



# **GECMUN IX**

## **BACKGROUND GUIDE**

### Roaring 20's: Mafia Eradication During the Prohibition Era

*Collaborating effectively to combat the arising threat  
posed by criminal organizations*

SDG: 16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, 17. Partnerships to achieve the goal

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## Committee Introduction

Welcome to the Roaring 20's committee!

This committee is a rather unique one, composed of three subcommittees under one committee: the government, the mafia, and the tie-breakers. Delegates can draft public directives with the entire committee, or draft semi-public directives only with members of their respective subcommittee. Delegates from all subcommittees will still engage in moderated caucuses all at the same time, but during unmoderated caucuses, delegates are encouraged to divide themselves up and discuss their unique agendas. In short, the matters discussed in moderated caucuses or public directives will be dictated by the discussions within the subcommittees.

The government subcommittee consists of officials and agents from different parts of the United States government, such as the Bureau of Investigation, Congress, and the one and only Prohibition Unit. The main objective of the members of this subcommittee is to prevent the criminal organizations from threatening American national security while considering the effectiveness of the national prohibition law. The most effective strategy for this group would be having the legislators draft public directives regarding policies with prohibition agents making efforts behind the scenes with private directives.

The second subcommittee consists of some of the most notorious organized criminals of the prohibition era. Many of the mobsters are from a large-scale criminal organization called The Commission, created by Charles Luciano in 1931 to govern the Italian-American mafia, or the Five Families. Other significant members of this group cannot be disregarded; some individuals of the subcommittee are completely independent criminals with similar influences as those of the most infamous mafiosos. As the main opposing force of the government, members of the mafia subcommittee must effectively collaborate with each other, making compromises between profitability for the group and for the individual. Efficient and fruitful cooperation would make the members of this committee significant stakeholders of the crisis timeline throughout the conference.

Last but not least, the third subcommittee is called the "tie-breakers," consisting of rather neutral members. Some could be in alliance with the state but have some conflicts with the government, while some could be entirely independent members solely interested in siding with the advantageous party. Delegates of this group have a greater degree of freedom compared to those of the other groups, which can be an advantage but can also imply the difficulty in collaborating with others and contributing to the timeline. However, each and every member of this subcommittee has their own specialties that makes them unique, making them minor yet crucial individuals of the entire committee. They will provide the swing vote for committee-wide public directives.

## Agenda Introduction

Not many people would have expected that a seemingly innocuous piece of legislation implemented to reduce crime rates would instead fund criminal organizations. Thus, this committee has been created to tackle this very issue of the proliferation of mafia forces during the Prohibition Era. For the government, neglecting this issue may become detrimental to the safety of the citizens and eventually the power of the state; for the mafiosos, letting the government take actions may weaken their influence over the cities of America.

By the time this committee's timeline begins, which is 1925, the mafiosos are active in virtually every "dry" state, or states that have implemented the prohibition law. Murder rate has spiked considerably, and is predicted to rise up to 78% by 1930. The number of illegal speakeasies and liquor transports have increased substantially; Americans have never ceased to buy beer for once since the law has been implemented. With criminal organizations and their budget growing bigger and bigger day by day, it is just a matter of time before the entire American coast becomes a colony for mafiosos. This issue must be resolved before it threatens national security and the state turns into utter chaos.

On the other hand, for the mafiosos, this is a chance that could provide enough wealth for their organizations to survive for decades after retirement. The most notorious mafiosos are making over fifty million dollars every year (in the 1920s exchange rate), which is clearly a threat for the government—but a celebration-worthy matter for the criminals. Just from selling liquor to alcohol addicts in the dry states would feed the mobs in the United States, Canada, Italy, Sicily, and anywhere else in the world. If they just keep the government under check, mafia organizations can become one of the most powerful stakeholders in world business in no time.

The tie-breakers can side with either party and follow along with each respective objectives, or can even act independently, simply for their personal benefit. However, it is still important that they address this issue as a whole in order to keep the United States peaceful and intact, no matter which power takes over the nation.

It is now up to the delegates to pave the way for the future of the United States and the mafia. Who will be the justice in this situation? Who will be the one to save the United States from being taken over by the mafia or the ineffective government?

