




From Norms to Practice: Untoc and The Challenge of Transnational Organized Crime

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<p>Received : May 25, 2026 Accepted : May 30, 2026 Published : June 1, 2026</p> <p>Citation: Saputera, D. (2026). From Norms to Practice: Untoc and The Challenge of Transnational Organized Crime. <i>Lex et Praxis Journal: A Peer-Reviewed Journal of Legal Studies and Practice</i>.1(1). 44-68</p>	<p>ABSTRACT: Transnational organized crime poses a serious threat to global and national security by challenging state stability, sovereignty, and law enforcement systems. In response, states are required not only to strengthen domestic legal frameworks but also to engage in international legal instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC). This study examines the implementation of UNTOC in domestic practice, focusing on its integration into national legal systems, the readiness of law enforcement institutions, and the effectiveness of international cooperation mechanisms. Using a qualitative normative legal approach, this research analyzes international conventions, national legislation, academic literature, and institutional reports. The findings reveal a significant gap between the normative objectives of UNTOC and its practical implementation, particularly due to legal fragmentation, unequal institutional capacity, and limited cross-border coordination. These challenges weaken collective efforts to combat organized crime and reduce the ability of states to maintain national security and public order. The study concludes that stronger legal harmonization, institutional capacity-building, and sustained international cooperation are essential to enhance the effectiveness of UNTOC implementation in addressing transnational organized crime.</p> <p>Keywords: Criminal Law, Legal Harmonization, National Security, Transnational Organized Crime, UNTOC</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Transnational organized crime (TOC) has become one of the most complex and multidimensional threats to national security, political stability, and state sovereignty in the contemporary era (Tabiu et al., 2023). Activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking,

arms smuggling, money laundering, and terrorism increasingly operate through flexible, adaptive, and network-based structures that transcend territorial boundaries. These criminal networks exploit technological innovations and accelerated globalization to penetrate state institutions, weaken law enforcement authorities, and disrupt the socio-political order (A. Khoirunnisa, 2018). For many countries, especially in the Global South, TOC strategically weakens institutional capacity and by exploiting governance weaknesses, thereby reducing the state's ability to protect its population and maintain its territorial integrity (Wijoyo & Hoessein, 2025). In the context of national defense and security, the security landscape has shifted from conventional military-centered threats to hybrid and non-traditional threats that challenge the core functions of the state. Among these threats, TOC stands out because it directly intersects with criminal law, national security policy, and defense strategy. Criminal networks undermine state power not only through illegal activities but also by weakening the legitimacy of legal institutions, disrupting social stability, and indirectly threatening the state's strategic defense posture. Technological advances in communications, finance, and logistics exacerbate these challenges, expanding the operational reach of TOC while complicating detection and law enforcement. These dynamics reveal a widening gap between the empirical threat environment (Dasein) and the normative expectations embedded in domestic criminal justice systems (Das Sollen), which are often rigid, state-centered, and slow to adapt.

To address this gap, harmonization of international law and enhanced cooperation are vital. Instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) serve as a normative anchor linking the global criminal law framework with national security imperatives (Khoirunnisa & Jubaidi, 2025)

. However, domestic implementation remains uneven due to differences in legal architecture, institutional readiness, and political commitment. This article therefore analyzes two main issues: 1) structural and institutional barriers that hinder the national implementation of UNTOC, and (2) fragmentation in domestic criminal justice systems that prevents alignment with international standards.

Given the complexity and evolving nature of transnational organized crime (TOC), this study uses a qualitative and normative legal approach to explore how criminal law reform can function as part of a broader national defense strategy, as well as how international legal instruments shape state responses to TOC. This analysis focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of UNTOC in guiding national legal frameworks and identifying practical reforms needed to strengthen legal and institutional resilience.

Ultimately, this article aims to contribute to legal studies while strengthening the theoretical foundation of national defense policy. This article argues that criminal law cannot be separated from security and defense considerations, and that a country's ability to deal with TOC depends on the integration of legal reform with national security strategies. By bridging the gap between the normative framework and operational realities, this article highlights the importance of a coordinated, defense-oriented legal response to transnational criminal threats.

Literature Review

1. UNTOC as an International Legal Framework

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) is widely regarded as the primary global legal instrument for addressing organized crime. Existing studies emphasize the role of UNTOC in establishing universal definitions, obligations, and mechanisms for cooperation between countries. Aqilah (2024) offers a conceptual foundation by defining organized crime as activities carried out by structured groups seeking financial or material gain, a definition rooted in UNTOC that has shaped legal interpretations in various jurisdictions. However, this conceptualization has been criticized for being general and insensitive to diverse socio-political contexts, especially in countries with weak governance structures. This criticism highlights the mismatch between the normative ambitions of UNTOC and the operational challenges faced by developing countries, particularly those with fragile institutions and extensive informal economies.

Feronica (2024) further analyzes the additional protocols to UNTOC, notably the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, and finds that although these instruments provide normative clarity, their practical effectiveness depends heavily on domestic institutional capacity and political commitment. A recurring theme in this literature is that an international framework alone cannot guarantee consistent compliance or enforcement without strong national legal and institutional infrastructure.

