Title: Introduction to Sam Gor using data collection, quantitative analysis and ACH.

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# Introduction of the investigation

In essence, Sam Gor, alias The Company (Luo, 2024), is an amorphous label for the collective operations of multiple Chinese and Southeast Asian triad groups coupled with Australian Motorcycle gangs (Allard, 2019: Oct 15. Choo and Grabosky, 2014; p. 485). The cooperation has created a transnational drug-trafficking and money-laundering empire centred on the Golden Triangle region of Myanma, Thailand, Laos, and Southern China. Its reach can be shown to extend globally, supported by casino-based laundering networks (Conneller, 2022) and resilient social ties among triads, diaspora communities, and local militias. However, when using OSINT tools like Maltego to search for surrounding networks, Sam Gor is a ghost.

Initially, when approaching Sam Gor and the company using Maltego, a powerful data mining and visualisation tool used for OSINT, only news articles were found. These news articles centred on the arrests of Tse Chi Lop and Lee Chung Chak suggesting that the kingpins of the Sam Gor syndicate had been caught. This is a testament to the high level of op-sec performed by the key movers in Sam Gor, as there is very little trace of the organisation outside of the news. This paper is a collection of investigations using news, literature, and OSINT tools to describe Sam Gor as a powerful conglomerate of syndicates infiltrating various areas of crime including, but not limited to, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and money laundering.

Of importance to this paper, Sam Gor doesn’t operate like known gangs, tongs, or triads around the world although clearly associated with organised crime (Levi, 1998; pp. 336-337). Traditionally, gang crime is defined by, among other things, violence (Chin, 2009; pp., 231-232). For example, several triad societies in Hong Kong were long associated with turf battles and social leveraging including political manipulation (Wong and Kwok, 2023. P. 454-455). However, Sam Gor seems to eschew this kind of violence (Cipher, 2016) opting for alliance and integration over violence (Wong and Kwok, 2023. Pp. 447-448). In drug trafficking, this interconnectedness leverages associated individual groups’ logistical strengths independently to proliferate a high-quality narcotic product. A win-win for all parties. Of interest here, the company seems to have its own IT department (Cipher, 2016. Luo, 2024; p. 7). Such a dedicated tool could maintain the afore mentioned digital footprint to a minimum, helping Sam Gor or the company to remain aloof.

In sum, this paper finds that the Sam Gor conglomerate represents a new type of criminal. A sophisticated, connected, network savy, cyber criminal which leverages already founded logistical networks to benefit all parties. At scale, Sam Gor makes corporate like decisions, eschews violence and in fighting, and maximises profit for all related parties. It mixes with various organised crime organisations to the fiscal benefit of all parties.

To understand this new form of organised crime, we need to situate Sam Gor in the longer history of triads.

# Description of Sam Gor

Tracing triad traditions back, we find reference to the *black societies* (Broadhurst & Zhong, 2021), and Tiandihui (Wang and Kwok, 2023) historically to the Qing Dynasty. At that time, these societies worked to support the under-classes with protection, smuggling, and robbery in response to the lack of Qing governmental support (ibid. p. 450-451). Later iterations of these groups embedded themselves in local communities, providing welfare, protection, and social benefits in Hong Kong under colonial government rule (Wang & Kwok, 2023). The triad families worked to support the lower classes no matter which ruler was in power. Thus, they achieved resilience through their ability to weather the differing ruling classes.

Sam Gor can be understood as the latest iteration of this triad tradition. Sam Gor embodies an adaptive legacy by consolidating multiple triad groups into a transnational syndicate, blending licit and illicit enterprises, and leveraging political ties in Myanmar, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. As the company’s affiliated triad members branch out across the SE Asian countries, Sam Gor has a foothold in various Asian markets.

Importantly, Sam Gor represents a departure from traditional definitions of organised crime. According the the Maltz’s criteria, organised crime is defined thus due ot “violence, corruption, continuity, and variety” (Maltz, 1976 in Levy, 1998; p. 335). However, Sam Gor seems to eschew violence, opting out of turf battles through incorporation of various groups and leverage of their logistical networks. Since its market dominance rests more on corporate-style coordination and political patronage than on violence, all party syndicates benefit from their own activities.