## Letter from the Chairs

Dear government officials, mafiosos, and tie-breakers,

We are Anika Kim (Director), Jack Oh (Head Chair), and Jihoo Kim (Deputy Chair). We are your chairs for the Roaring 20's: Mafia Eradication committee in this year's GECMUN conference! Delegates will be able to become a part of history and possibly even change the historical timeline by putting in their best effort in their respective roles.

This committee may be somewhat different from any other crisis committee you have ever seen. Even if you have never been part of a crisis committee before, this one will feel different from what you already know. Delegates have a substantial responsibility as a part of the committee as a whole and their own sub-committees, which can be a source of both diversion and pressure. However, none of these should be a worry for you if you do enough research and try your best in the conference! Remember, it is your rigor that counts, not the number of Oxford-level words you use in your position paper.

This is going to be a learning experience for everyone, and we are going to do our best to make this not only meaningful but exciting for everyone involved. But in order for that to happen, we need your support, too! We highly encourage all of you to be supportive and understanding to each other and try your best to make the two days as fruitful as possible.

Please don't hesitate to ask us for help or feedback before the conference! Take your time to read through this background guide and ask away any questions as they arise, especially if you're confused about the committee's procedure or timeline. Taking the initiative to ask questions and resolve any confusion is what makes you a strong delegate. Send us an email anytime and we'll try to respond in a timely manner. Have fun researching and see you in a few months!

Sincerely,

Anika, Jack, and Jihoo

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## Key Terms

### Anti-Saloon League

A New American temperance organization formed in 1893 that lobbied for prohibition in the United States in the early 20th century. The organization worked towards the unification of the American anti-alcohol sentiment, enforcement of existing temperance laws, and enactment of further anti-alcohol legislation.

### Bootlegging

The act of illegal traffic in liquor in violation of legislative restrictions on its manufacture, sale, or transportation. Bootlegging became widespread in America when the Prohibition Era began with the Eighteenth Amendment, until its repeal in 1933.

### Castellammarese War

A bloody, violent war between the partisans of Joe Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano during the power struggles to take over the Italian-American Mafia. Maranzano's faction seized victory, and the Commission was created a year later by Charles Luciano in order to prevent similar wars in the future.

### The Commission

The Commission was a governing body of the Mafia in the United States. The bosses of the New York Five Families provided the core membership of The Commission. It was established in 1931 by Lucky Luciano in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The purpose of The Commission was to replace the old Sicilian mafia regime and establish rule by consensus among the new crime families.

### La Cosa Nostra

Also known as the Sicilian Mafia, La Cosa Nostra is an Italian organized crime syndicate and criminal society originating in the region of Sicily, which was established back in the 19th century.

### Eighteenth Amendment

Amendment in 1919 to the Constitution of the United States imposing the federal prohibition of alcohol. The Eighteenth Amendment emerged from the organized efforts of the temperance movement and Anti-Saloon League, which regarded alcohol as the cause of society's ills and led campaigns at the local, state, and national levels to combat its manufacture, sale, distribution, and consumption.

### Five Points Gang

Criminal organization that is primarily of Irish-American origins, based in the Five Points of Lower Manhattan, New York City, during the late 19th and early 20th century.

Paul Kelly, an Italian American, founded the Five Points Gang. This organization included some who later became prominent criminals like Johnny Torrio, Al Capone, and Lucky Luciano.

### **Five Families**

Refers to the five major New York City organized crime families of the Italian-American Mafia formed in 1931 by Salvatore Maranzano following his victory in the Castellammarese War.

### **Mafioso**

A member of the Mafia.

### **National Crime Syndicate**

The National Crime Syndicate was a loosely connected American confederation of several criminal organizations. It mostly consists of the Italian-American Mafia and the Jewish mob. Murder, Inc., an criminal organization, was responsible for hundreds of murders on behalf of the National Crime Syndicate during the 1930s and 1940s.

### **Prohibition Law**

Also simply referred to as “prohibition,” the Prohibition Law was a nationwide ban on the sale and import of alcoholic beverages that lasted from 1920 to 1933.

