational actors and societies can be the referent object and all the NTS issues can be the subject of security

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<sup>10</sup> This school considers “non-traditional security” as a broader concept than traditional concept of security, but it still encompasses military security.

<sup>11</sup> This definition excludes military security.



studies (but the main attention is still centered on states and the national interests). The most prominent and popular constructivist school of thought is “Copenhagen school,”<sup>12</sup> which emphasizes the social aspect of security as well as the process of so-called “securitization.”<sup>13</sup> Copenhagen School has played an important role in broadening the conception of security and in providing a framework to analyze how an issue becomes securitized or desecuritized; the school also deepens security studies by including non-state actors (Emmers, 2007). This school has represented a move away from traditional security studies and drew more attention on non-military issues and non-state actors.

As for the non-traditional security agenda (or NTS issues), many have recognized that NTS issues move beyond inter-state conflicts and geo-political concerns, and it focuses on non-military security concerns and incorporate both states and non-state actors (Emmers, 2004). However, there is also no consensus on a precise catalog. Copenhagen school defines the security agenda from five political sectors in which a securitization could take place: military, political, economic, society and environment (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998). Some scholars argue that the NTS security issues must base on the source of insecurity. For instance, it should regard terrorism, drug traffic, international crimes, shortage of water and food, economic crisis, environmental damage, hacker, illegal immigrants, ethnic conflicts, overgrowth of population, etc all as nontraditional security issues (Xuetong, 2005). Some are according to the regional situation. For example, the NTS security agenda in East Asia consists of terrorism, environmental

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<sup>12</sup> The Copenhagen School is a school of security thought with its origin from theorists at the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute. The primary book of the Copenhagen School is *Security: a new framework for analysis* written by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde (1998).

<sup>13</sup> The term was coined by Ole Wæver in 1995. Securitization examines how a certain issue is transformed by an actor into a matter of security. Securitization studies aims to understand "who securitizes (through speech act), on what issues (threats), for whom (referent object), why, with what results, and not least, under what conditions (Buzan, Wæver, & de Wilde, 1998).

concerns, conflicts between growth and development, migration pressures, health issues (HIV-AIDS and other epidemics), the spread of weapons of mass destruction, transnational crime and others (Emmers, 2004).

#### **IV. TOC: State-centric Security Approach and Its Limitations**

##### *TOC in the Globalized World*

Globalization is a key factor in the rise of transnational organized crime (Shelley, Picarelli, & Corpora, 2003). The conditions of globalization have increased international economic liberalization, trade and financial flows, but they have also magnified illicit cross-border flows of narcotics, smuggled migrants and even infectious diseases like the Sever Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) (Emmers, 2004). In other word, globalization not only makes it possible to move goods, people and money through the global economy, but also facilitates the movement of “dirty money” as well as the transportation of drugs, counterfeit goods, arms, illegal aliens and nuclear material (Godson & Williams, 1998). Some scholars describe TOC as the dark side of globalization (Urry, 2002; Giraldo & Trinkunas, 2007); some argue TOC as the side effect of Globalization (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, 2004). But they all agree that globalization has played an important role in facilitating TOC (Shelley, Picarelli, & Corpora, 2003; Emmers, 2004; Williams, 1994; Urry, 2002; World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, 2004; Wang & Wang, 2009; Giraldo & Trinkunas, 2007; Calvani, 2008). It can be categorized into three forces within the context of globalization that have accelerated TOC and made it even more

transnational: 1) *Globalization of economy*. 2) *International movement of people, commodities and capital*. 3) *Progress in telecommunications and information technology*.

These forces do not “cause” the TOC, rather, they facilitate it.<sup>14</sup>

In terms of the definition, the key international instrument dealing with TOC issue is the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (TOC Convention), which provides a unified definition that is likely to serve as the benchmark for identifying TOC. Although some scholars criticize that the UN definition is too broad, the UN definition is so far the most useful and applicable to any policy or research work. According to article 2 of the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, “organized criminal group” is defined as:

*“ A structured group<sup>15</sup> of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes<sup>16</sup> or offen[s]es in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.<sup>17</sup> (UN General Assembly, 2001). ”*

This definition does not include groups that do not seek to obtain ‘financial or other material benefit’. This would not, in principle, include groups such as terrorists or insurgents provided that their goals were purely non-material. However, the Convention may still apply to crimes committed by those groups where they commit crimes covered

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<sup>14</sup> Finckenauer and Coker hold the same argument on this.

