

ORGANIZED EVIL AND THE ATLANTIC ALLIANCE

Moral Panics and the Rhetoric of Organized Crime Policing in America and Britain

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Moral panics are conventionally associated with the interpretations of youthful action imposed by powerful state or media forces. However, the concept is also useful in understanding more generally how social problems are constructed and presented. In this paper, we consider how a vague term such as 'organized crime' has emerged as a vehicle for exclusionary rhetorics in both the United States and Britain. While the origins of the organized crime moral panic in the United States can be located amongst moral entrepreneurs, the British version is marked by the outpourings of a right-wing media, and the influence of American foreign policy.

Moral panics in the United States increased in number, intensity and long-term influence as the new nation developed and urbanized during the nineteenth century. In 1812, the Reverend Lyman Beecher from Connecticut articulated and crystallized contemporary concerns about a perceived collapse in morality in a series of sermons that accompanied the establishment of the first statewide society for the Suppression of Vice and the Promotion of Good Morals. Without vigorous countermeasures, he told his congregation, hordes of the urban poor would soon 'swarm in your streets, and prowl about your dwellings'. On another occasion, he elaborated and expressed the fear that America's republican virtue was about to be corrupted by vices once only associated with monarchist Europe. 'The mass is changing,' he declared, 'we are becoming another people.' People who once would have been deterred from wrongdoing by 'shame alone', he continued, now flaunted their contempt for the established order and the proprieties. If action were not taken quickly, society would succumb to 'Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling, tippling folk'. To combat this threat to the new nation, he called for the establishment a nationwide network of voluntary moral-control societies to 'bring collective pressure to bear against organized evil' (Boyer 1978: 13).

Beecher's sermons thus prefigured several of the themes and patterns that would connect moral panics with what would later be called organized crime control, absolving mainstream society of responsibility for a perceived decline in moral values and exaggerating the threat from an alien and nebulous enemy—'the ruff-scruffs'. These were his 'folk devils' that had to be attacked by collective action.

Complaints about the criminal tendencies of foreigners increased in intensity during the nineteenth century, suggesting that conspiracies amongst immigrants constituted a threat to the nation. Xenophobic assumptions lay behind the concept of an American 'underworld', based more on race and ethnicity than class, which began to emerge after

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the Civil War during the country's most intense period of industrialization and urbanization. Crapsey (1872) introduced several themes that would recur as the understanding of 'organized crime' was being shaped. First was his association of the problem of crime with the masses of poor, foreign-born immigrants or black migrants then filling American cities. He argued that these immigrants and migrants were the cause of New York's crime problems, partly because these groups were naturally prone to crime and 'vice'. Crapsey also feared that such vices as gambling, prostitution and drinking were becoming increasingly institutionalized, pervasive and destructive. Card games, for example, were organized by a 'confederacy of roguery' (Crapsey 1872: 96).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, many states had passed anti-gambling, anti-prostitution and other laws thought desirable by the reformers. However, the problem moralists found was that few city governments consistently directed their police to enforce these laws. Many politicians, in effect, licensed vice, enabling entrepreneurs to build up bookmaking, lottery and policy syndicates, operate strings of gambling houses, or run houses of prostitution. Enforcement in some parts of the cities was purely for show or to crack down on those operators who failed to pay enough protection money. What had once been 'organized evil' now involved systematic lawbreaking and began now to be relabeled as 'organized crime' (Woodiwiss 2001: 177).

By the end of the nineteenth century, moralists could see that their efforts had thus far failed. Evidence of moral decline was everywhere, especially in the cities. New styles of clothing, 'suggestive' dances, 'titillating' movies and 'salacious' stage productions were all examples of the 'deadly moral poison' sapping America's strength or the 'germs of licentiousness' contaminating national morality. Illegal gambling houses, from the lavish to the most basic, operated in every city, and turned 'promising young men' into 'slothful idlers'. The use of alcohol and other drugs was said to have reached 'epidemic' proportions. Books were turned out predicting degradation and disgrace for the country's youth if exposed to liquor, in particular. Boys were doomed to be profligates and degenerates and girls would inevitably meet with seduction and 'white slavery' (Woodiwiss 2001: 171).

Anthony Comstock, the most prominent moralist of the 1870s and 1880s, used rhetoric that was designed to spread panic amongst prospective wealthy donors to an organization he founded called the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice (NYSSV). He made apocalyptic references to 'the importation of criminals from other lands' (Beisel 1990: 51), and elaborated on these arguments when he turned his society's attention to gambling. The essence of his argument was that gambling endangered upper-class children and rendered them unfit to take their parents' place as leaders of business and society and that this form of organized crime was being allowed to flourish because it was protected by local politicians (Beisel 1990: 49).

Frightened by the apocalyptic, racist and xenophobic messages of moral propagandists such as Beecher and Comstock, anti-vice, anti-drug and anti-alcohol societies lobbied energetically at local, state and national levels to dispel half measures involving the regulation of demoralizing activities such as gambling, commercialized sex, the drinking of liquor and recreational drug use, and focused on a crusade to eradicate these activities completely. By the beginning of the twentieth century, moralists had the finance and organization, as well as the commitment, to persuade and cajole enough people to ensure that virtue and abstinence became official policy at every level of American government (Woodiwiss 2001: 172).

All of the campaigns that successfully resulted in federal prohibition policies had their own panics and folk devils. During the ‘white slave’ hysteria, for example, when large numbers of American women were thought to be at risk of kidnapping and enforced prostitution at the hands of foreign criminals, a congressional committee claimed that ‘The vilest practices are brought here from continental Europe’; foreigners were corrupting America with ‘the most bestial refinements of depravity’. These unspeakable acts were sure to bring about the ‘moral degradation’ of America (Friedman 1993: 326). To emphasize the need for a federal response, there were claims about the centralization of white slavery; there existed, one politician claimed, ‘an organized society’ that existed both in the United States and abroad, ‘formed for no other purpose than to exploit innocent girls for immoral purposes’. The panic subsided after the passage of the Mann Act in 1910 that prohibited the transporting of women over state lines for ‘immoral purposes’. The Act, however, failed to make more than a marginal impact on the forcing of women into prostitution. No centralized white slave syndicate was ever discovered.

Similarly, contemporary campaigners for the prohibition of alcohol lumped the many thousands of breweries, distilleries and saloons together and refer to them as the ‘Liquor Power’, which was, according one prominent Presbyterian, the ‘most fiendish, corrupt and hell-soaked institution that ever crawled out of the slime of the eternal pit’ (Woodiwiss 2001: 174–5). Campaigns against opium raised the specter of ‘devious’ and violent Chinese ‘Tong’ gangs. Concern about the ‘seductive poison’ would extend far beyond American borders, with anti-narcotic campaigners feeling it was their moral duty to help the Chinese people to rid themselves of the ‘opium menace’ and thus putting themselves in the vanguard of the international drug prohibition movement, which will be discussed later (Bewley-Taylor 1999: 17–18).