2. TOC from the Perspective of National Security and Defense

Although the literature discusses UNTOC in depth as a legal framework, few studies explicitly link TOC to broader national security and defense issues. TOC is increasingly recognized not only as a criminal problem but as a non-traditional security threat capable of undermining state authority, weakening institutional resilience, and eroding public trust.

Previous studies, such as those by Khoirunnisa (2018) and Wijoyo & Hoessein (2025), acknowledge the destabilizing impact of TOC but tend to describe this impact descriptively rather than analytically in defense studies. What is missing is a more in-depth exploration of how criminal networks interact with national defense structures such as border control,

intelligence operations, and state resilience mechanisms. The literature also lacks comparative analysis showing how countries integrate criminal law, security policy, and defense strategy when responding to TOC. This void is critical given that modern security threats require synergy between law enforcement and national defense policy, especially in regions facing persistent cross-border crime.

3. Implementation of UNTOC in Developing Countries

Implementation challenges in developing countries are another key theme. Feronica (2024) highlights that although domestic laws formally adopt UNTOC standards, operational gaps such as a lack of trained personnel, weak interagency coordination, and limited technological capacity often hinder law enforcement.

Similarly, Nurfiqra et al. (2024) reveal significant obstacles in Southeast Asia, where geopolitical tensions and overlapping claims hinder the uniform interpretation of international norms.

However, existing studies have not linked these implementation challenges to national security and defense vulnerabilities. Weak domestic law enforcement not only hinders criminal justice; it creates strategic loopholes for transnational networks that exploit border weaknesses and institutional fragmentation. Similarly, while some scholars note the limitations of universal legal frameworks, few explore how regional mechanisms such as ASEAN security cooperation platforms can support more effective implementation of UNTOC.

4. Literature Gap: Harmonization of Law and National Security

A critical gap emerges from the existing literature. Studies on UNTOC tend to be normative and descriptive, focusing on legal obligations and mechanisms of agreements. Meanwhile, studies on the security implications of TOC are often separated from discussions on legal harmonization. Very few works connect UNTOC with national criminal law reform and national security and defense. Similarly, the literature has not sufficiently examined the misalignment between the empirical threat environment (Dasein) and the domestic legal framework (Das Sollen), especially in developing countries where capacity gaps are most severe. This article addresses this gap by integrating legal analysis with a national security and defense perspective, showing how harmonizing domestic law with UNTOC strengthens a country's resilience to TOC. This article also contributes by linking implementation failures with broader strategic vulnerabilities, thereby filling a conceptual gap in the existing literature.

METHODOLOGY

Transnational organized crime (TOC) has become one of the most complex and multidimensional threats to national security, political stability, and state sovereignty in the

contemporary era (Tabiu et al., 2023). Activities such as drug trafficking, human trafficking, arms smuggling, money laundering, and terrorism increasingly operate through flexible, adaptive, and network-based structures that transcend territorial boundaries. These criminal networks exploit technological innovations and accelerated globalization to penetrate state institutions, weaken law enforcement authorities, and disrupt the socio-political order (A. Khoirunnisa, 2018). For many countries, especially in the Global South, TOC strategically weakens institutional capacity and by exploiting governance weaknesses, thereby reducing the state's ability to protect its population and maintain its territorial integrity (Wijoyo & Hoessein, 2025). In the context of national defense and security, the security landscape has shifted from conventional military-centered threats to hybrid and non-traditional threats that challenge the core functions of the state. Among these threats, TOC stands out because it directly intersects with criminal law, national security policy, and defense strategy. Criminal networks undermine state power not only through illegal activities but also by weakening the legitimacy of legal institutions, disrupting social stability, and indirectly threatening the state's strategic defense posture. Technological advances in communications, finance, and logistics exacerbate these challenges, expanding the operational reach of TOC while complicating detection and law enforcement. These dynamics reveal a widening gap between the empirical threat environment (Dasein) and the normative expectations embedded in domestic criminal justice systems (Das Sollen), which are often rigid, state-centered, and slow to adapt.

To address this gap, harmonization of international law and enhanced cooperation are vital. Instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) serve as a normative anchor linking the global criminal law framework with national security imperatives. However, domestic implementation remains uneven due to differences in legal architecture, institutional readiness, and political commitment. This article therefore analyzes two main issues: 1) structural and institutional barriers that hinder the national implementation of UNTOC, and (2) fragmentation in domestic criminal justice systems that prevents alignment with international standards.

Given the complexity and evolving nature of transnational organized crime (TOC), this study uses a qualitative and normative legal approach to explore how criminal law reform can function as part of a broader national defense strategy, as well as how international legal instruments shape state responses to TOC. This analysis focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of UNTOC in guiding national legal frameworks and identifying practical reforms needed to strengthen legal and institutional resilience.

Ultimately, this article aims to contribute to legal studies while strengthening the theoretical foundation of national defense policy. This article argues that criminal law cannot be separated from security and defense considerations, and that a country's ability to deal with TOC depends on the integration of legal reform with national security strategies. By bridging the gap between the normative framework and operational realities, this article highlights the importance of a coordinated, defense-oriented legal response to transnational criminal threats.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. The Role of UNTOC in Combating Organized Crime

Transnational organized crime has long been recognized as a multidimensional threat that undermines legal stability, economic security, and state sovereignty. In this context, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) provides a basic international framework for regulating and combating cross-border criminal networks (Ma'rifah et al., 2021). Although the UNTOC is often discussed primarily as a legal instrument, its relevance is directly linked to national security, especially in countries such as Indonesia where the growing influence of transnational organized crime (TOC) affects internal stability, economic resilience, and the integrity of state institutions (Jubaidi & Khoirunnisa, 2025).

