

# Securitization of transnational crime



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The securitisation of transnational crime refers to contemporary efforts to curtail crime flows that take place across international borders via dissolution of the existing distinctions between external and internal security systems, placing a greater emphasis in the process upon international cooperation with regards to global policing, border controls, travel and financial flows. In this way the economic, political and strategic obstacles standing in the way of a coherent fight against transnational crime can begin to be effectively removed.

It should be noted that the securitisation of transnational crime has greatly accelerated in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks where lax international security was perceived to have facilitated not only the hijacking of the American planes that flew into the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon but also the transference of money which made the suicide missions possible in the first place. Viewed from this perspective, it is consequently clear that the securitisation of transnational crime attempts in the first place to instil law, order and international cooperation in what Chris Dishman refers to ‘ the leaderless nexus’ where crime and terrorism converge. Thus, while the move towards a securitisation of transnational crime ought to be applauded we must take note of the essential paradox that exists with regards to attempts to legally solve a problem that operates wholly within the domain of the lawless. We should also take note of the way in which securitisation has become increasingly popular since 9/11 suggesting that it is in many ways a knee-jerk reaction to an unforeseen problem – namely the convergence of trans-national crime and terrorism. Yet, due to the recent nature of international and regional security reforms,

we should – ultimately – be wary of offering any definitive conclusions to policies that remain very much at an embryonic stage of development.

However, although it is true that 9/11 has served to accelerate the securitisation of transnational crime (certainly as far as the collective ‘ West’ is concerned), it is also true that attempts to increase international cooperation in the face of rising global crime have been in existence before the spectre of trans-national terrorism became such a prominent international issue. For instance, Ralph Emmers has charted the attempts of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its bid to effectively securitize crime within that geopolitical locale between 1996 and 1997 with the author noting that while member states have openly declared the link between regional security and transnational crime they have hitherto fallen short of implementing bilateral actions due to ongoing resistance to institutional reforms. Thus, as is the case with the UN’s Transnational Organised Crime Convention, there remains a sizeable chasm to bridge between theory and practice concerning the securitisation of transnational crime in the contemporary era.