Moral Panics and Organized Crime Control at City Level

The most significant moral crusader at city level at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was a New York clergyman, the Reverend Charles Parkhurst, who first attracted press attention when he argued in a sermon that New York’s ‘thoroughly rotten’ moral climate was the by-product of the ‘slimy, oozy soil of Tammany Hall’ (then the city’s Democratic party organization) and its police—‘the dirtiest, crookedest, and ugliest lot of men every combined in semi-military array outside of Japan and Turkey’ (Boyer 1978: 165). During Parkhurst’s ensuing campaigns against Tammany Hall, variations on the phrase ‘organized crime’ began to be used more frequently. In 1895, for example, he described a police captain in New York who tolerated illegal gambling operations as one factor in ‘a colossal organization of crime’. Parkhurst was by then President of the New York Society for the Prevention of Crime, which described itself in its 1896 annual report as ‘A small, compact body, completely organized for offensive operations and thoroughly committed to a policy of exposing and breaking down official misconduct and organized crime’ (New York Society for the Prevention of Crime 1896). This was perhaps the first time reformers had used the phrase ‘organized crime’ in a way that gave it a distinct meaning—gambling and prostitution operations that were protected by public officials (Gilfoyle 1986: 643).

There was undoubtedly substance to the charges of Parkhurst, and others—politicians and police had been protecting different forms of organized criminality since the

beginning of the Republic. But, they misrepresented the degree of centralized control in vice operations (Gilfoyle 1992: 256–7). When, eventually, old-style machines like Tammany disappeared from the American political scene, other informal and fluid relationships ensured that prostitution and other protected criminal activity did not.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the hopes of reformers for an end to old-style political machine rule had been to a great extent realized. Civil service and other progressive reforms had reduced the number of jobs, contracts and other favours that had once been at the disposal of the machines. Control over the police departments, district attorneys, municipal judges and other public officials went from local politicians to city and state agencies, and the machines were no longer able to count on the support of the more established groups of immigrants and had little to offer the millions of recent arrivals amongst African Americans, Mexicans and other groups (Fogelson 1977: 168–9).

However, reform did not stop people's demand for gambling, drugs and other vices; it simply required changes in the organization of crimes created by the morality laws. Where, once, pimps, prostitutes, drug dealers, gamblers and gangsters had needed to deal with local politicians as intermediaries between themselves and the law enforcement and criminal justice systems, now they simply dealt directly with specialist police squads or relied on lawyers for more discreet deals within the court system (Blumberg 1971: 45–78; Williams 1971). Progressive reformers like Parkhurst had thus helped change the structure of some types of organized vice crime activity without making a significant impact on its extent. By the middle of the twentieth century, as we shall see, this was becoming a source of alarm for a new generation of moral crusaders and opinion makers and the dominant conceptualization of organized crime changed radically.

Moral Panics and Organized Crime Control at National Level

America's return to prosperity during the Second World War boosted illegal as well as legal businesses after the lean years of the 1930s. Gambling, in particular, enjoyed a wartime and post-war boom. Gallup polls indicated that 45 per cent of the population gambled in 1945 and this rose to 57 per cent in 1950, in spite of the fact that almost every state had laws prohibiting gambling. Off-track bookmaking and slot-machine gambling flourished in most cities, bookmakers made arrangements to operate in factories, offices and building sites, and slot machine distributors ensured that thousands of private clubs allowed their members the opportunity to play on what were known as 'devil machines' to moral crusaders. Illegal casinos operated in many areas around the country. Moral crusaders therefore had to respond to a situation that closely resembled the Prohibition era, since gambling, like drinking alcohol, was a socially acceptable activity (Woodiwiss 1988: 95).

The fact that the gambling laws, like the dry laws, were plainly not being enforced produced some calls for liberalization and regulation and arguments were made for control systems that, to an extent, would replace illegal enrichment with tax revenue. But the proponents of legalized gambling lacked the immense financial support that pushed through the repeal of Prohibition. Business interests were either uninterested, or they accepted the anti-gambling arguments of the Citizen's Crime Commission movement, which had, in many ways, replaced the more overtly moralistic reform organizations of the Comstock/Parkhurst era. The essence of these arguments was that

the laws prohibiting gambling were right and necessary, not only because gambling was immoral, but also because it took money away from the regular channels of trade. Anti-gambling proponents therefore had to suggest ways to enforce the laws. The solutions they decided would require increased federal commitment, involving the enactment of more laws and the establishment of a federal law enforcement capacity that was capable of succeeding where local authorities had failed. People had to be prevented from indulging in the activities that filled the coffers of the 'underworld'. The argument, as expressed by a senate committee, went as follows: '... the \$2 horse bettor and the 5-cent numbers player are not only suckers because they are gambling against hopeless odds, but they also provide the moneys which enable underworld characters to undermine our institutions' (US Congress 1951: 6). A voice-over narrator made the same point at the end of the 1950 film, *Hoodlum Empire*: 'Only an innocent \$2 bet you say! Well it's just as innocent as the germs in an epidemic. Spreading the worst kind of disease. The civic disease of criminals with a \$8,000,000,000 racket. Corrupting politicians, buying protection, fostering crime ... all with your \$2' (Wilson 2005: 75). The title of a 1961 book put the case more succinctly: *A \$2 Bet Means Murder* (Cook 1961).

The Kefauver Committee's strategy presented the problem of gambling as a threat to the nation, gambling fever was said to be infecting children in particular, and a 'folk devil' that would have national and even international significance was produced. A collective national response was then demanded and the repercussions on society and on the policing of organized crime were serious and long-lasting. The impact of the Kefauver Committee hearings and reports were immeasurably increased by the fact that the proceedings were televised in several cities, finishing with a 'grand finale' in New York. The hour-by-hour television coverage of the proceeding, relayed to other large cities, reached an estimated audience of between 20 and 30 million and was later said to mark television's coming of age in America.

The moralistic tone of the New York hearings was established early on by Senator Charles Tobey, who, like Comstock before him, played on the anxieties of parents. Responding to earlier testimony from a prosecutor that drugs had been sold outside some of the city's school and colleges, Tobey ended one day's hearings with the following:

What bothers me most about your splendid testimony this afternoon is your allusion to the condition of the school children of Brooklyn, where they are corrupted by these emissaries of evil, these ambassadors of evil, and they begin to think that these things are justified and right and that these things are the norm in America, and they grow up to the stage of adolescence and then become young men and women, and then they have a family life, and this family life has a lower standard of morals (Woodiwiss 1988: 123)

In the following days, viewers were then presented with an impressive array of notable crime figures, most of whom pleaded the Fifth Amendment and refused to answer questions on the grounds that it would tend to incriminate them. Frank Costello, described in one of the Committee's reports as 'the most influential underworld leader in America', however, chose to answer the questions. By doing so, he inadvertently elevated his status as the most prominent 'Mr Big' of the time by objecting to having his face filmed. The television people were thus told to avoid filming Costello's face but not his hands; viewers saw the gambler's nervous, sometimes twitching, hand movements, which, combined with the hoarse whispering voice of a man who had had a throat operation, and the press

build-up to his testimony, would have suggested immense conspiratorial power. The impressions left by Costello's appearance were far more significant than the testimony itself, which consisted of little more than the self-justifications of a beleaguered gambling entrepreneur with a criminal past and corrupt associates.