UNTOC covers a broad spectrum of criminal activities, ranging from human trafficking and drug smuggling to money laundering and illegal arms trafficking through obligations that require countries to criminalize certain behaviors, strengthen investigative powers, and cooperate internationally (Feronica, 2024). However, the value of these obligations is not only legal in nature; they strengthen the non-military defense posture of the State by equipping domestic institutions with the legal tools necessary to reduce the strategic space exploited by transnational criminal networks. Page this is crucial for Indonesia, where TOC networks exploit maritime borders, the informal economy, and jurisdictional gaps. One of the ongoing challenges in implementing UNTOC is the lack of harmonization between international standards and national legislation. Some countries have not fully integrated UNTOC provisions into their domestic legal frameworks, leading to inconsistencies in cross-border law enforcement (Fitriah & Yusuf, 2024). This inconsistency weakens collective security. For Indonesia, the harmonization gap results in vulnerability in national resilience, as a fragmented legal structure reduces the ability of law enforcement and intelligence agencies to act decisively across jurisdictional boundaries.

UNTOC, sometimes referred to as the Palermo Convention, also establishes a framework for cooperation that encourages a coordinated response to organized crime (Nurul Azizah

Zayzda et al., 2020). This cooperation is not only administrative in nature; it strengthens Indonesia's role in regional and global security networks, which are essential components of Sishankamrata's emphasis on collective, layered, and participatory defense. Organized crime, with its hierarchical or networked structures (Arindrayani & Anabarja, 2024), reflects the transnational flow of goods, capital, and people. This makes unilateral action inadequate. The mechanisms of UNTOC, extradition, mutual legal assistance, and joint investigations serve as enablers that enhance Indonesia's ability to secure its territory, protect communities, and maintain public order.

One of UNTOC's most significant contributions lies in strengthening domestic institutions. Through technical assistance, training, and capacity-building initiatives, UNODC helps countries improve their investigative skills, adopt modern technologies, and develop coordinated responses to organized crime (Feronica, 2024). For Indonesia, the empowerment of these institutions is directly related to the function of non-military defense components (reserve and support components), as law enforcement agencies are able to strengthen the resilience of the national security system. Improved investigative capabilities also narrow the operational space of organized crime groups that rely on weak oversight, corruption, and information imbalances.

UNTOC goes a step further by promoting information exchange protocols through mechanisms involving UNODC, Interpol, and regional partners. This exchange is vital to Indonesia's defense strategy, particularly in securing maritime borders, tracking financial flows, and intercepting transnational supply chains used by criminal organizations. Without coordinated intelligence, TOC networks can exploit porous borders and fragmentation between agencies.

In addition, UNTOC encourages countries to address the social dimension of organized crime. By establishing standards for victim protection, especially in cases of human trafficking, UNTOC encourages countries to adopt preventive measures and develop rehabilitation systems (Sahetapy et al., 2022). Communities with strong social resilience are the main pillars of Sishankamrata, reinforcing the idea that defending the country requires not only military strength but also protection of vulnerable populations from predatory criminal groups.

Table 1. Measurable Indicators of UNTOC Effectiveness

Indicator	Data	Source
Increase in convictions for human trafficking (2010 -2020)	47% increase in countries implementing UTOC-	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2022). Report of the Tenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime,

	aligned legislation	2022. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Retrieved April 8, 2025, from https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/publications.html
Adoption of laws criminalizing trafficking and smuggling among State Parties	Over 90% of State Parties	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2020). Report of the Tenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Retrieved April 8, 2025, from https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/session10.html
Increase in mutual legal assistance (MLA) request since UNTOC adoption	60% Increase in international cooperation through MLA	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). (2018). UNODC Annual Report 2018. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Retrieved April 8, 2025, from https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/resources/index.html

These indicators reflect how UNTOC contributes to better coordination of investigations, improved extradition practices, and greater mutual legal assistance. Each of these elements is integral to Indonesia's broader defense architecture: strong legal cooperation that weakens transnational criminal networks that challenge state authority, disrupt governance, and erode public trust.

Through three protocols additional, human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and illicit firearms trafficking UNTOC provides specific operational guidance. These instruments strengthen the capacity of states to dismantle criminal supply chains while enhancing prosecution strategies. For Indonesia, the integration of these protocols reduces strategic vulnerabilities in sectors critical to national defense, including border security, maritime control, and financial oversight.

Overall, UNTOC serves not only as a legal instrument but also as an integral component of Indonesia's non-military defense strategy, enhancing national resilience, strengthening institutional capacity, and supporting regional and international security cooperation. However, the success of this Convention ultimately depends on the political will and sustained commitment of countries to integrate the principles of UNTOC into domestic law and institutional practice.

