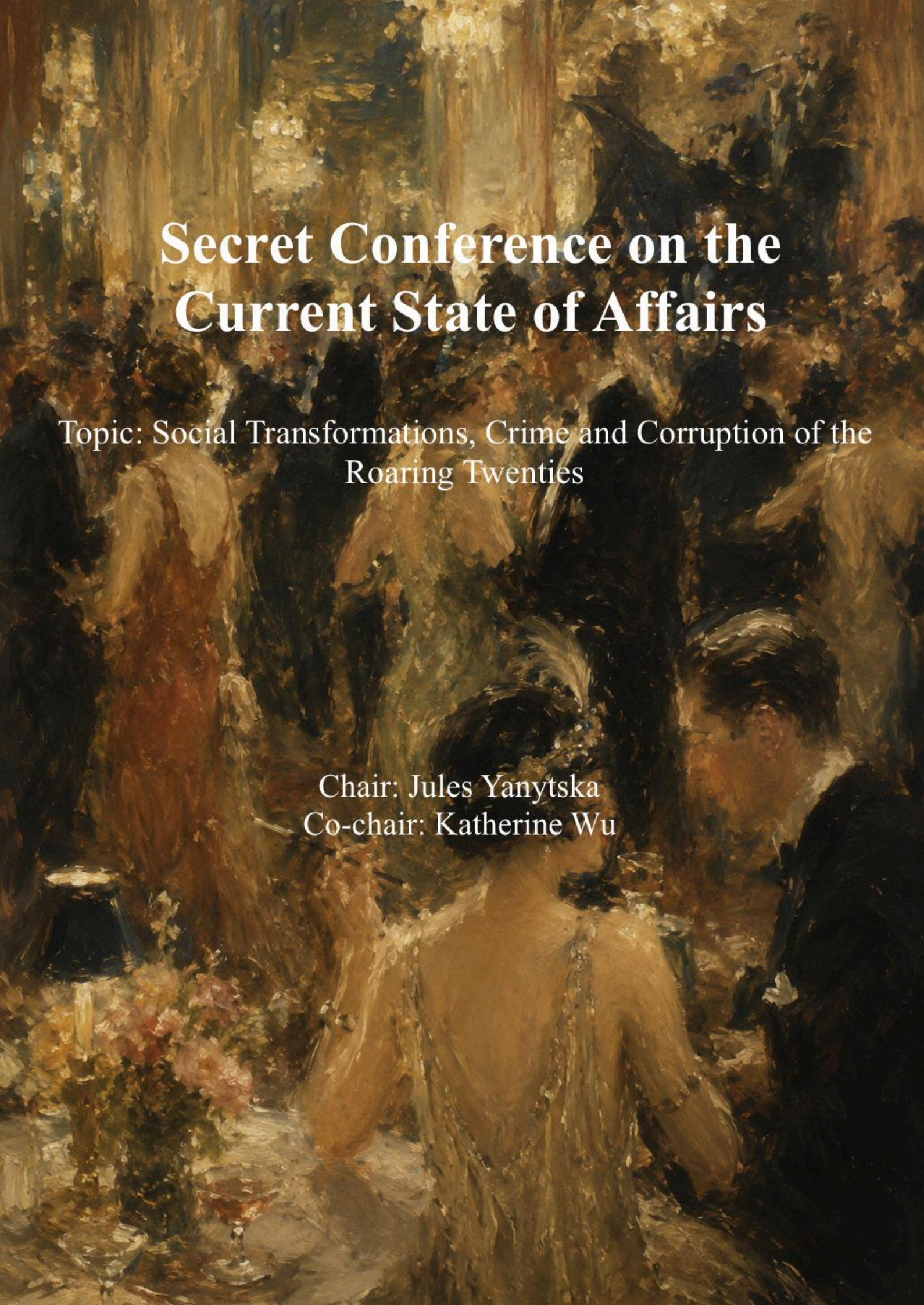




Secret Conference on the Current State of Affairs

Topic: Social Transformations, Crime and Corruption of the
Roaring Twenties

Chair: Jules Yanytska
Co-chair: Katherine Wu

Table of Contents

Letter from the Chairs	3
Committee Procedure	5
Conference Schedule	6
Historical Background	7
Topic 1: Social Transformations of the Roaring Twenties	9
Topic 2: Organized Crime, Corruption, and Crime in the Underworld of Society	10
Members of the Assembly	14
Works Cited	16