While memories of Costello's dramatic appearance were still fresh, the Committee released its *Third Interim Report*, which famously asserted that America's organized crime problems were of Sicilian origin and that 'a nationwide crime syndicate known as the Mafia' dominated gambling and other forms organized crime in America. Contrary to its Italian conspiracy conclusions, however, its investigations had found men of several ethnic groups at the head of criminal syndicates around the nation, and contact and cooperation between different ethnic groups. The networks of illegal activities that the Committee described always depended upon official sanction. As Costello himself had pointed out, 'I don't operate anywhere I am not invited' (US Congress 1950: 27). Much crime was undoubtedly organized but it was never centralized by a conspiracy outside of mainstream society (Woodiwiss 1988: 112–14).

To emphasize the scale of the problem, the committee also asserted that the 'take' from gambling in America was worth \$20 billion. This estimate was later investigated by the economist Max Singer, who found that the 'figure was picked from a hat'. A Kefauver staff member said 'We had no real idea of the money spent. The California Crime Commission said \$12 billion. Virgil Peterson of Chicago said \$30 billion. We picked \$20 billion as the balance of the two' (Singer 1971: 3–9). As we shall see, mythical numbers continued to play a part in moral panics that have influenced policing and criminal justice reform (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994: 43–5).

The Kefauver Committee recommended that the federal government must establish a central role in the fight against organized crime. Given that organized crime was by then mainly associated with gambling operators and drug traffickers, the committee was effectively arguing the case for increased federal involvement in the enforcement of the gambling and drug laws. Kefauver and his colleagues had thus set an important process in motion. The federal government would be more and more committed to the policing of illegal markets—a task that was proving to be beyond the capacity of local administrations.

Despite its inadequacies, the Kefauver report became a significant source for scores of media commentators, adding the illusion of weight and coherence to the idea of organized crime in America being dominated by a singular and alien organization. Popular crime non-fiction writers now had a formula when writing about US organized crime. The trick was to describe briefly how a secret criminal brotherhood developed in feudal Sicily was transplanted to urban America at the end of the nineteenth century, and took over organized crime in the whole country. As 'proof', all editors and publishers required were unrelated anecdotes about Italian-American gangsters, mostly from New York, with the narrative livened up with words like 'godfather', 'tentacles' and 'omerta', the last being the Mafia's code of silence. The moralism was overt in such work as Ed Reid's *Mafia* (1952). 'The conspiracy', he wrote, was 'history's greatest threat to morality', and was 'the principal fount of all crime in the world, controlling vice, gambling, the smuggling and sale of dope, and other sources of evil' (Woodiwiss 1988: 144). The proposed solution in Reid's work and many others was also overt: a righteously indignant public must force the Government to get tougher on the immorality that was sustaining the alien conspiracy.

As Smith documented (Smith 1975), following Kefauver, a law enforcement and popular consensus on the validity of the Mafia conspiracy theory of organized crime was reached by the end of the 1950s. Academic support, however, had to wait until the late 1960s. The criminologist Donald Cressey produced a report for President Johnson's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice that he later revised and expanded into a book (Cressey 1969). Cressey joined popular commentators in tracing the origins of organized crime in America to foreign sources and in claiming that organized crime was effectively dominated by a single centralized conspiracy that constituted a national security threat. This conspiracy consisted of a nationwide alliance of 24 tightly knit criminal Mafia 'families', whose 'bosses' and 'captains' gave directions for 'soldiers' and 'buttonmen' to follow. Cressey decided to follow the lead of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and use the term 'Cosa Nostra' rather than 'Mafia' to describe the organization that, he asserted, 'in fact controls all but an insignificant proportion of organized crime in the United States' (Cressey 1969: 8–21). Johnson's crime Commission accepted the Cressey/Salerno perspective on organized crime and recommended a complete package of laws to combat the Cosa Nostra (President's Commission 1967: 187–209), which amounted to a blueprint for developments in US organized crime control contained in the Omnibus Crime Control Act of 1968 and the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970.

In 1969, Richard Nixon added presidential weight to the Mafia conspiracy theory to support new legislation that increased federal jurisdiction over criminal activity to unprecedented levels. In 1970, Congress supported this line and passed the Organized Crime Control Act. This and other legislation gave federal law enforcement and intelligence agencies an unprecedented array of powers—they could now more easily use wiretapping and eavesdropping devices, cultivate informants, secure convictions that would result in long sentences and seize the financial assets of their targets. This amounted to a major alteration in constitutional guarantees, which had to be justified by the belief that organized crime was a massive, well integrated, international conspiracy. The balance in America was tipped towards a much stronger, far richer and far less accountable policing presence (Block and Chambliss 1981: 193–217).

Since 1970, the FBI's concentration on the 20-plus Italian-American crime syndicates that undoubtedly existed has shown that many Italian-American gangsters swore blood oaths of allegiance, made inter-state or regional alliances to try and regulate competition, and used murder and intimidation to protect territory, markets and operations. But the evidence has also shown the limits of Mafiosi power and the non-existence of a centralized national underworld power structure. Even James B. Jacobs, a law professor in the Cressey tradition, who has written extensively and favourably on federal government campaigns against Italian-American gangsters, acknowledged that there was little or no evidence of the existence of a ruling national commission of mafia bosses. 'It is best to think of Cosa Nostra,' he writes, 'as a *mélange* of locally based crime families, each of which has exclusive jurisdiction in its territory' (Jacobs 1999: 9).

Within the first year of her husband, Ronald Reagan, taking office as President in 1981, Nancy Reagan had placed drugs and the threat they posed to America's children at the centre of the new administration's domestic concerns. In November, she gave an interview to the popular television show *Good Morning America* to announce that her best role as First Lady was 'to try to bring public awareness, to the problems of drug abuse'. From then, her anti-drug crusade took her to 65 American cities and helped to add the

phrase ‘Just say no’ to the national vocabulary. In April 1985, she internationalized her campaign by inviting the wives of world leaders to attend a White House conference on youth drug abuse. In October of the same year, she hosted a larger group of the wives of international leaders at the United Nation’s 40th anniversary celebrations. From then on, she continued to press for an international drug prohibition regime, notably when she gave strong backing at a meeting of the UN General Assembly in 1988 for the treaty that would become the Vienna Convention against Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (National First Ladies Library 2008).

