

Border Security and Human Rights: Baltimore Connection

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Continuation

Though the UNCTC's work highlights the international significance of balancing border security with human rights, these topics are not limited to the international scale or foreign states. The interactions between terrorism, trafficking, and border control shape communities within the United States, in many instances which may be unnoticed. Some of the same obstacles that the UNCTC addresses, particularly the trade of weapons, human trafficking networks, and unjust treatment of marginalized populations¹ have direct effects in American cities. Being able to understand how these global issues transpire locally allows a clear picture as to why international cooperation and human rights based approaches matter. In order to understand this international scale, it is essential to analyze local communities and cities, such as Baltimore, Maryland. Though it is not directly situated on a border, Baltimore has experienced detrimental effects of global security collapse and international crime, showcasing how connected global and local security are.

Introduction into Baltimore

International debates between border security, humanitarian rights, and counterterrorism are often seen as foreign or international issues and are disconnected to life in American cities. But the issues addressed by the UNCTC, including trade of small arms and light weapons , trafficking networks and law enforcement exercises form the experiences of local communities. Baltimore is an example of how these global dynamics can reshape local conditions. The city's up and down battles with gun violence, migrant instability, and human trafficking reveal the problems connected to weak border security can be seen in urban communities. Examining Baltimore's connection to the UNCTC's work illustrated how international relations connect to local politics, and how global security should not be separated from regional experiences.

¹ United Nations. 2020. *Border Security and Management* | *Office of Counter-Terrorism*. www.un.org, 2020, (1)

Illegal Trade

International apprehension about border security goes beyond terrorisms and includes trafficking of weapons, individuals, and drugs; all which are issues that affect cities such as Baltimore. Inconsistent border governance allows SALW to travel through global and domestic trafficking networks, eventually reaching American cities far from where they were originally smuggled. Baltimore's struggle with gun violence is tied to the system where firearms reach cities through illegal trade. This trade concept sometimes starts outside of the United States or travels across multiple different U.S. states without being noticed. In result, Baltimore becomes a well known destination of global weapon movement, despite it not being a border city. Crifasi, Buggs, Choksy and Webster analyze the impact of Maryland's Firearm Safety Act (FSA) and its influence on how firearms are circulated. It is claimed that because of FSA, there has been less movement of SALW illegally, with a striking 82% fewer smuggled guns being recovered². This explains the UNCTC's emphasis on international cooperation and border management, because Baltimore is not the only American city affected by this illegal trade. When borders become more secure and regulated, American cities like Baltimore will experience lessened effects of illegal trafficking.

Migration

Migration security is a global issue that is local to Baltimore due to its historical background as a city sought after by immigrants. Critics of modern border management argue that heightened security post 9/11 has created repercussions for local immigrant communities across the United States, including Baltimore. Policies that have expanded surveillance security, restricted visa requirements, and heightened detention exercises that were previously instilled to prevent terrorism, have now allowed an atmosphere of fear and warriness among migrants and

² Crifasi et al., "Initial Impact of Maryland's Firearm Safety Act," *RSF Journal* 3, no. 5 (2017): 128,

asylum seekers. In Baltimore, immigrant families experience this fear through workplace raids, deportation threats and the anxiety that everyday interactions could lead to removal of their home and family, even though Baltimore as a city is openly supportive of their immigrant residents. Stephen Lee goes into detail about psychological trauma and the effect to one's dignity when separating migrant children from their parents³. These border policies shape the relations between immigrant communities and public institutions, sometimes making these residences weary to seek services, report crime, or cooperate with law enforcement. The UNCTC's human rights centered approach is contrary to this, as it emphasizes the idea that security can be achieved without threatening the safety of migrants⁴. This aligns with Baltimore's continued efforts to build trust within its communities.

Trafficking

Human trafficking conveys the connection between international border security failure and local repercussions. Baltimore's location alongside the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and the Beltway makes it a significant location for trafficking networks. Its proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, railway networks and major cities such as Washington, DC and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania also add quick transportation as a factor. Nazli Avdan explores this idea more, as he analyzes trafficking indicators through the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. It was seen that tighter entry restrictions often connected with higher trafficking risks, which he claims as the "vicious effect"⁵. The weakness that enables criminal groups to travel across borders and traffickers to exploit victims. The UNCTC seeks to reinforce border screening, cooperation, and human-rights centered law enforcement practices in cities, providing a fight against trafficking at

³ S. Lee, "Family Separation as Slow Death," *Columbia Law Review* 119, no. 8 (2019)

⁴ UNCTC. 2019. *Human Rights| Office of Counter-Terrorism*. www.un.org 2019, (1)

⁵ Human Trafficking and Migration Control Policy: Vicious or Virtuous Cycle?, Nazli Avdan, *Journal of Public Policy* 32, no. 3 (2012): 171–205

the source. Baltimore's ability to protect vulnerable populations can be connected to the effectiveness of intergovernmental structures.

MONSE

A local actor that specializes in these challenges would be the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement also known as MONSE. MONSE does not enforce border security and is not internationally affiliated, but its mission is directly shaped by the global issues that are addressed by the UNCTC. Their office initiates violence-intervention missions, collaborates with the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, and aids in trauma focused responses to crime; all which relate to issues originating beyond US borders⁶. MONSE's efforts to reduce gun violence is directly related to the flow of illegal firearms. Along with this, its cooperation with at-risk youth and survivors of exploitation indicated the local impact of trafficking networks. Although MONSE operates locally, it is supported by a security environment shaped by international norms and cooperation.

Conclusion

Baltimore reveals several important insights about the connectedness of international relations. As Mingst and McKibben claim, global problems will not be solved by any singular nation, and international institutions are necessary for flipping shared interests into collective action⁷. Baltimore's recurring issues with gun violence, trafficking and migrant fear demonstrates the city's reliance on effective global governance even if the residents do not connect with those international institutions directly. Observing how Baltimore operates shows that terrorism and human rights are not confined to international borders, they can be seen in our daily lives.

⁶ City of Baltimore, *Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement* (2024)

⁷ Karen A. Mingst and Heather Elko McKibben, *Essentials of International Relations*, (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 2022), 226-231.

Internationally when border governance fails, Baltimore experiences increased crime rates, causing instability; whereas when international institutions increase human-rights centered training, local law enforcement will then adopt similar practices. When security for migrants becomes participated globally, fear will no longer be instilled in local immigrant communities. Baltimore shows that global security concerns can harm communities, but the work of institutions like the UNCTC should not go unnoticed, as it is essential to improving the safety, security, and health of local populations.

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