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Crime in Ireland north and south: Feuding gangs and profiteering paramilitaries

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Abstract This paper provides a systematic overview of the emergence of organized crime in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland since the late 1960s. It draws on two major studies of organized crime in the South (Hourigan 2011) and para-military activity in the North (Morrison 2014) to explore how conflict within and between organized criminal and paramilitary groups, shapes the distinctive dynamic of organized crime on the island of Ireland. The paper opens with an overview of the development of the drugs trade in the Republic of Ireland. The distinctive cultural characteristics of Irish organized crime groups are considered and the role played by paramilitary groups in criminal networks, North and South, is reviewed. As part of this analysis, the dynamic of inter-gang feuds and the spectrum of conflicts between organized criminal and paramilitary groups are analyzed. The competitive and mutually beneficial links between these organizations, North and South are explored as well as the tendency of paramilitaries to engage in vigilantism against criminals (mostly drugs dealers) as a means of building political capital within local communities.

Keywords Organized crime · Ireland · Northern Ireland · Gangs · Feud · Paramilitaries

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Introduction

During the last fifty years, the Republic of Ireland has enjoyed a period of relative political stability. A concerted attempt by government authorities to open the Irish economy to global capital resulted in a sharp decrease in emigration in the early 1960s, increased rates of marriage and employment and rapid urbanization (Lee 1989). The modernised Irish state which emerged from this period has become more secularized and integrated into global culture. Yet the repeated boom-to-bust cycles of the Irish economy have led to weak public services, high levels of insecure employment, a disenfranchised working class and urban neighbourhoods with high concentrations of jobless households (Keohane and Kuhling 2014; O'Hearn 2003). Although Northern Ireland has also experienced increased levels of modernization, urbanization and population growth, the paramilitary conflict which re-ignited in the late 1960s has dominated Northern Irish society in the subsequent fifty years. Unlike the Republic, Northern Ireland had a strongly embedded industrial working class at the beginning of the twentieth century. Prior to the onset of the Troubles in the late 1960s, the society was already divided, spatially and educationally, along sectarian lines. Given the intensity of the conflict during the last thirty years of the twentieth century, it is not surprising that organized crime structures were almost entirely embedded and intertwined with terrorist organizations. Since the peace process of the late 1990s, the Loyalist and Republican presence within organized crime has become more difficult to map, yet these ideologies and their linked organizations to this day remain the two poles around which organized crime is structured in Northern Ireland.

Rates of crime in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland have increased considerably since the early 1960s. In mapping crime trends between 1963 and 2013, Sara Parsons notes that 'recorded crime increased by almost seven times in the Republic of Ireland (698 per cent) and over nine times in Northern Ireland (964 per cent)' (2016: 19). This said, in both cases, increases were from very low baselines (Brewer et al. 1997; Parson 2016) and, from 1996, recorded crime in the Republic dropped faster than in any other European country. This general crime drop was, however, accompanied by increases in violent and drug-related offences. By 2001, the Republic of Ireland had one of the highest rates of drug consumption per person in Europe (Kilcommins et al. 2004). While crime trends followed similar trajectories in both jurisdictions up to the end of the twentieth century, these trends diverge from the early years of the new millennium onwards with slight increases in the Republic and a sustained, yet slight, decline in the North (Parson 2016). Aside from changes to methods of recording and reporting crime in both jurisdictions in recent years, organized crime entities have played a significant role in generating increased crime rates, for particular offences (Fallon et al. 2012; Reynolds 2006). Indeed, in the Republic, much of the increase in homicide has been attributed to so-called 'gangland feuds' over illicit drug markets (Kilcommins et al. 2004).

During the 1990s, burgeoning drug markets, and 'gangland feuds' created an 'air of panic' around organized crime in Ireland (O'Donnell 2005:101). The media tended to portray Irish drug markets as extremely violent (Kilcommins et al. 2004)

whilst exaggerating the general level of violence within the country (Campbell 2010). Considering the interest Irish politicians and the media have in organized crime, it is surprising that there have been few academic studies into the phenomena in the last thirty years. The classic texts of Irish criminology have tended to overlook organized crime (i.e. O'Mahony, 1993; McCullagh 1996; O'Donnell and O'Sullivan 2001) or provide limited discussion as part of wider analysis of general crime in Ireland (i.e. Brewer et al. 1997; Kilcommins et al. 2004). Hourigan's (2011) ethnographic case study of Limerick represents the only in-depth empirical academic investigation of organized crime in the Republic of Ireland although a number of studies have examined illicit drug markets (Connolly and Donovan 2014; Marsh 2017; O'Leary 2009). With a small number of exceptions (Deegan 2010; McElrath 2004), the majority of Northern Irish studies have concentrated upon organized crime as a source of paramilitary financing (Evans 2002; Horgan and Taylor 1999, 2003; Ryder 2009; Silke 1998a, b, 2000). In their report, *North-South Irish Responses to Transnational Organized Crime*, Obokata et al. (2014) provided an analysis of policy and policing responses to organized crime in both jurisdictions. However, they do not address the distinctive cultural characteristics of organized crime patterns on the island of Ireland, nor frame their discussion in wider historical context. Thus, there have been almost no systematic comparisons of crime trends and organized criminal activities across the island of Ireland.

This article seeks to develop this analysis by drawing upon on the detailed empirical research conducted by Hourigan (2011) and Morrison (2014) as well as reviewing the available academic and open source literature. We focus specifically on the role of conflict within and between organized crime groups as well as complex linkages between them and paramilitary organizations in contributing to the distinctive dynamic of organized crime on the island of Ireland. Hourigan's three year study of fear and feuding amongst organized criminal gang networks in Limerick city devoted particular attention to the role of conflict in shaping the dynamic of organized crime in the Mid-West region of the Republic of Ireland. Morrison's recent research has focused on the origins and rise of violent dissident Irish Republicanism (VDR) and his primary source interviews, analysis of VDR statements and activities all provide evidence of links to organized crime groups (Morrison 2014; Morrison and Horgan 2016; Morrison 2016a). Therefore, this article offers a systematic overview of organized crime patterns North and South, as well as an analysis of how inter-gang and paramilitary conflicts contribute to distinctive patterns of organized crime in Ireland.

