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Michael P. Roth's *Global Organized Crime – A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Approach* is an ambitious book which presents the many and varied manifestations of organised crime across the globe. In doing so, Roth explores the inner workings of illicit marketplaces and their principal actors in many hitherto under-researched contexts, as well as reviewing well-known and oft-told stories of organised crime.

The sheer breadth of themes captured in this single authored textbook is immediately noteworthy, with the majority of academic books in this field tending towards edited collections. Roth's book is divided into fifteen chapters which seek to take the reader on a journey across a vast number of countries and regions as he explores organised crime across time and place. The opening chapter begins by reviewing the historical and contemporary debates on definitions of organised crime with Roth acknowledging that attempts to define this complex phenomenon under a single label ultimately remain a "fool's errand" (4: 2017). Chapter 2 attempts to lay a theoretical foundation for the remainder of the book, taking the reader on a whistle-stop tour of classic criminological theories from Lombroso to the work of the Chicago School of Sociology. Oddly, this chapter omits some of the most salient theoretical work applicable to organised crime with Roth choosing not to draw upon research concerning protection theory (Gambetta 1993), the 'glocal' nature of illicit marketplaces (Hobbs 1998) or situational/logistical approaches to understanding organised crime (Kleemans and Van de Bunt 2008).

From Chapter 3 to Chapter 12, Roth reviews the development and manifestation of organised crime in a number of (predominantly) geographical contexts. In these chapters, Roth explores the maelstrom of cultural, economic, political and legal forces which have coalesced to give rise to various forms of organised crime in countries and regions as wide-ranging as Italy, the USA, Asia, Russia, Europe, Mexico, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa.

Chapters 13 and 14 discuss two themes of increasing prominence in the past decade – the alleged terrorism-organised crime nexus and the rise of digital organised crime. These two themes have accrued growing importance, at least in law enforcement and governmental rhetoric, and their inclusion here reflects this mounting concern. Certainly, any text pertaining to explore organised crime in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be incomplete without some analysis of these topic areas, particularly the ominous spectre of the Dark Web. The final chapter attempts to synthesize previous discussions by exploring historical and contemporary efforts to investigate and respond to organised crime, and the multifaceted challenges therein.

The book undoubtedly offers many positive features. Perhaps the strongest aspect is Roth's ability to situate manifestations of illicit markets within the myriad of socio-economic, political and legal contexts. In doing so, Roth consistently demonstrates how these forces blend over both long and short periods of time to create, facilitate, disrupt or destroy various forms of organised crime. The book is filled with such examples and Roth expertly deconstructs the forces of (de)industrialisation, globalisation and neoliberalism to demonstrate how and why criminal opportunities arise and disappear. The fact that Roth is able to do this time and again and in a variety of different contexts - from 16<sup>th</sup> century Japan to contemporary Nigeria – helpfully reinforces what appear to be the central messages of the book: that organised crime does not operate in an 'underworld' vacuum; that it responds to

the forces of the licit political economy; and that illicit marketplaces are rarely (if ever) created or sustained simply by the predatory motivations of nefarious criminals.

Particularly welcome in Roth's analyses are the recurring discussions of the role of women in illicit marketplaces. Crucially, these discussions go beyond simply presenting women as victims of organised crime. Chapter 2 dedicates an entire section to this theme but the book returns to this several times throughout the remaining chapters, situating the role and participation of female offenders within a range of organised criminal contexts including (but not limited to): 19<sup>th</sup> century fencing markets in New York; prostitution rings in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America; late 20<sup>th</sup> century Camorra groups in Italy; and contemporary human smuggling enterprises in Mexico. These contributions are invaluable given the paucity of research on the role of women as offenders or facilitators within illicit markets, a research gap which has only recently begun to be addressed.

The book is also filled with fascinating case studies and vignettes of both well-known, prominent figures and groups in this field as well as rarely discussed but nevertheless crucial characters in the history of organised crime. Among the latter are the likes of 'Big Mike' McDonald in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Chicago; Jack Dragna and his rise as a central figure in West Coast illicit markets in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; and the recent emergence of the Mafia Capitale in contemporary Italy. Elsewhere, the roles of countries infrequently discussed is highlighted, including the political, cultural and geographical advantages which criminals have exploited in places like Paraguay, Guatemala and elsewhere in order to facilitate global illicit trade.

Roth's attention to detail is also a positive and not insignificant feature of the text. Public discussions of organised crime have historically been hijacked and consequently dumbed down by popular media and certain governmental actors, leading to the conflation, confusion or simply incorrect use of key terminology. Roth astutely navigates around this potential pitfall via expert use of definitions and delineations. His analyses of individuals and groups such as snakeheads, vory-v-zakone, triads and yakuza (among many others) are consistently underpinned by this meticulous approach.

There are however some limitations with the book, in this reviewer's opinion at least. As alluded to above, the chapter presenting theory sits oddly within the book and focuses on what appears to be largely irrelevant criminological theory at the cost of much more salient scholarship specifically applicable to this type of criminality. Indeed, the opening two chapters display some confusing features – Chapter 1 concludes with an overview of piracy as a form of organised crime which, whilst interesting, feels like something of an abrupt shift in the chapter and may have been better placed elsewhere (and indeed the book revisits piracy at several intervals). Likewise, the exploration of definitions of gangs in Chapter 2 would seem to be a more logical fit in the opening chapter which specifically deals with contested definitions of organised crime.

Moreover, the book follows a pattern of much organised crime scholarly literature insofar as the content is heavily US-centric. Of the 15 chapters in the book, six are exclusively concerned with organised crime in America (albeit exploring this from a variety of angles) while in chapters ostensibly discussing organised crime in different geographical contexts – in Asia or

Africa for instance – Roth’s analysis often returns to how organised crime in these regions has impacted (or been impacted by) the US socio-economy. Inevitably, such an approach runs the risk of presenting a narrow world view of such a diverse landscape as organised crime and risks omitting, or at least limiting, analyses of organised crime away from an Americanised lens. A clear example of this issue comes in the book’s final chapter – here the reader is presented with an excellent critical review of American efforts to investigate and respond to organised crime. Unfortunately, there is little discussion of non-American approaches which ignores the progressive and innovative work being undertaken in countries like Italy and others to combat organised crime.

These limitations notwithstanding, Roth’s book undoubtedly represents the most comprehensive, wide-ranging and ambitious single authored textbook to attempt to tell the story of organised crime across the globe and it should prove valuable to students and teachers in this field alike.

## **References**

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