Her husband was more prone to focus on the suppliers of illegal drugs than the consumers, and, as Hawdon notes in his analysis of the role of presidential rhetoric in the creation of a moral panic, Reagan also often evoked war metaphors in his speeches. ‘Drugs’, Reagan claimed, were ‘as much a threat to the United States as enemy planes and missiles’. Hawdon’s research supported the elite-engineered model of moral panics (e.g. Bennett 1980; Edelman 1988; Hall *et al.* 1978), which argues that public opinion is shaped by political elites. The Reagan rhetoric showed that ‘if elites carefully choose their rhetorical devices, they can help stir a moral panic’ (Hawdon 2001: 419–45).

The plan, as in the case in many moral panics, was to call for collective action to highlight and destroy the ‘evil’ before it destroyed the public. ‘Drugs are bad and we’re going after them. We’ve taken down the surrender flag and run up the battle flag and we’re going to win the war on drugs Drug traffickers can run but they can’t hide’. The same month, he promised an eight-point plan intended to ‘end the drugs menace and cripple organized crime’ (Woodiwiss 1988: 200). However, it soon became apparent that the money spent implementing the plan and a policing reorganization that saw the FBI take over much drug enforcement responsibility from the DEA achieved little and, in 1984, Congress’s General Accounting Office (GAO) concluded that drug availability in America was on the increase (Woodiwiss 1988: 199–201).

By that time, President Reagan had already appointed Judge Irving Kaufman to chair a Commission to investigate the power and activities of ‘traditional organized crime’ and ‘emerging organized crime “cartels”’ (President’s Commission on Organized Crime 1983: 12–13). At the first hearing, in November 1983, Kaufman spoke of organized crime as ‘a pervasive cancer spreading throughout all levels of society’, and stressed that organized crime’s new ‘threat’ was because of ‘its sheer size’. ‘The menace,’ he continued, ‘is larger and still growing. When we consider drug trafficking alone ... we find an “industry” with sales of approximately \$80 billion—I said billion—an increase of 50 percent since 1970’ (President’s Commission on Organized Crime 1983: 4–6). He then introduced Attorney-General William French-Smith, who outlined an approach to organized crime control at national and international levels that would become firmly established over the next two decades, providing a template that would be replicated not just by the governments of other countries, including, as we shall see, the United Kingdom, but by international groups and organizations, notably the G7/8 groups of industrialized countries and the United Nations.

French-Smith began by summarizing the alien conspiracy version of American organized crime history and then articulated an explanation for failure to control organized crime that has since been repeated many times in the popular literature. The work of the Kefauver and McClellan senate committees as well as President Johnson’s Crime Commission had, he said, led to the ‘legislation and law enforcement mechanisms that have enabled the Federal Government to fight a more organized battle against

organized crime'. French-Smith implied that organized crime was something separate from mainstream America—its society, politics and economics—and that, in particular, the prohibitions of gambling and drugs in America would have been effective if the federal government had got tough earlier (President's Commission on Organized Crime 1983: 11–13).

French-Smith listed the new crime 'cartels' as follows: 'Hell's Angels, Outlaws, Pagans, Bandidos, La Nuestra Familia, Mexican Mafia, Aryan Brotherhood, Black Guerilla Family, Japanese Yakusa, Chinese Triad Societies, Israeli Mafia, and many, many, more'. 'The emergence of these groups represents,' he continued, 'a new phase in the history of organized crime. So does the fact that organized crime has now experienced its latest evolution—from national in focus to international. This event is also directly related to drug trafficking'. He concluded with a clear statement of American intent to internationalize the wars on drugs and organized crime (President's Commission on Organized Crime 1983: 12–15).

This was an early version of a claim that would soon become familiar: the Mafia, once the dominant force in US organized crime, was now being challenged by several crime 'cartels', 'emerging' amongst Asian, Latin American and other groups. As Gary Potter argues in *Criminal Organizations* (1994), this was a development of the alien conspiracy interpretation rather than an overhaul in official thinking about organized crime. The argument remained the same: forces outside of mainstream American culture threaten otherwise morally sound American institutions. Potter describes the new official consensus as the 'Pluralist' revision of the alien conspiracy interpretation (Potter 1994: 7).

The same year as the Kaufman Commission began its hearings, a study of illegal businesses by Peter Reuter challenged its core beliefs. In *Disorganized Crime* (1983), Reuter produced empirical evidence that challenged the dominant perspective on organized crime reflected by the Commission. Although the federal governments continual assertions that illegal markets were centrally organized remained at the heart of official doctrine and policy, these assertions were weakly based. The evidence that he examined on illegal gambling in New York, the area with the most numerous and established Italian-American gangsters, led Reuter to cast doubt on the whole orthodoxy (Reuter 1983: 3–13). Mafia gangsters participated in illegal markets but they did not control them.

American Government officials needed the rest of the world to accept American-inspired analyses of drugs and organized crime 'threats' and also needed to maintain the perception that American drug control and organized crime control methods work or could be made to work (Nadelmann 1993: 470). To accelerate this process, as H. Richard Friman has shown, Reagan administration officials began to implicitly link economic issues with the war on drugs. At the May 1985 Economic Summit of the Group of Seven advanced industrial countries (G-7), Reagan broadened the Summit's focus by calling for more extensive international cooperation to respond to the drug problem. The proposal led to the establishment of a group of experts to prepare a report on the issue for distribution at the next Summit in 1986. The pledge of the G-7 countries to achieve greater international cooperation against drugs facilitated the 1987 UN world conference on drug problems and an accord to conclude a new international treaty against drug trafficking. In September 1988, a G-7 task force on drug issues recommended more coordinated action against money laundering and more action internationally to facilitate the seizure of profits from the illicit drug trade. In December of the same year,

representatives of the G-7 countries turned to incorporating these recommendations into what would become the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Friman 1991: 880–2).

The Convention, which is essentially an instrument of international criminal law, has at its core Art. 3: ‘Offences and Sanctions’. As the UN Commentary to the Convention notes, the treaty deviates from the earlier drug conventions by *requiring* Parties to ‘legislate as necessary to establish a modern criminal code of criminal offences relating to various aspects of illicit trafficking and ensure that such activities are dealt with as serious offences by each State’s judiciary and prosecutorial authorities’ (United Nations 1998: 48). As such, the 1988 Convention significantly extended the scope of measures against trafficking, introduced provisions to control money laundering and seize the assets of drug traffickers, to allow for extradition of major traffickers and improved legal cooperation between countries. Although the Convention did allow for the treatment or rehabilitation of addicts as an alternative to a penal sentence, the widespread acceptance of the Convention can be seen as a significant stage in the internationalization of American drug prohibition policies (Woodiwiss and Bewley-Taylor 2005: 17–21).

