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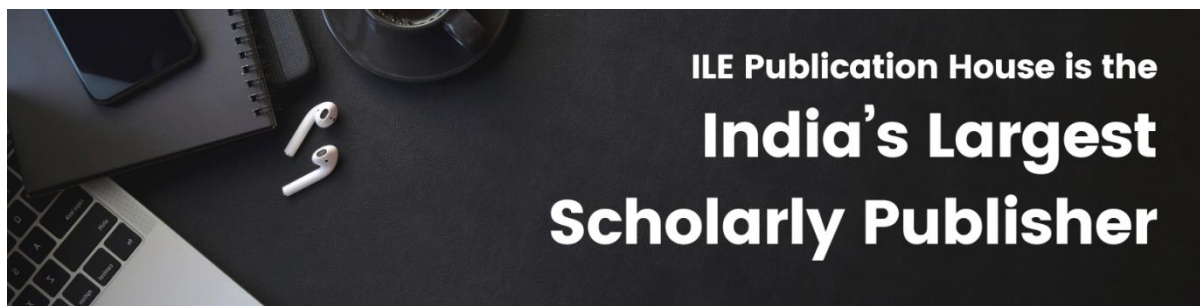
Chairman of Institute of Legal Education

No. 08, Arul Nagar, Seera Thoppu,

Maudhanda Kurichi, Srirangam,

Tiruchirappalli – 620102

Phone : +91 94896 71437 – info@iledu.in / Chairman@iledu.in



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MAFIA AND DRUG CARTLERTLE

AUTHOR – SOHAM RAVINDRA AVHAD & ANUBHAV MISHRA, STUDENTS AT KES SHRI JAYANTILAL H PATEL LAW COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

The writer discusses Mafia-style criminal organizations globally, pinpointing their names, organization, and illegal activities in Europe, Asia, North America, Latin America, and Africa. All the identified organized crime factions share similar traits. The most systematically arranged ones operate on an enterprise-like structure that aligns with a fundamental organizational chart applicable to any type of business. Organized crime syndicates can only persist if they manage that chart in a way that guarantees strict discipline and complete secrecy. These factions are driven by profit through any means, employing fear and bribery to accomplish their objectives. They engage not only in unlawful endeavors but also in legitimate businesses, penetrating and dominating various economic sectors. They aim to sway and bribe legitimate economic and political authorities at all tiers, thus endangering democracy by corrupting economics and politics for their personal gain. The vast quantities of money they generate from both illegal and legal operations render them an actual and potential threat not just within individual countries but also on an international scale. Common illicit activities fall into three categories: racketeering, extortion, kidnapping, coercive protection, and debt collection illegal service provision, which includes providing anything typically banned, regulated, or taxed by law (drugs, smuggling, gambling, usury, prostitution, pornography, migrants, and labor as well as financial crimes, counterfeiting, fraud, and cybercrime).

The term "mafia" frequently brings to mind images of obscure individuals functioning from the shadows, engaging in unlawful activities and holding considerable influence within their communities. Likewise, "drug cartels" conjure up images of ruthless groups managing the global drug trade, acting without consequences and inflicting immense damage on society. Although these two criminal organizations differ in their origins, frameworks, and objectives, they possess shared traits: a tendency toward violence, an insatiable desire for wealth and authority, and a disregard for human life and legal systems. In this article, we will examine the operations of both the mafia and drug cartels, their activities, the worldwide ramifications they cause, and the measures taken to counter them.

- Emerged in early 19th century Sicily, Italy
 - Secretive criminal group controlling businesses and politics
 - Utilized coercion and intimidation
 - Known as "Cosa Nostra," meaning "our thing"
 - Initially protected local landowners and businesses
 - Expanded into gambling, extortion, drug trafficking, and money laundering
- Italian-American Mafia
- Gained prominence in the early 20th century in the U.S.
 - Flourished during Prohibition when alcohol was illegal



- Smuggled and distributed alcohol to build power
- Rise of figures like Al Capone, notable for controlling parts of Chicago

Mafia Structure

- Operates through a hierarchical system known as a "family"
- Hierarchical roles: boss, underbosses, capos, soldiers
- Structure enables complex criminal operations with control and secrecy
- Members bound by a code of conduct emphasizing loyalty and silence (omerta)

Drug Cartels: The Global Trade in Illicit Narcotics:

While the mafia primarily functioned within local or national boundaries, drug cartels operate on a worldwide scale. A drug cartel is an organized group of criminals focused on the growing, making, and distribution of illegal substances. Cartels frequently govern extensive areas of land where they generate drugs such as cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines, and marijuana, and they have created intricate networks to smuggle these substances across borders.

