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# EXTORTION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM<sup>1</sup>

Analysing extortion racketeering in the United Kingdom proves to be a challenging task for researchers, primarily due to the lack of a specific offence of extortion in the British legal system. Interview with a former Senior Officer (UK-E1) at the Anti-Kidnap and Extortion Unit (AKEU) at the now defunct Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)<sup>2</sup> suggests that blackmail is the closest offence that can match this paper's definition of extortion as converging around three main elements: a) the presence of a threat, b) patrimonial damage and c) continuity of the act. It is very important to stress that this alternative conceptualisation of the offence brings up problems in the classification of the cases of extortion. For instance, someone demanding money from the owner of a take-away shop commits blackmail<sup>3</sup> irrespective of whether the victim does or does not comply with the financial demand. In other words, the legal definition of blackmail differs from this paper's definition of extortion insofar as it does not necessarily include an element of patrimonial damage. Further complications are brought by the presence of multiple offences at the same time.

Despite not being identified as priority areas in the *National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2015* drafted by the National Crime Agency (NCA), the criminal threats posed by blackmail should not be underestimated. As Figure 1 shows, with the exclusion of an upwards trend in 2006/07, in England and Wales police recorded blackmail offences remained fairly stable between 2002/03 and 2012/13 and later significantly increased in 2013/14 and, especially, in 2014/15.

However, the links between extortion and blackmail are very difficult to assess. The NCA points out that "the true extent of blackmail and extortion offences (including 'protection rackets') by organised criminals is not known. Fear, and damage to reputation in the case of retail businesses, may make victims unwilling to report instances" (National Crime Agency 2015b). Research conducted by

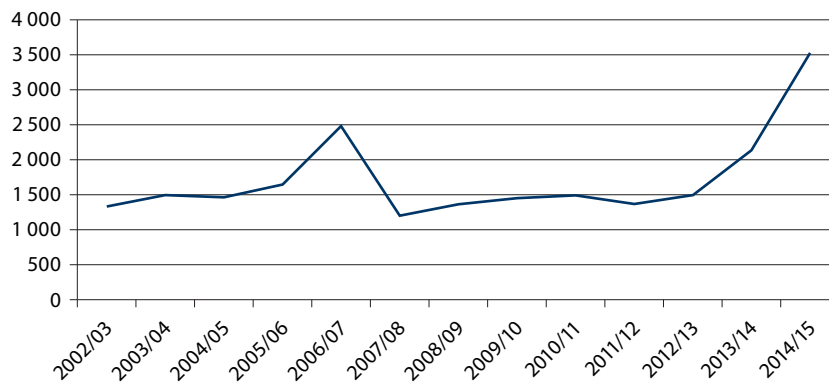
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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to acknowledge the kind assistance of the six experts (UK-E1, UK-E2, UK-E3, UK-E4, UK-E5 and UK-E6) who provided deep insights into extortion in the UK. Their identities are not disclosed for reasons of confidentiality. Moreover, the author would like to thank Gabriele Giovannini (Northumbria University), Liz Campbell (University of Edinburgh), Davie Duncan (Police Scotland), Lucy Smith, Ben Cavanagh and Brendan Nisbet (Scottish Government), Rebecca Jackson (National Crime Agency) and Gael Stigant (The Star).

<sup>2</sup> SOCA was established in 2006 and later replaced by the National Crime Agency (NCA) in 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Section 21 of the *Theft Act 1968* states that "(1) a person is guilty of blackmail if, with a view to gain for himself or another or with intent to cause loss to another, he makes any unwarranted demand with menaces; and for this purpose a demand with menaces is unwarranted unless the person making it does so in the belief (a) that he has reasonable grounds for making the demand; and (b) that the use of the menaces is a proper means of reinforcing the demand. (2) The nature of the act or omission demanded is immaterial, and it is also immaterial whether the menaces relate to action to be taken by the person making the demand. (3) A person guilty of blackmail shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years."

**Figure 1. Police recorded blackmail offences in England and Wales (2002 – 2015)**



Source: Home Office 2015.

Tilley and Hopkins (2008) highlighted that only a few businesses in high crime residential areas are victimised by serious organised crime and victims of extortion accounted for only 1 % of all of the 420 British businesses surveyed in the study. Importantly, the definitional and conceptual problem of conflating extortion with blackmail makes it hard to gauge the exact extent of extortion racketeering. UK-E1 further highlighted that the current classification of offences presents challenges in the production of reliable statistics. The SOCA database on combined cases of “kidnap and extortion” used to average about 500 cases per year during a seven-year period of time. However, a Home Office database would run in thousands of cases each year. The mismatch is partly explained the fact that the Home Office double counts some offences. For instance, if an individual is kidnapped and later murdered, the Home Office would count murder twice: first, as a single offence of “murder”; and second, as a joint offence of “kidnap and murder”.

Therefore, the opacity of the criminal phenomenon of extortion in the United Kingdom is not only explicable by the lack of such a specific offence. Additional methodological obstacles that impede the production of strong and reliable statistics relate to the diverse systems of recording crime by the police, the NCA and the Home office. Moreover, certain ethnic communities, in which extortion is prevalent, present a different degree of permeability. Thus, the data collected is vague and, for the most part, purely indicate the criminal activities that law enforcement agencies uncovered, rather than the exact extent of extortion-type offences in the United Kingdom. In this respect, one of the experts interviewed (UK-E1) pointed out that the Chinese community tends to be very inward looking and operates along homogeneous ethno-cultural lines. Within this community, bribery and corruption are perceived as normal and function alongside strong intra-community cultural bonds of loyalty even to extortionists (UK-E1). In this context, it is not unsurprising that extortion-type offences within Chinese communities tend to go unreported. This was confirmed during interview with an

