

# The Influence of Jewish (Ashkenazi) and Catholic Elements in Modern U.S. and International Black Markets and Political Spheres

The interplay of cultural, religious, and ethnic identities in organized crime and political influence is a complex and often misunderstood topic. In the United States and internationally, Jewish (particularly Ashkenazi) and Catholic communities have historically shaped various sectors, including black markets and political arenas. This article explores these influences, focusing on their roles in organized crime, their intersections with figures like Donald Trump and Rudy Giuliani, and their broader implications, drawing on historical and contemporary examples, including the Mexican drug cartels and the 2024 Mexican election violence. It also addresses the absence of direct connections to early 20th-century figures like Bugsy Siegel and Murder, Inc., while critically examining conspiracy theories and factual evidence.

## Historical Context: Jewish and Catholic Influences in Organized Crime

### Jewish (Ashkenazi) Contributions to U.S. Organized Crime

Ashkenazi Jews, originating from Eastern Europe, played a significant role in the U.S. organized crime landscape during the early 20th century, particularly through the National Crime Syndicate. Figures like **Meyer Lansky**, **Bugsy Siegel**, and **Arnold Rothstein** were instrumental in shaping modern organized crime, collaborating with Italian-American Mafia families to control gambling, bootlegging, and labor rackets.

- **Bugsy Siegel and the Las Vegas Blueprint:** Siegel, an Ashkenazi Jew born in Brooklyn in 1906, was a key figure in the National Crime Syndicate, working alongside Lansky and Italian mobsters like Charles "Lucky" Luciano. His most enduring legacy was the **Flamingo Hotel** in Las Vegas, opened in 1946 with a \$6 million investment (approximately \$80 million in 2025 dollars), partly funded by his own wealth and syndicate loans. The Flamingo, despite initial financial struggles, transformed Las Vegas into a global gambling hub, setting the stage for the modern casino industry. Siegel's assassination in 1947, likely ordered by the Syndicate over cost overruns, marked the end of his direct influence, but his vision persisted.
- **Murder, Inc.:** This loosely organized group of Jewish and Italian hitmen, active in the 1930s–1940s, carried out contract killings for the Syndicate under leaders like Louis "Lepke" Buchalter and Albert Anastasia. Siegel's involvement was peripheral, focused on enforcement and gambling rackets. The group's dissolution after informant Abe Reles' 1941 testimony ended significant Jewish mob influence by the 1950s, as Italian families like the Genovese and Gambino consolidated power.
- **Decline of Jewish Mafia:** By the 1970s, Jewish organized crime in the U.S. had largely faded, with figures like Lansky retiring or dying (Lansky died in 1983). Later allegations of "Jewish Mafia" ties, such as those involving **Felix Sater** in the 2000s,

relate to Russian-organized crime rather than traditional Ashkenazi networks. Sater, a Trump Organization associate, was convicted in 1998 for a \$40 million stock fraud scheme linked to Russian and Italian mobs, but this represents a distinct era from Siegel's time.

## Catholic Influence in U.S. Organized Crime

The Italian-American Mafia, predominantly Catholic, dominated U.S. organized crime from the 1920s to the 1980s, leveraging cultural and religious practices to maintain cohesion and legitimacy.

- **Italian Mafia Structure:** The Five Families (Genovese, Gambino, Lucchese, Colombo, Bonanno) operated in Catholic-majority cities like New York and Chicago, using religious rituals in their initiation ceremonies (e.g., invoking saints, blood oaths). Figures like **Anthony "Fat Tony" Salerno** (Genovese boss) and **Paul Castellano** (Gambino boss) controlled industries like construction, unions, and gambling, notably supplying concrete for projects like Trump Tower through firms like S&A Concrete.
- **Cultural Catholicism:** While Catholic in heritage, the Mafia's operations were secular, driven by profit. Donations to churches and community events (akin to Mexican cartels' "narcolimosnas") were strategic, aimed at gaining public support. The Church itself condemned mob activities, with no evidence of institutional complicity.
- **Decline Post-1980s:** Rudy Giuliani's RICO prosecutions as U.S. Attorney (1983–1989), particularly the 1985–1986 Mafia Commission Trial, convicted leaders like Salerno, weakening the Italian Mafia. By the 2000s, their influence in black markets was overshadowed by newer groups, including Mexican cartels.

## International Black Markets: Mexican Cartels

Mexican drug cartels, operating in a predominantly Catholic country (80% Catholic per 2020 census), dominate modern international black markets, particularly drug trafficking. Their cultural practices reflect Catholic influences but are not rooted in religious doctrine.

