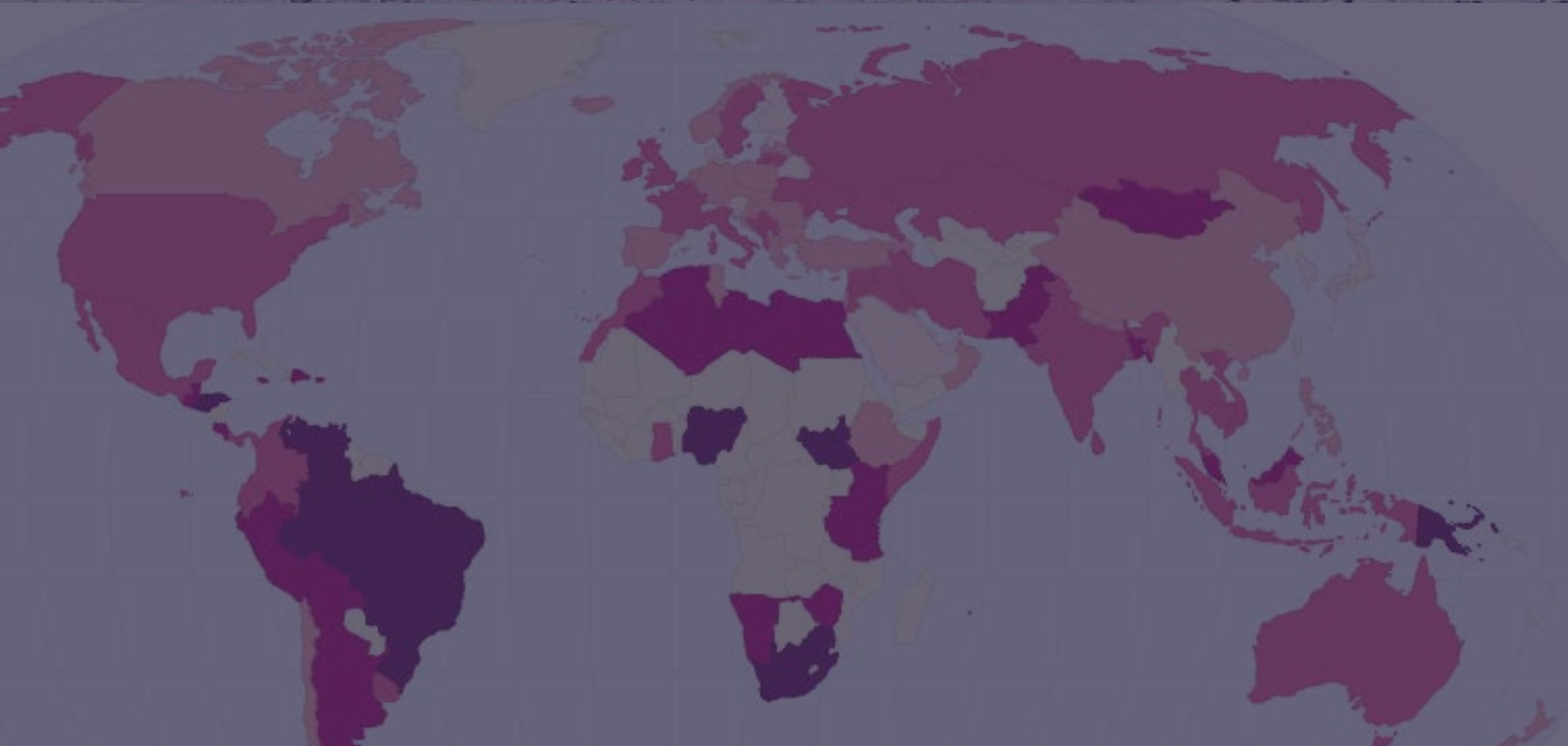


# Organized Crime in Pakistan

A Perspective from  
Global Organized Crime Index 2021



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ISSUE PAPER

# Organized Crime in Pakistan: A Perspective from Global Organized Crime Index 2021

## Introduction

1. In the recently announced National Security Policy of Pakistan (Jan 2022), organized crime (OC) has been identified as a major threat to “safety of our metropolitan cities, the environment in which businesses operate and the robustness of our economy”. Consequently, the NSP suggests that one of the main policy objectives is to “prioritise combating organized crime”. Combating OC, however, has to be preceded by a diagnosis, identifying its different dimensions in Pakistan. This write up, by giving the perspective from the recently published Global Organised Crime Index (2021), on where Pakistan stands in combating OC, intends to serve as a starting point in understanding the nature and extent of OC in Pakistan, for further deeper study.