Historical context

The roots of organized crime in Ireland pre-date the increase in public demand for illicit drugs which emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Indeed, some of the earliest manifestations of organized crime were street gangs who extorted money from local businesses, predatory pimps, money lenders and slum landlords who inhabited Dublin's tenements during the early to mid-twentieth century (Kearns 1994). Williams (2011) identifies the beginning of Irish organized crime as 1967

when the first armed robbery on a Dublin bank was undertaken by a criminal organization with links to the short-lived Republican movement *Saor Éire*.

The numbers of armed robberies continued to increase throughout the 1970s,[1] while criminal organizations also became involved in protection rackets and organised theft (Williams 2011). In Dublin, the most notorious criminal organization was led by the Dunne family. In 1978, they raided a pharmaceutical plant in County Tipperary and realised that the amount of revenue that could be accrued from the drugs trade was significant (Byrne 2011). Members of the Dunne family and their associates became instrumental in establishing the drugs trade in the Republic of Ireland, as they established connections to international suppliers of heroin and cannabis while building a network of local dealers on the north side of Dublin's inner city (Williams 2011). Improved security in financial institutions coupled with more pro-active policing led to a decline in armed robberies in the early 1980s. The increasing relative rewards of drugs dealing also played a signficant role in shifting the focus of organized crime networks towards the drugs trade.[2]

Heroin addiction grew in Ireland's urban working class areas during the late 1970s and 1980s, driven by a number of national and international developments. Consumers were attracted to a new drug that allowed them to 'black out' the hopelessness and exclusion of prolonged economic recession (Punch 2005). Increased demand was coupled with improved supply, driven by geopolitical changes in the South Asian 'opium zone', and technological innovations made it easier and cheaper to import larger quantities of heroin, thus reducing the price and increasing the availability of the drug (Windle 2016). In addition, Aogán Mulcahy (2002) argues that there was significant official indifference to the spread of heroin addiction in Dublin because it was confined largely to marginalized communities. The conflict in Northern Ireland also played a role in creating a policing vacuum in the Republic which was exploited by criminal family networks such as The Dunnesa as succession of Irish governments diverted Gardaí away from main cities and towns to patrol the border with Northern Ireland (Conway 2014).

As the eighties progressed, illicit drug markets developed outside of Dublin, in the cities of Cork, Limerick and Galway. Limerick city became a particularly important hub in the national drugs trade with criminal organizations exploiting Limericks sea- and air-ports to import drugs, and using their bases in disadvantaged communities to establish lucrative drugs distribution networks (Hourigan 2011). With the up-turn in the Irish economy during the 1990s, the demand for recreational drugs such as ecstasy and

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[1] The number of armed robberies has fluctuated ever since peaking at 306 in 1981 and dropping below 200 until 2002/ 2003 and 2006/2007 when the numbers of armed robberies peaked again. The rate of armed robbery in the South has, on average, been half the rate recorded in the North (Brewer et al. 1997). If armed robbery is merged with aggravated burglary, as Conway (2014) and Brewer et al. (1997) have done, then the number of recorded offences peaks in 1993 and then declines dramatically thereafter. An estimated one-third of which were believed by Gardaí to have been conducted by paramilitaries (Conway 2014).

[2] The decline in armed robbery from the early-1980s onwards was linked to improved security of financial institutions. More proactive policing of armed robbery and the increased relative rewards of drug dealing. This improved security has contributed to the rise of Tiger kidnapping – an abduction intended to coerce a victim to comply with offender demands sometimes used to enable robbery. A 2009 Dáil debate reported two Tiger kidnappings in 2005 and six in 2008 in the Republic while the number of Tiger kidnappings in Northern Ireland peaked at 16 in 2009 and then declined to just one in 2015 (Campbell 2010, PSNI 2016)

cocaine amongst the middle classes increased significantly. However, the increasing rewards of illegal drugs distribution intensified conflicts over territory between criminal networks. Conflicts also emerged between drug dealers and Republican paramilitary groups over payments of protection money. In the early 2000s, a conflict between two South Dublin gangs resulted in 16 murders. In Limerick, a deadly inter-gang feud, which erupted in 2000, resulted in the city becoming stigmatised at one point as the 'murder capital of Europe' (Devereux et al. 2011). Indeed, the state essentially lost control of pockets of some disadvantaged communities in Limerick. Two prominent family gang networks used intimidation to subdue local communities in the city and were then able to use these neighbourhoods as bases of operation to control the wholesale distribution of drugs and firearms in the province of Munster (Hourigan 2011:74). The conflict between these networks resulted in a dramatic increase in murder and firearms offenses in the Mid-West region of the Republic during the most heightened period of the feud between 2000 and 2009 yielding ultimately to public demands for a more robust state response to organized crime in the South.

Countermeasures

In mapping official government responses to organized crime activity, two pivotal moments emerge. In 1996, *Sunday Independent* crime reporter Veronica Guerin was murdered. Her reportage shone a spotlight on the rapid growth of criminal activity in Dublin and its facilitation by a certain level of official indifference. After her death, there was an immediate demand for changes to legislation in order to tackle organized crime. As a result, the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) was established to

> confiscate, freeze or seize assets deriving or suspected of deriving from criminal activity to ensure that the proceeds of (suspected) criminal activity are taxed and to investigate and determine any claim for benefit... This capacity to seize assets in the absence of a criminal conviction, and to tax illegal income, has proved remarkably successful, both in real terms and public and political perception (Campbell 2016:561).

