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FEATURES AND PREVENTION OF ECONOMIC SMUGGLING CRIMES

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Abstract

Under the dynamic conditions of a market economy, the incidence of smuggling crimes in China has been increasing significantly, posing substantial threats to national stability, harmonious development, and social order. Consequently, it is imperative to intensify research on smuggling crimes and actively implement corresponding predictive and control measures to ensure the nation's sustainable development. This paper examines the hazards and current status of smuggling crimes in China, establishing a theoretical foundation for subsequent countermeasure studies. Through analyzing prevention and control strategies for smuggling crimes under market economy conditions, effective measures are identified to reduce such criminal activities and safeguard national interests.

Keywords: economic smuggling; smuggling crime; prevention; criminology; feather.

1. Introduce

In the context of globalization and technological advancement, economic smuggling has evolved into a multifaceted threat characterized by increasing sophistication, transnational coordination, and adaptive exploitation of legal and technological loopholes. Recent trends reveal a surge in both traditional and emerging smuggling activities, ranging from luxury goods and agricultural products to strategic resources like rare earth minerals and lithium batteries, with global seizures of lithium-related contraband rising by 37% in 2022 (UNODC). Criminal networks increasingly leverage advanced technologies—such as AI-generated documentation, encrypted darknet platforms, and submersible drones—to evade detection, while capitalizing on fragmented international regulations and supply chain vulnerabilities. Regions such as the China-Vietnam border and the European carbon market have emerged as hotspots, with smuggling operations exacerbating environmental degradation, market distortions, and public health risks. Despite enhanced countermeasures, including AI-driven customs systems achieving 95% accuracy in container scanning (China Customs) and blockchain-based traceability initiatives, the cat-and-mouse dynamic persists, underscoring the urgency for adaptive, collaborative governance frameworks. This paper examines the interplay of legal, technological, and socioeconomic factors driving modern smuggling, aiming to inform policies that balance market efficiency with systemic security in an interconnected world.

2. Methods

The study of smuggling crime causation aims to identify its root drivers, thereby facilitating targeted prevention and control measures. The primary causes of smuggling crimes can be categorized into five major dimensions:

Table 1- Features of Smuggling Crimes

Features of Smuggling Crimes	Implications
Smuggling has expanded from drugs and weapons to include production materials and daily goods.	The scope of smuggling is broader, with increasingly innovative market strategies leading to a significant expansion in overall smuggling activities.
Smuggling now spans a wider range of sectors.	National fiscal losses are growing more severe, posing a heightened threat to economic security.
Smuggling is on the rise.	With advances in productivity, faster industrial and agricultural growth, and flourishing transportation and markets, new opportunities for smuggling are emerging, exacerbating the severity of these crimes.
Economic incentives for smuggling have intensified.	As global economic and trade ties strengthen, large profits drive smuggling activities to evolve into cross-border collaboration, deepening international smuggling networks.
Smuggling is intertwined with corruption.	Given the substantial profits, criminals often resort to bribery and collusion to maximize gains.
Smuggling methods are increasingly diverse.	Tactics continually adapt, such as exploiting the internet and logistics networks for smuggling.
Smuggling now involves both maritime and land routes.	Ongoing social and technological advances enable smuggling through various channels, creating new challenges for law enforcement and customs inspections.

2.1 Economic Factors

Economic incentives constitute one of the most critical drivers of smuggling activities. Criminals exploit price differentials between international and domestic markets to profit from smuggling foreign goods into China at below-market prices. For example, in a major 2018 frozen meat smuggling case uncovered by customs, smuggled meat was sold at prices dozens of yuan below market rates, generating profits of up to ¥100,000 per ton. These illicit products, often comprising expired meat, chemically treated meat, or diseased meat, pose severe public health risks. Furthermore, economic temptations have corrupted certain law enforcement agencies, which now act as "protective umbrellas" for smuggling operations. Such collusion enables rampant smuggling in specific regions, exacerbating harm to national interests.

2.2 Institutional Deficiencies

The diversification of smuggling methods has exposed systemic gaps in China's legal and regulatory frameworks. Inadequate management systems, fragmented oversight mechanisms, and weak enforcement capacities have allowed smuggling to proliferate. Current policies disproportionately focus on post-hoc punitive measures rather than proactive prevention, while insufficient regulation of customs personnel and institutionalized corruption further aggravate the issue. The absence of robust accountability systems and transparent governance structures perpetuates vulnerabilities in the anti-smuggling regime.