The most notorious and powerful drug cartels have historically emerged from nations in Latin America, especially Colombia, Mexico, and Bolivia. The Medellín and Cali cartels in Colombia represented two of the most formidable and violent groups during the 1980s and early 1990s. Guided by leaders like Pablo Escobar and the Rodríguez Orejuela siblings, these cartels dominated the cocaine market, controlling production, distribution, and shipping routes to the United States and elsewhere.

In Mexico, the emergence of drug cartels started in the 1980s, with factions like the Sinaloa Cartel, led by Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, gaining significant influence in the international drug trade. These cartels, often heavily armed and merciless in their strategies,

oversee the creation and smuggling of drugs into the U.S., employing sophisticated tunnels, vessels, and aircraft to evade law enforcement.



Although drug cartels and the mafia share certain characteristics—such as resorting to violence and functioning outside the law—the drug cartels are typically more ruthless and frequently possess superior resources. Furthermore, cartels generally have a wider, global presence compared to the localized efforts of the mafia.

Operations of the Mafia and Drug Cartels:

Both the mafia and drug cartels depend on secrecy, loyalty, and violence to safeguard their interests and maintain dominance over their operations. The mafia's historical areas of operation encompass extortion, gambling, prostitution, and protection rackets. They exert influence over local enterprises by providing "protection" in return for a share of the profits, and they employ violence or intimidation to enforce their demands. These operations are frequently concealed behind legitimate businesses, such as restaurants, construction companies, or trucking firms, which act as fronts for illicit activities.

The mafia also has an extensive history of participating in money laundering, utilizing legitimate businesses to "clean" the earnings from illegal activities. This enables them to reinvest their profits into legitimate ventures, further boosting their power and influence.

Conversely, drug cartels are chiefly concentrated on drug trafficking. The cartels dominate the production of narcotics in areas where drugs are grown and often resort to



violent measures to safeguard these territories from rival factions. For instance, cartels may deploy military-grade weapons and strategies to fend off law enforcement or competing cartels. They also play a crucial role in smuggling drugs across borders, employing a myriad of inventive techniques to avoid detection, such as utilizing drones, submarines, and even tunnels beneath the U. S. -Mexico border.

The Impact on Society and Law Enforcement:

Both the mafia and drug cartels have had deep and enduring impacts on the societies in which they function. The mafia has historically held a prominent position in various areas of Italy, the U. S. , and even other nations globally. Their activities have produced considerable economic and social ramifications, especially in areas where they hold sway over legitimate enterprises. The mafia has fostered a culture of corruption and lawlessness, as public officials and law enforcement officers may be bribed or coerced into overlooking or endorsing criminal behavior.

Drug cartels, on the other hand, have an even wider global effect, as their activities influence not only the areas they dominate but also the nations to which they ship drugs. The cartel-related violence in Mexico, for example, has resulted in tens of thousands of fatalities, with innocent civilians frequently caught in the crossfire. In the United States, the availability of inexpensive and powerful drugs has sparked addiction, resulting in a public health crisis and overwhelming the criminal justice system. Furthermore, cartels are often associated with human trafficking, money laundering, and other types of organized crime, further intensifying the extent of their influence.

Law enforcement agencies globally, including the FBI, DEA, and Interpol, strive diligently to dismantle mafia families and drug cartels, but these entities remain remarkably resilient. In spite of numerous arrests and prosecutions, the mafia and drug cartels persist in adapting and

evolving, discovering new methods to operate beneath the radar of authorities.

History and Expansion:-

The Sinaloa Cartel was founded in the late 1980s and early 1990s, becoming powerful under Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, who skillfully avoided law enforcement. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, it had built strong networks for smuggling cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and methamphetamine into the U. S. The cartel used advanced smuggling methods, including tunnels under the U. S. -Mexico border.