Analyst (UK-E5) in the Specialist Crime Division (Serious Organised Crime Group Mapping) at Police Scotland. Conversely, good relationships between British law enforcement agencies and Turkish communities can explain why Turks living in the United Kingdom report extortion-type offences at higher levels. This analysis goes hand in hand with an understanding of extortion racketeering as often targeting victims who belong to the same ethno-national community as the perpetrator(s). However, there are cultural nuances at play here. A Senior Officer (UK-E6) of the Organised Crime and Counter-Terrorism Unit at Police Scotland stressed the need to differentiate between Turkish and Kurdish groups. Kurdish groups tend to be particularly involved in extortion in Scotland. They tend to be migrant rather than Scottish-born and are very difficult to penetrate. They usually run coffee shops, kebab shops and other similar small businesses. While they might originally start their activities in London, they tend to subsequently move to other parts of the UK. Since 2007 Police Scotland have recorded a concentration of Turkish and Kurdish organised crime groups in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. Extortion within Kurdish communities is often related to fundraising for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). This entails a flux of money that moves from the UK to Turkey and Iraq. Moreover, extortion-related threats might not necessarily be directed to the UK-based victims but might target their family members in Turkey and/or Iraq. Victims of extortion who pay money to Kurdish groups de facto end up funding a terrorist organisation, the PKK. As in the case of Chinese groups, extortion within Turkish and Kurdish groups tends to be intra-ethnic, as groups maintain clear international connections. However, there is certainly a growing pattern of 'cross-fertilisation' of activities, namely different groups come together for joint criminal enterprises.

While extortion racketeering impacts differently within different ethnic communities, it also impacts differently within different areas of the United Kingdom. In mainland United Kingdom the crime of extortion is often undefined, hard to measure and opaque. However, in Northern Ireland, extortion appears to be a serious and widespread threat. The peculiar political history of Northern Ireland and its troubled past of enduring national conflicts are at the root of the problem. Since at least the 1970s, members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) have resorted to extortion as a method to both raise funding to finance their paramilitary operations and maintain social control over the community (Transcrime 2009). According to research conducted by Transcrime (2009), extortion generates a few millions of pounds every year: this is money that used to be destined to paramilitary activities. It is true that, nowadays, paramilitary activities are not as prominent as during the Northern Ireland Conflict (1968 – 1998) but splinter groups of the IRA still maintain paramilitary-like structures and are involved in criminal activities (BBC 2015; Smyth 2015). But even the true extent of the extortion problem in Northern Ireland is not reflected in the number of cases successfully prosecuted. While less than 10 % of incidents of extortion are reported to the police, the number of businesses asking for assistance from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) is increasing (Transcrime 2009). As of today, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) is allegedly operative and involved in extortion racketeering too (Bradfield 2015).

At the opposite side of the spectrum are areas of mainland UK such as Scotland where the extent of extortion is unclear. According to an advisor on Organised

Crime to the Scottish Government (UK-E2), recorded cases of extortion tend to be low in numbers (which were not disclosed by Police Scotland to the author), and particularly concentrated in the private security sector. The establishment of the Security Industry Authority (SIA) further reduced the levels of extortion in this sector. The low impact and the lack of sophistication of extortion in Scotland is corroborated by the fact that the database of Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (Scotland) holds very few extortion cases, which have been reported by the police and investigated (UK-E3). Moreover, extortion cases prosecuted in Scotland are usually unconnected to organised crime groups.

The major British institutions fighting extortion racketeering are law enforcement agencies and units tasked with dealing with organised crime. The key agency is the National Crime Agency, which is tasked with countering all forms of organised crimes and covers the whole of the UK with some limitations in Scotland and Northern Ireland. AKEU within the Investigations Command in the NCA deals with kidnappings, blackmail and extortion. The Organised Crime Division of the Crown Prosecution Service prosecutes serious organised crime, proceeds of crime and cases investigated by the NCA in England and Wales. The Northern Ireland Organised Crime Taskforce operates as a forum and multi-agency law enforcement taskforce bringing together government, law enforcement and other agencies (for example: Police Service of Northern Ireland, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, Northern Ireland Executive, Northern Ireland Policing Board, Home Office, National Crime Agency, and other organisations) to set priorities for tackling organised crime in Northern Ireland. The Serious Organised Crime Taskforce is a similar agency that operates in Scotland and brings together Police Scotland, the Scottish Prison Service, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (Scotland) and other organisations. Moreover, in the past decade several pieces of legislation have been enacted to tackle organised crime, for example: the *Proceeds of Crime Act 2002*, the *Fraud Act 2006*, the *Money Laundering Regulations 2007* and the *Serious Crime Act 2015*.

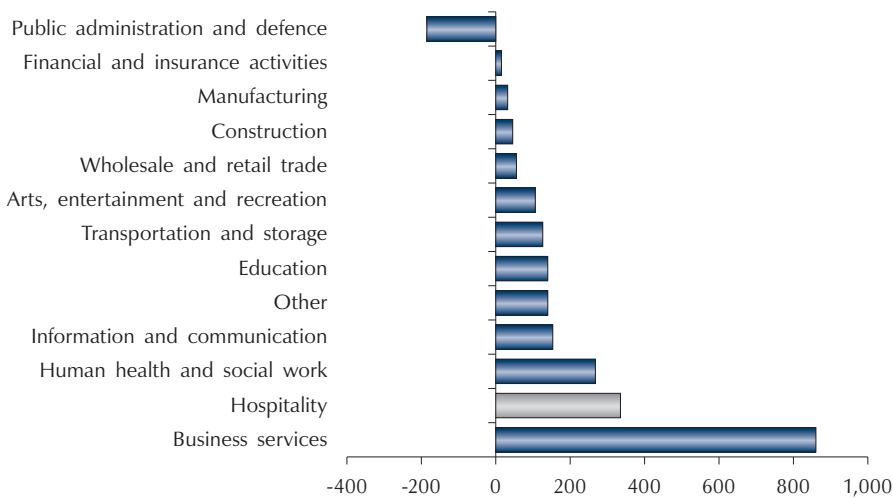
In terms of data collection, the sources consulted include: LexisNexis Professional (court cases); LexisNexis Business (media news); European Media Monitor (media news); various statistical sources (Office for National Statistics, Census, crime surveys, local councils' stats, et cetera); practitioners across various sectors, including government, police, prosecutors, journalists, et cetera. Fifteen cases of extortion racketeering in the hospitality sector were collected. However, only 3 cases are based on "strong data", that is court files. The other 12 cases were drawn from open sources (newspaper articles). Methodological difficulties were related to the relatively unknown nature of this type of crime and serious problems of access. A clear indicator of the challenges faced by researchers who wish to study extortion and organised crime in the United Kingdom was well spelled out in conversation with a Senior Officer (UK-E4) from the Organised Crime Fusion Centre/National Intelligence Hub at the National Crime Agency. UK-E4 explained that the NCA database contains no records that match the criteria adopted by this paper and that, even if the database contained such information, the NCA would be very reluctant to share it. Moreover, cases could not be retrieved via LexisNexis Professional (the world's largest electronic database of legal and public records) because: media sources do not state the name of the offender(s) and/or the victim(s) and/or the company, i.e. details

