

Transnational OC & Prohibition

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2-1 Discussion: Transnational OC & Prohibition

1. Theoretical Perspective on The Growth of Transnational Organized Crime

To understand the growth of transnational organized crime (TOC), we can apply Robert K. Merton's Theory of Anomie (Ademola & Akinbobola, 2022). Merton's theory posits that societal pressures drive individuals to achieve culturally approved goals, but when legitimate means are inaccessible, individuals resort to illegitimate methods.

Merton's Theory of Anomie explains TOC by highlighting the disparities between societal goals and the means available to achieve them. In many regions, socio-economic conditions limit legitimate opportunities for success, leading individuals to seek alternative, often illegal, avenues (Nicaso & Danesi, 2021). TOC thrives in these environments, offering economic benefits and social status otherwise unattainable through legal means.

Applying this theory to TOC, economic globalization and political instability create conditions ripe for organized crime. Global markets and porous borders facilitate illicit activities, while weak law enforcement and corruption in some regions provide safe havens for these organizations. This environment allows TOC groups to exploit the anomie—discrepancy between cultural goals and institutional means—on an international scale.

Critically, while Merton's theory effectively explains why individuals might turn to organized crime, it does not fully account for the sophisticated networks and strategic operations of TOC groups. Alternative perspectives, such as Rational Choice Theory, which focuses on the calculated decisions of criminals, may offer complementary insights (Nicaso & Danesi, 2021). Nonetheless, Merton's Theory of Anomie remains a valuable lens through which to understand the socio-economic drivers behind the growth of transnational organized crime.

2. Assess The Impact of Prohibition on Organized Crime

Prohibition, enacted in the United States from 1920 to 1933, profoundly impacted organized crime (Woodiwiss, 2024). While its intended strength was to reduce alcohol consumption and improve public morals, it inadvertently fueled the rise of organized crime.

Strengths and Weaknesses: Prohibition did lead to a temporary decrease in alcohol consumption and related health issues. However, its weaknesses far outweighed these benefits. The ban on alcohol created a lucrative black market, which organized crime syndicates quickly exploited (Lahcene & Madjed, 2022). Criminal organizations like the Mafia thrived, controlling the production, distribution, and sale of illegal alcohol. This illicit trade significantly increased their power and wealth.

Rise of Organized Crime and Unintended Consequences: Prohibition inadvertently strengthened organized crime by providing a steady source of income. Gang violence escalated as criminal groups competed for control over territories and distribution networks. Corruption also surged, as law enforcement officials and politicians were often bribed to disregard illegal activities, undermining the rule of law (Woodiwiss, 2024).

Public's View of the Prohibition Bureau: The Prohibition Bureau, tasked with enforcing the ban, was largely ineffective and often ridiculed. Public opinion was generally negative, viewing the bureau as corrupt and inefficient. This widespread disdain made it difficult for the bureau to enforce Prohibition laws effectively, leading to widespread non-compliance and further empowering organized crime.

In summary, Prohibition's failure to curb alcohol consumption and its role in bolstering organized crime highlight its significant weaknesses, with public opinion playing a crucial role in its eventual repeal.

References

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