Additionally, the company seems to have established a very special kind of networking connection among and between other organised crime syndicates. Early models of organised crime often assumed a pyramidal hierarchy, with strong vertical command and control. This view fits some traditional depictions of mafia, motorcycle gangs, and triads but fails to capture the resilience of Sam Gor. The Bright & Whelan (2018) and Burcher (2020) network perspectives describe this kind of group as a scale-free, multiplex system where hubs and redundant ties maintain cohesion and adaptability. These models explain why, even after the arrests of Tse Chi Lop and Lee Chung Chak (BBC, 2021. Berlinger, 2022. AFP, 2022), seizures and trafficking persisted. The pyramidal structure is not at play. The organisation seems to be more of a conglomeration of syndicates, each focused on their own expertise, and each feeding into the strength of the whole. Manufacturing groups distribute to trafficking groups who liaise with their street vendors. This offers a new type of organised crime.

Taken together, these perspectives refine our picture of Sam Gor. It is non-Maltzian (not violence-driven), corporatised, and horizontally networked conglomeration of syndicates. By maintaining this kind of flexible structure, Sam Gor can ingest any kind of criminal network anywhere and benefit from their in-place expertise. As such, Sam Gor could pivot to other crime industries, like cyber.

Drugs are only part of the story; increasingly, syndicates in the Golden Triangle have expanded into trafficking and cyber-enabled crime.

# From Meth to people smuggling

Reports across the discovered news articles indicate that Sam Gor is responsible for high quality and high quantity methamphetamine trade spreading from within the Golden Triangle. However, when considering the ASPI and UNODC reports, it is highly likely that Sam Gor has access to and engages in people smuggling activities in the region, also. Reports from ASPI and UNODC describe how casinos and “special economic zones” created an infrastructure in Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia which pivoted into large-scale scam compounds that utilise trafficked labour (Ruser, 2025. UNODC, 2024). Sam Gor’s presence in the region and known affiliations with the casinos and SEZ imply an awareness of these human trafficking activities.

Victims are offered jobs and lured to various areas where they are nabbed and transported to cyber-farms in the Golden Triangle. These compounds operate under direct protection of the Burmese junta and allied militias (McCoy, 2009), with Chinese syndicates providing the capital, logistics, and recruitment pipelines (Ruser, 2025). Note the constellation of parties includes mention of syndicates, potentially the same syndicates which coalesce into the operational strength of Sam Gor. Although not directly attributed with these activities in the articles sourced, there is an implicit, at least functional, collaboration is clearly inferable.

The Golden Triangle seems to be well known. There are several dedicated books on the area and vast arrays of discussion papers. This knowledge and history are broad. The sources indicate multiple Chinese syndicates, embedded with border militas, working in collaboration rather than competing for area control (Ruser, 2025. Luong, 2025). Various kinds of known criminal elements are present, and a vast array of enterprises including drug manufacturing, human trafficking, corruption, and more recently, cyber-crime.

While the methamphetamine trade often sparks the name Sam Gor (Chin, 2009), the people smuggling seems to be covered by state protection (especially Myanmar). If Sam Gor are directly associated then they might be part of a larger corruption racket in the area, leveraging state-controlled people smuggling to afford diversified profit sharing, of some kind. If affiliated with the surrounding states and given the already noted minimal digital footprint of the company, policing of the conglomerate requires a new type of approach. The approach taken by the Australian Federal Police and more than 20 other international agencies is one such approach.

# Policing of Sam Gor

Given the redefinition discussed above, policing strategies needed to move beyond kingpin arrests to broader systemic disruption. Operation Kungur, a joint task force established by the Australian Federal Police, targeted various avenues of disruption. It targeted brokers (Carley, 2025; culminating in the arrest of Lee Chung Chak in 2022 (Conneller, 2022), laundering (Levi, 1998; Songsuphap, 2022), logistic and political networks (Bright and Whelan, 2018), and precursors (Dungdee, 2021; AFP, 2022). Other drug operations were still pursued, and were also found effective, with a 1 billion pill seizure in 2021 (CNN, 2022).