### **Rum Runners**

The Rum Runners were people who traveled by sea to smuggle alcohol, bring it to the United States, and circumvent the Prohibition Law. Similarly, **Rum-Running** refers to the act of bootlegging and smuggling alcohol.

### **Speakeasy**

An illicit liquor store during the Prohibition Era. Came into prominence during the Prohibition Era, but diminished after the repeal of the law.

### **The Untouchables**

A group of special agents led by Eliot Ness, aimed to aggressively enforce the Prohibition Law and ultimately end Al Capone’s criminal activities. They were given the name “The Untouchables” after repeatedly refusing large bribes from criminals and other government officials.

### **Volstead Act**

The Volstead Act took effect in 1920 to provide enforcement for the Eighteenth Amendment (1919), prohibiting the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. It is named after Minnesota Rep. Andrew Volstead, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, who sponsored the bill and was in favor of prohibition.

## Historical Background

The American Mafia dates back to the 1800s, when it was initially formed by poor immigrants from around the world who were desperate to earn money even through illegal means. Most mafia organizations were exclusively Italian, and they had mainly originated in most East Coast cities of the United States, where Italian immigrants were the majority of the population. The most notable of them were: Boston, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and New York City. These criminal syndicates accumulated capital at an exceptional speed by selling stolen goods, practicing extortion, and facilitating prostitution. The Prohibition Era marked the rise of mafia entrepreneurship.

In the 1900s, with the rise of the Anti-Saloon League, which lobbied for the ban of alcohol in America, claimed alcohol to be the cause of problems such as alcoholism, family violence, and saloon-based political corruption. The beer industry tried to oppose the Prohibition movement but, to no avail, failed to make any significant impact as the U.S. government entered into World War I against Germany, where most of the wet supporters originated from. Soon after, most Americans were in favor of the Prohibition Law, claiming that banning alcohol would solve most of the criminal and social issues prevalent in America.

Accordingly, on January 16, 1919, the United States Parliament passed the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, banning all beverages with 0.5% or more alcohol by volume, thereby prohibiting virtually all alcoholic drinks. Soon after, the Parliament also passed the Volstead Act, enforcing the Eighteenth Amendment. President Woodrow Wilson vetoed this act, but the Senate overrode the president's veto.

However, right after the Volstead Act was passed, its unseen shadow rose as the nationwide ban on the transport and sale of alcohol severely backfired. The strict ban had motivated millions of Americans to consume alcohol through illegal measures, and the law instead gave rise to bootlegging, speakeasies, and ultimately, organized crime. Instead of reducing crime, eradicating corruption, and resolving social issues, Prohibition had paved a new platform for criminal syndicates to thrive, boosting the corruption of public officials and exacerbating violence in American society.

The rise of criminal syndicates, among all other side effects, was the most unfavorable (at least for the government) as Mafias began to expand their power in cities, feuding with other gang members and unleashing terror on American cities. At a national level, the murder rate per 100,000 people had rose by almost two-thirds. The fact that many government officials and police officers had been bribed to ignore illegal acts did not help the situation at all.

## Current State of Affairs

The Prohibition law was initially enacted with the hope that it would reduce crime rates, but the reality was that the Volstead Act led to even higher crime rates than were experienced prior to Prohibition, and had also led to the establishment of a black market dominated by criminal organizations, providing the Mafia with steady income. In fact, the Prohibition Law exacerbated corruption in the Federal Bureau of Prohibition at the state and municipal levels. Police officers and Prohibition agents alike were frequently tempted by bribes or went into bootlegging themselves. Although many stayed innocent, a significant portion of them had succumbed to the temptation, leading to public mistrust in law enforcement and forming the stereotype of Prohibition agents and local cops being corrupt. However, despite all these flaws, there are still a significant number of pro-Prohibitionists.

The growth of illegal liquor trade under the law turned millions of Americans into criminals. As the Volstead Act harshly punished even the slightest infractions, courtrooms and jails overflowed with criminals from all over the country, to which the American legal system had failed to keep up. By the beginning of this conference, it is common for defendants in prohibition cases to wait over a year to be tried at court, preventing the government from effectively combating the culprits.