Letter from the Chairs

Juliana Yanytska

Hello delegates,

My name is Juliana Yanytska and I am excited to be one of your co-chairs for 'IoMUN Secret Conference on the Current State of Affairs. I am a senior, and this is my third year in Model UN, and also my first time chairing (before, I co-chaired another committee). I am excited to see you in action in a politically and socially turbulent committee, and I hope you will enjoy it too. Aside from Model UN, I enjoy drawing, writing poetry and novels, and singing. I love hiking too, and my favourite hike is Koko Head and Carpathian Mountains Hikes back at home in Ukraine!

The Secret Conference on the current State of Affairs places you in a moment of history, when the world seemed to have turned upside down. The previous notions of modesty, Victorian austerity and politeness slowly seem to change after the most devastating war of all time crossed the continent (at that time). This committee came from my interest in governance, conventions of morality, progressive movements and societal struggles and development. As members of this committee, you will have to face protesters, politicians, crime lords, conservative activists, and figure out the answers to several questions: how do you balance order and morality, community and individualism, crime and justice? Make haste and decide — the future of the US is in your hands.

I encourage you to come to this committee with understanding, historical awareness, and confidence in what you do. This committee will bring some alterations, although I hope, you will not hesitate to defend your position, and fight for what is right. Or just for what's yours. I look forward to seeing you in action.

Good luck,
Juliana Yanytska
Chair, Secret Conference on the Current State of Affairs

Katherine Wu

Greetings delegates!

My name is Katherine Wu and I'll be looking forward to seeing you all in the committee at this conference. I'm currently a junior at 'Iolani, with this year being my second year in MUN. I'm part of the leadership committee and this committee will be my first time co-chairing. I hope that by participating in this committee you will gain some insight, no matter what area it is about. Outside of Model UN, I also play the violin, listen to music, and do online archival research. This committee's time period contains complex events occurring at the same time that I hope will challenge you during the committee. Most importantly, have fun in the committee!

Best of luck,

Katherine Wu

Co-Chair, Secret Conference on the Current State of Affairs

Committee Procedure

Technology Policy

Technology is **not allowed** during the caucuses and directive writing, however notepads and pens will be provided. We encourage equitable use of AI and humbly ask that you refrain from using AI to generate speeches and position papers. Any delegate who is caught using AI unethically will be ineligible for award consideration, and advisors will be contacted.

Position Paper Policy

To be considered for any award, including performance-based awards such as Best Delegate, please submit your position papers via the Google Form we will provide **by August 25, 23:59 to be eligible for Best Research Award, and August 28, 23:59 to be eligible for any award**. Submitting your paper ensures accountability for both sides of the conference. The header of your position paper should include the following: **name, school, position (delegate name), and delegate committee**. You may write no more than one page **per topic**, not including bibliography, in the following formatting: **10 pt font size, Times New Roman style, 1.5 Line spacing**. Citations in bibliography are accepted in both the Chicago and APA formats.

Committee Procedure

Since this is an advanced committee, we will be limiting the number of notes passed to the backroom to one personal note per crisis update. We will also be covering both topics equally, and crises will be planned according to the schedule. Costumes are allowed.