This multipronged approach came from several research avenues. For example, Choo & Grabosky (2014) show that organised crime routinely leverages ICT, moving toward commercialised, franchise-like digital structures where services (money mules, DDoS, laundering) can be plugged into larger criminal enterprises. Carley’s (2015) open-source exploitation model demonstrates how covert networks can expose brokers and afford a targeted individual different from a kingpin. Southerland & Potter (1993), meanwhile, suggest that while organised crime often appears decentralised, the decisions and money flows may be highly centralised. Therefore, targeting the ICT, brokers, and money in a multi-pronged approach may help destabilise a network like the company.

Operation Kungur was a multinational investigation led by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) involving more than 20 agencies worldwide. The operation combined intelligence-sharing, surveillance, and precursor-chemical interruptions, and boasted a record 1,300-kilogram ephedrine seizure in Victoria in 2018 (AFP, 2022). Associated actions, such as Kungur-Oak in Melbourne, disrupted local distribution cells, while the broader operation culminated in the 2021 arrest of syndicate leader Tse Chi Lop in Amsterdam and extradition in 2022. Despite these high-profile outcomes, analysts noted that the underlying network remained resilient (AFP, 2022). As part of this study, we will use the associated seizures as a proxy for an understanding of the Sam Gor production value.

# Following the money through the news

In this section, we are going to focus on seizures rather than the known laundering networks. Seizure value is going to be used as a proxy for estimating production scale. Once this is considered, we will hypothesise the resilience of the conglomerate and the surrounding policing effectiveness.

Initially, we will look at a timeline of the various known seizures attributed to Sam Gor, and affiliated activities. We will use USD as a comparative scale.

2016 – Yangon, Myanmar (Cipher, 2016)

* Seizure: 80 g ketamine carried by Taiwanese courier Cai Jeng Ze
* Value: approximately $53000 USD
* Significance: Phones seized during the arrest provided key intelligence linking Cai directly to Tse Chi Lop and “The Company”

2017 – Geraldton, Australia (Allard, 2019. Oct 15 and Oct 19)

* Seizure: 1.2 tonnes crystalline methamphetamine (crystal form)
* Value: $800 million USD
* Significance: At the time, the largest drug bust in Australian history. AFP attributed it to Sam Gor, estimating the syndicate controlled up to 70% of the Australian meth market

2019 – Melbourne, Australia (Operation Kungur) (AFP, 2022)

* Seizure: 1.3 tonnes ephedrine
* Value: $500 million USD (precursor valuation)
* Significance: Part of Operation Kungur, an AFP-led multinational effort targeting Sam Gor’s logistics. Showed direct links to Tse and his network

2019 – Shan State, Myanmar

* Seizure: Industrial-scale meth “super-labs” dismantled
* Value: Contributed to UNODC estimates of $8–17 billion USD annual meth sales for Sam Gor
* Significance: Demonstrated production had shifted to industrial capacity, fuelling oversupply across the Mekong region

2021 – Mekong Region (post-Tse arrest) (AFP, 2022)

* Seizure: 1 billion methamphetamine tablets
* Value: $60 billion USD (extrapolated using 0.09 g/tablet at $666.67/g taken from earlier calculations)
* Significance: Record-breaking seizure, showing resilience of Sam Gor’s network despite Tse’s arrest. Prices fell due to oversupply, indicating continued industrial-scale production

2025 – Philippines (Pangasinan & Ilocos Sur)

* Seizure: 1,038 kg shabu (methamphetamine) recovered floating offshore
* Value: $125 million USD
* Significance: Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) linked packaging directly to Sam Gor’s “teabag” branding. Underscores that operations persisted well after Tse and Lee’s arrests

As an explanation of the timeline, we see evidence of a continual production and supply of methamphetamine which can be associated with Sam Gor. While the initial arrest in 2016 opened the door to the digital footprint of Sam Gor, the later seizures showed the scale. There’s a clear oversupply of product available for shipping, shown in 2021 haul, and a continual proliferation of product shown by the product seizures in 2025. It looks as though the arrests in 2021 and 2022 do not directly affect the production and scale of the operation attributable to Sam Gor.

