STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

What is “Organized Crime”? How Does It Weaken Law and Order, Governance and Human Security?

Society & Social Justice

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Meaning of Organised Crime

- Organised crime refers to structured, coordinated and continuous criminal activities carried out by groups or networks.
- The primary objective is economic gain, power and influence.
- Such groups rely on violence, intimidation, corruption and illegal markets to operate.
- According to the UNODC, organised crime involves three or more persons acting together over a period of time to commit serious crimes.

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Key Features of Organised Crime

1. Hierarchical leadership and network-based operations
2. Long-term planning and continuity
3. Use of violence and fear as tools of control
4. Infiltration into political, administrative and security institutions
5. Often transnational in nature

How Organised Crime Weakens Law and Order

- Normalises violence through gang wars, contract killings and extortion
- Creates fear among citizens, discouraging cooperation with police
- Witness intimidation and low conviction rates undermine justice
- Criminal groups establish parallel enforcement systems
- Erodes the state’s monopoly over the legitimate use of force

Impact on Governance

- Promotes systemic corruption in police, bureaucracy and politics
- Criminal money influences elections and policymaking
- Weakens public institutions and democratic accountability
- Creates parallel power centres, especially in urban slums and border regions
- Leads to a shift from Rule of Law to Rule of Fear

Impact on Human Security

- Threatens individual safety and right to life
- Destroys livelihoods and economic opportunities
- Women and children become highly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation
- Youth are drawn into criminal networks due to lack of alternatives
- Public trust in the state declines as people depend on criminal groups for survival

Organised Crime and Development

- Flourishes in conditions of poverty, inequality and weak institutions
- Unplanned urbanisation provides fertile ground for criminal control
- Weak border management enables trafficking and smuggling
- Creates a vicious cycle:
- Underdevelopment → crime → corruption → weak governance

Conclusion

- Organised crime is not merely a law-and-order problem but a governance and human security challenge.
- It undermines state authority, democratic institutions and individual freedoms simultaneously.
- Combating organised crime requires strong institutions, effective law enforcement, social inclusion and international cooperation.

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