2.3 Geographical Factors

China's vast territorial expanse, encompassing 21,000 kilometers of land borders and 18,000 kilometers of coastline, creates inherent challenges in monitoring and controlling smuggling activities, particularly in remote frontier regions [1]. The extensive and porous nature of these boundaries enables criminals to exploit diverse smuggling routes—ranging from maritime channels to cross-border land corridors—thereby evading detection and perpetuating the persistence of smuggling networks.

2.4 Sociocultural Perceptions

The clandestine nature of smuggling obscures its immediate societal harm, as it lacks direct, visible victims. This ambiguity fosters widespread complacency among individuals, enterprises, and even customs personnel, who often underestimate its systemic risks. Misconceptions about smuggling as a “victimless crime” lead to insufficient vigilance and, in some cases, active complicity. For instance, customs officials who tacitly condone smuggling operations exacerbate the problem, transforming institutional apathy into a facilitator of criminal activity.

2.5. Law Enforcement Deficiencies

The evolving complexity of smuggling methods has outpaced the capacity of law enforcement agencies, which are hindered by three critical shortcomings. First, inadequate operational competence means that many personnel lack the technical expertise required to counter sophisticated tactics, such as digital fraud and covert logistics networks. Second, issues of corruption and collusion undermine the system, as low professional integrity among some officers leads to bribery and collaboration with criminal syndicates, effectively turning them into protective umbrellas or informants. Lastly, weak deterrent measures—characterized by lenient penalties for both smugglers and complicit officials—fail to curb risky behaviors, perpetuating a cycle of recidivism and allowing smugglers to operate with relative impunity.

3.Results

3.1 Strengthening the Legal Framework Against Smuggling

A robust legal system is fundamental to preventing smuggling crimes. Governments must clarify legal definitions and sentencing standards for smuggling offenses, formulate targeted measures to combat distinct forms of smuggling (e.g., weapons, narcotics, cultural relics), and enhance institutional constraints within customs systems to rigorously penalize corruption or collusion among law enforcement personnel. Moderately easing cross-border controls on low-risk commodities can reduce incentives for minor smuggling, while maintaining stringent oversight of high-risk items (e.g., weapons, drugs) to systematically eliminate opportunities for illicit activities.

3.2. Enhancing Enterprise Competitiveness and Regulating Market Order

Narrowing price differentials between domestic and international goods is critical to curbing smuggling. Promoting technological upgrades and cost optimization for domestic enterprises aligns product pricing with global standards, thereby eroding profit margins for smuggled goods. Concurrently, implementing a multi-tiered regulatory model—combining maritime interception, onshore inspections, and market crackdowns [2]—can disrupt the circulation of smuggled products, uphold market fairness, and establish a standardized domestic market environment.

3.3 Reinforcing Anti-Smuggling Oversight Mechanisms

Combating local protectionism requires a coordinated central-local supervisory framework. Centralized auditing and accountability mechanisms should be established to monitor regional customs operations and dismantle collusion between officials and criminal networks (termed “protective umbrellas”). Simultaneously, granting localities limited administrative autonomy—paired

with transparent performance evaluations—can mitigate rent-seeking behavior and reduce bribery risks among enforcement personnel, fostering a balanced governance network for anti-smuggling efforts.

3.4 Raising Public Awareness and Advancing Technological Detection Capabilities

Comprehensive public education campaigns are essential to highlight smuggling's socioeconomic and public health repercussions. Investment in advanced detection technologies, such as AI-driven scanning systems and blockchain-based supply chain traceability, is critical to counter increasingly sophisticated smuggling methods. Additionally, specialized anti-smuggling task forces should be developed, emphasizing cross-border collaboration and high-tech investigative skills. High case-resolution rates will deter criminal networks, enabling systemic suppression of smuggling activities.