Just in terms of the production scale, seizures linked to Sam Gor range from 80 g in 2016 (Cipher, 2016), 1.2 tonnes of meth in 2017 (Allard, 2019. Oct 15 and Oct 19) and 1.3 tonnes of precursor in 2019 (AFP 2022), culminating in the extraordinary 2021 seizure of one billion tablets (approximately 90 tonnes, $60B USD) (Berlinger, 2022) — a clear anomaly dwarfing all others. Even in 2025, over one tonne of shabu worth $125 million USD was intercepted in the Philippines (Araja, 2025). We see continual production and shipping throughout the dates of seizures and can assume that, given the oversupply found, this production has been consistent.

Accounting for these reports, we can quantify the amount of profit that Sam Gor lost in these incidents.

### Figure 1: Reported drug seizures for Sam Gor from news articles. Note: omitted 2021 seizure

If we follow the shipping lanes in and near Philippines, and mark the locations of the known seizures from the news reports, we see an interesting phenomenon.

Note that most of the international shipping appears across the West Coast of the Philippine island chain.

A map of different colored triangles

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

### Figure 2: International Shipping lanes around the Philippines archipelago.

Note that most of the shipping lanes around The Philippines moves along the country’s Western seaboard, with very few ships entering the Eastern seaboard.

However, the sites of the seizures that have occurred are either in Manilla itself (drug enforcement agency raids), or on the western seaboard (see Figure 3 below).

A map of a country

AI-generated content may be incorrect.

### Figure 3: Philippines seizures pins

This indicates that the drug shipping may have attempted clandestine routes rather than using major shipping (at least for the 2025 teabag seizure incidents). See the purple (2025 seizure) and red (2022 seizure) on the map above are both on the Eastern seaboard of The Philippines. We can see then that the Sam Gor related activity therefore is adjusting its activities. This clarifies flexible operations and potential novelty on the shipping front.

Despite these disruptions, questions remain about the syndicate’s trajectory—will it fragment, adapt, or collapse? ACH provides a way to interrogate these possibilities.

# What actions may happen in the future

To anticipate what comes next, we apply Heuer’s (2007) ACH framework to test competing hypotheses.

Given the current analysis, Sam Gor / the company displays a robust associated network of sub-units. Although the methamphetamine production and trafficking is continuing (see section above), there has been a noted hiatus in published news regarding Sam Gor. Between 2022 and 2025 there has been little news. This begs questions about the current situation of Sam Gor both internally and externally. Additionally, the release of the Ruser (2025) “Scamland Myanmar” discussion paper seems to position the Golden Triangle at the centre of a major cyber crime syndication. As Sam Gor has previously been associated with that area, it seems likely that their known human trafficking could be leveraged for cybercrime. This is an extrapolation and not a certainty. Importantly, the publication of several papers and gaps in publication between 2022 and 2025 lead to various predictive hypotheses which were tested.

**Hypothesis 1.**

Given the arresting and incarceration of the leader of Sam Gor, the company will collapse and loose its trajectory, leaving various triad groups to succumb to internal atrophy.

**Hypothesis 2.**

Given the amount of disruption to the methamphetamine distribution networks, Sam Gor will divest into other kinds of crime (specifically cyber crime).

**Hypothesis 3.**

Given the arrest and imminent prosecution of the leaders of Sam Gor, no further litigation is pending.

**Hypothesis 4.**

Given the decapitation of the major players in the company, other triad head figures will rise to fill the gap.

