The causes behind organized crime, who commits it, and how to handle it

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Organized crime refers to a criminal enterprise that aims to attain maximum profit from illegal activities that are usually in high demand by the public. There are three distinct categories of activities of these criminal organizations: infiltration of government and business, provision of illegal services, and illicit products. These groups differ from the traditional criminal operation models since they include multiple participants, adequate planning, and thrive on corrupt strategies to protect their operations.

Various texts provide overviews of these organizations. For instance, the movie, "City of God" provides a systematic typology of these agencies, causation, investigation, prosecution, and sentencing of the offenders (Lins, 2003). Other literary materials such as the "Code of the Street" highlight organized crime through the parties involved, and the geography while emphasizing the description of these groups compared to investigative responses (Anderson, 2008). Therefore, this policy paper will discuss organized crime by analyzing the perpetrators, and theories that explain the causes, and recommend various policy measures for action using the available research evidence.

The activities of organized criminals often pose other threats apart from the usual security problems. Importantly, transnational organized crimes usually carry out various criminal activities that affect the economic institutions, degrade the environment, corruption, and health problems besides creating instability and violence. Therefore, the nature of organized crime has made it difficult to deter it through the traditional law and order enforcement approach, especially in fragile countries (Nutley 38). An analysis of the film, "City of God," illustrates that despite the work of combating organized crime predominantly rests with civil law enforcement agencies, it is critical to devise new approaches to deal with this form of offense (Lins, 2003). Similarly, the film identifies the entry points for networked approaches and cooperation undertaken by the developed communities to deal with transnational organized crimes such as bilateral programs with partner nations.

History of Organized Crimes

Organized crimes refer to individuals who engage in criminal activities to make a profit. Membership in these groups may range from local, and national to international networks. Different rationales influence the formation of these groups; some are organized crime gangs, others are politically motivated and some are formed for financial reasons. Besides, the structure of these networks takes three distinct forms. The first type of formation occurs within the family, usually called the mafia. As a result, they operate based on the training of family members, family hierarchies, tradition, culture, and religion (McCall 97). Alternatively, the formation occurs through business networks. Organized crime organizations formed this way are often rigid and impersonal with an involved authority hierarchy. Due to their impersonal nature, these groups are usually dangerous for the members. The danger to the members even increases due to the lack of interpersonal loyalties and familial relationships coupled with the quest for power instead of family protection like in the previous network.

One of the perfect examples of organized crime in a business setup is the carrying out of illegal activities such as racketeering, insider trading, or drug trafficking. In such a case, legitimate corporations incorporate illegal organized crime techniques to achieve higher success. One of the biggest business organized crime activities is the infamous orchestration of the $65 billion Ponzi scheme by Bernard Madoff and his corporate associates, where over 1000 investors lost their life savings (Anderson 43). Finally, organized crimes can be in the form of a "gang." These groups often recruit their members through the connections made by the youths in correctional facilities and their involvement in various criminal activities as teenagers. Usually, members join a gang to protect themselves or to belong mainly due to inadequate support systems in their homes (Lins, 2003). Most of these bands lack a clear hierarchy especially when they deal with firearms, drugs, or sex trafficking. Some of the most infamous criminal gang organizations in the United States include Latin Kings, Aryan Brotherhood, and Hells Angels.

Historically, organizational criminals often use extortion to achieve their missions. Likewise, these organizations usually victimize individuals and companies through stealing cars, robbing, counterfeiting money, fraud, and rigging community projects. These organizations often use violence while performing their operations to intimidate their prey and secure what they need. When victims fail to comply, they are likely to receive bodily harm. However, gangs also do not spare their members. For instance, they can punish members when they fail to complete their assigned roles or do not take them seriously (Anderson 29). Some of the earliest organizational criminals in the 19th century included pirates who attacked people while transporting their properties on the water. The Pirates during these periods are the modern-day corporate crime groups. They had their rules and frequently used violence to attain their targets.

