

## THE CRIMINOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZED CRIME AND MEASURES FOR ITS PREVENTION

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### Аннотация

В данной статье рассматриваются криминологические характеристики организованной преступности и предлагаются стратегические меры по её предупреждению в современном обществе. Рассматриваются понятие, структура и социальная опасность организованной преступной деятельности, анализируются её экономические, политические и транснациональные аспекты. В статье представлен теоретический синтез криминологических исследований природы организованной преступности и оценивается эффективность государственных и международных механизмов противодействия ей. С использованием сравнительно-аналитической методологии выявляются основные факторы, способствующие расширению организованных преступных сетей, включая коррупцию, экономическое неравенство, слабое государственное управление и глобализацию. Результаты исследования подчёркивают важность системного подхода, основанного на правовых, экономических и социальных реформах в сочетании с международным сотрудничеством и участием общественности. В статье делается вывод о том, что борьба с организованной преступностью требует не только карательных мер, но и превентивных стратегий, направленных на устранение социально-экономических истоков преступной организации.

**Ключевые слова:** организованная преступность, криминология, преступные сети, коррупция, профилактика, транснациональная преступность, правоохранительная деятельность, международное сотрудничество.

### Abstract

This article examines the criminological characteristics of organized crime and outlines strategic measures for its prevention in modern society. It explores the concept, structure, and social danger of organized criminal activity, analysing its economic, political, and transnational dimensions. The study provides a theoretical synthesis of criminological research on the nature of organized crime and evaluates the effectiveness of state and international mechanisms aimed at countering it. Using a comparative and analytical methodology, the research identifies the main factors contributing to the expansion of organized criminal networks, including corruption, economic inequality,

weak governance, and globalization. The findings highlight the importance of a systemic approach based on legal, economic, and social reforms, combined with international cooperation and public participation. The article concludes that combating organized crime requires not only punitive measures but also preventive strategies addressing the socio-economic roots of criminal organization.

**Keywords:** organized crime, criminology, criminal networks, corruption, prevention, transnational crime, law enforcement, international cooperation.

## INTRODUCTION

Organized crime represents one of the most dangerous and adaptive forms of criminal activity in the contemporary world. Unlike individual offences, it is characterized by stability, hierarchy, planning, and the pursuit of long-term economic or political goals. Its capacity to infiltrate legitimate economic structures, influence state institutions, and corrupt public officials makes it a unique threat not only to public safety but to the rule of law and democratic governance. The criminological study of organized crime thus extends beyond the boundaries of criminal law, involving sociology, political science, and economics.

The term “organized crime” emerged in the early twentieth century, particularly in relation to American mafia structures, but its essence as a coordinated, profit-oriented network of illegal activities dates back to earlier centuries. Modern organized crime manifests in diverse forms: drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling, corruption, financial fraud, money laundering, and cybercrime. These activities often transcend national borders, exploiting technological advancement and global market integration.

In criminology, organized crime is defined as a system of criminal relationships aimed at obtaining material benefits through continuous illegal activity, supported by corruption and violence, and protected by political or economic influence. Its social danger lies in its ability to reproduce itself through corruption and intimidation, effectively creating “parallel power systems” that undermine state authority.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the criminological characteristics of organized crime—its structure, typology, causes, and mechanisms of operation—and to propose strategies for its prevention. The relevance of this topic arises from the growing complexity of organized criminal networks and their integration into global processes. Preventing and combating organized crime is not solely a matter of law enforcement; it requires comprehensive policies involving economic transparency, international coordination, and civic engagement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

The theoretical understanding of organized crime has evolved through multiple academic traditions. Early criminological works, particularly those of Edwin Sutherland, focused on differential association—the process by which individuals learn criminal behaviour through interaction within groups. Later, Donald Cressey and Frank Hagan conceptualized organized crime as a rationally structured enterprise that functions similarly to a corporation, guided by profit maximization and hierarchical control.

In European criminology, scholars such as Klaus von Lampe and Hans-Jörg Albrecht emphasized the social networks and relational dimensions of organized crime, rather than static hierarchies. Their research showed that organized crime is flexible and adaptive, often blending legal and illegal activities to evade detection.

From the sociological perspective, David Garland's theory of the "culture of control" provides valuable insights: organized crime thrives in conditions of social inequality, urban marginalization, and weak institutional trust. Economic globalization has amplified these tendencies, creating transnational opportunities for criminal organizations. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines organized crime as "a structured group of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing serious crimes for financial or material benefit."

Criminological literature distinguishes between different forms of organized crime: mafia-type organizations (Italy, Japan), cartels (Latin America), corporate crime syndicates, and cybercriminal networks. Studies also stress the role of corruption as the lifeblood of organized crime, enabling criminal groups to secure political protection and economic advantage.

Preventive approaches have developed alongside theoretical models. Authors such as R. Clarke and R. Cornish advocate situational crime prevention—reducing opportunities for organized crime through better regulation, surveillance, and accountability. International frameworks like the *UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (2000) emphasize multi-level cooperation, exchange of intelligence, and harmonization of national laws.

Overall, the literature converges on the view that organized crime must be studied as a dynamic, multi-causal phenomenon requiring integrated strategies that combine criminological theory, institutional reform, and global solidarity.