Conference Schedule

8-8:20am	Check in @Arillaga Student Center
8:25-8:55am	Opening Ceremony
9:00-10:45am	Committee Session I
10:45-11:00am	Break
11:00am-12:15pm	Committee Session II
12:15-1:00pm	Lunch
1:00-2:00pm	Committee Session III
2:10-2:30pm	Closing Ceremony

Historical Background

The Second Industrial Revolution

The start of the 1870s marked a period of rapid industrialization in the United States, driven by interconnected telegraph and railroad networks, abundant natural resources, and technological innovations that streamlined mass manufacturing. With economic growth, new industries emerged, and corporations amassed power and influence as profits grew. The expansion of industry and the rise of a national market economy also led to massive internal migration to cities, many of whom were immigrants or farmers from rural areas. New social classes were formed, including wealthy industrialists, a new middle class, and an expanded blue-collar class. Technologies paved the way for mass-manufactured goods, expanding public access to goods and creating a mass consumer culture. This period of rapid industrialization simultaneously generated profits and capital whilst subjecting the working class to low-wage jobs with dangerous working conditions and long hours. Technological innovations in manufacturing led to the replacement of skilled workers by cheaper, unskilled labor and sheer abundance. As wealthy business owners such as John D. Rockefeller used horizontal integration to consolidate capital and maintain giant monopolies, resentment from the working class began to grow.

Wealth inequality during this era exacerbated the working class response to the issues of industrialization. The richest men of the era were named “robber barons,” holding around seventy percent of the United States’ wealth. Corruption through political machines and government scandals was rampant, with much of it funded by trusts and monopolies. Political machines such as the Tweed Ring gave social welfare to immigrants in cities in exchange for political power. The government favored pro-business, or laissez-faire, policies and deployed military force to break workers’ strikes. The working class formed labor unions to demand attention towards addressing poor working conditions and stagnant wages. The Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and the formation of the Knights of Labor as a political party were examples of the working class organizing. This era was also known as the Gilded Age, due to the extravagant wealth on the surface that gave way to the political and social problems America faced. Many businesses saw the government's inaction in the economy and society as beneficial, and corporations pushed to maintain the status quo at the start of the 20th century.

Women during the Gilded Age

The rise of immigration during the Second Industrial Revolution led to a flourishing alcohol industry as people sought to preserve European customs. The term “temperance” means self-control; in the 19th century, it was used to refer to abstaining from alcohol. Organizations, particularly the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), demonstrated how women organized and protested for political change, in this case, the temperance movement. The WCTU used political activism not only to achieve prohibition

eventually, but also to advance women's suffrage. Another example of the rise of feminism was the emergence of settlement houses, most notably Jane Addams's Hull House, established in 1889. Settlement houses used middle-class volunteers to provide services like education to the urban poor, who were mostly immigrants. The temperance movement and settlement houses were some of the many reform movements that expanded women's roles in society and challenged traditional gender norms. These reform movements' efforts were soon recognized with the 18th and 19th Amendments in the Progressive Era.

The Progressive Era

At the tail-end of the 19th century, calls to address the problems of the Gilded Age culminated in the Progressive movement, whose middle class supporters primarily pushed for reform and an end to laissez-faire capitalism. Muckrakers, or journalists who exposed political and economic corruption, helped bring the issue of reform to the public sphere. The 1890s marked the start of Progressivism with federal policies that attempted to address wealth inequality, regulate trusts and monopolies, and promote political and social reform. The role of government was transformed into one responsible for social problems and for regulating the economy, a sharp contrast with the previous Gilded Age politics. The passage of the 18th and 19th Amendments, prohibiting alcohol and granting women's suffrage, respectively, was achieved during this time through efforts from multiple groups and organizations. Cases such as *Muller v. Oregon* restricted the amount of working hours for women, and policies like the Sherman Antitrust Act were part of the government's efforts to crack down on monopolies. However, mass production continued under Fordism, a system in which workers were paid a high enough wage to afford many manufactured goods during the 20th century. In the end, Progressivism sought to achieve a balance between capitalism and public life, using political power to regulate these policies.