Throughout its twenty years existence, CAB has had numerous successes in confiscating, freezing and seizing the assets derived from criminal activity across Ireland. As well as traditional organized crime groups, their activities have also included the targeting of assets derived from the criminality of the various paramilitary organisations operating across Ireland. A 2015 Garda report stated that since CAB's establishment, a total of €28million has been seized from over 50 individuals with connections or associations with the Provisional IRA in the past (O'Sullivan 2015). Despite CAB's achievements, however, Ciaran McCullagh (2011) has argued that even after Guerin's murder, a certain public tolerance of the activities of Irish criminal organization remained.

In 2008, two murders committed by organised crime networks in Limerick city shattered this public indifference. Shane Geogheghan, a local rugby player, was shot in a case of mistaken identity. A year later, Roy Collins was also murdered: his family members had given witness testimony against a local criminal organization. There were

a number of public protests and marches on the streets of the city calling for action on organized crime. In 2009, the Criminal Justice Act (Amendment) was passed which provided the state and the Irish police force, An Garda Siochána, with a range of new powers to tackle organized crime and 'criminal organizations' in the Republic. Significantly, Section 3(a, b) of the legislation provided, for the first time, a definition of a criminal organization, influenced by the definition of an organized crime group in the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.[3] The Act allows the Irish criminal justice system to utilize the non-jury Special Criminal Court – a court originally created to handle paramilitaries - to try some organized crime-related offences including: directing the activities of a criminal organization, participating or contributing to certain activities of a criminal organization and committing a serious offence for a criminal organization. In addition to these legislative changes, increased community policing, CCTV and armed response units were deployed in marginalized communities where criminal networks held territorial strongholds.

Furthermore, the Irish Government, aware of the cross-border nature of organized crime, has entered into a number of cooperative ventures with other law enforcement agencies. Ireland is one of seven European countries forming the Maritime Analysis and Operations Centre, an initiative which provides a forum to facilitate multi-lateral cooperation to counter maritime drug smuggling into Europe (MAOC 2016). The Irish and British governments have developed a Cross-Border Policing Strategy which provides for a number of formal cross-border initiatives and a strong relationship between the two forces has developed (PSNI and An Garda Síochána 2014, 2016). This cooperation has been most publicly visible in initiatives to tackle the threat of national and international terrorism, most notably through the work of the Joint Agency Task Force (PSNI and An Garda Síochána 2016). There is also a significant amount of informal cross-border cooperation between prosecutors and frontline officers in An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (Obokata et al. 2014). The UK's forthcoming departure from the European Union, however, creates an air of uncertainty over the future of Anglo-Irish cooperation around the policing of organized crime and terrorism.

Assessing the impact of the most recent legislative and policy changes on organized crime networks in the Republic from 2010 onwards is complex. The Irish economy experienced a banking crisis which has led to a deep economic recession impacting significantly on drugs and other illegal goods markets. The economic downturn also diminished the resources available for socio-economic and criminal justice initiatives aimed at tackling organized crime. Prior to the financial crash, large-scale local regeneration projects had been established in parts of Dublin and Limerick in an attempt to unpick some of the underlying social inequality underpinning organized crime in these communities. These projects combined with increased resources devoted to policing, have yielded a decrease in firearms offences and organized crime-related

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[3] The act described an organized crime group as 'a structured group, however organised, that has as its main purpose or activity the commission or facilitation of a serious offence … 'structured group' means a group of 3 or more persons, which is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of a single offence, and the involvement in which by 2 or more of those persons is with a view to their acting in concert; for the avoidance of doubt, a structured group may exist notwithstanding the absence of all or any of the following: (a) formal rules or formal membership, or any formal roles for those involved in the group; (b) any hierarchical or leadership structure; (c) continuity of involvement by persons in the group'.

murders. However, the most significant consequence of these socio-economic and law enforcement changes appears to have been to copper-fasten the trans-nationalisation of Irish organized criminal networks across Europe and the Global South.

Contemporary organised crime

Ireland has long been a transhipment point for drugs destined for the UK market (Marks 1997), as Southern Ireland's rugged coastline makes it difficult to control (McDonald and Townsend 2007). Irish traffickers have recently developed strong links to drug trafficking networks in South and Central America in order to import cocaine directly to Ireland, or transhipped via Africa (EMCDDA/Europol 2016). The Irish drugs market is not, however, dominated by indigenous Irish criminals alone. While the scope of the phenomena requires further research, government and media reports identify Vietnamese and Chinese networks as heavily involved in cannabis cultivation, North and South. There is some evidence of the exploitation of human trafficking victims as labour. Sentencing data from the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court shows how, over a two year period, 75% of those imprisoned for cannabis cultivation were Asian immigrants and, two-thirds claimed to have been exploited or maltreated (Irish Times 2013; Migrant Rights Centre 2014; Organised Crime Task Force, 2015, 2016). Evidence from recent cases suggests that some Asian cultivators also sell their expertise to others (Cusack 2013; EMCDDA/Europol 2016), which has increased the involvement of Irish nationals in large-scale domestic cannabis cultivation (PSNI and An Garda Síochána 2014). Jim Cusack (2013) reports a wider pattern of organized criminal activity by Eastern European crime networks in Ireland, including human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation, organised theft, and the sale of crime facilitating technologies such as mobile phone jammers. Asian and Eastern European networks are also involved in the importation and counterfeiting of tobacco, often in cooperation or competition with indigenous criminals. At retail level, illicit tobacco is sold by a wide variety of Irish and foreign actors operating in black, informal and otherwise legitimate markets (Calderoni et al. 2013).

Close familial, ethnic and geographical ties ensure significant levels of co-operation between organized criminal entities in Ireland and the UK as well as cross-border co-operation on the island of Ireland.[4] Price differentials between Northern and Southern Ireland also result in significant levels of alcohol, tobacco and fuel smuggling. One consequence of this difference is the existence of illegal fuel laundering in the border regions of both Northern and Southern Ireland (PSNI and An Garda Síochána 2014), much of which is under the control of Irish Republican paramilitaries. Organised vehicle and agricultural machinery theft in the Republic represent another profitable transit crime. Vehicles are often stolen on demand from abroad and then shipped directly out of the Republic or transhipped via Northern Ireland (Savona and Riccardi 2015).