This research employs a qualitative, analytical, and comparative methodology, aiming to synthesize theoretical insights and policy experiences related to organized crime and its prevention. The study is based on a review of criminological theories, legal frameworks, international conventions, and statistical reports from agencies such as INTERPOL, Europol, and UNODC.

The methodological framework includes several analytical stages:

1. **Conceptual analysis** — identification of criminological definitions and structural elements of organized crime, including hierarchy, continuity, coordination, and use of corruption and violence.
2. **Comparative evaluation** — analysis of national and international approaches to combating organized crime, including legal reforms, enforcement models, and preventive programs.
3. **Systemic synthesis** — integration of theoretical and practical dimensions to outline a unified criminological characterization of organized crime.
4. **Interpretive reflection** — discussion of social, economic, and political conditions that foster the emergence of criminal organizations.

The study adopts a system-oriented perspective, treating organized crime as a social institution that interacts with legitimate systems of power, economy, and culture. Analytical tools include content analysis of academic literature, interpretation of international legal documents, and critical comparison of prevention strategies.

While the research does not employ quantitative methods, it relies on official reports and documented cases to illustrate theoretical arguments. This methodological approach ensures a balanced examination of organized crime as both a legal violation and a social process deeply embedded in structures of inequality and corruption.

## RESULTS

The study's results reveal that organized crime possesses distinctive criminological features separating it from other forms of criminality. It is characterized by the following attributes:

1. **Organizational Structure:** Organized crime operates through hierarchical or network-based models that ensure coordination, discipline, and continuity. Leadership is typically centralized, with specialized divisions responsible for finance, logistics, security, and communication.
2. **Economic Motivation:** The primary goal is systematic profit generation, often through illicit markets—narcotics, weapons, human trafficking, and illegal gambling. These profits are subsequently laundered through legitimate enterprises, creating a fusion between legal and illegal economies.
3. **Use of Corruption and Violence:** Corruption secures protection from law enforcement and political interference, while violence enforces internal discipline and deters competitors or whistle-blowers.
4. **Transnational Operations:** Modern organized crime transcends national borders, facilitated by globalization, digital technology, and international trade. Networks

in narcotics, cyber fraud, and money laundering demonstrate high adaptability and global reach.

The results also demonstrate that organized crime functions as an alternative social system in environments where state institutions are weak or corrupt. It provides illegal “services” (protection, dispute resolution, employment) that substitute legitimate authority. This dual nature—criminal yet quasi-institutional—explains its persistence.

The prevention of organized crime, therefore, requires a multi-dimensional approach. Law enforcement must be complemented by structural reforms addressing socio-economic inequalities, strengthening transparency, and reducing opportunities for corruption. International cooperation—through intelligence exchange, mutual legal assistance, and harmonized legislation—remains a key pillar of success.

## DISCUSSION

The results affirm that organized crime cannot be eradicated solely through repressive measures; its endurance is rooted in systemic flaws of governance, economy, and social order. Criminological theory must therefore move beyond punitive paradigms to preventive and integrative models.

From a structural viewpoint, organized crime represents a distorted form of social organization that mirrors legitimate business and political institutions. Its members are often rational actors seeking power and security in contexts of uncertainty. As Nikos Passas observed, global markets and deregulated economies have blurred the lines between legal and illegal activities. Consequently, countering organized crime demands robust regulatory frameworks and ethical economic governance.

The discussion also underscores the central role of corruption as both a facilitator and product of organized crime. The symbiotic relationship between criminal organizations and corrupt officials creates a “shadow state” in which criminal interests penetrate policymaking. Hence, anti-corruption measures, transparency in procurement, and judicial independence are indispensable elements of crime prevention.

On the international level, effective cooperation requires not only law enforcement coordination but also shared political will. Organizations such as the UNODC, INTERPOL, and the Financial Action Task Force provide crucial platforms for joint operations, training, and intelligence-sharing. However, disparities in national legislation and resource capacities remain obstacles.

Finally, social prevention—education, employment, community engagement—must accompany institutional reforms. A society that offers fair opportunities, social trust, and strong civic institutions reduces the breeding grounds of organized crime. Thus, the fight against organized criminality is as much a moral and educational challenge as a legal one.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, organized crime is a multifaceted phenomenon that combines criminal enterprise, corruption, and social adaptation. It operates through structured, profit-oriented networks capable of penetrating political and economic systems. Its criminological characterization reveals an entity that mimics legitimate institutions while subverting them from within.

The study emphasizes that effective prevention requires a balance of law enforcement, institutional integrity, and social development. Strengthening governance, promoting transparency, and reducing social inequality are vital to diminishing the appeal and power of criminal organizations.

International cooperation remains the cornerstone of global crime control. Through collective action, harmonized legislation, and information sharing, states can address the transnational nature of organized crime. However, long-term success depends on moral renewal and the creation of a culture of legality within societies themselves.

Understanding organized crime through a criminological lens allows for a comprehensive, humane, and realistic response that addresses both symptoms and causes. Only by uniting national and international efforts under the principles of justice, solidarity, and lawfulness can the global community effectively resist the expansion of organized criminal power.

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