necessary to make a search; or the court case is still ongoing; or it is not clear if the case went through the court system and, if so, through which court; or the case is simply not available on LexisNexis Professional. A lack of responses from the Home Office, business associations and newspapers only compounded the problem of access. It is crucial to stress that this study can only present an extremely superficial picture of extortion in the UK: the findings are very preliminary, at times speculative, and should not be generalised to the whole country.

## EXTORTION IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR

According to a recent report commissioned by the British Hospitality Association (BHA) to Oxford Economics, the hospitality sector is the economic sector which includes all of the industries providing “accommodation, meals and drinks in venues outside of the home” (Oxford Economics, 2015: 2). The BHA also stresses the importance of the hospitality sector within the British economy. In 2014, it represented nearly 4 % of the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With more than three million employees, that are approximately 10 % of the total workforce, it ranks as the fourth sector by employment capacity. The hospitality sector is also the sixth contributor to export revenues and accounts for more than 180,000 companies. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the hospitality industry contributed significantly (17 %, Oxford Economics, 2015: 13) to the UK employment growth in the last four years (Oxford Economics, 2015).

**Figure 2. UK employment growth by industry (2010 – 2014)**

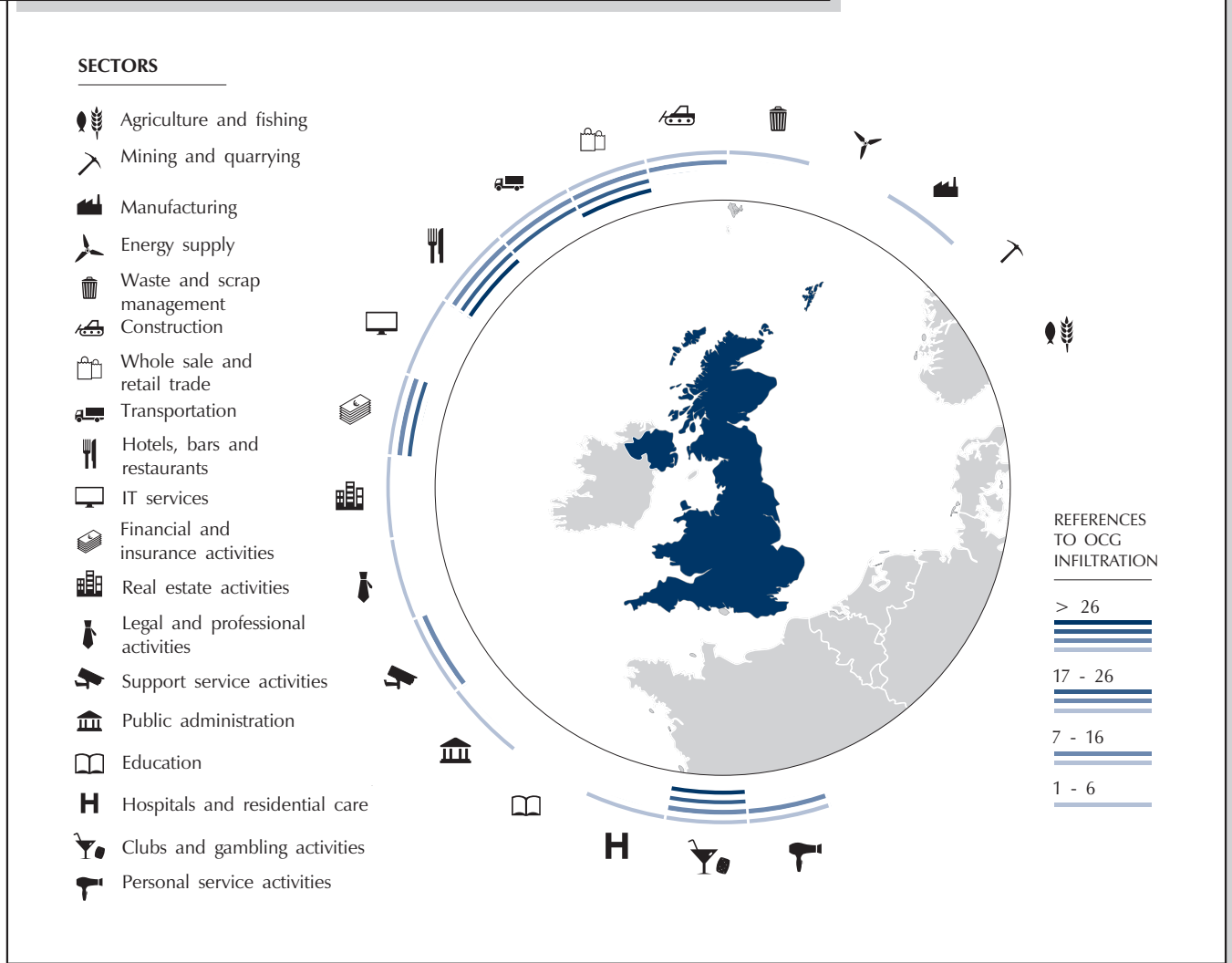


Source: Oxford Economics 2015: 12.