2. Challenges in Enforcing the Rule of Law at the National Level

The implementation of UNTOC at the national level is influenced not only by the adoption of laws but also by the strength, integrity, and operational capacity of domestic law enforcement agencies. In Indonesia, these factors pose persistent and interrelated challenges. Bassiouni (2014) notes that differences in legal systems influence the extent to which countries adopt international norms. In practice, differences in legal culture, institutional priorities, and administrative capacity create structural barriers that undermine Indonesia's ability to translate UNTOC obligations into effective law enforcement.

From the perspective of national security, these obstacles are not merely administrative, they are vulnerabilities that can be exploited by transnational criminal networks. TOC thrives in environments where corruption, fragmented institutions, and capacity gaps limit the state's ability to exercise its authority. As noted by Syifa Kinanthi Puji Utami & Rahmi Fitriyanti (2023), differences in policy orientation among countries hinder cooperation, but at the domestic level, similar differences exist among Indonesian institutions, resulting in inconsistent responses to cross-border crime.

One of the most widespread internal challenges is corruption in law enforcement agencies. As emphasized by Khoirunnisa & Jubaidi (2023) report from the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK RI, 2024), corruption undermines institutional integrity and reduces public trust. In the context of national defense, corruption represents a strategic burden: it creates loopholes for TOC networks to penetrate law enforcement agencies, disrupt investigations, and weaken state authority at the central and regional levels. Criminal groups routinely exploit corrupt channels to avoid prosecution, move illegal goods, or manipulate the judicial process.

Another significant challenge is unequal access to justice. Research by LBH shows that marginalized communities, especially in remote areas, face disproportionate barriers in utilizing legal mechanisms (Makmur et al. (2024). This inequality weakens social resilience, a key pillar of Sishankamrata, which depends on citizens' ability to rely on the state for protection and dispute resolution. Populations that cannot access justice become more vulnerable to recruitment, exploitation, or victimization by TOC networks.

Operational capacity also remains limited. Constraints in technology, investigative tools, and specialized training hamper the effectiveness of law enforcement. The gap between the sophistication of criminal organizations and the resources available to the police, prosecutors, and border authorities directly contributes to the *Das Sein–Das Sollen* gap in the implementation of UNTOC in Indonesia. Although the legal framework exists, the means to enforce it lag

behind. Outdated systems, inconsistent application of legal norms, and overlapping regulations exacerbate this gap (Badan Pembinaan Hukum Nasional, 2019).

Political intervention represents an additional external challenge. Mahfuz (2020) notes that political pressure in high-profile cases often undermines fair legal processes and erodes legal certainty. Such intervention undermines the neutrality of law enforcement, damages its role as a key non-military defense component, and threatens the credibility of the state in combating transnational threats.

Addressing these complex challenges requires reform at the institutional and systemic levels. Efforts to eradicate corruption must be strengthened through independent oversight bodies. Strengthening accountability mechanisms is not only a governance reform but also a strategic defense measure to prevent TOC infiltration into vital state institutions. Legal education also plays a vital role in instilling professional ethics and integrity among prospective officials. The adoption of technology is equally important. Modern investigative tools, artificial intelligence (AI)-based analysis, digital forensics, and financial tracking systems enable a faster and more accurate response to TOC. However, technological tools must be accompanied by human capacity building to prevent abuse and ensure compliance with human rights principles.

Public participation and civil society involvement is an additional element in national resilience. Transparent legal processes and easily accessible information empower citizens to monitor government performance and act as informal watchdogs. This is in line with the Sishankamrata doctrine, which views defense as an integrated effort involving the government, the military, and the community. Finally, Indonesia must place domestic reforms within a broader international framework. Strengthening the enforcement of national law directly strengthens Indonesia's position in regional and global cooperation networks under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), enabling more effective participation in joint operations, information exchange, and mutual legal assistance.

In summary, the challenges of law enforcement in Indonesia reflect deeper structural vulnerabilities that affect not only legal compliance but also national security, community resilience, and the effectiveness of international cooperation mechanisms. Without addressing these internal weaknesses, the country cannot fully utilize the protection and opportunities offered by UNTOC.

Case studies provide an empirical basis for assessing how UNTOC functions in different legal and institutional contexts. The following four cases, Indonesia, Germany, Italy, and Canada show diverse implementation paths and their implications for national security and transnational

crime control. This section also identifies relevant lessons for strengthening Indonesia's non-military defense and legal resilience.

a. Indonesia: Challenges in Law Enforcement and Structural Weaknesses

Indonesia ratified UNTOC in 2009, but its implementation continues to face significant institutional and structural obstacles. Domestic initiatives such as anti-human trafficking task forces and cross-border cooperation reflect commitment, but law enforcement remains uneven due to capacity constraints. These weaknesses create vulnerabilities in Indonesia's national security ecosystem, allowing TOC networks to exploit loopholes in maritime borders, financial systems, and local governance structures.

Table 2. Key challenges in Indonesia

Challenge Factor	Description
Corruption	According to Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), corruption among law enforcement agencies and public official undermines the effectiveness of the justice system, (KPK, 2022)
Institutional Capacity	Limited resources, lack of trained personnel, and inadequate technology hinder the investigative and judicial processes
Access to Justice	Research by the Legal Aid Institute (LBH) reveals that citizens in remote areas face serious obstacles in accessing affordable legal services
Legal Uncertainty	Overlapping and inconsistent laws create confusion among law enforcement officers, making it difficult to apply international standards like UNTOC coherently

Detailing the main challenges, including corruption, fragmented interagency coordination, and limited investigative technology. These issues, although often categorized as administrative obstacles, have direct consequences for national security, weakening the state's ability to prevent TOC groups from infiltrating the political, economic, and security sectors.