The First World War

Although America initially stayed neutral in the First World War, its neutrality ended due to a shift in public sentiment. Major primary causes include the German sinking of the RMS *Lusitania*, leading to 128 US civilian casualties, and the Zimmerman Telegram, in which Germany promised Mexico to regain its previous territories from the United States. The role of government in consolidating power to control industries and the banking system is evident in the establishment of various federal agencies. Agencies such as the War Industries Board and the National War Labor Board set maximum working hours to streamline the war production process. The idea of consumerism and credit culture spurred economic growth, though unstable, and later permeated politics and society. Yet, liberties on the home front were still oppressed. The Espionage and Sedition Acts of 1917 and 1918 silenced vocal anti-war critics, prosecuting them and ignoring the basis of free speech. Wartime labor demands spurred many African Americans to move from the South to Northern cities, and women increasingly took up industrial jobs. This massive mobilization ultimately led to the ratification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, guaranteeing women the right to vote. Women's wartime efforts enabled them to gain greater political power through their critical labor roles, with notable feminists like Alice Paul advocating for an Equal Rights Amendment. The Equal Rights Amendment was one of the many movements led by

women to achieve gender equality, and contributed to the many debates about women's roles in society in the twenties.

World War I led President Woodrow Wilson to heavily push for his Fourteen Points in order to create peace and prevent another war from arising. In the Treaty of Versailles, the League of Nations was formed as an international organization for peacekeeping and international relations—both the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations were never ratified in Congress due to fears of foreign involvement and a belief in US isolationism. The war's impact on American society was seen through a desire to return to normalcy with Republican pro-business conservative governments.

Topic 1: Social Transformations of the Roaring Twenties

The Roaring Twenties were marked by the most dramatic social and cultural transformations in American history. The passage of Prohibition in 1920 represented a bold social dream, where supporters believed that the elimination of alcohol would reduce crime, violence, strengthen family bonds, improve worker productivity, and return society to the moral order, which was partially hindered after the Great War. Instead, Prohibition became one of the most destabilizing policies of the twentieth century.

Despite ambitious ideas, enforcement failures undermined public trust and confidence in government institutions: federal prohibition agents were underfunded and therefore vulnerable to bribery. Local officials ignored violations, and wealthy Americans enjoyed their alcohol, while ordinary citizens were arrested for minor offenses. Inconsistencies fueled the belief that Prohibition was only enforced for the poor, while magnates and wealthy officials benefited from the system.

Women's organizations played a significant role in the movement, where many reformers saw alcohol as a primary cause of domestic abuse and financial inability. They argued that saloons drained household income, promoted political corruption, and encouraged violence against women and children. One of the reasons for increased activism was connected to women's historical lack of legal protections in marriages and family structures, and therefore, the temperance movement became deeply connected to broader campaigns of social reform and participation. The ratification of women's suffrage led prohibitionists to believe female voters could permanently reshape policy in favor of moral legislation. Yet women themselves were still divided over Prohibition and the social changes it brought; some preferred to reject the restrictive policies it imposed. The women's movement was also characterized by the new ideas of reproductive health, education, and legal equality. Some figures advocated birth control, while clashing with conservative religious opposition. Debates about cultural changes have led to more and more options for women: marriage, employment, and personal freedom.

Urban nightlife began growing rapidly during the decade despite the federal restrictions. Speakeasies began appearing across major cities, and some were even protected by police. Jazz clubs, cabarets, dance halls, and underground bars became more prominent, eventually becoming symbols of the roaring twenties. The Harlem Renaissance became one of the starting points of entertainment tied to African American culture. It was both enjoyed and overlooked — some places catered specifically to the white people's needs, and those

only for African Americans received less attention in funding. Women were able to participate in those places in unprecedented numbers, challenging the shaky rules about gender segregation and public behavior that were less intact after the war. The expansion of consumer culture further intensified these changes, creating a new era of the film industry, advertising, and campaign running. Hollywood films, magazines, and radio broadcasts showed images of glamorous modern lifestyles, which promoted hedonistic philosophies by centering on pleasure, freedom, fashion, and entertainment for Americans. Traditionalists were cautious, since they believed that mass consumerism and indulgence would lead to mass media normalizing immorality and weakening religious authority.

There was a response from religious groups to the changes brought by the Twenties: Protestant fundamentalists organized campaigns to defend traditional morality, biblical authority, and conservative social norms they believed were rapidly drifting away from humanity. They did see Prohibition as the defense and protection of American civilization as a whole. The “wet” and “dry” America revealed deeper cultural divisions within the society: urban and rural, secular and religious, modern and traditional.