Across the United Kingdom, London and the South East are the regions with the highest rate of hospitality-related activities and account for the highest number of employees in the sector, respectively nearly 400,000 and nearly 350,000 in 2010 (Ibid.). Given that the hospitality industry plays a crucial role in the economy of the United Kingdom, it does not come as a surprise that recent research (Wall and Bonino, 2015) found this sector to be among the most

infiltrated by organised crime groups (see Figure 3, particularly the symbol for “hotels, bars and restaurants”).

**Figure 3. Estimated organised crime infiltration of business sectors in the UK**



Source: Wall and Bonino 2015: 71.

According to the Home Office (2013), in the UK there are about 5,500 organised crime groups and nearly 40 thousand criminals, many of whom are so-called generalist criminals (Francis et al., 2013). Even if there is some evidence of the presence of hierarchical organised crime groups, the majority of the organised crime groups active in the UK are loosely organised (Wall and Bonino, 2015). They resemble a network rather than a traditional mafia group (Hornsby and Hobbs, 2007; Levi and Maguire, 2004; Wall and Bonino, 2015). These groups tend to operate in a functional manner, that is they work together for the purpose of committing an offence and then they may dissolve (Wall and Bonino, 2015). Longer-term goals to control an illicit market (Lavorgna



et al., 2013) or a business sector (Adamoli et al., 1998) are not common (Wall and Bonino, 2015).

The United Kingdom Threat Assessment (UKTA) maintains that the major threats posed by organised crime groups are: “[1] trafficking of controlled drugs; [2] organised immigration crime (people smuggling and human trafficking); [3] financial crime (fraud); and [4] organised acquisitive crime (e.g. armed robbery, road freight crime and organised vehicle theft)” (Home Office 2011: 9). According to this assessment, extortion-type offences are not identified as preferred crimes perpetrated by organised crime groups in the United Kingdom. However, there are myriads of reasons why these offences are not considered a major threat posed by organised criminals, ranging from their widely underreported nature within certain ethnic communities to crime classification issues.

Due to the peculiar geographical and territorial dimension of organised crime in the United Kingdom (Wall and Bonino, 2015), extortion racketeering may not be not embedded in the country’s social, cultural and political structures to the same extent that it is in European countries, such as Italy, which presents more traditional, territorial mafia-type criminal organisations (Savona and Berlusconi 2015). Moreover, the shadow economy in the United Kingdom is relatively low. In 2013, the portion of the shadow economy in the United Kingdom was at 10 % of the GDP, a share well below most European countries such as Norway (14 %), Belgium (16 %), and Spain (19 %) Italy (21 %) and higher only than economically virtuous states such as Switzerland (7 %), Austria (8 %) and The Netherlands (9 %) (Schneider 2013: 4). Utilising electronic payment methods tends to negatively correlate with the degree of shadow economy: in the United Kingdom and Nordic countries such payment methods are widespread (Schneider 2013: 14). The exact contribution of criminal activities, including extortion, carried out by organised groups to the shadow economy is unknown. In fact, as Albertson and Fox (2012: 240) explain, “those activities carried out by organised criminal organisations are not all in the shadow economy.”

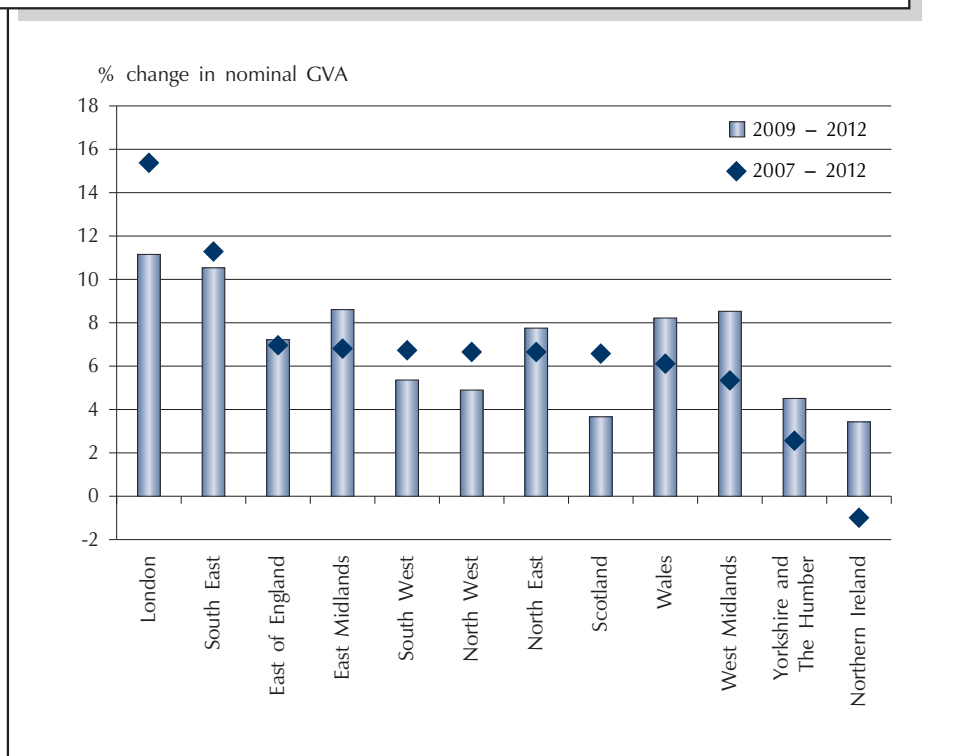
It would be misleading to conceptualise extortion simply in financial terms. Acquiring territorial control through fear is overwhelmingly more important than mere financial means (Kelly, 1999). In this sense, the monopolistic control of a particular territory by a criminal group within certain contexts, such as Sicilian territories controlled by the mafia in Italy, increases the chances of becoming victim of extortion. This is also due to the fact that perpetrators indiscriminately commit continuous or occasional extortion against all of the businesses working within “their borders” (La Spina et al., 2014: 2). As the recent history of Northern Ireland demonstrates, while extortion is often driven by economic motives, there remains a very strong territorial dimension that turns extortion into a para-political crime. A case in point is the fact that, before the IRA declared a ceasefire in 1994, one of the key factors that helped both Loyalist and Republicans paramilitary groups to survive and prosper was their ability to exercise social control within their constituencies and generate vital revenues from extortion (Maguire 1993).