Lessons learned from Indonesia:

UNTOC alone cannot strengthen national defense unless it is supported by institutional reform, technological modernization, and solid inter-agency integration in accordance with the principles of Sishankamrata.

b. Germany: Effective Harmonization and Institutional Discipline

Germany is an example of rapid and structured internalization of UNTOC norms. With a strong civil law tradition and institutional discipline, Germany quickly aligned domestic legislation with UNTOC and implemented mechanisms for extradition, mutual legal assistance, and joint investigations (UNODC, 2020). Germany's success is based on three pillars:

1. coherent legal harmonization,
2. professional law enforcement, and
3. consistent political commitment.

Table 3. Highlights of successful implementation in Germany

Succes Indicator	Description
Legal Harmonization	German criminal law includes clear provisions on human trafficking, migrant smuggling, and money laundering in line with UNTOC
Inter-Agency Coordination	Germany has established inter-agency units involving law enforcement financial authorities, and intelligence service
Mutual Legal Assitance (MLA)	According ti UNODC data, Germany among the most active countries in international cooperation and legal enforcement exchange
Public Trust	Transparent, right-baesd law enforcementhas helped build strong public confidence in Germany’s legal institutions

Germany also hosts regular international training and offers capacity-building assistance to developing countries under the UNODC framework. Its approach demonstrates how integration, coordination, and transparency contribute to effective implementation of global crime prevention norms (Mutual Evaluation Report, 2022).

Table 4. Comparative Table: UNTOC Implementation in Indonesia and Germany

UNTOC Ratification	Ratified 2009	Ratified 2003
Domestic Legal Alignment	Partial, not comperehensif	Comperehensif and consistent
Key Challenges	Corruption, limited acces to justice, low capacity	Bereaucratic complexity
Strenghts	Government commitmen, international cooperation	Strong legal harmonization, high public trust
Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA)	Limited, in early stagess	Active and efficient

For Indonesia, Germany's experience highlights the importance of legal clarity and cohesion between institutions as the foundation of national resilience. Strong internal coordination strengthens the state's capacity to disrupt TOC supply chains before they develop into strategic threats.

Lessons learned from Germany

Stable institutions and harmonized legislation facilitate more efficient implementation of UNTOC, strengthen internal security, and contribute to broader defense readiness.

c. Italy: Eradicating Mafia Networks and Strengthening State Authority

Italy's involvement with UNTOC was shaped by decades of dealing with mafia organizations such as Cosa Nostra, 'Ndrangheta, and Camorra. The country's legal system has integrated anti-mafia laws, asset seizure mechanisms, and special anti-corruption courts, enabling Italy to dismantle deep-rooted criminal networks (UNICRI, 2016).

Italy's success is based on aggressive prosecution, sophisticated financial intelligence, and cross-jurisdictional operations. These measures not only reduce criminal influence but also strengthen state authority an essential component of national defense where criminal networks can undermine social cohesion and political stability.

Table 5. Key elements of Italy's success

Succes Factor	Description
Special Anti-Mafia Legislation	Italy already had strong domestic laws prior to UNTOC, such as the Rognoni-La Torre Law (1982), which defines criminal association and allows asset seizure from mafia members. These laws were further aligned with UNTOC post-ratification
Anti-Mafia Prosecution Unit	Specialized national units, such as the Direzione Nazionale Anti Mafia (DNA), coordinate investigations and prosecutions across Italy
Use of UNTOC Tools	Italy effectively use tools such as mutual legal assistance (MLA), joint investigations, and extradition in collaboration with EUROPOL and INTERPOL
International Leadership	Italy plays a key role in international anti-crime initiatives, offering training to other countries trough the Palermo-based UNTOC Secretariat

Lessons learned from Italy: Strong prosecution institutions and financial intelligence systems are essential to weaken the economic power of TOC, which in turn strengthens national resilience and reduces strategic vulnerability.

d. Canada: Strengthening Anti-Money Laundering and Financial Intelligence

Implementation UNTOC at Canada stands out through its strict anti-money laundering (AML) system and effective financial intelligence collaboration through FINTRAC (FINTRAC, 2019). Canada has harmonized its domestic AML legislation with global standards, resulting in consistent improvements in suspicious transaction reporting and successful prosecutions.

Financial crimes pose a strategic threat because they enable TOC groups to fund transnational networks. By strengthening its financial intelligence architecture, Canada has effectively integrated the UNTOC mandate into its framework of national security to prevent illegal financial flows that could disrupt markets and undermine institutional trust.

Table 6. Key highlights from Canada

Implementation Focus	Description
AML Legislation	Canada’s proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Act) is aligned with UNTOC obligations and Supports extensive AML oversight
FINTRAC (Financial Transactions and Report Analysis Centre)	The Government body analyzes financial transactions to detect suspicious activity and supports law enforcement with data for criminal investigations
International Cooperation	Canada is an active participant in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and cooperates closely with UNODC, Interpol, and other countries
Real Estate and Casino Oversight	In response to the “Vancouver model” of money laundering, Canada introduced stricter regulations on real estate and casinos, common entry points for illicit funds

Lessons learned from Canada: Strengthening financial oversight is essential to disrupt the operational capacity of TOCs and reduce their influence on the national economy.