The cartel grew by forming alliances with other groups like the Juárez Cartel. However, conflicts with rivals like the Tijuana Cartel and the Jalisco New Generation Cartel led to increased violence in Mexico. The Sinaloa Cartel often used brutal methods, such as beheadings, to instill fear and maintain control

Leadership Structure:-

The leadership of the cartel has changed over time. After Guzmán was arrested in 2014 and then extradited to the U. S. in 2017, Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada became an important leader. Zambada's leadership style is more decentralized than Guzmán's, giving different factions of the cartel more independence. This structure has helped the Sinaloa Cartel adjust to law enforcement challenges and internal disputes. The cartel is now divided into various factions led by different leaders, including Guzmán's sons, known as "Los Chapitos," and others like Rafael Caro Quintero. These factions compete for control over smuggling routes and territories, which causes ongoing conflicts within the cartel.

Tactics and Operations:-

The Sinaloa Cartel uses various methods to keep control of drug trafficking. These methods include bribing police, corrupting government officials, and forming alliances with local gangs. The cartel also invests in community projects to win local support, but it uses violence against enemies. Besides drug trafficking, the cartel has expanded into human trafficking and arms



smuggling. Its large distribution network connects South America, Mexico, the United States, and Canada.

Current Status :-

As of 2025, the Sinaloa Cartel is still a major player in international drug trafficking, even with challenges from other cartels and law enforcement. Arrests of important leaders have caused power struggles, resulting in violence and instability in Mexico. The cartel's future influence will depend on how well it can adjust its operations. Its history shows it is adaptable, violent, and has a complicated leadership structure that faces ongoing challenges.

The famous Medellín cartel :-

The Medellín Cartel, one of the most infamous drug cartels in history, was founded by Pablo Escobar in the early 1970s in Medellín, Colombia. The cartel's rise to prominence was swift and marked by extreme violence, corruption, and unprecedented wealth. Here are key details about the Medellín Cartel:

Founding and Early Years-

The Medellín Cartel, directed by Escobar, expanded into one of the wealthiest and most violent criminal syndicates ever. At its height, the cartel controlled about 80% of the global cocaine trade. Escobar's wealth was staggering; at the peak of his power, his net worth was thought to be in the billions. Some estimates indicate he was making close to \$420 million every week at the height of his operations.

Violence and Corruption:-

Escobar was notorious for his use of terror and violence to assert his dominance. His tactics encompassed killings, bombings, and corruption. He commanded the deaths of thousands, including law enforcement agents, judges, politicians, and reporters, to hinder anyone from opposing him. He also exerted considerable power over Colombian politics, frequently bribing officials and leveraging his wealth to influence the system. Escobar even

attempted to penetrate Colombian politics by campaigning for a position in the Colombian congress in 1982, yet his connections to the drug trade swiftly resulted in his ousting from the political arena.

About **Pablo Emilio Escobar Gaviria**:-



Earlylife:-

Born on December 1, 1949, in Rionegro, Colombia, and raised in Medellín, Escobar came from a poor family with a farmer father and a schoolteacher mother. He showed ambition early on, wanting to improve his situation. In his youth, he committed minor crimes such as selling fake diplomas and stealing cars, but later transitioned into the more profitable drug trade.

Rise to Power:

In the early 1970s, Escobar engaged in the cocaine trade. As cocaine gained popularity in the United States, Escobar took advantage of this demand by establishing a large drug empire.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, he had become the leader of the Medellín Cartel, which was accountable for providing a significant amount of the cocaine that was illegally transported into the U. S. The cartel controlled the cocaine market and was among the richest criminal organizations in history.

Wealth and Influence:

Escobar was extraordinarily rich, frequently listed among the wealthiest individuals globally. At his highest point, his net worth was assessed at roughly \$30 billion (considering inflation).



Escobar's affluence enabled him to wield considerable power and influence within Colombia. He utilized his fortune to bribe politicians, law enforcement, and even the military.

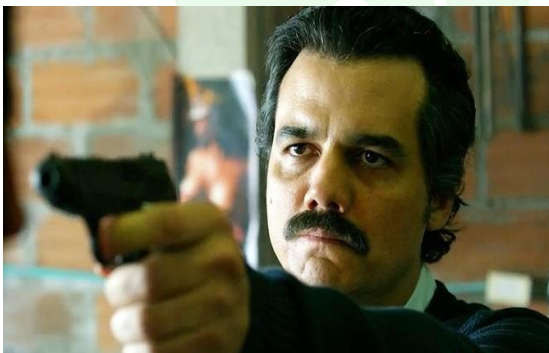
He possessed many properties, such as Hacienda Nápoles, an enormous estate featuring a private zoo and opulent amenities.