It might be pertinent to mention that the last comprehensive study carried out about Pakistan’s illicit economy, was by UNODC in 2011. As per that report, “Growth of Organized Crime and related corruption undermine the very foundations of the State, simply by creating parallel structures or systems of governance on which citizens become more reliant....”. Eleven years down the road, the Organized Criminal Groups

(OCGs) are likely to have become even more powerful. Thus, another similar study is long overdue.

2. Global Organized Crime Index 2021. The latest study on the subject of Global Transnational Organized Crime (GTOC), which includes a chapter on Pakistan, was published in 2021 by Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC), a Vienna based, international think tank. In fact, it is the first ever global study carried out on GTOC, based on data analysed by local, regional and global experts on the subject. This paper analyses the findings of Global Organized Crime Index (GOCI), 2021, given in its chapter on Pakistan and attempts to highlight issues which merit our immediate attention and a possible way forward.

Before going on to discuss the GOCI 2021, it may be pertinent to point out that the UN convention against organized crime in 2000, could not come up with any consensus definition of organized crime. UNODC, however, came up with the following definition “Organized Crime is a continuing criminal enterprise that rationally works to profit from illicit activities that are often in great public demand. Its continuing existence is maintained through corruption of public officials and the use of intimidation, threats or force for its operations”. We will take that as the guiding definition for this write up, with all its limitations

3. Understanding the GOCI 2021. Prior to examining what GOCI 2021 has to say about Pakistan, it may be relevant to mention the basic criteria adopted in the

report to evaluate and calculate the score for each country. Also, it may be worth pointing out, that the numbers given here may be taken as a starting point to delve deeper into the context of each country, to better understand the OC in that country and not as something conclusive.

a. Six main findings of the report

i. More than 75% of people live in countries with high criminalities and those with low level of resilience to OC

ii. Asia has the highest levels of criminality, and within Asia, Western Asia including ME.

iii. Human trafficking is the most pervasive of criminal markets globally, followed by cannabis trade, arms trafficking, human smuggling and wildlife crimes

iv. Democracies have higher levels of resilience to organized criminality than authoritarian states. The sequence is as follows, full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid regime and authoritarian regimes. (Pakistan probably can be placed in the category of hybrid regimes, contributing to lower capacity to combat OC)

v. **State actors are the most dominant agents in facilitating illicit economies and inhibiting resilience to OC. (This is the most important finding. Pakistan, with its high level of corruption in state apparatus, is a likely easy targets for OCGs)**

vi. **Many countries in conflict and fragile states experience acute vulnerability to OC. (Relevant for Pakistan due to its political instability and conflict, both within and across borders)**

b. Criteria for the report. Two broad categorizations have been made to formulate the Index ie criminality and resilience. Within criminality there are further two subcategories ie criminal markets and criminal actors.

i. Criminal markets have been defined as the type of criminal activity carried out by the OCGs like drug trafficking etc. GITOC has confined itself to 10 activities or criminal markets for evaluating the criminality of OC in every country ( human trafficking, human smuggling, arms trafficking, flora crimes, fauna crimes, non renewable resource crimes, heroin trade, cocaine trade, cannabis trade, synthetic drug trade). As far as scoring system is concerned, the three elements ie criminality, criminal markets and criminal actors are evaluated on four categories of scores ie

1. A score of 1,2,3, means that the criminality, or criminal markets or criminal actors have non existent or too little influence in that country.