By employing the rhetoric of moral panic, by stating, for example, that those drugs defined as illicit ‘pose a serious threat to the health and welfare of human beings’ (1988 Convention), the supporters of global drugs prohibition could exert considerable pressure on nations to conform to the established norms of behaviour regarding control policies. States that flouted the principles of the regime and refused or failed to abide by the norms and rules could and were labelled as deviants. They thus risked condemnation by those members of the international community who did adhere to the recognized standard of behaviour. What have been called the ‘Reputational effects’ of non-compliance were important because, by renegeing on their commitments under a regime or even deviating from the spirit of the regime, nations were likely to damage their reputation and forfeit potential future gains from cooperation (Keohane 1984: 94). The practice of linking or ‘nesting’ drug control with other issue areas made cost and cooperation important concerns. Violating a particular agreement or norm of the regime could have consequences beyond the drug issue and may affect a state’s ability to achieve goals elsewhere. States were thus willing to accept regime rules when they perceive the cost of compliance to be cheaper than non-compliance (Bewley-Taylor 1999: 171–4). By July 2005, 173 countries were Parties to the 1988 anti-drugs convention and, as a result, were required to change their codes of criminal offences and the structure of their police authorities.

Running alongside this ‘Americanization’ of international law enforcement was a developing popular literature based primarily on sources in the American law enforcement and intelligence communities that put forward a global conspiracy interpretation of the problem of drugs and organized crime and proposed solutions that were in line with those emanating from Washington.

There were, to begin with, repeated claims from the 1980s that ‘crime multinationals’ now ran the global market in illegal drugs. Short (1984), for example, in a book that accompanied a popular British television documentary series, *Crime Inc.*, repeated a claim coming from the US Drug Enforcement Administration that ‘New York’s Mafia families now import 85 percent of America’s heroin, amounting to 4.4 tons and worth many billions of dollars’ (Short 1984: 342). Sterling (1990) was even more hyperbolic, claiming that ‘Starting in 1957, a small band of criminals presumed to be operating within the

confines of a small Mediterranean island grew into a multinational heroin cartel operating around the planet'. 'Heroin', she continued, was 'the hardest drug, deadliest of all narcotic killers', and was worth 'ten times its weight in gold by 1988'; she continued, 'It was bringing in from \$212 to \$20 billion a year in the United States, \$35 billion in Italy, and another \$300 billion or so around the planet'. 'Drugs alone', she claimed, made the Mafia 'the twentieth richest "nation" in the world—richer than 150 sovereign states' (Sterling 1990: 11–45). Increased international cooperation was her implied solution to the threat of the octopus: 'The head and the limbs would all have to be chopped all at once. This would take an act of iron will such as the international community has rarely displayed. It could happen but there isn't much time' (Sterling 1990: 314).

The American intelligence community thought highly enough of the Mafia conspiracy theorist to invite Sterling to a Washington, DC, conference of high-level American law enforcement and intelligence community personnel in September 1994. It can be suggested that Sterling was invited because her outlandish theories closely reflected those of the American intelligence community's at the time. The speeches delivered involved not only jumps from the undeniable to the unbelievable, but also mythical statistics and claims that the future of civilization was threatened by outside forces. The executive summary of the conference set the tone:

The dimensions of global organized crime present a greater international security challenge than anything Western democracies had to cope with during the cold war. Worldwide alliances are being forged in every criminal field from money laundering and currency counterfeiting to trafficking in drugs and nuclear materials. Global organized crime is the world's fastest growing business, with profits estimated at \$1 trillion. (Raine and Cilluffo 1994: ix)

The keynote speaker at the conference, FBI Director Louis Freeh, stressed that 'the ravages of transnational crime' were the greatest long-term threat to the security of the United States and warned that the very fabric of democratic society was at risk everywhere. CIA Director, R. James Woolsey, followed up by noting that 'the threats from organized crime transcend traditional law enforcement concerns. They affect critical national security interests ... some governments find their authority besieged at home and their foreign policy interests imperiled abroad'. Woolsey also made claims that paralleled Sterling's: 'Organized crime is a multibillion dollar transnational business. Profits from drug trafficking alone—some \$200 billion to \$300 billion a year—dwarf the GNP of virtually all the 170 nations in the international system' (Sterling 1990: 135).

Two months after the Washington conference, the United Nations held the World Ministerial Conference on Organized Transnational Crime in Naples. It is clear from studies of the background to this Conference that it represented a coincidence of interests between the United States, the member states of the European Union and the internal politics of the United Nations itself (Edwards and Gill 2003: 8–9; see also Elvins 2003: 28–41). It also provided an international forum for the global conspiracy theory of organized crime.

The UN conference was attended by high-level governmental representatives from 138 countries. The rhetoric and analysis were essentially the same as those employed by Freeh, Woolsey and Sterling. According to the United Nations' press release, participants at the conference recognized the growing threat of organized crime, with its 'highly destabilizing and corrupting influence on fundamental social, economic and political

institutions'. This represented a challenge demanding increased and more effective international cooperation. 'The challenge posed by transnational organized crime,' the document continued, 'can only be met if law enforcement authorities are able to display the same ingenuity and innovation, organizational flexibility and cooperation that characterize the criminal organizations themselves (United Nations 1994a).

UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, set the tone of the conference and gave probably the best exposition of the new conventional wisdom on organized crime with his opening address: 'In Europe, in Asia, in Africa and in America, the forces of darkness are at work and no society is spared ...' It 'scoffs at frontiers,' he continued, 'and becomes a universal force.' Traditional crime organizations have, in a very short time, succeeded in adapting to the new international context to become veritable crime multinationals. It 'undermines the very foundations of the international democratic order. Transnational crime poisons the business climate, corrupts political leaders and undermines human rights. It weakens the effectiveness and credibility of institutions and thus undermines democratic life'. He concluded with what was already becoming a familiar call to international action.

Boutros-Ghali was followed by series of speakers who were concerned with 'a new monster ... the Anti-State' 'armies of evil', who could be defeated 'only by international collaboration'. No region of the world 'was safe from the large criminal networks' (United Nations 1994b). There was no significant dissent from this line at the conference and many speakers at Naples implicitly or explicitly emphasized the success of United States-approved organized crime control strategies.

The main result of the conference was to put the elaboration of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) at the centre of discussion. This process culminated in December 2000, when representatives of more than a 100 countries met in Palermo, Sicily, to sign up to the Convention in principle, and 23 September 2003, when it came into force, having been ratified by the required number of states. Nations that ratify the UNTOC Convention commit themselves to the type of American measures deemed to be effective in combating organized crime by the United Nations.

While it does not deal exclusively with the issue of proscribed drugs, the linkages between what is defined as organized crime and the illegal drug trade ensures a coincidence of purpose with regard to illicit trafficking and the 1988 Convention. Beyond this, the process of conceptualizing transnational organized crime in the run up to the Palermo Convention deployed similar semantic techniques to that of the global drug control regime. In this way, it was able to rally widespread support from the international community. The language of universal threat so evident at the 1994 World Ministerial Conference on Organized Crime is remarkably similar to that found in various UN drug policy documents (Woodiwiss and Bewley-Taylor 2005: 27-8).