Political Ambitions:

Escobar sought to engage in politics, thinking it would provide him with safety and legitimacy. In 1982, he was chosen as an alternate representative for Colombia's Congress. However, his time in politics was brief after his illegal activities came to light.

Escobar's wish to shape Colombian politics intensified as he aimed to stop the extradition of Colombian citizens to the United States, where he was a fugitive. This resulted in his outright conflict with the Colombian government.

Violence and Terrorism:



Escobar grew his empire through extreme violence, using bombings, assassinations, and massacres to intimidate opponents and silence dissent. His cartel was responsible for countless deaths, and he is believed to have directly ordered the killings of politicians, judges, journalists, and police. One of his most notorious acts was the bombing of Avianca Flight 203 in 1989, killing 110 people in an attempt to target a political rival, but resulting in many civilian deaths. He waged a violent campaign against the Colombian government, leading to thousands of deaths, and was seen by many Colombians as a dictator-like figure.

"Plata o Plomo"

Robin Hood" Image:-

Escobar attempted to present himself as a "Robin Hood" character in certain circles, particularly among the disadvantaged residents of Medellín. He constructed housing developments, soccer pitches, and various public facilities in the underprivileged neighborhoods, gaining the allegiance of numerous locals. This contributed to establishing a kind of protective network for him in Medellín, although it did not shield him from his numerous adversaries.

Narco-terrorists:-

The end of the Cold War and a renewed focus on terrorism altered the language surrounding the drug war. Characterized as a structured entity involved in drug trafficking to fund politically motivated militant activities, the narco-terrorist group emerged as a new menace. The DEA indicated that Afghanistan under Taliban rule was a clear example of a nation reliant on illegal opium production. Regional experts argued, however, that the Taliban's strict Islamic governance largely curtailed opium production. Afghan opium production steadily increased following the American invasion in late 2001 and the collapse of the Taliban regime.

By the DEA's account, leaders of drug cartels have been retrospectively classified as narco-terrorists. For example, Escobar of the Medellín cartel is now described as having taken part in "terrorist activities," including the bombing of a commercial airliner in 1989. He also commissioned the assassinations of Colombian supreme court justices, journalists, police officials, presidential candidates, and legislators.

Subsequently, additional organizations labeled as terrorist groups—Hezbollah, Hamas, the Shining Path in Peru, the Kurdistan Workers' Party, FARC in Colombia, and ETA in Spain—were also analyzed regarding their involvement in narco-terrorism. Originating as Marxist socialist factions, many of these were identified as such



until the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991. In this context, the Cold War, the drug conflict, and the war on terrorism were interconnected seamlessly.

UN Security Council Resolution 1373 further clarified the relationship between drugs and terrorism. Stressing the "need to enhance coordination of efforts on national, subregional, regional and international levels in order to strengthen a global response to this serious challenge and threat to international security," the resolution, adopted shortly after the September 11, 2001, attacks in the United States noted "the close connection between international terrorism and transnational organized crime, illicit drugs, money-laundering, illegal arms-trafficking, and illegal movement of nuclear, chemical, biological and other potentially deadly materials.

money laundering:-

the way criminals try to conceal the illegal source and rightful ownership of the profits generated by their criminal activities. Through money laundering, criminals seek to change the profits from their illicit operations into assets of apparently legal origin. If successful, this technique gives the earnings—which the criminals keep control over—genuineness. Money laundering can either be a very complex one exploiting the worldwide financial system and involving numerous financial intermediaries across several jurisdictions, or a fairly simple procedure done at the local or national level. Money laundering is fundamental for two reasons: first, the offender needs to use the earnings as though they came from legally, second he must evade link to the offenses producing the criminal income (known as predicate offenses). Simply put, money laundering hides the illegal source of money so that it can be freely used.

Money laundering involves three stages: placement, layering, and integration. During the placement stage, the launderer enters the financial system illicitly gained money. During the layering phase, the launderer engages in a

series of conversions or transfers of the money to isolate it from its source. At last in the integration phase, the money reintegrate into the legal economy.