Table 7. Comparative Summary Table: UNTOC Implementation in Italy and Canada

Aspect	Italy	Canada
Area of Focus	Organized crime (Mafia, drug trafficking)	Financial crimes (Money Laundering, terrorist financing)
Strength	Specialized legal frameworks, anti-mafia task forces	Robust AML, regulations, proactive financial intelligence
Institutions Involved	DNA, Anti-Mafia Directorate, judiciary	FINTRAC, RCMP, AML Task Forces
UNTOC Tools Used	Joint investigations, MLA, extradition	Information exchange, STRs, international AML compliance
Global Role	Pioneer in organized crime, prosecution	Leader in AML standards and enforcement

Comparative Analysis and Cross-Cutting Lessons

Tables 4 and 7 provide comparative insights into the four case studies. The differences reflect varying levels of institutional maturity, political commitment, and legal harmonization.

Through various case studies, several themes emerged:

1. Harmonization of Laws Determines Enforcement Strength

Germany and Canada demonstrate how cohesive domestic laws strengthen alignment with UNTOC. Indonesia's fragmented laws create vulnerabilities that undermine national security and complicate cooperation with foreign partners.

2. Institutional Integrity Shapes National Resilience

Italy demonstrates how anti-corruption measures and asset forfeiture reduce the influence of organized crime. Indonesia must tackle corruption to protect its law enforcement agencies as an essential component of non-military defense.

3. Technological Capabilities Influence Operational Success

The Canadian financial intelligence model shows that technology-based systems dramatically improve TOC detection. Indonesia can strengthen its defense posture by modernizing its digital forensics and intelligence platforms.

4. Regional and International Integration

Enhancing Strategic Depth Germany and Italy benefit from mechanisms work similarly the EU. Indonesia can emulate this strength through deeper collaboration based on ASEAN, supporting the vision of Sishankamrata regarding layered defense.

Synthesis: Implications of the for Indonesia's National Security

Overall, the case studies show that the impact of UNTOC on national security is determined not only by ratification, but also by the depth of domestic integration, institutional integrity, and regional cooperation.

For Indonesia, empirical evidence shows:

- a. legal loopholes → weaknesses in national security,
- b. corruption → erosion of institutional defense,
- c. limited technology → reduced prevention capacity,
- d. Weak regional integration → strategic exposure to transnational organized crime (TOC).

Therefore, UNTOC should be viewed as part of Indonesia's non-military defense architecture, supporting the protection of borders, communities, and economic systems from the threat of transnational crime.

3. Work of the and International in Combating Organized Crime

International cooperation is the backbone of the effectiveness of UNTOC operations. Because transnational organized crime (TOC) routinely crosses national borders and exploits gaps between national jurisdictions, responses limited to domestic mechanisms are unable to adequately prevent, detect, or dismantle cross-border criminal networks (Mahadewi, 2023). For

Indonesia, strengthening international cooperation is not only a diplomatic requirement but also a national security necessity that enhances non-military defense readiness and supports the layered security architecture promoted in Sishankamrata. Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) serves as one of the primary legal tools facilitating cross-border investigations, information exchange, and evidence collection (Manurung & Prasetyo, 2024).

BHTB ensures that law enforcement agencies can handle cases that cross multiple jurisdictions, including financial crimes, technology-enabled human trafficking, and transnational smuggling networks. In the Indonesian context, MLA enables domestic agencies to overcome investigative limitations by relying on external intelligence and technical resources, thereby reducing strategic blind spots exploited by criminal groups. As emphasized by Bassiouni (2014), MLA mechanisms create legal bridges connecting countries with different legal traditions, facilitating more in-depth investigative work. Extradition complements MLA by ensuring that criminals who flee abroad cannot escape justice.

The UNTOC extradition framework facilitates more efficient cross-border arrests and prosecutions, a crucial function given the mobility of modern criminal actors. For Indonesia, which adheres to the principle of effective extradition agreements, this strengthens territorial sovereignty and prevents foreign safe havens from undermining domestic law enforcement efforts. However, weaknesses in bilateral agreements and political sensitivities still hinder Indonesia's ability to fully utilize extradition channels. This gap impacts national defense because criminals who evade prosecution still possess the ability to rebuild their networks and influence within the country.

Joint operations conducted through INTERPOL and Europol represent another important dimension of cooperation (User, 2023). These networks facilitate coordinated raids, synchronized intelligence gathering, and cross-border pursuit of cartel leaders, cybercriminals, and human trafficking syndicates. Such operations demonstrate that TOCs are best addressed through integrated multinational responses, enabling countries such as Indonesia to strengthen their prevention capacities by leveraging global law enforcement networks. Khoirunnisa (2018) notes that joint operations are particularly effective because TOC networks are highly adaptive, mobile, and technologically sophisticated. International coordination therefore strengthens domestic capacities and accelerates disruption efforts.