<sup>15</sup> According to the convention, a ‘structured group’ “shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure (UN General Assembly, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> According to Article 2(b) of the TOC Convention, ‘serious crime’ “shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty”.

<sup>17</sup> While the reference to ‘financial or other material benefit’ was intended to exclude groups with purely political or social motives, the term “material benefit” is not limited only to financial, monetary or equivalent benefits. The term should be interpreted broadly, to include personal benefits such as sexual gratification so as to ensure that organizations trafficking in human beings or child pornography for sexual and not monetary reasons are not excluded (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004).

by the Convention (for instance, by committing robbery in order to raise financial and material benefits) (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004).

According to article 3, a serious crime is “transnational” if it (UN General Assembly, 2001):

- (a) Is committed in more than one State*
- (b) Is committed in one State but a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another State*
- (c) It is committed in one State but involves an organized criminal group that engages in criminal activities in more than one State; or*
- (d) It is committed in one State but has substantial effects in another State*

The TOC definition provided by the United Nations is the most comprehensive, addressing the size, duration, and the transnational nature of criminal groups. In addition, it provides the flexibility to examine transnational organized crime that is not related to traditional organized criminal groups, such as Italian Mafia. This paper adopts the UN definition on TOC.

### ***Traditional Security Approach to TOC***

In traditional security’s viewpoint, both TOC and globalization are considered as less important issue; the role of non-state actor is being overlooked. The traditional security approach is primarily the (neo) realist view, focusing on statism, meaning the state is the only referent of security and state sovereignty is the core issue. As for the international system, it is an anarchy world where state as the only actor should pursuit its own security and to prevent external military threat through self-help. Survival is the primary objective of national security and the major mean is to build military might and to achieve balance of power. Regarding the globalization, realists, like Waltz, claim that “globalization is only a fad that poses new challenges to states but there is no non-state

actor who can be equal in capacity to a state (Waltz, 2000).” Under this traditional state-centric security standpoint, TOC do not appear to post a threat or challenge to the international system composed by states. TOC is considered to be a marginal threat given that they are not legitimate and are excluded from the international security discussion (Willetts, 2001; Zabyelina, 2009). Therefore they can be presented as endorsing the basic principles of a traditional state-centric system (Willetts, 2001). More specifically, we can examine it from the following five aspects. First, from the referent of object, traditional security does not recognize TOC simply because it does not form a state. Secondly, regarding the values, traditional security protects states survival and sovereignty. However, generally TOC doesn’t have intention nor have capability to post threat to states. Thirdly, regarding the source of threat, traditional security considers the only threat is external military challenge. Therefore TOC cannot be considered as a threat. Fourthly, in terms of roles of state and non-state actors, traditional security doesn’t recognize non-state actors. Thus TOC cannot interact with states. Finally, as we mentioned about globalization, realists think globalization do post some new threats to state, but still TOC cannot compete with states.

Neo-liberal institutionalism as one of the main critique of neo-realist expanded the scope of international security, recognizing non-state actors can be a player in the international system, emphasizing states’ mutual interests and cooperation through international institutions and regimes and democratic peace, drawing attention on the economic aspect of globalization. Neo-liberals even offer a mixed-actor model<sup>18</sup> - a theory based on spillover effects which are to bring global governance through norms,

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<sup>18</sup> This is the system free of militaristic solutions where the major source of power is concentrated in the functioning international organizations (Zabyelina, 2009).

rules, processes and institutions (Keohane & Nye, 2000). However, TOC is still considered as an insignificant security threat and does not pose a challenge to state sovereignty. Therefore TOC is often being treated as a domestic issue and there is no much room for discussion under the traditional security approach.