During the committee, delegates must confront conflicts over morality and social order after Prohibition shifted the tides for many. They have to evaluate the role of government authority in regulating morality and how it enforces its power to do so; rapid modernization; and how to deal with polarizing social reform.

Guiding questions:

- Does the federal government have the authority to regulate morality (whether through censorship, alcohol restrictions, etc.) through law?
- Is the growing distrust of authority caused primarily by criminal activity or ineffectiveness of the government?
- Are rising social movements undermining traditional American values and cause destabilization in society?
- Should constitutional amendments and lawmaking be used to enforce social reforms, or does this expand federal power into private life too much?

Topic 2: Organized Crime, Corruption, and Crime in the Underworld of Society

Perhaps one of the most concerning and destabilizing issues of the Roaring Twenties was the significant rise of organized crime. Criminal organizations and outlaw society existed way before the Prohibition; the illegal alcohol trade presented itself as a major business opportunity. It transformed gangs and syndicates into enormous national enterprises with expanding financial resources and political power. The profits generated by bootlegging allowed many criminal groups to expand their connections worldwide: smuggling routes stretched across Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, and the coastal cities of America. They established illegal breweries, secret distilleries, and warehouses, and built vast transportation networks, bribing their way into business and politics across the country. Organized crime

became closely tied to legitimate businesses, labor unions, police forces, and municipal departments.

Chicago and New York became centers of the most concentrated criminal power. Gangs violently competed for territories and distribution control. Bombings, assassinations, kidnappings, and massacres out in the open became increasingly common, and gang warfare was sensationalized, turning criminal leaders into national celebrities, heroes for the urban working class, and citizens who defied Prohibition, while simultaneously exposing how weakly and selectively the law was enforced.

Famous gang leaders like Al Capone made themselves a name through controlling networks of entertainment and business: speakeasies and nightclubs, gambling operations, and political bribery was common and thriving in their hands, earning millions of dollars annually. Despite the widespread visibility and public knowledge of their activities, prosecutors had a hard time securing convictions because of the fear, injustice, and violence that would follow: witnesses were intimidated or murdered, juries were bribed, and officials frequently followed the corrupt system for safety and profit.

Organized crime thrived because of the public demand, because, despite the Prohibition, Americans still wanted to drink. They purchased alcohol from the crime rings, and, despite being law-abiding citizens otherwise, violated the law and were responsible for a massive influx of money into the illegal businesses of the gangs. They were the suppliers serving a willing market, and it blurred the line between the ordinary citizen and a criminal enterprise. Marginalized communities were restricted in their economic movement and therefore associated themselves with crime rings for protection and money. Bankers engaged in money laundering, businessmen were involved in illegal operations, and police officers protected bootlegging routes. Politicians were bribed and even relied on gangs as a means of intimidation to throw out the opposition in elections in exchange for a blind eye to the illegal activity. Judges and prosecutors were vulnerable to financial pressure. Corruption and injustice were embedded in every aspect of daily life, even for ordinary citizens, and democratic institutions were failing in society's eyes.

Federal responses were inconsistent. The Federal Bureau of Investigation was still relatively restricted in its authority and organization for most of the decade. Coordination and cooperation under dual federalism remained weak, and local agencies couldn't keep the crime in check. Many Americans also opposed aggressive federal policing because they feared a centralized government infringing on their civil liberties.

Crime continued to expand through gambling, narcotics trafficking, labor racketeering, extortion, and financial fraud. The sudden expansion of the stock market created additional opportunities for speculative crime. Because of the syndicates' financial scope, they were seen as sophisticated businesses rather than street gangs. What made matters more complicated was the public fascination with gangsters, who were seen as glamorous, wealthy, intelligent, and who could outmaneuver corrupt and ineffective politicians. As mentioned before, the working class viewed gangsters as protectors who could provide jobs, charity, or actual resistance against the laws that citizens disfavored.

Consequences of organized crime were severe: mass violence, police and government corruption, intimidation of the free press and justice, illegal economies, and weakening democratic institutions. Americans questioned whether Prohibition led to this; others stated

the opposite, since Prohibition was considered a moral control and an attempt to keep lawfulness. Delegates in this committee must consider how to address the consequences of growing crime and whether it is even possible to mitigate its effects, given the government's ambiguous position.