Although important, cooperation mechanisms face several challenges. Differences in legal procedures, political tensions, and bureaucratic delays can hinder real-time cooperation, an issue that is particularly problematic for Indonesia given the operational speed of TOC actors. In some cases, cooperation is hampered by mistrust, limited information-sharing protocols, or gaps in

digital infrastructure. These limitations reduce the efficiency of joint operations and procedures MLA, allowing networks TOC to exploit coordination delays to avoid detection or relocate their operations.

ASEAN plays an increasingly important role in regional cooperation. The ASEAN Convention on Transnational Crime (ACTC) and the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) provide a platform for collaboration, policy harmonization, and joint strategic planning (Wear, 2024), (2024). For Indonesia, deeper ASEAN integration directly supports Sishankamrata by strengthening collective security in Southeast Asia, especially in maritime routes that are vulnerable to drug trafficking, migrant smuggling, and illegal arms flows. However, cooperation within ASEAN is limited by differing national priorities and uneven law enforcement capacities among member states.

To increase effectiveness, Indonesia needs an integrated regional information exchange center capable of real-time intelligence sharing. Such a mechanism would help prevent transnational organized crime (TOC) networks from exploiting inconsistencies or legal loopholes in ASEAN countries.

Measures to build trust and political commitment are essential to maintaining cooperation, as concerns about information security often limit countries' willingness to share sensitive data. Cooperation with dialogue partners such as the European Union, the United States, and Australia further strengthens Indonesia's capacity through technical assistance, training, and access to advanced technology. These partnerships not only strengthen Indonesia's investigative and regulatory frameworks but also enhance the country's strategic position in the global security landscape. International cooperation also includes important collaboration with the private sector, particularly financial institutions, telecommunications companies, and technology providers. These actors possess the critical data and technical capabilities needed to track the digital footprints, financial flows, and cyber operations of TOCs. Integrating private sector intelligence into state operations strengthens national resilience and provides an early warning system that supports preventive defense.

International cooperation under UNTOC serves as an important extension of Indonesia's national defense apparatus, enabling the country to protect its borders, communities, and financial systems from the widespread impact of transnational organized crime. Despite its limitations, cooperation remains a strategic necessity. By strengthening its network of agreements, investing in joint training, expanding data-sharing mechanisms, and deepening regional alliances, Indonesia can significantly strengthen its ability to combat transnational organized crime in line with broader security and defense objectives.

4. Recommendations from the National Commission on Human Rights for the Ministry of Law and Human Rights Strengthening Criminal Law in the Eradication of Organized Crime

Strengthening criminal law to combat transnational organized crime requires a multidimensional strategy that integrates legal harmonization, institutional capacity building, and enhanced regional cooperation. Although various efforts have been introduced, these measures must be repositioned within the context of national security and defense to ensure that criminal law reform directly contributes to Indonesia's resilience against transnational organized crime. The following recommendations consolidate insights from international best practices while addressing domestic vulnerabilities.

1. Harmonization of National Legislation with International Instruments

The harmonization of national criminal law with UNTOC remains a fundamental step toward strengthening legal certainty and closing regulatory loopholes. As emphasized by Bassiouni (2014), countries that fully internalize international obligations reduce inconsistencies that are often exploited by TOC actors.

In Indonesia, legal fragmentation still occurs in various sectoral regulations, weakening coordination and complicating law enforcement. Harmonization is therefore not merely a legal exercise; it is a strategic defense requirement that aligns Indonesia's domestic framework with global security standards. An integrated legal architecture will:

- a. facilitate mutual legal assistance,
- b. simplify extradition procedures,
- c. improving the clarity of definitions for crimes such as human trafficking and money laundering, and
- d. reducing jurisdictional overlap between agencies.

Legal cohesion strengthens Indonesia's ability to participate effectively in international operations, reinforcing the external layer of the Sishankamrata defense model. At the regional level, harmonization enables ASEAN to function as a coordinated security bloc. Increased alignment with the ACTC and related ASEAN instruments can accelerate the formation of a collective defense posture against TOC networks in Southeast Asia.

2. Enhancement Capacity Law Enforcement Agencies Through Training and Technology

Institutional capacity remains a major challenge in the implementation of UNTOC in Indonesia. Many law enforcement agencies still face limitations in investigative skills, digital

forensics, financial intelligence and interagency coordination. Capacity building is therefore essential not only to improve law enforcement performance but also to strengthen Indonesia's non-military defense capabilities. Training programs should include:

- a. cyber investigation and digital evidence management,
- b. crime analysis with the help of artificial intelligence (AI),
- c. detection of illegal financial flows,
- d. cross-border case management, and
- e. anti-corruption law enforcement tools.

The implementation of advanced technology is equally important. Big data analysis, integrated criminal databases, and monitoring systems blockchain-based finance enable earlier detection and stronger disruption strategies.

Investment in technology enhances Indonesia's prevention capabilities and reduces the strategic space exploited by transnational networks, particularly in maritime, border, and financial areas. However, technological modernization must be accompanied by legal safeguards to ensure transparency and prevent abuse. This balance ensures that advances in surveillance and investigation remain consistent with democratic oversight and the protection of human rights.