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[4] For example, in April 2016, 14 members of the 'Rathkeale Rovers' were sentenced for the theft of an estimated €70 million worth of rhino horns and cultural objects from museums across Europe. While the group, many of whom belonged to one extended family, were based in the town of Rathkeale, (Republic of Ireland), several also lived in the UK and/or Northern Ireland (Vernalls 2016).

In terms of indigenous Irish criminal organization themselves, the most significant consequence of the tightening of organized crime legislation has been to force some senior crime figures to base themselves outside the state, most often in Spain. These senior figures co-ordinate major decisions, formulate strategy and direct minor gang members. These minor figures are generally part of the extended family of senior gang members and conduct day-to-day operations in Ireland (Cusack 2003; Lally 2014, 2016a). For example, in 2010, the Europol-coordinated Operation Shovel led to the arrest of 35 people linked to 'a well-known [Irish] family clan'. The criminal organisation was described as 'perfectly structured, lead, and controlled by one leader in close collaboration with his two sons' and involved in 'drug and arms trafficking, kidnapping, counterfeiting, smuggling of vehicles, murders and money laundering' in Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK (UN Office of Drugs and Crime 2016).

In terms of the spectrum of organized crime activity in Spain, the Irish are relatively minor players, melting into criminal networks from across Europe, as well as Asia, the Middle East and South America. From the 1960s onwards, Resa-Nestares (1999:48) notes

> Large international crime groups began to establish themselves in a major way in Spain...Their main activity consisted of laundering the money generated in businesses such as drugs trafficking, arms trafficking, extortion and kidnapping. After creating operating bases and incorporating new and powerful business organizations, they have achieved a division of labour so perfect that they have been able to operate virtually unnoticed by the majority of the general public.

Many criminals are attracted to Spain due to its position as a key entry point into Europe for cannabis and cocaine. Other factors include its climate, banking and financial systems, weak organized crime legislation, public policy which facilitates foreign investment and lack of co-ordination internally between polices forces and police corruption (Sands 2007). Furthermore, the popularity of Spain as a holiday destination and large ex-pat population means that Irish criminals can continue to consume home comforts which might be missing in more exotic destinations. Living and operating in Spain is not, however, risk free. The high concentration of ex-pat criminals has resulted in violence. Indeed, there have been at least ten gangland murders involving Spain since 2004 and while the majority are believed to have involved Irish feuds at least one is speculated to have involved either Russian or Turkish crime groups.[5]

The difficulties posed for the Irish criminal justice system in policing organized crime where leaders are based outside the state was highlighted in 2016 when an intense feud erupted between two prominent Irish criminal organizations: the Hutch and the Kinahan criminal networks (Calnan 2016). The feud began initially after the murder of Gary Hutch and thus far, eleven people have died. The Garda operation to tackle the feud has resulted in the seizure of 456 firearms, €2.2 million cash and €64 million drugs. However, despite the establishment of 22,428 check points across Dublin city in 2016 and 2017 to police the feud, efforts to stem the violence have had mixed success partly because the leaders of the two feuding entities are based in

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[5] This is the murder of Paddy Doyle in Spain during 2008 (McDonald 2008).

Spain. While Garda Siochána have exchanged officers with Spain's Guardia Civil in order to improve policing of the feud, the conflict highlights the significant difficulties local Irish law enforcement agencies face in policing conflicts between Irish gangs with transnational structures (Hilliard 2017).

Feuds and family

A key feature of Irish organized crime is the central role of family relationships in shaping the core structures of criminal organizations.[6] While there are a variety of organized criminal actors on the island of Ireland, including independent entrepreneurs and loose social networks, the structural model of indigenous criminal organizations in Ireland tends to lean closely towards Mediterranean, Asian and African contexts where participation in criminal activity is closely linked to forms of amoral familialism (Banfield 1958; Basham 1996; Pine 2012). David Lloyd (2000) argues that in post-colonial societies such as the Republic of Ireland, families become particularly important repositories of challenging attitudes to official authority and state justice systems. Aside from this historic context, the socio-economic conditions of Irish society have reinforced the cultural and emotional importance of the extended family as a key locus of identity in marginalized communities. As the Irish economy became increasingly integrated into global capitalism from the 1960s onwards, many of the established industries which provided employment to the industrial working classes were closed (Ferriter 2004). Therefore, the occupational identities which play a central role in shaping the self-esteem and self-respect of the employed working and middle classes in Ireland became increasingly unavailable to those living in these communities. Instead, the identity of the extended family, its honour and prestige fill this vacuum. Within the *Understanding Limerick* study which examines Irish communities with strong links to organized crime, it became evident that

> an individual can be treated with deference or contempt on the basis of their family relationships. It is not uncommon for an innocent family member to be punished for the crimes or debts of a sibling or a cousin by a criminal family gang (Hourigan 2011: 63).

For young men or boys who are on the fringes of families with connections to organized crime, it can be very difficult to resist the lure of participation when opportunities for conventional employment are extremely limited. For these reasons, large numbers of participants in Irish criminal networks have blood relationships to each other and these familial relationships have a direct impact on the operation of criminal organizations and the dynamic of inter-gang conflict in the Republic of Ireland.

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[6] While the following section explores feuding between criminal organizations in greater depth, it should be noted that Ireland is a relatively peaceful country. According to the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (2013) Ireland's homicide rate of 1.2 per 100,000 is slightly higher than its neighbours, yet half the European average (3:100,000) and, significantly lower than global (6.2:100,000), Americas (16.2:100,000) or US averages (4.7:100,000).

While Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries in the North are bonded to their respective groups by shared ethnicity and political aspirations, the degree to which kinship binds the distinctive core of family gang networks in the Republic merits further research. Christy Dunne, one of the earliest prominent figures in these networks was clear about the role of kinship in his activities:

> I felt that with my brothers, that if we ever would do anything together …that it was a closely kept secret between us. We worked together, we could depend on each other for our lives and we knew that whatever we did no one else would ever know about it (quoted in Williams 2011:44).

Hourigan also found that concepts of family honour and status were critical to the dynamic of inter-gang feuds in Limerick city during the course of her research conducted between 2007 and 2010. One man, Tomás, a relative of those involved in the feud commented 'we have to keep our side up the whole time, we can't let them get the upper hand on us' (Hourigan 2011: 114). Indeed, historic conflicts between Irish-American gangs and Italian-American mafia in the United States has led to some speculation about the similarities between Ireland and Italy in terms of the role of kinship in organized criminal activity. Evidence from Hourigan (2011) research and Ní Shúinéir (2005) study of Traveller feuds would suggest some initial similarities. Within both contexts, they found a deep distrust of the state generating an intensified connection to kinship and family networks. These intense bonds do manifest some forms of amoral familialism however, Irish organized crime groups do not possess the normative and cultural characteristics which define Southern Italian mafias (Allum 2017; Gambetta 1993). Furthermore, the kinship bonds at the heart of the Italian mafia have underpinned criminal networks which have infiltrated up through layers of public bureaucracy to the highest echelons of the state leading to a number of political crises in recent Italian history (Catanzaro 1992; Gambetta 1993). In Ireland, the response of the state to the activities of family gang networks has been more robust and effective as evinced by the establishment of the Criminal Assets Bureau and the reforms introduced under the Criminal Justice Act (2009). While corruption is a significant problem in Irish public life (Byrne 2012; Hourigan 2015) and indeed, police corruption in Ireland has also recently been highlighted (Conway 2014), these forms of corruption do not originate within organized criminal family gang networks. Therefore, the bonds of loyalty which have united these gangs at local and trans-national level have not been successful in extending upwards to develop the reach of these networks through to highest echelons of Irish society.

While organized crime networks all over the world have been known to engage in feuding over territory and black markets, the practice of feuding has a particularly prominent role in organized crime in Ireland. In the nineteenth century, feuding and faction-fighting were regarded as a 'remnant of the old barbarous system of clanship, which still continues in practice' by British colonial administrators (Lewis 1836). Given the level of alienation between Catholic citizens and the state at the time, it was not surprising that families turned to local feuds to resolve conflicts over property, money, marriage commitments and personal injury (O'Donnell 1975). Even after the establishment of the independent Irish state in 1922, suspicion of the police remained intense; particularly in urban slum districts and rural areas. As a consequence, feuding

practices continued. Feuding is particularly prevalent as an approach to dealing with conflict within the Irish Travelling community [7] (Ní Shúinéir 2005). Eamon Dillon comments 'Travelling people generally prefer to sort out their affairs among themselves'. The police, solicitors and the court system of 'country people' [settled community] are viewed with suspicion (2006:116). Since the introduction of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002, which restricts Travellers freedom to move, the prevalence of feuding has increased within the Irish Traveller community. The place of ethnic identity and specifically Traveller ethnic identity within organized crime and feuding in Ireland is, however, a deeply contested issue. In her *Understanding Limerick* study, Hourigan (2011:72) found

> Based on the information gathered in interviews for this study, it would appear that there are a number of Traveller families who have links with Limerick criminal families. However, there are also Traveller families who have no association with this criminal activity. Of the core crime families... some have Traveller ethnicity in their background, other families do not have any connection to Traveller cultures.

A number of prominent Traveller feuds in Ireland have had nothing to do with organized crime but are focused on issues of family honour and prestige.

Feuding as part of organized crime in Ireland can be regarded as a distinct phenomenon in sociological terms. Ansley (2000) defines a feud as 'formalised private warfare, especially between family groups... In modern times, the feud outlawed in most countries, has persisted where public justice cannot be easily enforced and private means are a simpler recourse'. For both Catholics in nineteenth century Ireland and the contemporary Irish Traveller community, the tendency to feud has been rooted in a deep distrust of the official criminal justice system. For those involved in organized crime, feuding is necessitated by the fact that they have already placed themselves outside the recourse of the justice system. However, their informal and sometimes brutal methods of dealing with conflict are interwoven with understandings of status and prestige related to family which are found in more classic feuds. Feuding is also commonplace across paramilitary groups operating across Ireland. These violent feuds are especially prominent in the aftermath of organizational splits and schisms within the groups. In these situations, there is a redefinition of 'enemy' as their former comrades who are now their opposition in a battle for control and legitimacy. This has been most recently seen in the feuding between the Continuity IRA and Real Continuity IRA in the aftermath of their 2010 split (Morrison 2014).

In 2010, a faction of the Continuity IRA left the organization. This departure was due to a failed leadership challenge, coupled with a desire to actively engage with other VDR groups (e.g. RIRA and ONH). When the grouping left, they maintained the same organizational aim as their previous comrades, the achievement of a 32 county united Ireland, independent of the United Kingdom. However, in the years that have followed much of the focus of the statements and violent actions of each group has focused on

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[7] Irish Travellers are a distinct and indigenous ethnic minority on the island of Ireland. They have shared values, language and customs within which nomadism is important. There are an estimated 25,000 Travellers in Ireland (Irish Traveller Movement 2016).

denigrating the name, capabilities, legitimacy, and reputation of their former allies. Irish paramilitary history is replete with instances of post-split feuds. The origins of the Provisional IRA (PIRA) in the early 1970s was for many defined by the punishment beatings and assassination attempts by, and against, their former allies in the Official IRA (OIRA). This conflict re-emerged in the mid-1970s and ran in parallel to the newly emerging feud between the OIRA and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), who moved away from the OIRA in 1974. These feuds target the leadership, as well as the rank and file membership, in the battle for legitimacy, membership and support. Most famously the founding member of the INLA, Seamus Costello, was murdered by the OIRA in October 1977. While Northern Irish paramilitaries are often depicted as operating solely in Northern Ireland, the murder of Costello took place in Dublin, the capital of the Republic of Ireland. The INLA was never able to recover from the murder of Costello, and spent many of the years afterwards immersed in infighting and feuds in a battle for control within the movement (Morrison 2014).