Combining the examination of the *modi operandi* of organised crime groups, and especially their relation to specific territories, with the available data on extortion

mentioned so far, it appears that, geographically, Northern Ireland could be prone to extortion within a wider socio-political strategy of both exerting territorial control and generating revenues. Within mainland United Kingdom, some minority ethnic communities, particularly those operating in the London area, might operate within internal cultural dynamics that facilitate the underreporting of intra-community extortion, as suggested by UK-E1.

Extortion racketeering flourishes in contexts coloured by extremely different economic situations, from the key financial hub of the United Kingdom, London, to the relatively languishing Northern Ireland. In fact, London and Northern Ireland are, respectively, the biggest and the smallest contributors to the national GDP. In 2013, Northern Ireland accounted for a tenth of the GDP compared to London (£33 billion versus £338 billion) (Harari, 2014). The recent trends have deepened this gap. Data (see Figure 4) from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that, between 2007 and 2012, the Gross Value Added (GVA) of London increased by 15.4 % (a rate more than double compared to the national average). Northern Ireland was the only region that showed a contraction (-1 %) (Office for National Statistics, 2014).

**Figure 4. Change in GVA by region and country 2007 – 2012**



Source: Office for National Statistics, 2014.

The mortality rate of businesses also demonstrates the disparity between these two regions. In fact, in 2012 London registered an increase of 3.1 % (the highest increase in the UK), while Northern Ireland recorded a negative score (-2.5 %)

for the fourth year in a row. In light of these figures, it comes as no surprise that in 2013 the government granted Northern Ireland the Assisted Area Status for the period 2014 – 2020 (Department for Business Innovation & Skills 2014). As far as London is concerned, given that the capital city records both the highest number of businesses in the hospitality sector and the biggest economy in the country, it is possible that profit-driven extortionists will target London businesses over and beyond other regions. However, at the moment this remains speculative due to the data limitations identified in the introduction.

## PERPETRATORS

The prevalence of extortion racketeering is unknown across Europe due to the nature of the phenomenon. The scarcity of information collected from 15 case studies and the questionable reliability of open sources are a limit to the generalisation of findings.

As far as the fifteen cases collected are concerned, both network-type of organised crime groups (UK-H4, UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H11, UK-H12 and UK-H13) and hierarchically organised crime groups (UK-H3, UK-H5, UK-H8, UK-H9, UK-H14 and UK-H15) account for 6 cases each (40 % each). In the remaining 3 cases (UK-H1, UK-H2 and UK-H10), that is 20 %, the nature of the group was unknown. It is noteworthy that extortion incidents involving hierarchical groups all occurred either in Northern Ireland or within migrant communities. Outside the context of either ethnic minorities or Northern Ireland, extortionists tended to target small businesses, such as takeaways. One potential explanation could be that the criminal group is not well organised, structured and operationally equipped to extort money from larger and more profitable businesses. The duration of extortion activities, which ranges from one-off payments to a maximum period of two years, further points to the direction of an utilitarian type of crime that fizzles out once criminals move to different criminal activities or are investigated and prosecuted. The more structured the gangs are, the longer the crime continues. Network and hierarchical groups differ also in relation to the outcome of their extortion. While in the 15 cases under study network-type of criminal groups never managed to perpetrate actual extortion, hierarchical criminal groups were always successful besides one single occasion (UK-H5). The criminal groups were composed of a maximum of seven people – a relatively low number typically associated with local organised crime groups.

### **Modus operandi**

In all cases involving hierarchical groups (UK-H3, UK-H5, UK-H8, UK-H9, UK-H14 and UK-H15), the criminals pursued territorially based extortion with only one exception (UK-H5), in which the leader of a criminal gang composed by at least four individuals of different nationalities aimed to obtain a one-off payment from a pub owner. In this case, the gang was a temporary hierarchical unit that pursued a single demand of money. All of the three cases (UK-H11, UK-H12 and UK-H13), in which extortion was functional, involved network-style groups. The geographical location of the economic activity tended to be the most relevant selection criterion driving extortion in six cases (UK-H1, UK-H2, UK-H8, UK-H9, UK-H14 and UK-H15). Contact was always directly established by the extortionists, without the help of mediators with the exception of one case (UK-H15). There is no evidence of any involvement of public officials.

Some form of intimidation took place in eleven cases: in seven cases (UK-H1, UK-H4, UK-H5, UK-H8, UK-H10, UK-H11 and UK-H15) the perpetrators threatened the business owners, their relatives or their employees; in four cases (UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H12 and UK-H13) they blackmailed or threatened with property damage. Violence in the form of physical aggression was detected in four cases (UK-H1, UK-H2, UK-H5 and UK-H11).