Reefer to SOCA: The British Way of Moral Panic

In 1929, the political commentator, Walter Lippmann, made a comparison between American and European responses to drinking alcohol, gambling and drug taking in his essay, 'The Underworld as Servant', that clearly found the European models superior. America's frequent gangland shootings and corruption scandals, he argued, made it clear that the machinery of US law enforcement did not work as it should. 'We find

ourselves,' he continued, 'revolving in a circle of impotence in which we outlaw intolerantly the satisfaction of certain persistent human desires and then tolerate what we have prohibited. Thus we find ourselves accepting in their lawless forms the very things which in lawful forms we repudiate, having in the end to deal not only with the vices we intended to abolish but with the additional dangers which arise from having turned over their exploitation to the underworld.' By contrast, the European tradition was 'tolerant of human appetites, and far too worldly to seek to condemn absolutely what it seems impossible to abolish' (Lippmann 1967: 63–4).

The policing of organized crime in Britain was always a relatively low-key and essentially local affair (Levi 2004). With the exception of the occasional moral panic concerning vice (Greenslade 2008) or American-style 'gangsterism' (Hobbs 1988: 46–61), Lippmann's observations held true for Britain, at least until the latter part of the twentieth century. Instead of prohibiting the sale of alcohol, for example, the British Government laid down restrictions on the time and places where it could be bought. Gambling was also regulated in ways intended to discourage it. Similarly, when there was awareness of the use of drugs such as heroin, cocaine and cannabis, the response was either to make the use of these drugs a public health issue or, more usually, to turn a blind eye to behaviour so long as it only harmed the consumer. As a result, although Britain had a long history of moral panics, these had little influence on the policing of organized crime and the control of drugs until the second half of the twentieth century.

As Hall *et al.* (1978) show, when two or more activities converge, moral panics become especially powerful. 'The net effect is amplification, not in the real events being described but in their threat potential for society' (Hall *et al.* 1978: 223). As a consequence, suspicion of drug use increased when it was linked with immigration and the presence of resented minorities.

Consider this excerpt from a mid-1950s issue of the *Sunday Graphic*, for example:

Detectives on this assignment are agreed that never have they had experience of a crime so vicious, so ruthless, so unpitiful and so well organised

The victims are teenage British girls and to a lesser extent teenage British youths. The racketeers are 90 percent coloured men from the West Indies and the West Coast of Africa.

The insidious vice was the cannabis or 'reefer' allegedly being peddled by the black men. The reporter then quoted from a girl called Jesse to impress upon the readers the real danger of black/white drug-induced dance floor intimacy in West End clubs: 'The days will come when this country will be all mixtures if we don't watch out' (Tyler 1985: 6).

Despite the racism and cynical moral outrage, the story did contain an element of truth. By the 1960s, more people, and, in particular, more young people, were using drugs like cannabis, as well as heroin and cocaine, for recreational purposes, and there was a much noted rise in the number of cases of heroin addiction. Newspapers turned out a litany of drug horror stories, accompanied by explicit or implicit demands for a harder line against all illicit drug use (Young 1971).

On 27 November 1984, the *Daily Mirror* put itself in the vanguard of a new heroin panic, clearly playing on the fears of parents. The front page of its 'Shock Issue' on 'Heroin: The Scourge' consisted of a half-page picture of a baby, next to a syringe and a Chinese dragon, with the headline 'Baby Gavin: Heroin Addict'. The next day, the

headline was ‘Drugs: Fightback!’, which included a report that the then prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, had ordered ‘an instant Government inquiry into drug abuse yesterday after seeing the *Daily Mirror* shock issue on heroin’.

In 1985, the House of Commons all-party home affairs committee issued a report based partly on the lessons they said they had learned from a 10-day ‘fact-finding’ trip to the United States. The rhetoric that accompanied this report was remarkably close to the rhetoric of American anti-drug crusaders and there was little or no acknowledgement that the ‘British System’ of drug control was a feasible alternative to American prohibition-based policy. The committee members declared war on drugs, warning that drug abuse was ‘the most serious peacetime threat to our national well-being’, and the committee’s chairman, Sir Edward Gardner, added ‘Every son and daughter of every family in the country is at risk from this terrible epidemic’ (Gavan 1985). He was paraphrasing President Richard Nixon, who declared his own war on drugs in July 1969 with the claim that drug abuse had become a ‘serious national threat to the personal health and safety of millions of Americans’, and had added that every son and daughter was at risk (Woodiwiss 1988: 221–2). The measures the British committee recommended to combat drugs were all American-inspired, including bringing in the Navy and Royal Air Force to intercept suspected drug ships and confiscating the proceeds of drug traffickers (Hencke 1985). In August 1985, Prime Minister Thatcher also closely followed President Reagan’s example by visiting the customs area at Heathrow airport accompanied by television and press cameras and repeating Reagan’s warning to traffickers: ‘We are after you. The pursuit will be relentless. We shall make your life not worth living’ (Woodiwiss 1988: 222).

In this emotive atmosphere, as had long been the case in the United States, any efforts to have an informed and open-minded debate on the best way to approach drug control were met with a concerted and negative response. In September 1985, for example, Dr David Marjot, an experienced treatment centre consultant, told medical journalists that as de facto prohibition had failed to control the use of heroin by addicts, there was a need to consider other ways of dealing with the problem. His remarks were roundly criticized as ‘grotesque and fatheaded’ (Spear 2002: 304–5).

At the same time, new types of drug-related stories began to appear in the media, not only the familiar appalled reaction to the sordid devastation of the lives of addicts. Britain now had its own drug ‘barons’, ‘czars’ and ‘Mr Bigs’, seizures were reported not just in weight but in more impressive ‘estimated street values’, and groups of criminals were now more likely to be described as ‘armies’, ‘corporations’ or national security ‘threats’.

The *Daily Mail* announced a particularly frightening folk devil to its readers on 28 December 1987 with the headline ‘Black Mafia in Gang War’. It claimed that police throughout Britain had been sent a secret report ‘warning of the threat to law and order from the new crime syndicate called the Yardies’. The report described the Yardies as an ‘embryo organisation’ with tentacles spreading to many parts of the United Kingdom and affecting, in the main, the criminal elements of the West Indian community. ‘The most disturbing aspect of the Yardies,’ the *Mail* concluded, ‘concerns the future, namely when they have achieved—and there appears to be nothing certainly at present, to prevent them—their aim of total domination of the aforesaid community, will they turn their attention to the domination of all criminal activities, irrespective of who controls them’ (Gardner 1987).

The source given by the *Mail* was the Scotland Yard-based National Drugs Intelligence Unit and much of the more alarmist rhetoric on the issue of organized crime that has

followed since emanated from that organization or its successor, the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS).

The National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) was formed in 1992, amalgamating various regional and national intelligence units, and maintaining national indices in relation to categories of criminal activity such as counterfeit currency, drug trafficking, money laundering, football hooliganism, organized crime, paedophilia, kidnapping and extortion. This was Britain's first centralized formal policing acknowledgement of organized crime, which, until then, had been dealt with on a local or regional basis (see Hobbs and Dunnighan 1999).