The Great Depression severely crippled the economy of the United States, with the unemployment rate reaching 23% and the U.S. gross domestic product falling by 46% from 1929. Government revenue has dropped by almost 20%, and state tax collections have decreased by 13%. With many citizens reluctant to buy government bonds, the federal budget decreased, making it hard for the government to fund all government agencies adequately. With the government's primary focus on revitalizing the collapsed U.S. economy, it is no surprise that the bureaus and the agencies responsible for combating organized crime and prohibition infringements generally lack adequate funding.



## Stances of Parties

### Mafias

#### Al Capone

Al Capone is an American gangster and businessman who led the Chicago Outfit. He attained notoriety during the Prohibition era as the co-founder and boss of the Chicago Outfit. Al Capone is an extremely influential individual in Chicago and ruled an empire of crime in the Windy City. He conducted businesses in gambling, prostitution, bootlegging, and drugs. Capone is expected to submit private directives as he conducts these illegal activities undercover. Capone bought legal immunity by administering bribes to police and politicians. He paid off every law enforcement agent and politician in the districts in which he operated his illegal businesses. Al Capone was able to utilize Prohibition to become a prominent mafia during the 1920s.

#### Charles Luciano

Charles "Lucky" Luciano is an Italian-born gangster who operated mainly in New York, United States. Luciano started his criminal career in the Five Points gang and was instrumental in the development of the National Crime Syndicate. Luciano is the founder of the Commission which served to oversee all Mafia activities and he was appointed chairman of the Commission. The Commission consisted of seven family bosses: the leaders of New York's Five Families: Charlie "Lucky" Luciano, Vincent Mangano, Tommy Gagliano, Joseph Bonanno, Joe Profaci, Chicago Outfit boss Al Capone, and Buffalo family boss Stefano Magaddino. The Commission agreed to hold meetings every five years or anytime when they needed to discuss or resolve family problems. Luciano is the most powerful chief of American organized crime.

#### Salvatore Maranzano

Salvatore Maranzano is an Italian-American mobster from Sicily and an early Cosa Nostra boss who led what later would become the Bonanno crime family in New York City. He formed the Five Families in New York City and got the title of *capo di tutti capi*. Maranzano, before his murder by Luciano on September 10, 1931, ruled the committee that consists of the bosses of the Five Families of New York City, as well as the bosses of the Chicago Outfit and, at various times, the leaders of smaller families, such as Buffalo, Philadelphia, Detroit, and others.

#### Joe Masseria

Joe Masseria, byname Joe The Boss, is an early Italian-American Mafia who was a boss of what is now called the Genovese crime family, one of the New York City Mafia's Five Families, from 1922 to 1931. He attempted to take over all criminal activities in New York City, and was known for his rather impulsive yet proactive personality. He had recruited Luciano as one of his own gunmen, but is having conflict with him regarding moral and personal beliefs.

## **Earl "Hymie" Weiss**

Earl "Hymie" Weiss is a Polish-American mob boss who became a leader of the North Side Gang during the Prohibition Era. He is known to be one of the few bitter rivals of Al Capone along with George Moran. Weiss is referred to as "the only man Al Capone feared." He was known to be rather brutal, with killing being one of his favorite hobbies. He may be a potential threat to both the mafias and the government if he uses private directives effectively to sabotage members of the subcommittees.

## **George Clarence "Bugs" Moran**

George Clarence "Bugs" Moran is an American gangster in Chicago. He has continuously posed a significant challenge to Capone's South Side Gang. Moran and Earl "Hymie" Weiss inherited O'Bannion's gang (North Side Gang) in Chicago when the chief was killed in 1924. After two years, Moran became the sole leader after Weiss was killed. For the next three years, Moran and Al Capone's gang were locked in a bloody warfare, which climaxed in 1929 by the St. Valentine's Day Massacre, in which several members of Moran's mob were slaughtered in a garage. Moran is one of few gangsters who went strongly against Al Capone during the Prohibition era.