Guiding questions:

- Can criminal organizations be controlled without fundamentally expanding federal policing powers and surveillance authority?
- Is organized crime primarily caused by Prohibition itself?
- Should federal agents receive expanded powers to wiretap, surveil, and investigate suspected criminal organizations?
- Can organized crime be eliminated while widespread public demand for illegal alcohol, gambling, protection, and economic assistance continues to exist?

Historical Setting

Washington, D.C., 1928

The capital shines with confidence, and the United States is at the height of prosperity and rapid progress in 1928. Cities expand rapidly, factories produce consumer goods more and more, jazz fills the streets, and the stock market continues to rise dramatically. To many Americans, the nation seems unstoppable, but beneath the sheen of a newly emerging society, there is a growing sense that the country is losing control of itself.

Nearly a decade after the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment, Prohibition enforcement was collapsing across much of the country. Speakeasies stand proud and open in the streets, alcohol flows through interstate smuggling routes, and crime syndicates operate hand in hand with businesses that seem legitimate. Criminals control gambling networks, shake hands with police and politicians, all while drawing the guns and sliding stacks of money across the table to every willing and scared person. At the same time, women enjoy the changes the Twenties brought — flappers roam the streets and relish the loose norms the modernity brought, and younger generations forget the strict behavioral code that dominated society before the Great War. Some look at the changes in judgment — religious leaders and conservative organizations are worried about the moral decline of society that seems to inevitably strike and will destroy society. Whatever these rapid changes bring and rock the previously stable society, all are interconnected in the loop of chaos: conservatives and modernists, women, prohibitionists and moralists, criminals and officials. Those who are atop the ladder are getting worried that the national tensions are going to threaten the existence of the country itself.

In response, a confidential gathering was arranged in the capital to determine the moral direction of the country's current trajectory. No formal authorization was announced, no public records released yet, but some journalists and representatives of different standing

were let in. Political connections brought all-powerful and outspoken figures from across the country together behind closed doors for a Secret Conference on the Current State of Affairs, hidden in the guise of a luxurious party.

Attendees of the Conference

Federal Government & Law Enforcement

1. Herbert Hoover — Secretary of Commerce and presidential candidate; advocate of efficiency, reform, and “American individualism.” Deeply concerned about corruption, instability, and national image.
2. J. Edgar Hoover — Director of the Bureau of Investigation; ambitious anti-crime bureaucrat seeking expanded federal surveillance and investigative powers.
3. Mabel Walker Willebrandt — Assistant Attorney General and one of the strongest defenders of Prohibition enforcement in the federal government.
4. Al Smith — Prominent anti-prohibition politician
5. Fiorello La Guardia — Congressman and outspoken critic of corruption and organized crime; advocates aggressive federal reform.

Organized Crime & Underworld Networks

6. Al Capone — Chicago crime boss controlling massive bootlegging and political corruption networks throughout the Midwest.
7. Lucky Luciano — Rising New York criminal organizer seeking modernization and national coordination among crime syndicates.
8. Arnold Rothstein — Influential gambling financier and political intermediary with extensive ties to business and organized crime.

Journalists, Media & Public Opinion

9. Walter Lippmann — One of the nation’s most influential political writers; concerned with democracy, propaganda, and mass public opinion.
10. William Randolph Hearst — Media magnate possessing enormous influence over public opinion, political narratives, and sensational journalism.

Women’s Activists & Social Reformers

11. Alice Paul — Leader of the National Woman’s Party; advocates expansion of women’s legal and political equality.
12. Margaret Sanger — Prominent advocate for reproductive rights and women’s bodily autonomy; controversial national figure.
13. Jane Addams — Settlement house founder and progressive reformer focused on poverty, labor conditions, and urban social welfare.

Political Machines, Labor & Urban Power

14. Jimmy Walker — Mayor of New York City; charismatic political machine figure associated with nightlife culture and corruption accusations.

Religious Leaders

15. Billy Sunday — Fierce evangelist, who based his beliefs on Protestant morality

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