### ***Non-traditional Security Approach to TOC***

With dramatic change of international system in the 1990s—politically, the collapse of Soviet Union, and economically and socially, the accelerating process of globalization, the international security thinking finally has also altered. As a result, NTS became a major concern among states. As we have stated, NTS is more related to social constructivist approach, where non-state actors and societies can be the referent object and all the NTS issues can be the subject of security studies. Therefore, the scope of international security has been broadened and deepened. Although state is still the major concern and still placed in the center, state is not necessarily the only referent object. Likewise, external military threat is no longer the major threat to national security. Other NTS challenges have also incorporated into the category of national and international security. From NTS viewpoint, then, TOC become a serious subject to study. Like what we have examined previously, globalization is the major force that facilitates the growth of TOC in the 1990s. The change of international political system also provides a great environment for TOC to develop, especially in the countries from former Soviet bloc. Under these circumstances, TOC has gradually become one of the security issues among states. For *social constructivists* like researchers in “Copenhagen school,” the military and state continues to be an important sector, but they are evaluated in conjunction with

the economic, societal, and environmental sectors (Shelley, Picarelli, & Corpora, 2003). TOC as the dark side of globalization is seen as a cross-sectoral threat.

With the knowledge of above discussion, we can now scrutinize TOC within the scope of NTS study. First, speaking about the reference object, since NTS has broadened it to other non-state actors, TOC now can be an object in security studies. But states are still the primary focus. Secondly, regarding the values, although NTS mostly focuses on national interests, but it also cares about the international and societal interests. The threat posed by TOC not only harms the international and societal interests, but also national one. Thirdly, concerning source of threat, NTS holds that threats can be both from external and internal and is not necessarily a military one. In this case, TOC fits the definition that it can challenge a state both internally and externally. Fourthly, in terms of means, NTS stress on international governmental and instrumental cooperation. Now we can see governments work together to combat TOC (for example the European Union), because in NTS view, TOC cannot be solved by a single state. Lastly, as to roles of state and non-state actors, NTS recognizes non-state actor as an important player. From what we defined, TOC has the entity dimension, meaning TOC can be regarded as a non-state actor. The difference is TOC is an illicit one.

### ***Key State-centric Security Arguments on TOC***

In the interpretation from state-centric security, there have been several key arguments that need to be highlighted. Those arguments to a large extent construct the picture of TOC from state-centric security perspective.

### **A. TOC as non-state actors**

In state-centric security viewpoint<sup>19</sup>, scholars tend to focus on the *entity* nature of TOC and therefore considered TOC as a “non-state actor”<sup>20</sup> (Williams, 2008; Chickering, 2006; Emmers, 2004; Giraldo & Trinkunas, 2007; Shelley, Picarelli, & Corpora, 2003; Willetts, 2001). Non-state actor implies that state is still the primary one, and TOC as a non-state actor is secondary. Nevertheless TOC can still challenge states in many ways. Different scholars interpret different aspect of TOC as non-state actor. Some argue that TOC abuses the processes of globalization to operate at a truly transnational level (Emmers, 2004); some explains that the traditional Westphalian nation-state is experiencing an erosion of power and sovereignty, and non-state actors are part of the cause (Chickering, 2006); many examines the challenge of TOC to national and international security; others considers TOC as non-state actor is a major actor in areas with significant regional conflicts (Shelley, Picarelli, & Corpora, 2003); Some think TOC may become so powerful as to challenge and replace the state’s monopoly on the use of force, as has occurred in some remote areas of drug-producing regions of Colombia, Peru and Bolivia (Giraldo & Trinkunas, 2007).

### **B. TOC as a threat to national and international security**

Although some argue that in practical world states and international organizations have been slow to recognize TOC as a strategic threat (International Peace

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<sup>19</sup> Very few still possess the traditional realist security approach; most in the academia holds a NTS view on TOC issue.

<sup>20</sup> Some scholar argue that the term “non-state actor” would cause ambiguity, because it is unclear whether intergovernmental organizations are regarded as inter-state or non-state organizations. Consequences, in this thesis TOC is defined as a transnational actor (Willetts, 2001). But this paper holds that non-state actor is more common and will not cause too much confuse. Therefore this paper still uses non-state actor to describe the entity nature of TOC.