2. A score of 4,5 means that these have moderate influence.

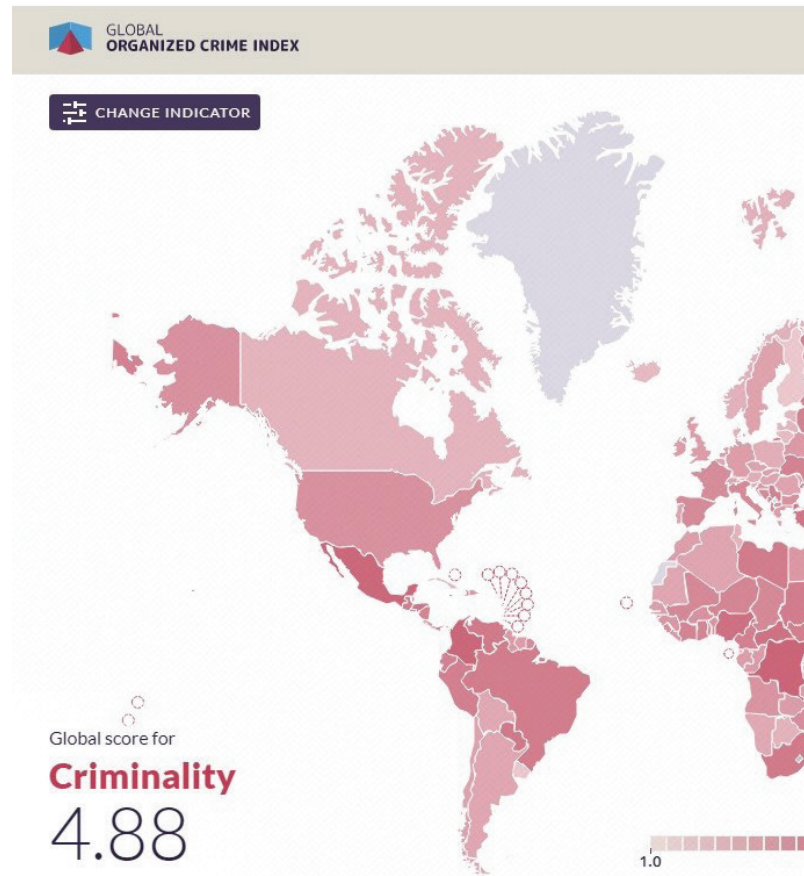
3. A score of 6 and 7 means that the criminality, criminal markets and the criminal actors have a significant influence on the country's policies, economy, governance etc.

4. A score of 8,9 and 10 means that these factors have severe influence on the country. So, the country scoring 1 is the best and the one scoring 10 is the worst.

ii. Criminal actors. Just as the criminal markets studied in the index have been divided into 10 specific criminal markets to confine the area of study ,similarly

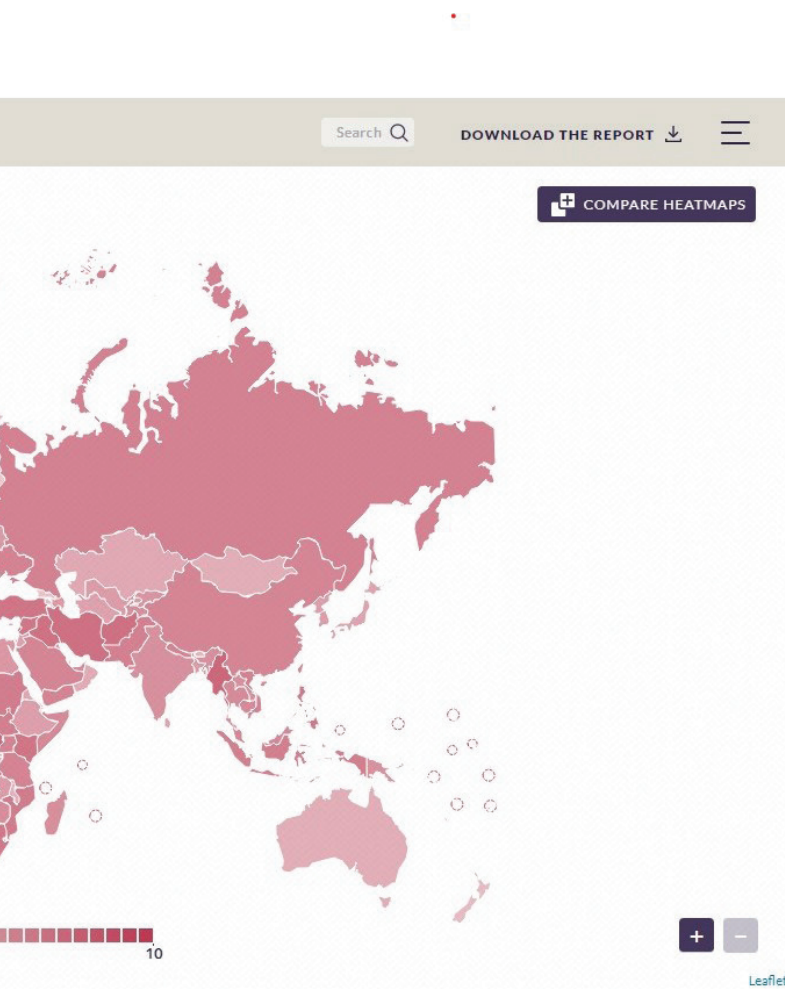
criminal actors have been divided into four broad categories, in which OCGs of each country can be placed ie