## **Roy Olmstead**

Roy Olmstead is one of the most successful and best-known bootleggers in the Pacific Northwest region. Olmstead was a former lieutenant in the Seattle Police Department, and he began smuggling alcohol from Canada while still on the force. After he was fired, he ran his illegal operation like a business and he became one of the largest employers in Puget Sound. Although sided with the Mafia, he would act out of his own interest to benefit his business.

## **Government Officials**

### **Thomas E. Dewey**

Thomas E. Dewey is the New York City prosecutor and District Attorney. He is known for his repeated efforts to curb the power of the American Mafia and unwavering focus on the investigation of organized crime. He is one of the major figures that helps eradicate organized crime in the United States. He has the authority and power to control the direction of the subcommittee and appeal to higher officials to assign agents to missions, yet he does not have the sufficient physical ability to defend himself from potential attacks.

### **Georgia Hopley**

Georgia Hopley is the first female prohibition agent of the United States. She is famous for advocating for the publicity of the Prohibition Law. Hopley was often utilized

for propaganda work instead of for agent work. She would be a major figure that would influence press releases and manipulate the American public. She has the ability to potentially manipulate even the Mafia into changing their stances if private directives are used effectively.

### **Eliot Ness**

Eliot Ness is an American prohibition agent. His main focus is to tear down Al Capone and his power and enforce prohibition throughout the nation. He later became the leader of the Untouchables, a group of special agents of the U.S. Bureau of Prohibition to end Al Capone's illegal activities. Ness and the Untouchables would greatly influence the activities of Al Capone and his gang, especially with his aggressive personality.

### **Izzy Einstein and Moe Smith**

Izzy Einstein and Moe Smith are the United States federal police officer duo agents of the U.S. Prohibition Unit. They were able to achieve the most arrests and convictions during the first years of the national prohibition era. They were known for exploding many speakeasies and for being the ultimate duo, showing great teamwork and strategy in all their missions.

### **Wayne B. Wheeler**

Wayne B. Wheeler is an American attorney and also the leader of the Anti-Saloon League, an organization that lobbied for prohibition. Wheeler is a leading advocate in the prohibition movement and has played a major role in the drafting and passing of the Volstead Act as well as the Eighteenth Amendment. He is often seen as radical, and may induce conflicts within the conference.

### **Carrie Nation**

Carrie Nation is a radical advocate of the temperance movement. She often attacked alcohol-serving establishments with hatchets. Due to her infamous aggressive attacks involving hatchets, she is also called the Hatchet Granny. She is also one of the major figures who are able to draft dramatic private directives to drive the crisis updates and move the timeline forward.

## **Tie-breakers**

### **William Edwards Reynolds**

William Edwards Reynold is a government official working as commandant of the Coast Guard. He was in charge of protecting the U.S. Coast from harm but is recently having a hard time dealing with the rum runners of the east coast. While Reynolds is against the Mafia and the rum runners, he is more than willing to use them as an

opportunity to get many destroyers (ships) from the Navy. As a result, Reynolds was able to increase the number of vessels and men serving under him. Reynolds is not typically interested in eradicating the Mafias in the United States.

### **Henry Louis Mencken**

Henry Louis Mencken is an American journalist, essayist, satirist, cultural critic, and scholar. He is an outspoken opponent of organized religion, theism, and representative democracy. Additionally, he is a supporter of scientific progress and was critical of osteopathy and chiropractic. Mencken openly criticized prohibition. As an individual that resents both the government and the Mafia, Mencken would be a loner and could possibly draft aggressive private directives rather than public directives in order to impact the direction of the committee.

### **Fiorello La Guardia**

Fiorello La Guardia is an American attorney and politician who represented New York in the House of Representatives. Guardia staunchly opposed prohibition, as shown by his infamous act of summoning twenty news reporters and drinking beer right in front of them. Due to his brazen acts, he was not popular between his fellow members of the Parliament and was considered an outsider. The fact that he is an influential politician remains the same: he can utilize his status as the member in the House of Representatives to issue private directives or public directives that benefits the government, but possibly in a less conventional direction compared to the rest of the group.

### **George Remus**

George Remus is an ex-lawyer who became one of the most successful bootleggers in America. Remus established his own drug companies that bought liquor with government positions, then had his gang members hijack the transports to extort the liquor. He holds a similar stance as Roy Olmstead, and may collaborate or oppose him. He would raise private directives for his smuggling industry, not necessarily for the Mafia.