Institute, 2009); Most in the academia consider TOC as a threat to national and international security, not merely a domestic issue. Aas argues that TOC is far more complex and pervasive than it was before, so the new challenges to national and international security are being created (Aas, 2007). William also thinks that TOC as a national and international threat has become more complex and subtle than more traditional military challenges. He illustrates an example of drug trafficking, stating that “drug trafficking is much more serious than many issues that have traditionally been seen as a threat to security (Williams, 1994).” Cockayne thinks that the globalization of transportation, communications and finance has benefited not only licit business, but also professional criminals, allowing them to organize transnational, and the threat is increasingly global (Cockayne, 2007). Wang further points out that “no single country has the capability to prevent and contain different kinds of transnational crime. Consequently, transnational crime has become a severe challenge for the whole world in the 21st century (Wang & Wang, 2009).”

It should be noted that United Nations has recognized six kinds of national and international security threat, and TOC is one of them (United Nations, 2004).<sup>21</sup> According to UN, these six kinds of threat undermine States as the basic unit of the international system is a threat to international security (United Nations, 2004).

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<sup>21</sup> Those threats are (1) Economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation, (2) Inter-State conflict, (3) Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide and other large -scale atrocities (4) Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons, (5) Terrorism and (6) Transnational organized crime.

### **C. TOC erodes state sovereignty**

Many argue that state sovereignty is undermined by non-state actors in contemporary world system. However there are two camps of thought. One group argues that non-state actors such as TOC does undermine state sovereignty but not actually eliminates the significance of the state. Given that TOC's illicit activities is not allowed by states, TOC would find any possibility to uses the shadowy "sovereign-free" areas of the international system, where state control is weak or ineffective—such as war zones, cyberspace and private bank accounts—to operate. (Godson & Williams, 1998) Operating in such zones beyond the reach of state-based crime control, TOC slowly corrupts and undermines state, social and global systems of governance (Cockayne, 2007). William further argues that "the issue is control versus autonomy (Williams, 1994)." States want to control within its sovereignty but non-state actor like TOC want autonomy. Consequently, sovereignty no longer reflects real control over territory. It can be argued that the activities of many transnational organisations undermine state sovereignty (Williams, 1994).

The other camp takes the alternative vision of the sovereignty-eroding international system, which view was developed by scholars like Susan Strange who claimed that the international system is undergoing crucial transformations leading to the excess of power of non-state actors tending to govern the world politics (Zabyelina, 2009). In this camp, the state power is being taking over by non-state actors and therefore states are losing its sovereign capability. Susan further argues that International Relations discipline fails to produce "explanatory

theories capable of adapting to the emergence of TOC as a major threat – perhaps the major threat to the world system in the 1990s and beyond (Strange, 1996).”

#### **D. TOC and state weakness**

State weakness<sup>22</sup> has several aspects, such as territorial (lawless areas), legal (gaps or incompleteness in legislation), political (lack of legitimacy), economic (large illegal economy) and social (such as corruption) aspect. Different writers focus on different aspects, but all these aspects are important.<sup>23</sup> Most often, scholars have posited that the weakening of state structures, either caused or enhanced through globalization processes, has created spaces that have allowed transnational organized crime to flourish (Shelley, 1994). Weak governance allows TOC to forge a symbiosis with politics, hindering development and reducing the capacity of states to manage social tension and conflict (International Peace Institute, 2009). For TOCs, they have an interest in penetrating areas of weak governance and armed conflict, where they may find a comparative advantage over the better regulated zones of the global economy, or in sustaining ongoing corruption and governmental weakness, like that found now in parts of West Africa, Somalia, and Afghanistan (International Peace Institute, 2009). However, TOC has no interest in state collapse (Williams, 2008). As a result, the convergence of TOC, state failure, and armed conflict poses an increasingly obvious threat to global security (International Peace Institute, 2009).

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<sup>22</sup> The notion of weak states suggests a lack of certain qualities that have become widely accepted as critical components of the modern Westphalian state (Williams, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> This view is shared by Williams. He further argues that the best way to understand contemporary states is in terms of a strong-weak continuum across certain key dimensions. These include: Legitimacy and Capacity (Williams, 2008).