While paramilitary feuds function as a means for individual groups to assert dominance over each other, feuding is also used by criminal organizations to subdue local communities where their criminal activities are based (Hourigan 2011). There is a strong link between the dynamic of these feuds and the political economy of the drugs trade with 'feuds' sometimes being used as justification for attacks and reprisals when a drugs distribution based outcome is really the objective (Hourigan 2011). Feuds may bolster family reputations for violence which can, in theory, deter victimisation from other criminals (Marsh 2017; Windle 2013; Windle and Briggs 2015). These conflicts may also prevent witnesses and victims from cooperating with the state and increase the cohesiveness of the group (Decker 1996). Feuds also provide the opportunity for younger (largely male) members of family gang networks to prove their skills and commitment to the family, thus enhancing their reputation and prestige within the network. Therefore, it can be difficult at times to unpick commercial and personal motivations for the systematic violence which occurs within feuds (Windle 2013).

In the Republic of Ireland, inter-family feuds have been policed through increased use of intelligence and community policing as well as the deployment of armed response units at key flashpoints of conflict. However, the trans-nationalization of Irish gang networks have somewhat undermined this approach as some high-level criminals who are being targeted by such measures have removed themselves from the state (Brady 2008). Within Traveller feuding contexts, mediation models have been introduced with some success. However, there is much greater scepticism about the extent to which mediation can be used in dealing with organized crime group conflicts as the rewards for dominating geographical areas or drugs markets controlled by groups with the feuds are so significant.

Irish paramilitaries and organized crime

In order to develop an accurate understanding of organized crime on the entire island of Ireland, it is essential to understand the role which Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries play in these activities. The final section of this article explores this issue and examines Republican groups such as the Provisional IRA, 'New' IRA and Continuity IRA in terms of their activities on both sides of the border. The activities of Loyalist

paramilitaries are considered exclusively in terms of Northern Ireland where they have been largely confined.

In January 2004 the British and Irish governments established the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC). A significant part of the organization's remit was to monitor the activity of the paramilitary organisations in a post-peace process Northern Ireland. The majority of their analysis focused on terrorism and political violence. However, they also analysed paramilitary involvement in non-political crime. Their earliest in-depth analysis of non-political crime was contained within their third report published in November 2004. This report stated that paramilitary groups were involved in a wide-range of criminal activity both at the 'top end of the scale' and also 'lower down the scale', including smuggling of drugs, oil, alcohol and high value goods, counterfeiting and bank robbery. The report pointed out that the involvement of paramilitaries, on both sides of the sectarian divide, in criminality gave them the 'community roots and influence of a kind organised criminals strive to gain' (IMC 2004:26).

The IMC was established to monitor the actions of paramilitary groups at a time of ostensible peace. However, paramilitary involvement in organized crime originated during The Troubles - the paramilitary conflict that plagued Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to the late 1990s. During the Troubles, the Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries engaged in organized crime as a method of terrorist financing, but also at times as a means of lining their own pockets. For the Irish Republican Movement, most notably the PIRA, their involvement in organized crime ranged from kidnapping for ransom, smuggling of animal grains, extortion and film piracy (Horgan and Taylor 1999). The PIRA General Headquarters (GHQ) was set up departmentally, in order to implement the decisions made by the Army Council. There were ten departments in total including, but not exclusively, Quartermaster, Training, Operations, Intelligence, Education and Finance. The finance department was in charge of procuring illegally gained funds and ultimately laundering this capital. The laundering of these funds was often carried out through PIRA-owned legitimate businesses, including pubs, Dublin-based hackney services, video shops, courier services, a security firm, a haulage company and guest-houses (Horgan and Taylor 1997; Clarke and Lee 2008).

Much of this criminality continues in a post-Troubles Northern Ireland. Right up to the present day, the Irish journalist Jim Cusack reports on the continuation, and resultant dangers, of cross-border fuel smuggling and laundering (Cusack 2015). Provisional Republicans, largely based in the border region of south Armagh, continue to engage in the illegal treatment and resale of diesel. It is reported that this criminality has made millionaires of the 200–300 main operators in the region, while simultaneously bringing detrimental environmental and security risks to the surrounding areas and its inhabitants (Cusack 2015). One of the most high-profile fuel-smugglers was the leading Provisional Thomas 'Slab' Murphy. It is believed Murphy was running four diesel laundering plants in south Armagh, resulting in profits of approximately £10million annually (Barnes 2016). In order to seize the paramilitary's assets, the Irish and British states have utilised the Criminal Assets Bureau and the Serious Organised Crime Agency, entities originally designed to tackle organized crime. After a lengthy investigation by the CAB in February 2016, Murphy was sentenced to 18 months in prison for tax evasion.

While fuel smuggling and extortion have remained persistent, the most-prominent single act of post-Troubles paramilitary criminality occurred on December 20th 2004. It was on that day that the Northern Bank branch in Donegal Square, Belfast was robbed of £26.5million GBP, as well as smaller amounts in Euros and US dollars. At the time of the robbery, the newly established Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), as well as the British and Irish governments, claimed that the robbery was carried out by the PIRA. When the IMC reported in February 2005, they concurred with PSNI and the two governments, in their belief that the PIRA was responsible for this robbery.[8] They also stated that the PIRA was responsible for three other high profile robberies that year, including the robbery of cigarettes with a market value of £2 m (IMC 2005:6).

Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, the Republican paramilitary dominance of the PIRA has been replaced by the violent dissident Republicans (VDR), a set of groups whose aim is to maintain the paramilitary conflict in the pursuit of a united Ireland. They reject the legitimacy of the peace process and believe that Sinn Fein and the PIRA have sold out the Republican community through their engagement in the politics of normalisation (Horgan and Morrison 2011). As well as taking over from the Provisionals in terms of terrorist activity, the VDR groups, which includes the Continuity IRA, Óglaigh na hÉireann and The 'New' IRA, have continued the Republican tradition of organised criminality.

On both sides of the border, these groups have been involved in sustained levels of criminality, including extortion, cigarette smuggling and the arms trade. It appears that some individuals within the groups have now become involved in drug trafficking, a trade avoided by PIRA (Morrison 2014). This engagement in organized criminality has seen the groups become embroiled in gang-land feuds with organized criminal gangs across Ireland, and most notably in Dublin. In September 2013, the Real IRA (now 'New' IRA) leader Alan Ryan was murdered as a result of his involvement in one of these feuds. Ryan and his associates, while nominally leading members of a paramilitary force, were involved in extortion rackets,[9] intimidation and various forms of organized crime. He was revered as a paramilitary, yet his actions were more reminiscent of a criminal enforcer (Morrison 2014).

Throughout the Troubles, and beyond, Republicans have imposed their own brand of vigilante justice on those they perceive to be engaged in drug dealing, and other non-political crimes, within Republican regions of Northern Ireland. Their vigilantism ranged from warnings and curfews to punishment shootings, expulsions and murder (Silke 1999). The stated aim of their vigilantism is to protect the communities they claim to represent (Irish Republican Army Statement, October 13, 2013). By developing this perception of protection, they

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[8] It appears that, with this battery of robberies taking place during the peace process, the PIRA was attempting to finance their now dormant paramilitary force and its idle membership. During the Troubles, the membership had become reliant on the 'army' for financial support. This was, perhaps, expected to be continued in a post-conflict society.

[9] The Organised Crime Task Force (2016:13) has commented that some organised crime groups involved in extortion 'have maintained links to [both Loyalist and Republican] paramilitary groups, however it is often not clear whether the actions have been sanctioned by senior members. Some organised criminals will use the name of a paramilitary group in order to threaten a business, however any money extorted will ultimately be for personal gain'.

aim to gain the trust and support of the communities, which is essential for the survival and success of their organizations (Morrison 2016a).

These vigilante campaigns have at times led to the formation of ostensibly autonomous paramilitary organisations with the sole purpose of targeting suspect drug dealers. One of the most notable examples of this was Direct Action Against Drugs (DAAD). DAAD was a Republican vigilante group active between 1995 and 2001, claiming responsibility for a number of vigilante murders and attacks (Silke 1998a, b). Their period of activity coincided with the PIRA ceasefires of the 1990s, which ultimately led to their permanent cessation of violent activity. It was during these ceasefires that the rates of vigilantism increased dramatically (Silke and Taylor 2000). After the 1994 ceasefire was announced, DAAD was created as a cover name for the PIRA. Therefore, its existence allowed the Provisionals to retain power and control with Republican communities while simultaneously keeping their membership active. By carrying out these activities under a new organizational moniker, the Provisionals were able to maintain the guise of adhering to their ceasefire. This violent vigilantism continues to this day. However, where once the Provisionals were the sole perpetrators of self-appointed justice, this role has since been taken on by the VDR groups (Morrison and Horgan 2016).

Kneecappings and punishment beatings are still weekly occurrences in Belfast and Derry, Northern Ireland's two biggest cities. These attacks are being perpetrated by each of the main VDR groups: the New IRA, ONH, and the CIRA (Morrison and Horgan 2016). The groups are utilising the same methods as their PIRA predecessors, and they are targeting the same groups of individuals. They are copying from the Provisionals' past in order to differentiate themselves from the Provisionals' politicised present. They are attacking those they characterise as drug-dealers and anti-social elements of society in order to portray themselves as the protectors of the Republican and Nationalist communities. In doing so, they hope to gain the passive and active support of the communities in order to to sustain their localised criminality, as well as their nationalised terrorism (Morrison 2016b).

Most analyses of the Northern Ireland paramilitary groups have tended to focus on the Republican groups in general and the PIRA, in particular. This perspective though overlooks that by the 1990s, the Loyalist paramilitary groups were routinely killing more people than the Republican groups, a state of affairs which has largely continued in the post peace-process era (though at much reduced levels). With regard to organized crime activity in the twenty-first century, it is clear that it is the Loyalist groups that remain are substantially more active compared to the various Republican groups (Lally 2016b). Indeed, Loyalist paramilitaries currently represent by far the most formidable bloc of organized crime activity in Northern Ireland today.

In the 1990s, the PIRA is estimated to have raised at least £11 million per annum through a variety of organized crime activities. In the same era, the Loyalist paramilitaries combined were raising approximately £3 million per annum (Silke 1998a, b). The traditional primary sources of funding for the Loyalists were drinking clubs, extortion, robbery, smuggling and counterfeiting. In the early-1990s, however, new legislation made it increasingly difficult for the Loyalists to raise money from drinking clubs which represented a very significant loss in income. Consequently, there was a major shift by Loyalist groups towards drug trafficking and dealing. By the mid 1990s, it was estimated that approximately 60% of Northern Ireland's drug trade had fallen

under the control of Loyalist paramilitaries (Silke 2000). It is likely that Loyalist groups
continue to control the drug trade to this extent today. From 2000 onwards, OCTF
reports continually indicated that the Loyalist groups remain very active in relation to
drug dealing, extortion, smuggling and counterfeiting (e.g. Organised Crime Task
Force 2013, 2016). The final IMC report in 2011 singled out the Loyalist groups for
particular concern and warned that:

> Some members and former members of all groups remain heavily involved in a
> wide range of serious crime, exploiting the contacts and expertise they acquired
> during the Troubles and thereby presenting a challenge to law enforcement which
> is significantly more serious than it would otherwise have been (IMC 2011:56).