1. Mafia style groups,
  2. Criminal networks,
  3. State embedded actors, and
  4. Foreign actors.
- iii. Resilience. Resilience has been defined in the Index as “the ability to withstand and disrupt OC activities as a whole rather than individual markets, through political, economic, legal and social measures” ie the capability to combat OC. It refers to the measures taken by both state and non state actors.
1. Dimensions chosen to examine resilience. The Index used twelve dimensions to measure resilience of any country.
    - a. Political leadership and governance
    - b. Govt transparency and accountability
    - c. International cooperation
    - d. National policies and laws
    - e. Judicial system and detention
    - f. Law enforcement
    - g. Territorial integrity
    - h. Anti money laundering
    - i. Economic regulatory capacity
    - j. Victim and witness support
    - k. Prevention
  1. Non state actors
  2. Scoring system to measure resilience. As in criminality, a one to ten points system



was used to measure resilience of any country in the above mentioned twelve fields.

- a. A score of 1,2,3 means that the resilience in that country was non existent or extremely ineffective.
- b. Points 4,5 mean moderately effective.
- c. A score of 6,7 means sufficiently effective and
- d. A score of 8,9 and 10 means highly effective.
- e. To sum up, a country with 1 point has non existent resilience to combat organized crime while the one getting ten points has maximum resilience.



that , as per the Index, the big picture for Pakistan in organized crime was, that it was among the 57 countries in the world that have been placed in the category of highly vulnerable and least resilient to the threat of OC ie the OC poses a very serious threat to our society and our capability to address the challenge was very weak. Viewed in the context of existing political instability, continuing economic fragility, persistent mis governance , the threat of OC is likely to further erode our security, economy, governance and writ of the state.

- c. Limitations of the Index. The following are the limitations of the index, which may be kept in mind while going through the report.
  - i. Corruption has not been included as a stand alone criminal market or indicator of criminality
  - ii. Illicit financial flows have not been computed in
  - iii. Cyber crime as a tool of OC has not been factored in
- 4. GOCI chapter on Pakistan
  - a. Before going into greater details of the Index, it might be pertinent to point out

- b. Ranking of Pakistan and its score on criminality. Pakistan has been ranked as number 29 out of 193 countries in the threat from criminality in OC ie there are 164 countries which fared better than Pakistan , as far as overall vulnerability to OC was concerned. The score it got was 6.28 ie organized crime had a significant impact on Pakistan. The global average in criminality is 4.87 and that of South Asia is 5.30 ie South Asia falls in the broad category of those countries where the influence of OC is moderate, but in Pakistan it is significant ie slightly above the worst category of OC having severe influence in any country. We are the second worst country in South Asia to the threat of OC. Even in comparison to South Asia, we don't fare any better.
  - i. Criminal markets.
    - 1. In criminal markets, Pakistan scored 6.30 ie the organized criminal markets in Pakistan have a significant influence on its society. The global average in criminal markets is 4.65 ie moderate influence .
    - 2. The five most prevalent criminal markets

of OC in Pakistan, out of the ten markets targeted by the index, are

- a. Heroin trafficking (8.50 points) ie severe influence in our country
- b. Human trafficking (8 points) ie severe influence in our country
- c. Arms trafficking (8 points) ie severe influence in our country
- d. Human smuggling (7 points) ie not severe but significant influence
- e. Non renewable resource crimes (5.50 points) ie moderate influence , slightly better than significant influence.

ii. Criminal actors.

