

Presentation on the relationship between organized crime and civil society.

Working definition of OC:

Illegal economy that operates non-ideologically through intimidation and violence over a given (a) territory, (b) duration, or (c) socio-political milieu, in search of money and power.

Working definition of CS:

Participation by ordinary citizens in the public space between (a) the state and the economy or (b) the state and family (non-political, non-economic), and embodied in voluntary organizations.

Working definition of Liberal Democracy:

"1) popular control over public decision-making and decision makers; and 2) equality of respect and voice between citizens in the exercise of control" (Allum and Siebert 2003:15).

Hypotheses for discussion

1. Weak CS proves conducive to OC.

"Organized crime groups are firmly rooted in the civil society that facilitated their existence and expansion... These groups are an integral part of these countries' civil society, a presence there to control, to 'keep an eye' on 'everything' and 'everyone', so that they can make money undisturbed; in some cases, they appear more efficient than the state, as an alternative state, which provides what the state is unable to provide - jobs, protection, goods, and services" (2). They "gain power by ruling over the territory and its citizens, by dominating the economic and political activities which it has undertaken there" (9).

2. OC has flourished in liberal democracies (liberal free markets 14-15).

"Once it has established itself, its natural habitat would appear to be one of democratic values and conditions...." (15). "Liberal democracies experience two particular vulnerabilities. First, their political and economic systems are relatively open and are capable of being penetrated by covert criminal activities. The freedoms enshrined within the economic system thus becomes a source of weakness. Second, the ability of democracies to combat criminal groups is severely constrained by their adherence to the rule of law. For instance, police forces must possess sufficient evidence to bring criminal charges against a suspect and they must have this evidence tested in court" (Rees 115).

Native versus transnational

"the operations of these organizations are no longer limited to traditional organizations are no longer limited to traditional organized crime countries; they are now becoming involved in a whole variety of activities in countries neither naturally linked to native organized crime groups nor having an organized crime problem, countries such as India, Albania, Turkey, and Ireland" (5).

"research carried out by Ercole Giap Parini in the field of Mafia infiltrations in two local communities in southern Italy draws upon the unambiguous existence of a reciprocal relationship between criminal forces and democratic forces: "the Mafia is not simply something that affects or shapes different aspects of social and economic life, but is in turn something that is affected and shaped by them." Parini's hypothesis is that,

when a democratic system is "alive" with active citizens and an engaged civil society, then organised crime tends to concentrate on the mere criminal aspects of its activities. Indeed the behavior of the criminal can be greatly influenced by a society's inability to invest in and consolidate the civic values, behaviour and attitudes of its citizens" (19).

"Is there a correlation between the strength of organized crime group in democratic countries and the type of instruments offered by democracy to its citizens to enable them to participate effectively in the democratic process? (Parini 145)

Models

Presence of **Native OC**: deeply integrated within civil society combined with weak state control

CS			
weak		Serbia (1980's)?	USSR, E.Europe
		Italy	
strong	W.Europe, US		Weimar
	strong		Weak
Liberal democracy			

Presence of **Transnational OC**: targeting vulnerable ethnic minority communities, impoverished regions, and large urban areas.

CS			
strong	Weimar		W.Europe, US
		Italy	
weak	USSR, E.Europe	Serbia (1980's)?	
	weak		Strong
Liberal democracy			

CS			
weak			
strong			
	strong		Weak
State? (Institutions)			

Discussion:

If a vibrant SC is vital to a liberal democracy, what threat does OC pose to liberal democracy?

Can one reframe the original question by asking if OC *is* a type of civil society voluntary organization that functions between the state/legal-economy and the family and uses violence to (a) protect its illegal assets from the state/legal-economy and (b) assure participation?

Sources: Allum and Siebert (2003) Organized Crime and the Challenge to Democracy