4. Discussion

4.1 Enhancing Institutional Capacity to Control Smuggling Activities

Improving institutional control over smuggling requires a multi-pronged approach. First, expanding investigative channels is critical as smuggling networks have extended from coastal and border regions to inland areas, fueling black-market transactions and illicit demand. Law enforcement must intensify surveillance in both maritime zones and inland hubs to dismantle cross-regional criminal operations. Second, strengthening internal oversight mechanisms within enforcement agencies is essential to eliminate corruption, such as the acceptance of bribes or collusion with criminal "protective umbrellas" and "special channels" [3]. Rigorous audits and accountability systems should be implemented to ensure integrity. Third, interdepartmental coordination must be enhanced through real-time information sharing and joint operations. Finally, adopting systematic, comprehensive, and legally grounded governance strategies—such as integrating social resources, balancing interests, regulating behaviors, and leveraging "government + market" collaborative dispute resolution models—can amplify control efficacy. Incorporating "internet+" technologies into governance frameworks will further optimize anti-smuggling efforts, safeguarding national interests and social stability.

4.2 Refining Criminal Law Regulations and Strengthening Legal Accountability

Legal reforms must align with evolving smuggling tactics to ensure robust deterrence. First, the Criminal Law should explicitly define smuggling offenses and corresponding penalties. For instance, the Interpretation on Determining Charges established criteria for prosecuting the smuggling of state-prohibited goods (per Criminal Law Amendment VII) and ordinary goods (per Criminal Law Amendment VIII), stipulating that evading payable tariffs exceeding ¥100,000 warrants criminal charges [4]. Second, timely revisions to legal frameworks are imperative. Amendment VIII abolished quantitative thresholds for prosecuting ordinary goods smuggling, enabling stricter liability regardless of evasion amounts. Additionally, it introduced explicit charges for smuggling currency—previously classified under foreign exchange evasion—to address gaps in regulating financial crimes. Third, judicial authorities must impose stringent penalties proportionate to the severity of smuggling crimes while avoiding over-reliance on punitive measures. Balancing legal rigor with contextual fairness ensures deterrence without undermining judicial legitimacy.

5. Conclusions

The harm caused by smuggling is increasing and its criminal activities are becoming more frequent. Therefore, it is essential to enhance research on the prevention and control of smuggling, and to develop mechanisms that fundamentally reduce such illegal activities. This paper examines the

dangers and root causes of smuggling, providing insights and foundations for studying both preventive and control measures. It suggests that smuggling can be prevented through improved legal frameworks, strengthened oversight of smuggling operations, and more effective public education. Moreover, enhancing the capacity of organizations to manage smuggling, refining criminal regulations, and rigorously enforcing legal responsibilities can help control smuggling activities, thereby better safeguarding national interests and the rights of citizens and ensuring harmonious, stable development.

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Резюме

ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПРЕСТУПЛЕНИЙ ЭКОНОМИЧЕСКОЙ КОНТРАБАНДЫ И ИХ ПРОФИЛАКТИКА

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В динамических условиях рыночной экономики число случаев контрабандных преступлений в Китае значительно возросло, что представляет существенную угрозу национальной стабильности, гармоничному развитию и общественному порядку. Следовательно, крайне важно активизировать исследования контрабандных преступлений и активно внедрять соответствующие меры прогнозирования и контроля для обеспечения устойчивого развития страны. В данной статье рассматриваются опасности и текущее состояние контрабандных преступлений в Китае, что создает теоретическую основу для последующих исследований мер противодействия. Путем анализа стратегий профилактики и контроля контрабандных преступлений в условиях рыночной экономики определяются эффективные меры по сокращению такой преступной деятельности и защите национальных интересов.

Ключевые слова: экономическая контрабанда, контрабандная преступность, профилактика, криминология, перо.

ЭКОНОМАНБАНДА ҚЫЛМЫСТАРДЫҢ ЕРЕКШЕЛІКТЕРІ ЖӘНЕ АЛДЫН АЛУ

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контрабандалық преступлений, бұл ұлттық тұрақтылықты, жылуды дамытуды және жалпыны қамтамасыз етуді ұсынады. Следовательно, крайне важно активизации исследования контрабандных преступлений и активно внедрять соответствующие меры прогнозирования и контроля для обеспечения устойчивого развития страны. Китаеде В данной статье рассматриваются опасности және текущее состояние контрабандных преступлений, ол составляется теориялық негіздерін зерттеу үшін кейінгі зерттеулер. Путем талдау стратегиялық профилактикалық және бақылау контрабандных преступлений в условиях рыночной экономики определяются тиімді кезеңдері бойынша сокращению такой преступной деятельности және защите национальных интересов.

Түйін сөздер: экономикалық контрабанда, контрабанда қылмысы, алдын алу, криминология, қауырсын.