### **E. TOC undermines economic and financial system and democratic stability**

TOCs now conduct their illegal businesses in a less hierarchical structure, which has made the government and law enforcement hard to detect and prevent. Moreover, the advanced modern technology is also used by TOC members to assist their underworld transnational activities, it thus often weakens governmental institutions or destroys legitimate business endeavors. In carrying out illegal activities, they upset the peace and stability of nations worldwide, often using bribery, violence, or terror to achieve their goals (U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 2007). TOC especially targets those in transition to democracy and free markets, the threat that transnational crime poses to whole regions, be it the Horn of Africa or the Balkans, means that even government capabilities and well established rule of law are faced with the spillover effect of transnational crime based in poorly governed areas of the globe (Giraldo & Trinkunas, 2007). In a nutshell, transnational crime ring activities not only weaken economies and financial systems but also undermine democracy (Voronin, 2000).

#### ***Limitations and Problems***

Although state-centric thinking is still dominating the world system, there are several limitations and problems in interpreting TOC that should be noted. First, the state itself sometimes cannot be a guarantee of national and international security. There are no such problems for “healthy” states, where democracy and rule of law are well-structured. For weak states, especially for countries in West Africa, which have very weak governance and corruptions within the governments, problems exist. In such cases, the

states cannot confront with TOC groups alone, because sometimes TOCs are more powerful than the states. Instead, those weak states have provided TOCs a perfect place to hide and to run their illicit businesses. Secondly, state-centric security overlooks the individuals and this would cause a blind spot in pursuing human rights. When facing the TOC issues, the governments tend to only care about how the state will be threatened, instead of caring about how their people will suffer. Taking human trafficking as an example, the states are concerned only with border control mechanisms and, therefore, are inclined to treat all the people who illegally across the border (no matter in or out) as criminals. However, the blind spot is that those being trafficked are not criminals; they are victims who really suffer from the TOC activities. In this case, states are the perpetrator to harm their own people. Thirdly, the concept of state sovereignty is sometimes not helpful in combating TOC. TOC activities are across borders and without boundary. As was previously stated, state wants control, but TOC wants autonomy. If there is no proper social-economic standard, law-enforcement and rule of law within a state, a state cannot tackle the TOC issue from its roots. Such as drug trafficking situation in Thailand, in spite of great endeavor by the government, Thailand is still an important origin and transit place for drug traffickers. The solution is not state sovereignty but the socio-economic imbalance and lack of rule of law locally. Finally, theoretically state-centric security focuses more on TOC as entity (non-state actor) and its impact than activity. The interaction between state and non-state actors is the focal point in state-centric security, which means TOC has been treated as political security issue. However, the characteristics of TOC should be a comprehensive security issue relating to social, economic, political and cultural aspects. Thus the attention should be also drawn on the

possible socio-economic impact from TOC activities, not only political one. The state-centric security approach has a tendency to fail to address this.

## **V. Conclusion**

In the globalized era, TOC has been affecting the world across the borders. However, traditional security thinking cannot effectively cope with the transnational phenomenon of organized crime as it only considers the state is as the only referent of security, and only military powers can be recognized as a threat to national security. Consequently, TOC is considered to be a marginal threat given that they are not legitimate and are excluded from the international security discussion. On the contrary, NTS provides a more down-to-earth version of statism, where state is not necessarily the only referent object and external military threat is no longer the major threat to national security. Other NTS threats such as TOC have also been incorporated into the category of national and international security. In other words, TOC as a non-state actor can pose real threats to states, eroding state sovereignty, penetrating areas of weak governance and armed conflict, and undermining economic and financial system and democratic stability.

Nevertheless, the nature of TOC can be more harmful than military threats, as it affects not only states but human beings. Therefore there are still several limitations of interpreting TOC from non-traditional security concept. In weak or fragile states, it provides a cozy environment for organized crime groups to run their illicit businesses. Also, state-centric security tends to overlook the individuals and this would cause a blind spot in pursuing human rights. Besides, in state-centric security, too much focus has been put on state sovereignty, but it is not helpful in combating TOC as this issue is more

related to socio-economic imbalance and lack of rule of law. TOC is a wide-ranging security issue encompassing social, economic, political and cultural aspects. Accordingly, more attention should be drawn on the possible socio-economic impact from TOC.

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### About the Author

**Leo S.F. Lin** is a Foreign Affairs Police Officer in Taiwan (R.O.C) and RIEAS Research Associate. He received his B.A. in Crime Prevention and Corrections from Central Police University (Taiwan, R.O.C), and a M.A. in International Relations from University of Indianapolis (Athens campus).

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