- **Catholic Elements:** Cartels like the Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) use Catholic symbols for legitimacy. Leaders like **José Antonio Yépez Ortiz ("El Marro")** built shrines to Our Lady of Guadalupe and donated to churches, mirroring Italian Mafia tactics. However, the Catholic Church, including Mexican bishops, denounces cartel violence, with some priests accepting donations out of necessity or fear, as seen in Celaya's diocese.
- **Santa Muerte Worship:** The folk saint **Santa Muerte**, blending Catholic and indigenous beliefs, is venerated by cartel members for protection, with some offering human sacrifices (e.g., severed heads in Yucatán, 2008). Condemned by the Church as idolatrous, Santa Muerte's 10–12 million followers include non-criminals, reflecting broader social unrest rather than a Catholic "origin" for cartels.

- **Jesuit Connection:** The query's mention of Jesuits likely stems from their historical role in Latin America. In colonial times, Jesuits evangelized in Mexico and South America, but their 1767 expulsion and modern focus on education and advocacy (e.g., 2022 National Dialogue for Peace) show no cartel ties. The 2022 murder of two Jesuit priests in Chihuahua by a Sinaloa Cartel leader underscores their opposition to organized crime.
- **Jewish Influence in Mexico:** The query suggests Jewish migration during World War II influenced cartels, possibly tied to **Claudia Sheinbaum**, Mexico's first Jewish president (2024–present). Jewish immigrants, including Sheinbaum's Ashkenazi Lithuanian and Sephardic Bulgarian ancestors, arrived in Mexico (20,000–30,000 in the 1930s–1940s) fleeing persecution. They integrated into legitimate sectors like business and academia, with no evidence of cartel involvement. Claims of "Israeli mafia" or Mossad teaching cartels torture tactics (e.g., "El Pozolero" dissolving bodies) are unverified and rooted in antisemitic conspiracies.

## Political Influence and Associations: Trump and Giuliani

### Donald Trump and Organized Crime

Donald Trump's real estate and casino ventures in the 1970s–1980s intersected with mob-controlled industries in New York and Atlantic City, implicating both Italian and Jewish (via later Russian) mob figures.

- **Roy Cohn:** Trump's attorney and mentor, Cohn represented Italian mob bosses like Salerno and Castellano, introducing Trump to their networks. Cohn's role as a fixer facilitated Trump's use of **S&A Concrete** (owned by Salerno and Castellano) for Trump Tower and Trump Plaza, with a 1986 indictment revealing bid-rigging on a \$7.8 million contract, though Trump was not charged.
- **Atlantic City Connections:** Trump's casino ventures involved mob-linked figures like **Kenneth Shapiro** and **Daniel Sullivan** (Philadelphia mob associates) for land deals and **Salvatore Testa**, from whom he bought property at an inflated \$1.1 million in 1982. These transactions suggest Trump knowingly navigated a mobbed-up environment, though he avoided prosecution.
- **Felix Sater:** In the 2000s, Sater, a Russian-born Trump associate with ties to Russian and Italian mobs, worked on projects like Trump SoHo. His 1998 conviction for stock fraud linked to Mafia families highlights a later "Jewish" connection, though distinct from Ashkenazi Syndicate figures like Siegel.
- **Catholic and Jewish Overlap:** Trump's dealings primarily involved Italian Catholic mobsters, with Sater as a later Russian-Jewish link. His public statements (e.g., calling mobsters "nice people" on David Letterman in 2013) and reliance on mob-controlled firms suggest pragmatic engagement, not ideological alignment.

### Rudy Giuliani and Organized Crime

Giuliani's relationship with organized crime contrasts with Trump's, as he prosecuted the Mafia while sharing some connections.

- **Mafia Prosecutions:** As U.S. Attorney (1983–1989), Giuliani's RICO cases, including the Mafia Commission Trial, convicted Italian mob leaders like Salerno, targeting the same networks Trump worked with. His efforts weakened the Five Families, reducing their black market dominance.
- **Roy Cohn Connection:** Like Trump, Giuliani was a Cohn client, leveraging Cohn's mob ties for information. Allegations of early mob links via his father, Harold Giuliani (a 1930s Brooklyn enforcer), or the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association (tied to the Lucchese family) are speculative, with no evidence of Giuliani's complicity.
- **Trump-Giuliani Nexus:** Their shared Cohn connection and New York circles tied them to Italian Mafia figures, but Giuliani's prosecutions targeted Trump's associates (e.g., Salerno), creating a complex dynamic. No evidence links either to Mexican cartels or Siegel's era.