Causal Theories of Organized Crimes

Various theories exist that attempt to illustrate the causes of organized crime within society. Some of these theories include strain, social learning, and control models. Proponents of strain theory believe that individuals commit criminal activities to relieve themselves of their challenging experiences. Thus, it implies that people turn to crime due to a particular circumstance. The theory states that when people are not able to attain their social mobility goals, they turn to criminal activities to achieve their objectives. According to a 2008 poverty report in the United States published by Siegel, nearly 37 million people live below the poverty line in the US. The condition, therefore, causes old neighborhoods, minimal desire to acquire genuine and legitimate properties, and inadequate healthcare (Lins, 2003). Therefore, such groups of people use these odds using their conditions. The theory shows how American immigrants were able to achieve considerable progress and social mobility in the previous periods.

On the other hand, social learning theory explains that individuals often commit crimes due to their associations. This perspective highlights the importance of embracing social policy initiatives to create awareness among people, especially the youth about bad company and negative peer pressure. The social learning theory requires strategies that focus on enlightening teenagers about choosing friends. Finally, the control theory illustrates that individuals participate in criminal activities due to the lack of proper measures to curb these activities. Empirical studies indicate that the most appropriate means of controlling such crimes is strengthening community policing and urging people to be vigilant (McCall 106). It is therefore for law enforcement institutions to initiate a group neighbor's policy that checks and reports strangers or strange behaviors.

How to Control Organized Crime

Organized crime has attracted considerable academic inquiry for a long period, while at the same time introducing the perception that it is a practical problem that needs to be adequately addressed. In the previous years, the policies for controlling organized crimes focused primarily on two important strategies. Some of the approaches in the book, "make wanna holler" include, tracking down members of organized crime and focusing on the market relationships and structural features that enhance the possibility of organized crime (McCall 126). These two approaches are distinct and do not conflict with each other. However, they reflect the underlying assumptions on employing the available economic and human resources to control organized crime.

McCall (127) further suggests that instead of relying on the traditional strategy of focusing primarily on the members of these organized crime groups, it is important to begin focusing on the environments within which these organizations operate. Therefore, this perspective implies adopting market intervention measures instead of law enforcement measures. For instance, one of the response actions is decriminalizing the services and goods that motivate the formation of organized crimes. As a result, the government may introduce provisions that legalize gambling and lotteries in places such as Atlantic City and Las Vegas so that the populace may access services that could only be accessed through illicit markets. However, the film, City of God (2003) opposes that no guarantee decriminalizing a particular practice will destroy an illegal market remains one of the greatest challenges of this approach. According to the film, legalization may create a social climate that can be more supportive of the activities of such crimes.

On the other hand, the book, "Code of the Street" suggests that since organized criminals mainly facilitate money laundering, the policy attention needs to focus on money itself. For this reason, the government needs to concentrate on developing money laundering policies and regulations to freeze the offenders' profits and assets. Although the United States has been very efficient in implementing money laundering laws, as indicated in the film, the emergence of globalization requires the enactment of an international approach that seeks the cooperation of different nations (Lins, 2003). However, the lack of political goodwill in the previous periods prevented these policies from achieving significant success. Moreover, the fact that these strategies often entail long-term undercover and sting operations and the assistance of informants, giving them the wrong perception has been an impediment to the realization of productive activities (Anderson 72). Nevertheless, the evolving nature of organized crime activities over the recent years has been very destructive to nations as terrorism requires a concerted effort that involves cooperation among different countries to weed out the perpetrators of these crimes.

Conclusion

Organizational crimes are very harmful especially when they paralyze the government's counter-efforts. Although this has not been the case in developed nations, it is quite rampant in most developing countries. Most of these criminal organizations acquire their economic power through mostly distributed, modest-harm actions like selling non-standardized drugs and counterfeit products and scams that are mainly perpetrated through the internet. Policy analysts state that even though the public regards these organizations as bad, they do not often consider the fakes sold to them as bad. However, according to Nutley's research evidence, it is important to devise various effective means for information exchange to find out the organizedness of these agencies (Nutley 74). Attaining this will assist in overcoming the barriers to controlling organized criminal activities, not only locally but in the international arena.

Works Cited

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