The spectrum of criminal activities in which the perpetrators are involved is far larger for hierarchically organised groups. In such groups, activities span from drug dealing (UK-H4, UK-H9, UK-H10, UK-H14 and UK-H15) to extortion (in all cases) to kidnapping (UK-H8 and UK-H9) and money laundering (UK-H8 and UK-H9). With regard to network-type groups there was no relevant data. This may suggest that networks are mainly *ad hoc* structures formed to pursue very specific types of crime.

### Nationality of the perpetrators

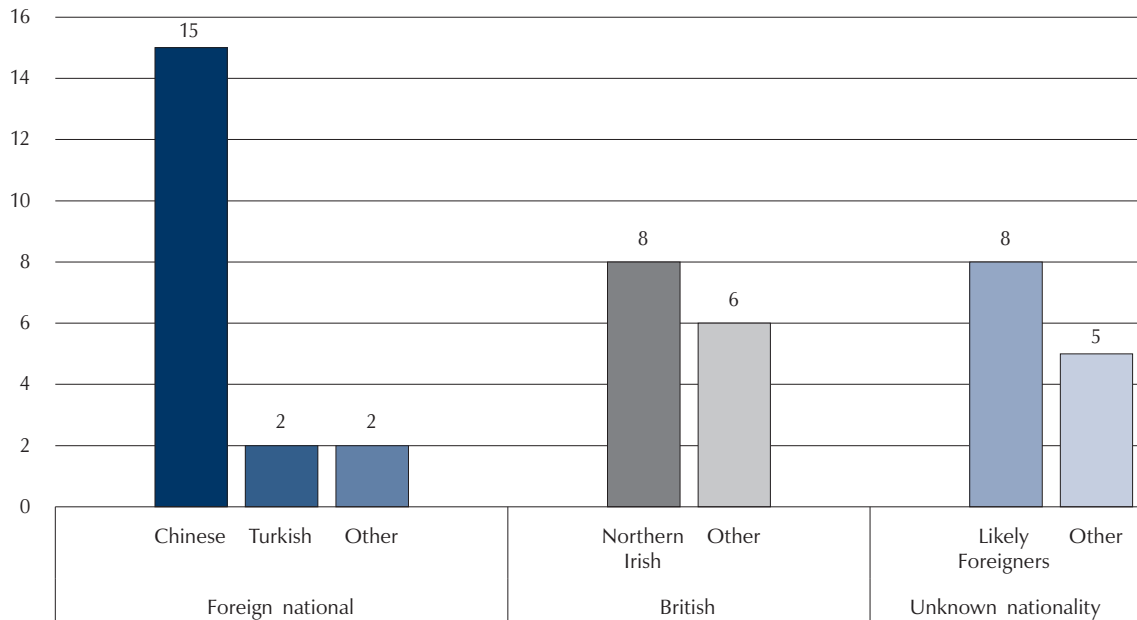
The empirical analysis of the case studies seems to confirm the important role of the ethnic background of perpetrators, which was specifically pointed out by one of the experts interviewed (UK-E1). In the 15 incidents under study at least 46<sup>4</sup> criminals were involved and foreign nationals outnumber British-born criminals (see Figure 5).

Northern Irish criminals (8 people) account for more than 50 % of the British quota; 5 of the 6 remaining British perpetrators were all involved in the same case (UK-H11; see Box 1). The non-territorial dimension of such a case as well as the fact that it was only an attempted extortion eventually punished with several years of imprisonment could well indicate that British extortionists are not necessarily more effective than foreign nationals. For thirteen perpetrators (cases UK-H1, UK-H2, UK-H5, UK-H10, UK-H12, UK-H13) it was impossible to ascertain the national origin: however, it is likely that 8 perpetrators were foreign nationals. This considers the fact that the victim was a foreign national and, therefore, that s/he was targeted by a foreign gang, in line with what had been reported by the senior officer interviewed (UK-E1).

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<sup>4</sup> In two cases (UK-H12, UK-H13) there is no data available but there had to be at least two perpetrators (one in each case) for the crime to be committed. In all the other cases (UK-H1, UK-H2, UK-H3, UK-H4, UK-H5, UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H8, UK-H9, UK-H10, UK-H11, UK-H14 and UK-H15) there is evidence of a specific number of criminals involved in extortion. However, given that these criminals often operated as part of a larger group, the figure provided here (46 people) might be an underestimate.

**Figure 5. National distribution of perpetrators based on collected cases**



Source: Author.

**Box 1. A British gang’s attempt to extort £18,000 from a pub owner in Whitley Bay (UK-H11)**

This is a case in which a gang of five British criminals demanded money for unwanted labour (the replacement of the tarmac in the pub car park) from the relief manager of a pub in Whitley Bay. The victim initially did not know whether the work that the extortionists had done was sanctioned by his boss and thought they were council staff. However, the individuals were criminals attempting to defraud the pub by carrying out unwanted labour and then demanding payment. When one of the extortionists demanded money from the victim, the victim told him that he had no control over the finances and that he was not in a position to pay. The victim started receiving many calls and serious threats of violence from the extortionists had he not paid the money requested by the extortionists (a one-off payment of £18,000). The victim changed his route going into work to drive past a police station. He felt very vulnerable when opening the pub on his own and felt very scared for his staff and customers. He apparently reported the case to the police after some time. The situation continued for one or two years between late 2011 and sometime in 2012 or 2013. The gang also used this same method to blackmail and intimidate other small businesses in Newcastle upon Tyne Birmingham, Hull, Devon and Sheffield. The five criminals ended up being jailed for a total of 31 years in 2014.