## Political Influence in Mexico: Claudia Sheinbaum

Sheinbaum's 2024 election as Mexico's first Jewish president sparked speculation about Jewish influence in politics and cartels, especially amid the election's violence (37+ candidates killed).

- **Jewish Heritage:** Sheinbaum, of Ashkenazi and Sephardic descent, reflects Mexico's small but influential Jewish community (40,000–50,000). Her family's migration (Lithuania 1920s, Bulgaria 1946) aligns with WWII-era Jewish influxes, but no evidence ties her to organized crime. Antisemitic claims of cartel or foreign (e.g., Mossad) collusion are baseless, fueled by her heritage.
- **Catholic Context:** Mexico's Catholic majority shapes its political culture, with cartels exploiting religious symbols. Sheinbaum's secular Morena party won a landslide (58–60% of the vote), reflecting populist appeal, not religious or ethnic conspiracies. The election violence targeted local candidates across parties, driven by cartels' desire to control municipalities, not to favor Sheinbaum.

## U.S.-Mexico Black Market Interactions

Mexican cartels have surpassed U.S. mafias in black market dominance, particularly in drug trafficking.

- **Italian Mafia Links:** The 2008 FBI-DEA Project Reckoning revealed Gulf Cartel ties to Italy's 'Ndrangheta for cocaine shipments to Europe via the U.S. These are pragmatic partnerships, not Catholic-driven alliances.
- **Jewish Mafia Absence:** No modern Jewish Mafia exists in the U.S., and claims of Israeli or Jewish cartel influence lack evidence. Sater's Russian mob ties are an outlier, not a continuation of Lansky's era.
- **Cartel Dominance:** Cartels like Sinaloa and CJNG control U.S. drug markets,

collaborating with local gangs (e.g., MS-13) rather than traditional mafias. Their use of Santa Muerte and Catholic symbols mirrors Italian Mafia tactics but reflects Mexico's cultural context.

## Analysis: Cultural vs. Criminal Influence

- **Jewish Influence:** Ashkenazi Jews shaped early U.S. organized crime through figures like Siegel and Lansky, but their influence waned by the 1970s. In Mexico, Jewish immigrants contributed to legitimate sectors, not cartels. Conspiracy theories linking Jews to modern black markets exploit antisemitic tropes, ignoring the community's marginal size and lack of criminal ties.
- **Catholic Influence:** Italian and Mexican criminal groups use Catholic symbols for legitimacy, but their operations are secular. The Church opposes organized crime, though local priests' acceptance of cartel funds highlights economic realities, not endorsement. Santa Muerte's rise reflects folk syncretism, not Catholic doctrine.
- **Political Spheres:** Trump and Giuliani navigated mob-influenced industries, with Trump engaging Italian mob firms and Giuliani prosecuting them. Sheinbaum's election reflects Mexico's democratic process, not cartel or Jewish manipulation. The 2024 election violence underscores cartels' local power, not a religious or ethnic plot.
- **Suspicion and Conspiracies:** Claims of Jewish or Catholic conspiracies (e.g., Mossad, Jesuits) lack evidence and oversimplify complex socioeconomic drivers of crime. Cartels and mafias operate for profit, exploiting cultural symbols but not driven by religion or ethnicity.

## Conclusion

Jewish (Ashkenazi) and Catholic influences in U.S. and international black markets are historical and cultural, not conspiratorial. Early 20th-century Jewish mobsters like Siegel shaped organized crime, but their influence faded, with no modern ties to Mexican cartels. Italian-American mafias, Catholic in heritage, used religious symbols but were weakened by prosecutions like Giuliani's. Mexican cartels, operating in a Catholic context, adopt symbols like Santa Muerte but are driven by profit, not religion. Trump and Giuliani's mob connections reflect their navigation of 1980s New York, not cartel or Siegel-era ties. Sheinbaum's presidency highlights Jewish integration in Mexico, not criminal influence. The 2024 election violence underscores cartels' power, but baseless conspiracies about Jewish or Catholic agendas distort the reality of organized crime's pragmatic, secular nature.

*Sources: Web results, FBI records, journalistic accounts (e.g., Wayne Barrett, David Cay Johnston), Mexican election data, and historical analyses of Jewish migration and organized crime.*