(Analysis of Competing Hypothesis: using Heur, J.R. Psychology of Intelligence Analysis, Ch. 8. Model)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ACH | Sam Gor will collapse1 now that their leader is arrested | Sam Gor will divest into other criminal enterprises like cyber crime | There are more legal actions pending now that the Sam Gor leader is arrested | One of the smaller triads/gangs will rise to fill the gap left by Sam Gor |
| Burcher social network of gangs | * - | + | ? | + |
| Wan Kuok-koi | - | + | - | - (arrested) |
| Scamland Myanma | - | + | - | + |
| She Zhijiang | - | + | ? | * (arrested) |
| Missing reporting, news, and general media between 2022 and 2024 mentioning Sam Gor | ? | ? | ++ | ? |
| Huge shipments found in Philippines abandoned | - | + | ? | ? |

### Figure 4: Analysis of Competing Hypotheses using collected information, news articles.

In this table: + confirmed with the data  
- disconfirmed with the data  
? neither confirmed nor disconfirmed

**H1: Collapse of the Syndicate**

The hypothesis that Sam Gor or its allied Triads might collapse is consistently unsupported across the evidence. Both the historical resilience of Triad networks and the distributed, networked structure of Sam Gor indicate redundancy rather than fragility. Even when leaders such as Tse Chi Lop or She Zhijiang are removed, the operational ecosystem persists. Abandoned shipments or individual arrests reflect tactical disruption rather than structural collapse, and the continued flow of meth from the Golden Triangle underscores this durability.

**H2: Divestment into Cybercrime**

The strongest support emerges for diversification into cybercrime. Evidence from “Scamland Myanmar” compounds, online casinos, and associated fraud operations shows that Triad-linked actors are already pivoting into cyber-enabled revenue streams. This aligns with historic patterns of diversification, where criminal groups exploited new markets as opportunities arose. Cybercrime provides lower-risk, higher-return pathways compared to large-scale meth shipments, making it a logical and supported trajectory.

Further to this, Cybercrime diversification is not a departure but a logical extension of Sam Gor’s conglomerate model.

**H3: More Legal Actions**

Legal actions remain ambiguous. The stark gap in media reporting between 2022 and 2025, despite Tse Chi Lop’s high-profile arrest, suggests ongoing legal manoeuvrings, possible suppression orders, or evidentiary fragility. The absence of public updates is itself notable: while it does not prove collapse, it indicates that law enforcement and prosecutors may be grappling with complexities in linking defendants to syndicate activities. This uncertainty leaves the hypothesis of expanded prosecutions in a liminal space—plausible but not demonstrably supported in open-source reporting.

**H4: Rise of Smaller Gangs**

The prospect of smaller gangs rising in the wake of leadership arrests receives mixed but cautious support. In fragmented environments such as Myanmar’s borderlands or the Philippines’ disrupted supply chains, successor groups could plausibly consolidate power. The networked structure of Sam Gor makes such local ascents feasible when central hubs weaken. However, cases tied directly to individuals like Wan Kuok-koi or She Zhijiang are constrained by arrests, reducing their immediate prospects for leadership. Overall, this hypothesis appears situational—likely in peripheral zones, less so at the syndicate’s core.

**Takeaway:** Sam Gor and its allied Triads are highly unlikely to collapse under current pressures; instead, they are adapting by diversifying into cybercrime, while legal proceedings remain opaque and slow-moving. The real risk lies not in the syndicate’s disappearance but in its transformation—fragmenting at the margins while simultaneously expanding into digital domains that are harder to police.

# Sam Gor Conglomeration

The company, Sam Gor, is a new kind of organised crime affecting Australia and surrounding countries. While the syndicate shares ties with triad groups, it seems to eschew violence. Such a move makes its activities less public and easier to fly under the radar. This necessitated a change in policing, requiring a multi-country operation to target individuals, precursor agents for methamphetamine, and logistics. Aside from these changes, Sam Gor seems to have remained resilient. It is still producing and packaging methamphetamines in its iconic ways and shipping via novel clandestine methods. Although eh policing has clearly seized large volumes of drugs, the conglomerate is still proceeding.

Looking into the future, it seems that the arrest of the figureheads has left little dint in operations. The nature of triad groups is to remain flexible in instances of decapitation, and a time for readjustment seems to have occurred between 2022 and 2025. But there remain questions for the future. The company may pivot to cyber-criminal activities, if it has not already done so. It also seems likely that the assignment of a new figurehead will be moot as the corporate structure of the conglomerate means it will continue to thrive no matter who is in the driving seat.

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