Law enforcement :-

Control of the gains of illegal operations became an international concern in the late 1980s as part of the battle against drug trafficking. Three world conventions addressed the issue between that time and the end of the 20th century: the United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988, which for the first time provided that the laundering of proceeds from drug trafficking might be treated as an autonomous crime; the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime of 1990; and the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime of December 2000. Additionally, in 1990 the Financial Action Task Force, an intergovernmental organization established in 1989 for the purpose of the development and promotion of policies to combat money laundering, published its Forty Recommendations. Originally designed to stop the profits of crime from influencing legal economic activity and from being employed in future criminal operations, the recommendations were afterward amended several times.

These different tools lay forth an anti-money-laundering plan made up of two primary parts:

- (1) implementation of a set of preventive actions aimed at credit and financial institutions and meant to raise the openness of financial transactions.
- (2) criminalizing money laundering and providing for the seizure and confiscation of illegal profits thus enhancing the efficacy of criminal justice systems.

These measures comprise the so-called know-your-customer rules (procedures for the identification of clients opening accounts or conducting financial transactions and the



conservation of relevant documentation for a reasonable amount of time), the reporting to national authorities of all transactions that are considered suspicious, and cooperation between financial institutions and national law-enforcement agencies so as to render investigations more effective.

The United States has implemented and put into practice this approach in its entirety. Originally meant to detect cash flows, the Bank Secrecy Act of 1970 was U.S. first legislation enacted. Important legislation is also the 1986 Money Laundering Control Act, which made money laundering a national offence. This law was changed many times until it reached the form set out in Title 18 of the U.S. Code, sections 1956 and 1957. The Money Laundering and Financial Crimes Strategy Act of 1998 mandated the Department of the Treasury as well as other federal agencies to regularly publish National Money Laundering Strategy reports. The first report, released in 1999, underlined federal attempts to tackle the problem of money laundering in a coordinated and systematic manner. Combating money laundering by denying criminals access to financial institutions and increasing enforcement reduced inbound and outbound movements of illicit profits were among the goals of the broad U.S. strategy to combat financial crime as carried out through the end of the 20th century.

War on Drugs :-

Since the 1970s, the United States has sought to combat illegal drug use by significantly enhancing penalties, enforcement, and imprisonment for those convicted of drug offenses.

The War on Drugs began when U. S. President Richard Nixon classified drug abuse as "public enemy number one" in June 1971 and boosted federal funding for drug-control agencies and drug-treatment programs. Formed in 1973 by combining the Office for Drug Abuse Law Enforcement, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, and the Office of Narcotics Intelligence, the Drug Enforcement

Administration was created to unify national resources to address drug abuse.

Before Ronald Reagan's presidency, which started in 1981, the War on Drugs was relatively minor within federal law-enforcement initiatives. Reagan greatly expanded the drug war's reach, and his emphasis on criminal punishment over treatment led to a significant rise in the imprisonment of nonviolent drug offenders—from 50,000 in 1980 to 400,000 in 1997. In 1984, Nancy adopted a different method in the War on Drugs with her privately funded "Just Say No" campaign, which aimed to inform schoolchildren about the risks of drug use through a privately funded initiative. In many respects, the War on Drugs grew due to increased media attention on—and resulting public concern regarding—the crack epidemic that emerged in the early 1980s. This increased awareness of illegal drug usage gained political backing for Reagan's tough position on drugs. The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, passed by the U. S. Congress, allocated \$1.7 billion for the War on Drugs and set a range of 'mandatory minimum' prison sentences for numerous drug offenses. Mandatory minimums were characterized by the stark differences in the amounts of crack and powder cocaine that triggered the identical minimum sentence: possession of five grams of crack resulted in an automatic five-year sentence, while possession of 500 grams of powder cocaine was required to warrant that sentence. Given that nearly 80% of crack users were Black, the mandatory minimums led to a disproportionate rise in incarceration rates for nonviolent Black drug offenders and sparked claims that the War on Drugs was a racially biased policy.

Rising awareness of the racial injustices in the punishments meted out by the War on Drugs as well as worries about its efficacy led to less public support for the most severe components of the drug conflict in the early 21st century. Thus, reforms were put into place during this time including the Fair Sentencing Act of 2010, which reduced the difference between crack-to-powder possession thresholds for minimum



sentences from 100-to-1 to 18-to-1 and the legalization of recreational marijuana in a growing number of states. Sentences for certain offenses connected to crack cocaine were further lowered by legislation for prison reform introduced in 2018. Though officially still being fought, the War on Drugs is executed at a far lower intensity than it was at its height in the 1980s.

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