



The European Dimensions of Organized Crime

Some remarks from a criminological perspective

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The Concept of Organized Crime

- Organized crime = organized criminal **activity**
- Organized crime = criminal **organization**
 - **economic** functions: illegal enterprises
 - **non-economic** functions: e.g. criminal associations (*vory v zakone, Cosa Nostra*)
- Organized crime = criminal **power** structures
 - organized **underworld**
 - **alliance** between criminal, political and business elites

Organized Criminal Activity

- Crimes with EU dimension:
 - VAT fraud
 - smuggling of high excise goods (tobacco)
 - => EU response needed
- Crimes with European dimension:
 - trafficking trade routes (e.g. drugs, humans)
 - transnational predatory crimes
 - => EU and other international bodies need to promote and facilitate international cooperation

Criminal “Organizations”

- Transnational criminal groups: overrated
 - mostly associational networks
 - latent (and potential) rather than manifest links
 - transnational enterprises segmented
 - transnational links between local entities
 - criminal associations have little impact on members abroad
- Transnational crime should better be targeted in terms of logistics, opportunities, patterns

Criminal Power Structures

- “Mafia transplantation” (F. Varese)
- Power is rooted in local context
 - underworld milieus
 - homogeneous communities
- Alliances between criminal, political and business elites
 - culturally embedded
 - congruent interests
- Local conditions not easily replicable

Conclusions

- Europe, EU no homogeneous crime region
“patchwork” of crime regions/trade routes
- Offender structures mostly locally based
- Transnational crime:
 - movement of commodities
 - communication between local entities
 - network of mostly latent transnational ties
- ‘Organized crime’/’criminal group’ not useful
- Bottom up, European wide assessment: NECA

Sources/Further Reading/Links

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