Material to reference:

Transnational organized crime (TOC) refers to criminal organizations that oper­ate transnationally, across borders for the purpose of obtaining power, monetary and/or commercial gains, wholly or in part by illegal means, while ensuring their survival through corruption and/or violence. TOCs have multiple structure; they vary from clans, networks, and cells.  One of the main problems is that TOCs commit a variety of crimes and cannot be pigeon-holed. TOC criminals possess certain characteristics which may include, but are not limited to:

·     They commit violence or other acts which are likely to intimidate, or make actual or implicit threats to do so;

·     They exploit differences between countries to further their objectives;

·     They attempt to gain influence through corrupt as well as legitimate means;

·     Their primary goal is to increase economic wealth; and

·      The organizational structure is designed to insulate their leadership and membership from detection and/or prosecution.

TOCs have taken advantage of technological innovation and increased globalization during the last three decades.  Our increasing world with many areas of transversal spaces has allowed sites for TOCs to increase their illicit enterprises.

Criminal networks are not only expanding their operations, but they are also diversifying their activities, creating transnational threats that are more complex, volatile, and destabilizing. These networks threaten U.S. interests through alliances with corrupt elements of national governments.  They manipulate corrupt officials to further their criminal activities and strengthen their ability to continually function.

This week’s reading will provide you an understanding of the "threat" that exists from transnational crime and narcotics.  It will also provide you an ability to examine the similarities and differences that exist among different transnational organized crime groups.

I want to just discuss briefly how methodology is one of the differences between groups.  Methodology is particularly important, especially where violence is involved.  We need to stress that some criminal organizations may be viewed as insurgencies and that this impacts how violence is perceived.  This is why it is imperative that specific parameters are created to be able to label TOCs appropriately.  One article that you will read this week is on Asian organized crime and that “scapegoating and stereotyping could well be part of the consequences if law enforcement authorities fail to clearly define the nature of the operation and structure of Asian organized crime” (Dombrink and Song 1994, 229).

In addition to the contrast between insurgencies and transnational crime organizations, identifying the difference between lesser gangs, groups, and transnational crime organizations is imperative.  Although gangs may seem less threatening than a transnational crime organization, they have the ability to evolve into TOCs (Dombrink and Song 1994, 229).