The formation of the non-operational NCIS was initially criticized for its lack of accountability (Burrell 1996), and was typified by fierce in-fighting amongst law enforcement agencies (Dunnighan and Hobbs 1996). With an annual budget of £31.8 million and employing 562 staff (drawn from the police service, HM Customs and Excise, the civil service and other law enforcement and intelligence agencies), NCIS was tasked with the provision of strategic threat analyses on changing trends and patterns in organized and serious criminal activities, which, according to the organizations' early outputs, were of an increasingly global nature. Early NCIS threat concentrated upon Triads, Yardies, Russians, Colombians, Italians and Turks (NCIS 1993*a*; 1993*b*). Identifying Aliens as the principal organized crime threat conveniently excuses British society from taking responsibility for its own maladies, and so conforms to a mythological version of globalization (Ferguson 1992), that is little more than a reworking of mass society rhetorics intersected with jingoism (Hobbs 1998).

In 1993, for example, NCIS held a conference at the Police College, Bramshill, organized jointly with the University of Chicago's Office of International Criminal Justice, which appropriated large amounts of United States-style organized crime control rhetoric. The most reported speaker at the conference was David Veness, Deputy Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, who told his audience that 'In five years time there is no doubt that the major threat confronting the inner cities of the United Kingdom will come from central, eastern European and Russian countries' (Kirby 1993). His remarks prompted a spate of Russian Mafia stories over the next few years. *The Observer*, for example, concluded the following, in an article entitled 'Russian "mafia" invade Britain': 'Russia is perfectly placed to become the vast new conduit for drugs. This year Western law enforcement agencies have tracked a consignment of acetic anhydride—the precursor which condenses raw opium into more compact more easily shipped heroin—from a German chemical factory to the poppy fields of Afghanistan.' Moral panic was most clearly illustrated by the last sentence: 'The children of the West are about to pay back the capital on the mafia's dirty Russian money, with interest' (Sweeney *et al.* 1996: 16.7). Concerns about a new red-organized crime menace were picked up by politicians, particularly Tony Blair, then Shadow Home Secretary, when, in 1994, he noted the 'enormous' police concern about the former Soviet Union. He said that 'this growing menace' needed greater coordinated action at the European level (Travis 1994).

Towards the end of the 1990s, claims about a centralized Russian mafia began to diminish, after, perhaps coincidentally, Russia had joined the now G-8 groups of nations and was making its own commitment to international norms of organized crime control. NCIS, in its 2000 *UK Threat Assessment from Serious and Organised Crime*, stated that 'Judging from current intelligence, the United Kingdom is not facing an "invasion" by a "red mafia"', without acknowledging its own contribution to the past exaggeration of the menace.

Discourse on organized crime at high government levels had changed by the end of the 1990s. The Birmingham G8 Summit, for example, signalled a change from an emphasis on the threat of super-criminal organizations to an emphasis on the threat of certain kinds of criminal activities. Its declaration highlights how transnational organized crime is now understood by the dominant industrial nations:

Globalisation has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in transnational crime. This takes many forms, including trafficking in drugs and weapons; smuggling of human beings; the abuse of new technologies to steal, defraud and evade the law; and the laundering of the proceeds of crime. Such crimes pose a threat not only to our own citizens and their communities, through lives blighted by drugs and societies living in fear of organised crime; but also a global threat which can undermine the democratic and economic basis of societies through the investment of illegal money by international cartels, corruption, a weakening of institutions and a loss of confidence in the rule of law. To fight this threat, international cooperation is indispensable. (Scherrer 2008)

Statements by NCIS officers soon began to reflect this changed rhetoric and also began to reflect an updated variation on the '\$2 bet means murder' argument, discussed earlier. Roger Gaspar, director of intelligence at NCIS, told *BBC News Online* in 2001, for example, that 'Organised criminality underpins at a very high level a lot of the criminality that goes on in this country. It is the medium by which drugs are available in local communities, it is the medium by which cigarettes and alcohol which have evaded the proper duties are made available in local communities, it is the means by which illegal immigration takes place in growing numbers' (BBC News 2001).

NCIS-sourced news articles also continued to emphasize the 'foreignness' of new threats. In November 2002, for example, the *Times Online* announced that NCIS was warning that 'Albanian gangs are about to make violent inroads into Britain's underworld', before claiming that 'The gangs already run most of the country's off-street prostitution' and were about to challenge the Turkish gangsters 'who run the trade in heroin' (Tendle 2002).

By the beginning of the following year, concerns about foreign gangsters, and, in the wake of the 2001 World Trade Center bombing, foreign terrorists, were being mixed up in a popular press-inspired panic involving those seeking asylum in Britain. The *Daily Mail* announced that Britain was a 'haven' for 'Albanian gangsters, Kosovan people smugglers and Algerian terrorists'. The *Daily Express* reproduced 20 of its front pages on the subject with the headline 'We Told You So'. *The Sun* had a daily 'Asylum Madness' campaign, which it announced had 385,000 readers signed up to its petition: 'I call upon Prime Minister Tony Blair to protect Britain before it is too late' (Toynbee 2003).

The Government's proposed response to these concerns and the 'threat' of organized crime was outlined in a White Paper published in March 2004, *One Step Ahead: A 21st Century Strategy to Defeat Organised Crime*, which elaborated on the new themes in organized crime control rhetoric. 'Organised crime,' announced Home Secretary David Blunkett, 'is big business. It causes untold harm of our streets, damage to our communities and nets billions of pounds each year for those responsible. Our world is becoming smaller through easier international travel and universal electronic communication and the 21st century will be a period of rapid and constant change with enormous potential for wealth creation, the message is not lost on terrorists and organised criminals, this White Paper describes how we plan to stay one step ahead of them' (Home Office 2004: iii).

To deliver a strategy based on reducing the profit incentive, disrupting the activities and increasing the risk for the criminals, ‘particularly the kingpins of organised crime’, the White Paper noted the establishment of the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). This new agency was to bring together the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), the National Crime Squad, the investigative and intelligence work of Her Majesty’s Customs and Excise on serious drug trafficking and the recovery of related criminal assets, and the Home Office’s responsibilities for organized immigration crime (Home Office 2004: 3–4). SOCA, described by Harfield as ‘A Paradigm Shift in British Policing’, became operational in April 2006 as an intelligence-led organization, headed by Sir Stephen Lander, an ex-Director-General of MI5, Britain’s national intelligence agency (Harfield 2006).

SOCA came into existence on 3 April 2006, employing over 4,000 staff, and with a budget of more than £400 million a year. Tony Blair launched SOCA at a press conference the same day with the announcement that the new crime-fighting agency will target the biggest criminals, the so-called “‘Mr Bigs” who make fortunes... from drugs, human trafficking, major fraud and counterfeiting, using a “sophisticated 21st century approach” (BBC News 2006). These were essentially American-inspired approaches, including the formal introduction of plea-bargaining and a system of ‘supergrasses’ into the criminal justice system in England and Wales (Travis 2006).

