Social Studies

Why the Mafia must have home cooking

Federico Varese

Do Americans bowl alone?
Michael Barone

How the shamans survive
T. M. Luhrmann

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Paul Boghossian
There's no place like home

How the Mafia finds it difficult to expand from its geographical base

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The Triads as Business
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Mafia Vecchie, Mafia Nuove
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1993, the twelve people who are said to rule the Solvesevo decided to expand their operation to Italy. It was an operation taken very seriously by the Italian police, who started a lengthy investigation of the case and eventually produced a confidential three-volume report on the activities of the Solvesse in Italy. Rocco Sciarone’s Mafia Vecchie, Mafia Nuove examines the roots and attempts at expansion of various Italian Mafias, namely the Sicilian Mafia, the Neapolitan Camera and the Calabrian-based ‘Ndrangheta. Although the text is at times burdened by academic jargon, this is an important contribution to the study of the local nature of Italian Mafia groups and the strategies they expand to other parts of the country. It draws on more than one hundred judicial reports as well as numerous interviews with entrepreneurs and money laundering, and with local politicians and prosecutors. Sciarone’s book is complemented by the collection edited by Tom Farer, Transactional Crime in the Americas. At first, I suspected that the latter book would be another attempt by academics to cash in on their fear among the American public and politicians of the supposedly ‘new mono-lithic threat of Transnational Organized Crime’ (to use Senator John Kerry’s prestigious preface), but the book wonderfully highlights the inconsistencies of the current definitions of ‘Transna- tional Organized Crime’, puts the international nature of contemporary criminal enterprises in historical context and criticizes the attempt by some state bureaucracies, in particular that of the United States, to manufacture a new security threat to re-define that of the Soviet Union. The spread of the Mafia has often been compared to that of a disease, such as cancer, and the carrier of that disease is said to be migration in Italy in the 1980s, the xenophbic Northern League called for controls over the North-South migration. Sciarone, however, shows that migration can be both a cure and a background condition, neither of which can be used by the government to create a public opinion for a Mafia group to expand. Most of the entrepreneurs now found employed in the industries of Northern Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. The labour market was able to integrate two million people into the local economy. A perverse policy of the Italian State in a more significant factor in Mafia expansion. Recently rescued Mafiosi were often forced to reside outside their area of origin as a form of punishment. Forced resettlement (spac- piene obbligato) was practiced on the assumption that, away from their home base and immersed in the civic, law-abiding culture of the North, Mafiosi would surrender their old ways. Since the mid-1950s, this policy brought hard-nosed lawbreakers to northern regions of Italy, such as Lombardy, Piedmont and Emilia- Romagna. The policy was clearly flawed, based on a naive view of the Mafia as a product of a backward society. In fact, Mafiosi were often selected for forced migration individuals with criminal Mafia skills and surely was a factor facilitating expansions.

Most important of all, criminals migrate to escape Mafia orders. In fact, Mafiosi of the region say that Magadino did. The position of the Mafia in the North, however, is more complex than it seems. For example, when Magadino moved his activity to Switzerland, he did not abandon his position in the North, but continued to control the activities of his men there. The same can be said for many other Mafiosi who have moved to other countries. Sciarone’s book is a valuable contribution to the study of the Mafia in its various forms, and is highly recommended for anyone interested in the phenomenon of organized crime.

Ernesto Ruggiero
sequence, the Medelines carted accused a foot- hold in Bolivia. It is hardly ever the case that a move to a distant land takes the form of a formal agreement. At first, a criminal organization, then less the integration of two organizations. Most importantly, local agents of foreign Mafia need to become autonomous from their old masters. Anthony P. Maio, in his paper in the Parole collection, shows how Colombian criminalists at first worked as agents of the Colombian traffickers, but soon became autonomous and independent of their old masters. Similarly, the Bolivian rancher-trafficke Snyder Gómez successfully freed himself from the power of the Colombian and was, until his death in July 2000, the biggest Bolivian drug king.

Unlike legitimate global businesses, Mafia firms find it hard to take advantage of the benefits of economic scale. The bigger the organization, the harder it is to collect reliable information both on new recruits and local conditions. Moreover, the bigger the reach of the organization, the more likely it is that disputes will emerge within it, and that rival reputations will be fostered, allowing police informants to penetrate the organization. A successful expansion in a new territory also depends onWK.

In the early 1990s, the European Union allowed the Mafia to maintain their organized crime groups and the mafia in Europe, which was the main reason for the break-up of the Mafias. The EU was then able to adopt a more aggressive stance against the Mafia, which had been targeted for a long time. The Mafia was then able to use this new aggressive stance to the benefit of the local Mafia groups. The Mafia was thus able to gradually gain control over the local market.

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