## VICTIMS

### Main regions or zones affected

Keeping in mind the limitations posed by the scarcity of information collected in the case studies, it seems that extortion racketeering is concentrated in major British cities. Two thirds of the incidents (UK-H2, UK-H3, UK-H4, UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H8, UK-H9, UK-H10, UK-H14, UK-H15) took place in large cities. London (UK-H7, UK-H14, UK-H15) and Belfast (UK-H3, UK-H8, UK-H9) were the most affected places with three cases each. But there was also evidence of one occurrence in Birmingham (UK-H4), Edinburgh (UK-H10), Glasgow (UK-H2) and Manchester (UK-H6) (all areas with more than 350,000 inhabitants). Only five cases (UK-H1, UK-H5, UK-H11, UK-12 and UK-H13) occurred in smaller towns. However, two (UK-H12 and UK-H13) out of these five cases involved low levels of operational organisation, violence, patrimonial damage and no continuity of the extortion: in other words, extortion in these cases was an episodic and opportunistic crime. In these two cases the extortionists blackmailed the owners of, respectively, a pub and a hotel in order to obtain a free or discounted meal and stay under the threat of a bad review on the popular website Tripadvisor.

Keeping in mind the serious limitations of the data collected, extortion seems to be connected to the urban dimension of certain cities rather than to the demographic characteristics of the wider region. As far as London is concerned, the three reported cases (UK-H7, UK-H14 and UK-H15) all took place in areas of the city where the ethnic communities involved in the incidents account for a relevant percentage of the overall population. In fact, the Chinese community in the City of Westminster (London) represents 2.7 % of the total population (nearly 6,000 people) while the Turkish community accounts for nearly 7 % of the total population in the London Borough of Enfield (approximately 21,000 people). With regard to the smaller towns (UK-H1, UK-H5, UK-H11, UK-12 and UK-H13) in which the database recorded at least one case of extortion racketeering in the hospitality sector (excluding UK-H12 and UK-H13), these are close to relatively big towns: Haslingden, in Lancashire, is only 19 miles far away from Manchester; Shinfield, in Berkshire, is only 4.7 miles from Reading; and only 11 miles separate Whitley Bay from Newcastle upon Tyne.

The most interesting finding is that the targeted businesses share similar urban locations within the towns in which they are based. An analysis of the addresses of the commercial venues of the targeted businesses demonstrates that the vast majority of the victimised companies are located along major routes or in very busy areas. In seven cases (UK-H1, UK-H2, UK-H10, UK-H11, UK-H13, UK-H14 and UK-H15) the venue is located on major routes classified as A-roads, while five businesses (UK-H3, UK-H5, UK-H6, UK-H8 and UK-H9)

are on B-roads.<sup>5</sup> But besides the importance of the roads in terms of national codification, what seems to matter even more is their relative central position. In eight cases (UK-H1, UK-H2, UK-H3, UK-H10, UK-H11, UK-H13, UK-H14 and UK-H15) the targeted business lies on the most important road of its area. In other eight cases (UK-H5, UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H8, UK-H9, UK-H11, UK-H14 and UK-H15) it is placed very close to a key intersection. The three remaining incidents (UK-H4, UK-H6 and UK-H7), with only one exception (UK-H12), involved companies located in the city centre. This preliminary urban analysis can indicate two possible findings. First, extortionists might target businesses in the hospitality sector that are located on main routes because they enjoy very high visibility and, in turn, are most likely to possess a certain financial capacity. Second, it could indicate the scarce organisation and capillarity of the gangs involved in extortion racketeering: in this sense, a visible café in the city centre might be easier to identify and target than a secluded one in a suburban area. Arguably, this study lacks enough data to provide a full assessment. However, further research should certainly aim to understand whether the location of targeted businesses along key routes is a signal of the limited diffusion of extortion.

### Demographic, social and economic characteristics

Among the twenty identified victims, all but two were male between 30 and 50 years old. As in the case of the perpetrators, many victims were foreign nationals, but in this case they did not represent a majority (as for the available data there are 8 foreign nationals and 8 British, the latter including 3 Northern Irish). In the three cases (UK-H2, UK-H14 and UK-H15) in which an immigrant was victimised,<sup>6</sup> s/he was a documented immigrant. There are no data regarding the number of employees in the various businesses, but most businesses appear to be small in size, for example pubs or takeaway shops. In 12 cases (UK-H1, UK-H2, UK-H4, UK-H5, UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H8, UK-H9, UK-H12, UK-H13, UK-H14 and UK-H15) out of 15 either the owner or the director of the business were victimised. In two cases (UK-H10 and UK-H11) employees of the company were victimised (see also Box 1). Data on the victim's role in the company is missing in one case (UK-H3). Besides three cases (UK-H2, UK-H7 and UK-H12), no data were available on other activities of the businesses. Whether the business had a contract with a private security company, held an insurance against extortion-types of risk, or were members of a business association is unknown.

### Protective measures

There is no evidence of special protective measures provided by business associations emerging from the analysis of the case studies. The only evidence of special protective measure implemented by public authorities is detected in

<sup>5</sup> The UK Government Department for Transport defines A roads as "major roads intended to provide large-scale transport links within or between areas" and B roads as "roads intended to connect different areas, and to feed traffic between A roads and smaller roads on the network" (Department for Transport 2012: 6).

<sup>6</sup> There is no evidence on the immigrant status of the other foreign victims.



two cases (UK-H8 and UK-H9). Both cases occurred in Northern Ireland and involved some of the same perpetrators. In these cases the police run investigative sting operations in order to secretly record the criminals before arresting them. Afterwards, the victims were forced to leave Northern Ireland and, in both cases, the businesses were dissolved. In one case (UK-H8, see Box 2) a witness protection scheme was put in place to relocate the victims to a safe area (England).