### **Charles Norris**

Charles Norris is New York's first appointed chief medical examiner. He was suspicious of the government poisoning and killing people with alcohol, and accordingly often conducted autopsies to confirm his notion. Norris has the ability to reveal government secrets which the mafias could potentially take advantage of. Norris is one of the outsiders that would collaborate with the Mafia to check his suspicions despite being on the government's side.

### **Pierre S. du Pont**

Pierre S. du Pont is an American entrepreneur, businessman, philanthropist, and member of the prominent du Pont family. He is also known as the president of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment. Although he is opposed to Prohibition, he

is willing to hold hands with anyone that would benefit his company: the Du Pont company, which specializes in producing gunpowder and other explosives. Depending on who he sides with, either the Mafia or the government would be able to benefit from his tremendous wealth and authority.

### **Grayson M. P. Murphy**

Grayson M. P. Murphy is an American banker and company director. He is an active participant in the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment and a passionate advocate against the Eighteenth Amendment, strongly asserting his beliefs at a Congressional hearing. He believes his efforts would greatly contribute to the repeal of prohibition in the United States. While he is against the prohibition law as a whole, he is simply a banker who is in favor of neither the Mafia nor the government.

## Possible Solutions

### **Solution #1: Backup Plan (Mafia)**

In the case of the Mafias, they are under continuous threat from the United States government, the members of which are working towards eradicating all criminal organizations through investigations of murder scenes and routes. There is a high chance that the government will “catch” the criminals and prevent them from further criminal activities or even dismantle such organizations. It is, therefore, crucial to make sure that all activities and meetings are done covertly. It is highly recommended that the mafiosos come up with a backup plan to run away to a new location, whether it be their home countries or a completely unexpected region in the world. It is likely that the mafiosos would be able to safely conduct illegal activities and continue to accumulate income without the U.S. government keeping an eye out for them.

### **Solution #2: Collaboration and Corruption (Government)**

It is now time for the government officials to take a step towards restoring American society. Their priority must be to distinguish the mafias hiding among the innocent civilians, sabotaging and depraving the society. It is highly encouraged that the government officials effectively utilize government agents and groups, including the Prohibition Agents that are already part of the subcommittee. The resources they have at hand will be extremely valuable in finding clues, allowing them to bring the mafias under control in no time. However, finding the consensus through collaboration is necessary in order for such plans to work out.

There is also a high chance that some government officials may be working with the mafias under the table for their own interest. Therefore, it is crucial that the rest of the government officials are mindful about sharing information. It is suggested that the officials devise a strategy to accurately identify and penalize any individuals attempting to collaborate with the criminals.

### **Solution #3: Flexibility**

It should never be forgotten that the tie-breakers are just as important as the mafiosos and the government officials. While it is apparent that they would stick to either side of the situation depending on the trend of the committee, it is essential that the tie-breakers try to maintain a neutral (or at least not too radical) stance to prevent huge losses from changes in power dynamics. They are all ultimately businessmen or individuals working for their own interests, so it is imperative that they are flexible and do not recklessly side with one party.

## Questions to Consider

### For the Government Officials:

- What methods would successfully tackle criminal organizations with a short budget? Would brute force be a viable option?
- How would the government more effectively clamp down on the Mafia?
- Should Prohibition still be continued?
- How would the government be able to regain the trust of the public?
- How would the punishments against the Mafia backfire?

### For the Mafias:

- How could prohibition be maintained?
- Are there any other alternatives if the Volstead Act is repealed?
- What would be some good countermeasures to government prosecution?
- Should the mafias collaborate with each other? If so, then how would all of their interests be secured?
- What are some backup measures if certain missions or criminal acts fail to benefit the organization?

### For the Tie-Breakers:

- Which side would be the most beneficial?
- Would siding with one side or hedging with both sides be beneficial?
- How would one be able to gain the most without annoying the two sides?
- What are the current power dynamics?
- Is the Prohibition Law beneficial to your stance/business?

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