The previous January, in an interview with *The Independent*, Lander had revealed the new agency’s symbiotic relationship with the press by disclosing that the priorities that would be adopted by the new elite policing agency were to be partly based on the number of column inches newspapers gave to different types of organized criminality. Researchers at the Home Office had looked at about 30 newspapers, divided equally among broadsheet and compact newspapers, the tabloids and the regional press, over the previous five years. They then calculated which organized crime issues were the most pressing by measuring the column inches and number of stories devoted to each subject. Lander conceded that the method was ‘not quite right, but is probably as good as you will get’. ‘It is pretty rough and ready’, he claimed, but ‘is asking the right questions’ (Bennetto 2005).

The claim that the United Kingdom’s approach to organized crime control is asking the right questions can, however, be queried. The United Kingdom has been coming into harmony with American-inspired ideas on drug and organized crime control since the 1980s and there is no sign yet that this approach will be effective. In fact, the ‘Americanization’ of international crime control has not produced more effective crime control anywhere, according to the research of Andreas and Nadelmann. These authors contend, in *Policing the Globe* (2006), that the whole process has helped generate enormous collateral damage. Efforts to curb the smuggling of people and drugs, for example, have had particularly destructive consequences. The tightening of US and European immigration controls has promoted migrant smugglers to turn to more daring and dangerous border-crossing strategies, leading to hundreds of migrant deaths per year. The global anti-drug campaign has also generated extraordinary levels of crime, violence, corruption, disease and other ills. ‘Blaming and targeting international drug traffickers and migrant smugglers is politically easier,’ they write, ‘than dealing honestly with the enormous consumer demand for psychoactive substances and cheap migrant labor. Criminalizing and targeting the supply side of these problems masks the fact that they are first and foremost public health and labour market regulation issues’ (Andreas and Nadelmann 2006: 251).

With key policing operational targets associated with activities such as drugs and human trafficking, both suggesting some international link, a mystique more powerful and insidious than that associated with the crude racial stereotyping emerges, and it is now globalization itself, albeit in its rawest form that inspires fear (Findlay 2008: 151–2). The abstract nature of globalization enables it to be used as a highly potent vehicle for alien conspiracy-inspired moral panics, which ‘suggest that righteous citizens are being perverted, intimidated, and forced into vice by alien forces is far more palatable than suggesting that “native” demands for illicit drugs, sex, and gambling invite the creation of organised crime groups’ (Potter 1994).

Serious debate in Britain, the United States and other countries on the issue of organized crime and how best to control it has effectively been frozen by making it a national security issue (Findlay 2008). The British Government made this clear in March 2008, when it published *The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom: Security in An Interdependent World*, which was announced as the first time ‘the Government has published a single overarching strategy bringing together the objectives and plans of all departments, agencies and forces involved in protecting our national security’ (Cabinet Office 2008: 4). ‘Transnational organised crime’ featured prominently amongst the nation’s ‘Security challenges’ and the NCIS/SOCA rhetoric restated. Since the writers of the document had to balance the Government’s desire to emphasize the continuing threat of organized crime to the nation itself with its other commitment to spread American and now British-favoured organized crime control techniques, they had to produce the tortured logic of the following paragraph:

While the threat to the United Kingdom from serious and organised crime is assessed by the Serious and Organised Crime Agency to be high and causing significant damage to the United Kingdom, it is not the pervasive threat which it is in some parts of the world, where it has effectively undermined legitimate trade and government and the rule of law. However, even in the United Kingdom it is a serious and fast-moving threat. Organised crime groups are becoming more complex and professional and increasingly operate a portfolio approach, switching focus to wherever risk is lowest and profit highest. It is a threat which requires constant vigilance and a continuing effort to stay ahead of the criminals in adapting to new developments, both inside the United Kingdom and across the world. (Cabinet Office 2008: 13)

One can thus expect the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to continue performing a similar function as the US State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) and push for greater coordination in efforts to combat drugs and organized crime. Since the 1980s, American and British diplomats have been working incessantly in the pursuit of this through multilateral and bilateral forums to define what the INL calls ‘global norms for effective criminal laws’, which are effectively Western norms. Both the FCO and the INL also actively encourage foreign governments to enact and enforce laws based on these norms (US Department of State 2007, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 2007).

Concluding Remarks

Given that, according to UN statistics, all the efforts to combat drug trafficking have failed to stop increasing numbers of people across the globe using illegal drugs, it is appropriate to recall Walter Lippmann’s verdict on alcohol prohibition: ‘We find ourselves revolving in a circle of impotence in which we outlaw intolerantly the

satisfaction of certain persistent human desires and then tolerate what we have prohibited. Thus we find ourselves accepting in their lawless forms the very things which in lawful forms we repudiate, having in the end to deal not only with all the vices we intended to abolish, but with the additional dangers which arise from having turned over their exploitation to the underworld' (Lippmann 1967: 63–4).

Institutions that emerge as part of such circles of impotence are, as Garland points out, not without consequence. Institutions, he writes, 'have a way of taking on a life of their own, and outliving the meanings and motivations that led to them being set up in the first place ... continuing long after the original reasons for their creation have faded' (Garland 2001: 179). Via an analysis of the policing of organized crime, we can observe how moral panics function as vehicles for the repressive and racist governance of urban life, and for the colonization of democratic states by the penetration of political institutions. While Young (1971) did not deny the taking of drugs by young people, but stressed that the moral panic about this activity led to the establishment of drug squads, so we do not attempt to deny the existence of drug and people trafficking, and myriad other acts defined as criminal by the legislative process (Kituse and Schneider 1989: i–iv). However, loading these activities into a single category marked 'organized crime' creates a sense of threat that is far more ominous and substantial than is warranted after realistic analysis (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994: 36). The activities of 'aliens', newcomers and immigrants are particularly susceptible to moral panics related to untestable concepts such as organized crime (Balcaen *et al.* 2006), and constitutes a particular form of othering that invites participation from right-thinking political players across the political and media divide. Excluded communities become, by necessity, covert and hidden, as they are, by definition, closely linked to various global networks of kin and culture, which casts a shadow over their very existence in an environment sensitized to be suspicious when the global is cloaked in anything other than mainstream legitimate consumption. Flying in the face of evidence gleaned not from critical or oppositional sources, but from the police themselves (Gregory 2003: 78–96), the organized criminal/folk devil is presented as an external threat (Cohen 1972), even though organized criminality, albeit like the rest of contemporary capitalism with global connections, is ultimately expressed through local trading networks (Dorn *et al.* 1992: 3–59), and commercial viability is assured (cf. Hobbs 1995: Chapter 7) by the perpetual realignment of local precedents in the context of global markets (Giddens 1991: 21–2; cf. Hobbs 1995: Chapter 5).

Both the complexity and sheer normalization (Lea 2002: 135–60) of 'organized crime' are shrouded by engineering moral panics suggesting that the problems of late capitalism emanate from another, alien and essentially hostile place rather than in our own backyards (Hall *et al.* 1978: 118).

Funding

Research for this paper was part-funded by the University of the West of England

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