3. Development of Regional Cooperation Mechanisms (ASEAN) to Combat Organized Crime

ASEAN remains a crucial arena for strengthening regional resilience against organized crime. As a major transit hub for narcotics, human trafficking, and illegal goods, Southeast Asia requires a coordinated response among countries.

Wear (2024) argues that ASEAN has the institutional capacity to support an integrated policy response, but political fragmentation often reduces its effectiveness. Therefore, Indonesia must lead stronger collaboration in the region.

work Enhancement sama ASEAN strengthens Indonesia's external defense layer by reducing cross-border vulnerabilities and creating common security norms among member countries. Key strategies include:

- a. expanding joint training and operations under the AMMTC,
- b. establishing an integrated ASEAN criminal intelligence center,
- c. harmonizing the definition of TOC crimes,
- d. implementing interoperability between national databases, and
- e. expediting the ASEAN Extradition Treaty.

Effective regional cooperation prevents TOC groups from exploiting jurisdictional gaps, thereby strengthening Indonesia's prevention posture.

Partnerships with dialogue partners such as the European Union, the United States, Australia, and Japan provide additional financial, technological, and operational support.

4. Improving Oversight, Integrity, and Public Participation

Institutional integrity greatly affects the successful implementation of UNTOC. Corruption within law enforcement agencies and the judiciary undermines public trust and creates an environment conducive to criminal infiltration.

Strengthening oversight mechanisms is therefore crucial not only for governance reform but also as a core defense strategy that protects the country from internal vulnerabilities. Independent oversight bodies must be empowered to audit performance, investigate violations, and ensure transparency. Public involvement also plays a central role in national security. A law-abiding and informed public acts as a monitoring agent against the abuse of power and criminal operations. This is directly in line with the Sishankamrata doctrine, in which civil society is an integral component of national defense.

A modern legal education program is needed to develop future law enforcement personnel who understand both domestic law and international cooperation standards.

Synthesis: Towards a Security-Oriented Criminal Law Framework

Overall, these recommendations reflect that strengthening criminal law cannot be separated from strengthening national security. Crime prevention, legal harmonization, and institutional reform must be seen as part of Indonesia's broader defense strategy against TOC, rather than merely technical legal reforms.

Effective implementation of UNTOC will:

- a. reduce cross-border vulnerability,
- b. enhance the credibility of domestic institutions,
- c. strengthen Indonesia's strategic position in ASEAN, and
- d. strengthen the country's non-military defense apparatus.

Ultimately, criminal law reforms that directly adopt the principles of UNTOC contribute to Indonesia's national resilience and support the country's long-term security interests.

CONCLUSION

The study's main conclusions can be presented in a brief conclusion section, which may stand alone or form part of the discussion or results and discussion section. Transnational organized crime (TOC) continues to evolve into a multidimensional threat that challenges not

only the criminal justice system but also the foundations of national security. This study shows that criminal law remains a key pillar in addressing TOC, but its impact depends on how effectively the national framework translates international commitments, particularly those outlined in the UNTOC, into coherent and enforceable domestic mechanisms.

Although UNTOC provides uniform normative standards, its implementation remains uneven due to legislative variations, limited institutional capacity, and differing policy priorities among countries. This structural inconsistency creates operational gaps that can be exploited by transnational criminal networks, weakening collective security arrangements.

Strengthening the alignment between international obligations and national legal systems is therefore essential. This harmonization is not only a legal requirement; it is a strategic necessity to strengthen national resilience and ensure that criminal law functions as an early warning and prevention tool within the broader national defense architecture.

For Indonesia, harmonizes domestic law with UNTOC obligations to enhance mutual legal assistance, procedures extradition, and joint investigations, key components of effective law enforcement and maintenance of national security.

Institutional readiness is equally important.

This study highlights that law enforcement agencies must be supported with specialized training, digital forensic tools, and integrated coordination mechanisms to handle increasingly sophisticated criminal operations. Case studies of cybercrime and human trafficking show that fragmented institutional structures hinder rapid response and weaken prevention. Therefore, capacity building contributes directly to national resilience and strengthens Indonesia's non-military defense components within the framework of Sishankamrata.

Cross-border cooperation remains a determining factor in combating transnational organized crime (TOC). No country can effectively combat transnational crime through a unilateral approach; a connected and cooperative security environment is essential. Regional platforms such as ASEAN offer opportunities for policy harmonization, intelligence sharing, and coordinated operations, although their current potential has not been maximized. Deeper cooperation such as interoperable databases, uniform prosecution standards, and strengthened joint operations would significantly enhance regional prevention capabilities.

Partnerships with global institutions such as INTERPOL and UNODC provide additional support through access to global intelligence networks and technical expertise. Technological innovation also plays a vital role. The integration of AI-based threat detection, blockchain systems to track illegal financial flows, and secure digital communication platforms will greatly enhance investigative capabilities. However, technological advances must be accompanied by

strong legal safeguards to ensure accountability, transparency, and compliance with human rights standards.

This study concludes that combating transnational organized crime requires a comprehensive legal and institutional strategy that integrates harmonized legislation, enhanced law enforcement capacity, advanced technological support, and sustained regional and international cooperation. By strengthening these pillars, countries, especially developing countries such as Indonesia, can build a robust legal and security architecture capable of responding to the increasingly complex challenges posed by transnational organized crime.

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