1. In criminal actors, our score is 6.25 ie our criminal actors in organized crime have a significant influence on our governance, economy, politics etc. The global average is 5.09 ie the criminal actors ,the world over have moderate influence. So, criminal actors of organized crime in Pakistan, are much more influential in Pakistan than in an average country in the world.
2. The most active type of criminal actors in Pakistan were identified as the loose criminal networks (7.50 points) ie this type of OCGs are significantly influential in committing organized crime in Pakistan, followed by state embedded actors (7 points) ie the government officials and others in the government or state machinery are significantly influential in commission of OC in Pakistan, the next category of criminal actors active in Pakistan are mafia style groups (6.25 points)
3. The Index mentions that the mafia style groups in Pakistan, wield significant power

over the democratic process and also influence the prison system, indulge in racketeering, extortion and kidnappings. “These mafias are widespread across the country and are key to undermining the formal governance system, as they have close ties to different state structures ie LEAs, customs/ taxation deptt etc. They are linked to corrupt govt officials or political parties”. Besides, mafia groups, the state embedded actors are involved in a range of criminal markets.

c. Ranking of Pakistan and its score in resilience.

- i. As far as resilience to OC is concerned, the ranking of Pakistan is 133 out of 193 countries ie 132 countries are better off than Pakistan in terms of resilience to OC. Similarly, the score of Pakistan is 4 ie Pakistan`s resilience to organized crime is moderately effective, which is one category above the worst ie the countries which have non existent or ineffective resilience.
- ii. The scores in the twelve indicators of the resilience score card as follows;
  1. The judicial system/ detention (3 points) ie non existent or extremely ineffective.
  2. Political leadership and governance (3.50 pts) ie non existent or extremely ineffective
  3. Government transparency/accountability (3.50 points) ie non existent or extremely ineffective
  4. Victim and witness support (3.50 points) ie non existent or extremely ineffective
  5. Law enforcement (4 points) ie moderately effective
  6. Anti money laundering laws (4 pts) ie

moderately effective

7. Economic Regulatory capacity (4 pts) ie moderately effective
  8. Territorial integrity (4 pts) ie moderately effective
  9. Prevention (4 pts) ie moderately effective
  10. Non state actors (4.50 pts) ie moderately effective
  11. International cooperation (5 pts) ie sufficiently effective
  12. National Policies/laws (5 pts) ie sufficiently effective
- iii. Thus, the weakest link in the resilience to OC in Pakistan are the judicial system, political leadership/ governance, lack of transparency and accountability, besides, victim and witness support because all these have been given 3 and 3.50 points ie the resilience capability to OC is either non existent or ineffective.
- iv. The Index also mentions that the limited efforts made to respond to OC in Pakistan are “largely cosmetic and driven by political aims”.

## Analysis

- a. The report GOCI 2021, is the first ever report on global OC and thus while being a pathbreaking document, has still a long way to go in terms of availability and collection of data and formulating standard formats of data maintenance and sharing. It is , thus, to be taken as a good starting point to address the rapidly aggravating global challenge of OC.
- b. The evaluations about individual countries, should be taken as signposts, flagging major areas of concern in OC in

those countries. These areas, are required to be studied in greater depth, within their respective peculiar contexts.

- c. As per this report, Pakistan falls in the category of those countries, which have been categorized as most vulnerable to organized crime and having least resilience to combat it ie for this category, the challenge of OC is the highest and the capability to combat it is the lowest, in the world. This should be a source of concern for Pakistan, and it must formulate a holistic national strategy to deal with this increasing threat .
- d. The most pervasive OCs in Pakistan are, broadly speaking, heroin trafficking, human trafficking, arms trafficking and human smuggling. Our efforts to combat OC, therefore, should adopt a holistic approach towards prioritizing dealing with these four types of crimes by designating a focal institution to deal with them, provide adequate resources, expertise and legal powers to achieve its organizational objectives. The FIA having the legal mandate and expertise to deal with investigation of white collar crime, is most suited to be the focal national institution to spearhead and implement the national strategy against OC in Pakistan
- e. One main finding, of the GOCI 2021 is that the world over, state actors are the most dominant agents in facilitating illicit economies and inhibiting resilience to OC. It is more true for Pakistan, where the score given to state embedded actors is 7 ( the global average is 5.09), ie they have significant influence and impact on OC. This calls for more effective accountability



of state officials and greater transparency in spending of state resources, if we want to weaken a crosscutting enabler of OC in Pakistan.