**Box 2. From victims of extortion to the witness protection scheme: a case in Belfast (UK-H8)**

This is a case of extortion conducted by three criminals, members of the loyalist paramilitary Ulster Defence Association (UDA), against the owner of a bar and her husband in Belfast from June 2004 to May 2005. Starting in June 2004, the criminals demanded the owner to pay a weekly sum of money (£1,000, later agreed at a lower amount of £200) every Monday, initially by cheque and then in cash. Gaming machines, for which the owner was paying a rental lease, were emptied totally between the leasers and one of the extortionists. Also, the extortionists demanded £2,000, and then agreed on £1,000 in cash, from the owner from a wedding reception that she had organised at the bar. Further £1,000 were demanded a month later and the demands and intimidations became more frequent to the point that, by May 2005, no profit was being made and the owner was having difficulties paying, e.g., the lease. The criminals were often in the bar and at some point they asked for the rent to be paid directly to them. In that instance, one of the three criminals demanded the owner's husband to hand over the bar keys, books and cheque books. The criminal wanted to use the employment payrolls to falsely obtain a mortgage for a house. The following day the bar was effectively handed over along with £4,000 in cash. According to media sources (but not the court case), the victims were in fear of their lives and contacted the police. The police organised an undercover operation and secretly recorded the extortion and the threats, before arresting the criminals and moving the two victims to England under a witness protection scheme, where they were put under police protection.

### Behavioural patterns of the victims

What emerges from the analysis of the 15 case studies collected for this research is that in the vast majority of cases (UK-H1, UK-H4, UK-H5, UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H10, UK-H11, UK-H12 and UK-H13) the victim refused to comply with the perpetrators' requests, although it should be noted that only cases that are reported to the police eventually become publicly known. In 9 of the 13 cases (UK-H1, UK-H4, UK-H5, UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H10, UK-H11, UK-H12 and UK-H13) for which there is information, victims resisted (or tried to resist) the demands from the extortionists. In some cases it is unclear whether the victim refused to pay extortion money from the very beginning, or whether sometimes they paid, perhaps under the promise that the payment would be a one-off protection request. Despite the fact that the perpetrators often used intimidation (UK-H1, UK-H4, UK-H5, UK-H6, UK-H7, UK-H8, UK-H10, UK-H11, UK-H12, UK-H13 and UK-H15) as well as physical violence (UK-H1, UK-H2, UK-H5 and UK-H11), in only three cases (UK-H8, UK-H14 and UK-H15) the victims paid the money that was demanded. Moreover, in some cases (UK-H1, UK-H4, UK-H5, UK-H6, UK-H7 and

UK-H8) the victims referred the incident to the police: this includes the Chinese owner of a pub (UK-H4, see Box 3), showing that even in a tightly knit community sometimes a victim of extortion finds the courage to resist demands for money.

**Box 3. Resisting extortion: a Chinese case in Birmingham (UK-H4)**

This is a case in which five young Chinese men, for a period of five months (February-June 2014), demanded a weekly sum of protection money (£500), both using threats in person and over the phone, from the owner of a restaurant in Birmingham in order to keep his business safe. As soon as the restaurant opened, the owner was demanded a first round of money. It is not clear whether the business owner ever responded to the threats (i.e. whether he ever paid the money or not) but it is known that the gang returned for a second round of demands in the same year in July when the incident was reported to the police. It is also known that the gang was not a hierarchically organised group, but instead a network.

However, even if in the victims had resisted and asked for police assistance (and this is not established given data limitations), this does not necessarily mean that, at least initially, they were not acquiescent. At the same time, even if there is no evidence of an immediate refusal to pay money, the collected data do not indicate the existence of a tendency to continuously pay money to the extortionists. However, the existence or absence of compliance cannot be generalised due to the lack of information in the collected cases and the very limited sample.

## CONCLUSION

The hospitality sector in the UK constitutes a key segment of the British economy accounting for nearly 4 % of the national GDP in 2014. At the same time, it is a key target of organised crime groups (see Figure 3). The limitations posed by both the quality of the data collected and the small sample are evident. It is of paramount importance that researchers manage to establish channels with police forces and governments in order to access reliable data that can inform sound European policies. As noted elsewhere (Wall and Bonino, 2015), easily accessible centralised repositories of data on organised crime are missing in the British system, making research in this field very complicated. Moreover, the lack of a specific crime of extortion is a major hurdle in conducting serious trans-European research on this topic.

The analysis of the case studies collected for this research produced preliminary and, at times, speculative findings. Extortion in the hospitality sector has sometimes been undermined by limited operational capacities and a lack of acquiescence by the victims. The adoption of intimidation and violence in the course of an extortion attempt is not necessarily a guarantee of success. The data also show that foreign nationals, for example Chinese people, are involved in several incidents of extortion, while the involvement of British perpetrators is more limited (out of six perpetrators, five were involved in the same incident; UK-H11). A pattern that emerged from a tentative and very preliminary analysis of the urban location of the incidents shows that two-thirds of the incidents occurred in major cities. The targeted companies were located along major routes and intersections or in the city centre. Lastly, Northern Ireland appears to be a key target of criminals, often linked to paramilitary groups, who conduct a mixture of territory-control oriented and profit-driven extortion. This element brings to the foreground the nexus between organised crime and terrorism activities, as that extortion within UK-based Kurdish communities and Northern Irish communities is sometimes used to fund the activities of, respectively, the PKK and the IRA.

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## APPENDIX 1. LIST OF CASE STUDIES FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM COUNTRY STUDY

Case ID	Case name	Source
UK-H1	Extortion Haslingden	Media sources
UK-H2	Extortion Glasgow	Media sources and LexisNexis
UK-H3	Extortion Belfast 1	Court case
UK-H4	Extortion Birmingham	Media sources
UK-H5	Extortion Shinfield	Media sources
UK-H6	Extortion Manchester	Media sources
UK-H7	Extortion London 1	Media sources
UK-H8	Extortion Belfast 2	Media sources and court case
UK-H9	Extortion Belfast 3	Media sources
UK-H10	Extortion Edinburgh	Media sources
UK-H11	Extortion Whitley Bay	Media sources
UK-H12	Extortion Rotherham	Media sources
UK-H13	Extortion Lytham St Annes	Media sources
UK-H14	Extortion London 2	Media sources and court case
UK-H15	Extortion London 3	Media sources