It would be wrong, however, to view the Loyalist bloc here as cohesive. On the
contrary, the past 15 years have been marred by very serious conflicts between and
within the Loyalist groups, with control of organized crime activity frequently lying at
the heart of most of the feuds (Barnes 2014). Several Loyalists and their associates have
been killed as a result of these clashes and many others have been forced to flee
Northern Ireland.[10] The conflicts mirror similar violence prior to the 1998 Good Friday
Peace Agreement when Loyalist factions frequently fell out over finance and organized
crime issues. A very violent split in the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1996 which led to the
emergence of a new and very aggressive group, the Loyalist Volunteer Force, was
primarily connected to the drug-dealing activities of the latter group (Silke 2000).

Moving ahead, two trends attract attention. First, the Loyalist groups will
continue to be major players in the organized crime arena in Northern Ireland
and will likely remain far more significant players than the dissident Republican
groups. As the IMC consistently warned, the weapons and characteristics of the
Loyalists, means that they add a "unique" and significantly more dangerous
element to organized crime activity in the region. The failure of the Loyalist
political front organizations following 1998 has denied the groups the options
presented to Sinn Fein and PIRA, and hence involvement in organized criminality
is unlikely to fade. The second trend is that the Loyalists will continue to fight and
squabble among themselves, effectively preventing the emergence of anything like

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[10] In 1974/5 there was a feud between the two main Loyalist paramilitary groups, the Ulster Defence
Association (UDA) and the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF). This fatal feud originated over the unauthorised
opening of a pub, during the Ulster Workers' Council Strike. The UDA and UVF had ordered all of their social
clubs and pubs to be closed. This was so the family 'breadwinners' would not be spending what little money
was left on alcohol. However, one of the UVF run Shankill Road pub remained open. This spurred a UVF
man, Joe Shaw, to defy the ban and open up his local pub too. When local UDA men noticed this they
attempted to shut it down. When Shaw refused he was fatally shot. This shooting led to a series of other
shootings, both fatal and non-fatal. This included the attempted murder of UVF leader Ken Gibson, who later
ordered the failed attack to blow up UDA headquarters in East Belfast. As well as the inter-group feuds, there
have similarly been intra-group feuds in each of the key Loyalist paramilitary groups. In 2002 an internal UDA
feud led to one of the most recognisable Loyalist paramilitaries, Johnny Adair, being run out of Northern
Ireland, along with a significant proportion of his supporters. This was after his efforts to form stronger ties
between the UDA and the UVF splinter group, the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). Some members of the
UDA saw this as a push for Adair to take over organisational leadership, and bolster his associations in the
drugs trade. With the push-back against him Adair, and his supporters, engaged in and incited a violent feud
which took the lives of key Loyalists, including Jim Gray the head of the UDA in East Belfast, and a rival of
Adair's.

the incredibly cohesive network created by the PIRA prior to 1998. This means that Loyalist activities and ambitions will effectively remain local and regional.

Media and other reports continue to highlight the major role the Loyalists in particular are playing in organized criminality in Northern Ireland. While it was operating, the IMC consistently drew attention to the seriousness of the paramilitaries organized crime activities, and repeatedly prompted the OCTF and related agencies to acknowledge the threat. Reading between the lines of the IMC reports, there is the suggestion that they were often swimming against the tide in this regard and a variety of bodies would perhaps have preferred if they had glossed over the issue. Today, it remains critical that officialdom continues to face up to the role that the paramilitaries play in organized crime, yet there are lingering concerns that the appetite to do so has never been very strong in the post-peace process era and may even be fading further (Ryder 2016).

Conclusion

The rise of significant levels of organized crime is a relatively recent phenomenon in both the North and South of Ireland. Within the Republic, organized criminal activities have been linked to the expansion of drugs markets. However, criminal networks have been also involved in armed robbery/tiger kidnapping, extortion, fuel laundering and trade in a range of illicit goods. The Troubles in Northern Ireland has not only impacted significantly on organized crime in that region but also contributed to criminal activities in the South in a number of ways. Within the Republic, family and kinship ties have shaped organized crime networks since the late 1960s. These family-linked structures have contributed to the prevalence of feuding with organized crime networks where the material interests of criminal networks have frequently become conflated with concepts of family honour and status. Conflict has also played a prominent role in shaping the dynamic of organized crime in Northern Ireland with a succession of feuds occurring on both sides of the sectarian divide during the last fifty years.

In the Republic, conflicts between organized criminal networks have been significantly complicated by interweaving links to paramilitary groups. In some cases, they have engaged in mutually beneficial arrangements while in other instances, paramilitaries have sought to extort money or engage in vigilante activities against criminal organizations in order to build or maintain ties to local communities. Our analysis demonstrates that while much attention within the limited academic literature focuses on the activities of Republic paramilitaries, Loyalist groups are very prominent actors in terms of organized crime on the island of Ireland. Because of the failure of post-peace process Loyalist organizations to make a significant political impact, they are likely to be important players in organized crime activities for some time to come. Therefore, critical challenges are being faced by those who police organized crime on the island in managing the border region and understanding the complex position of criminal and paramilitary groups in local, national and transnational organized crime networks. It seems inevitable that these challenges will become even greater in a post-Brexit context.

By international standards, countermeasures introduced in both Northern Ireland and the Republic have been relatively robust. Within the Republic, the establishment of the Special Criminal Court, the Criminal Assets Bureau and the introduction of the 2009 Criminal Justice (Amendment) Act significantly increased the scope of state agencies to respond to organized crime. Increased cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Ireland and UK has also contributed to more successful policing of organized crime across the island of Ireland. However, crime trends across North and South have begun to diverge since the early years of the millennium with organized crime in the Republic in particular, characterised by greater ethnic diversity and trans-nationalism. The need for coherent transnational responses to organized crime across Ireland, the UK and Europe has never been more evident but indeed, such cooperation may be more difficult to achieve within the context of the current retrenchment of globalization.

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