- f. About the type of criminal actors active in OC in Pakistan, the report says “mafia style groups wield significant power over the democratic process....they are widespread across the country and are key to undermining the formal governance system.... Are involved in a range of criminal networks.....boundaries between mafia style groups , terrorist groups and political parties are thus, often blurred.” There is a need to have a stronger civil society and media, to expose the misdoings of these corrupt elements. Not only that, the agencies investigating these corruption cases have to be independent and strong.
- g. Discussing the obstacles to enhancing Pakistan’s resilience to combat OC, the report states “ the government exhibits strong authoritarian tendencies..... the limited efforts to respond to OC are largely cosmetic and are driven by political aims .... Judicial and security sectors are largely corrupt and lack political independence due to military influence..... failure of anti corruption measures engenders high rate of impunity and anti corruption charges are often merely political attacks, hindering rule of law and democracy..... its international cooperation efforts against OC and VE have been fraught with complications.” It continues “Pakistan’s rule of law is extremely weak. Corruption and impunity run rampant and little public trust in judicial or law enforcement

systems.... Power struggles between civilian and military components of state security apparatus weaken the efficacy of anti OC and terrorism efforts..... Pakistan has one of the highest risks of ML and terrorist financing in the world..... victim support services severely lacking, victim protection laws exist but largely not implemented.” About civil society in Pakistan, the report says “it is relatively active, but Pakistan has one of the lowest rates of media freedom worldwide”

- h. Two recent important developments in Pakistan have not been mentioned in the report, as it was published earlier than these developments. One, because of its effectively meeting the requirements of FATF in anti money laundering and terrorist financing, Pakistan, which had earlier been placed in the grey list for special monitoring in 2018, has now been taken out of it in Oct 2022. This indicates a stronger political will to address the areas of money laundering and terrorist financing. Two, as per decision of the UN to carry out independent reviews of implementation of UNCOC by individual countries, Pakistan volunteered for the UNTOC review of its efforts against the OC. An outstanding police officer, has been nominated as the National Expert on Organized Crime as well as National Focal Person (NFP) for spearheading the UNTOC Review. The review started in 2022, and with the help of the civil society, work on the first cluster is nearing completion. National Initiative against Organized Crime( NIOC), in collaboration with UNODC and GITOC is playing a significant role in carrying out

this review.

- i. While the report is, by and large, a good data based study, still some observations have been made here, which are not based on data but may be on subjective perceptions. Statements such as Pakistan has served as “a spoiler of peace negotiations” are not substantiated by facts. Pakistan played a crucial role in bringing Afghan Taliban to the negotiating table with the US, which finally led to the agreement between the two. Not only that, Pakistan’s role in evacuating foreigners stranded in Afghanistan, after the withdrawal of US forces, was internationally applauded.
- j. While going through this report one feels that there are areas of OC, particularly in developing countries, without which an estimation of OC in any country is not complete. For instance, in Pakistan, it is difficult to have an accurate picture of OC and its pernicious effects, without factoring in corruption, money laundering, illicit flow of finance and also factor in different mafias which control the illicit markets and have formed, like in Mexico, “corruption cartels”. The categories of criminal markets, may have to be expanded, keeping in view the peculiar contexts in different countries.

### Way forward.

The report makes some general observations about the way forward, globally.

- a. The most important recommendation is about understanding the scale and nature of the problem of OC, before it can be addressed effectively. Pakistan, presently

lacks serious studies, not only to gauge the extent of OC in the country but the widespread negative effect it is having on our economy, security, governance and political as well as judicial systems. Our prescriptions to deal with OC in Pakistan must be based on scientific assessment of the forms of OC in Pakistan, which calls for research projects in this area, sponsored both by the government and the private sector.

- b. On the basis of this national diagnosis of OC, a holistic national strategy be drawn up to deal with it.
- c. A national institution be nominated to act as the focal institution to implement this national strategy and provided with required resource, equipment, expertise and legal powers. FIA is most suited for this role, as it is already the premier federal investigation agency for white collar crime.
- d. Another important recommendation made by the Index is about ending the impunity of the state embedded actors, which will enhance resilience of the community to combat OC. This calls for effective accountability mechanisms as well as greater transparency both by the government and civil society. An active civil society and a free media is an important tool of transparency, the world over.
- e. The Index asserts the importance of continuing to bolster democracy, especially in fragile states, as a viable and useful response, to deal with OC.
- f. Emphasizing the significant impact of conflict on prevalence of OC, the Index

suggests that working towards peace is crucial in reducing opportunities for criminality to thrive. Being in the neighbourhood of the strife torn Afghanistan for the last 40 yrs, has multiplied the opportunities to commit OC in Pakistan, leading to setting up of transnational criminal networks. weakening governance and encouraging corruption.

- g. One suggestion, one would like to make is that in some countries, like Pakistan, OC continues to be investigated and tried as ordinary crimes ie the focus is more on the individual criminal , who is caught and is normally a foot soldier. The OC network continues to work. There is a need to sensitize the investigation agencies, about investigating networks and not only individuals.

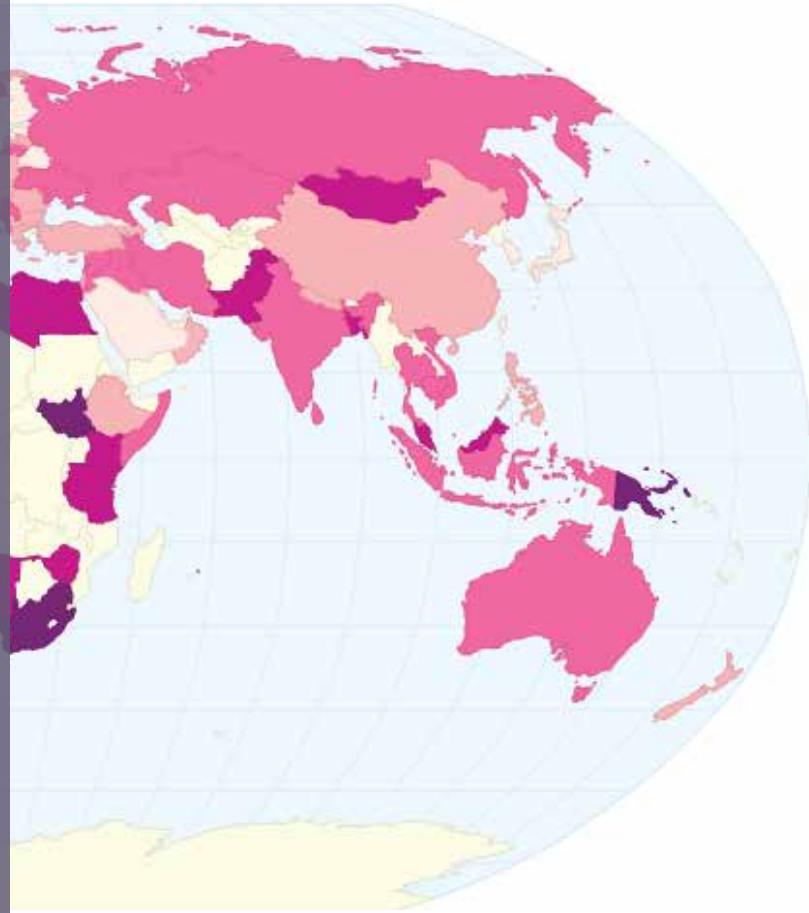
## **Conclusion.**

Organized Crime is a serious global challenge, to which the world has started giving importance only recently, hence the response to this challenge is also in its nascent phase. The GOCI 2021 is a very useful document and sets the stage for further study of this phenomenon. We,in Pakistan, have not been giving the importance that this very grave threat to our society , economy, governance and security, deserves. Let this report be a springboard for launching an effective and comprehensive response to this national threat, which is insidiously but assiduously, eating into the vitals of our entire social fabric.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Starting his career in 1973 as Assistant Superintendent of Police, Mr. Tariq Parvez served in the Police Service of Pakistan for more than 35 years with distinction and honor, and retired in the rank of Inspector General of Police, from the post of Director General, Federal Investigation Agency, Pakistan in 2008. Besides command postings at the subdivisional, district and divisional level, in the police hierarchy, Mr Parvez, served as head of the Counter Terrorism Department, of Punjab for more than seven years (1997-2005). He has been awarded the prestigious Sitara- e- Imtiaz (Star of Excellence) by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for his immensely valuable contributions to peace and security of the country. During his four years tenure as head of the Federal Investigation Agency, he led the national effort against organized crime in Pakistan. Later, in 2009, he was tasked to set up the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and was appointed its first National Coordinator. He has also served as Home Minister of the province of Punjab. He advises multiple international organizations in the field of counter-terrorism, investigations, organized crimes and police reforms. Presently, he is the President, Advisory Board, National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC) Pakistan.



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