

6-1-2012

Review of *Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime Conquers New Territories*, by Federico Varese

H. R. Friman

Marquette University, h.r.friman@marquette.edu

practice deleterious to democratic institutionalization can open up new possibilities for antiauthoritarian forces. Exile can offer political actors the opportunity for political learning and for redefinition of political identity. Exiled political actors can also reassess the costs and benefits of their tactics, as well as the validity of their strategic goals. Moreover, they can gain access to existing political, social, and intellectual networks and/or develop new ones. They even can transcend nationalist mistrust, and expand their geopolitical visions and loyalties. In brief, in exile, political actors can rethink the meaning of politics and alter its practice.

The political impact on the homeland, in turn, depends on the degree of politicization, activism, and effectiveness of exiles: their capacity to represent translocated compatriots (to give them a voice on the international stage and to leverage the importance of diasporas to home states), to energize solidarity networks, and so forth. On this front, the book uncharacteristically provides a less than complete account of the institutional, economic, and political mechanisms involved in the loopback effect of exile activism on the home state and regime. On another front, however, the book succeeds resoundingly in demonstrating that exile, though a legacy of authoritarianism, is neither static nor inescapable precisely because exile means not the end of politics but, rather, a new starting point. At stake in the politics of exile is the utility of exile itself as an instrument of exclusion, as well as the costs and benefits of undemocratic practices more broadly. The authors cogently argue that exiles can affect both.

The eclecticism and micro-macro scope of *The Politics of Exile in Latin America* are a source of strength. Borrowing from anthropology, for instance, the book identifies the ways in which exiles acquire and deploy social and cultural capital; and drawing on sociology, it contends with the internal alignments and cleavages of exile communities. Not unrelated to its strength, however, is its weakness. The book engages, in sustained fashion, with definitional discussions of exile, but links only tenuously its own theoretical insights and rich empirical findings to broader theoretical debates. Most notably, the book correctly emphasizes the institutional implications of exile for the development of citizenship and democracy, but fails to address institutionalist approaches to the study of the state and democratization.

Omissions notwithstanding, this book ought to be of interest to scholars working on the role of authoritarian legacies and political learning in the construction of regimes and states in Latin America. It should also command the attention of scholars who work outside the region, especially those who seek to understand the relationship between the (re)construction of collective identity, political allegiances, and political action. No single book can do it all. *The Politics of Exile* is no different. But what it does, it does extremely well.

Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime

Conquers New Territories. By Federico Varese. Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 2011. 288p. \$35.00.

doi:10.1017/S1537592712000047

— H. Richard Friman, *Marquette University*

Conventional wisdom on globalization and crime posits the combination of technological change and economic liberalization as contributing to the unprecedented expansion of criminal activities and organizations on a global scale. Federico Varese challenges the premise that globalization-induced opportunities for transnational mobility are the primary determinants of criminal expansion and that such expansion is always successful. The volume's central argument is that successful transplantation of mafias is more likely where demand for criminal protection exists due to sudden market expansion "that is not properly regulated by the state" and where a supply of persons capable of stepping in to meet this demand is present (p. 12).

Varese narrows the focus of the inquiry over the expansion of organized crime to the practices of mafia organizations. He explicitly defines a mafia as "a group that supplies protection in the territory of origin," and defines transplantation as "the ability of a mafia group to operate an outpost over a sustained period outside of its region of origin and routine operation" (p. 6). Although narrow conceptual framing can be used to place contending approaches at an explanatory disadvantage, Varese accurately observes that the globalization literature often claims to explain *mafia* expansion while blurring critical distinctions between types of organized crime groups and their varied activities.

The author engages diverse literatures through a typology of supply and demand factors shaping mafia transplantation. The supply side refers to factors that explain why mafia members might move to new locations, whereas the demand side consists of factors that explain why mafia members, once relocated, become entrenched. The treatment of supply factors is wide-ranging, drawing on migration arguments and economic approaches to organized crime. Varese rejects the politically popular argument that criminals surface in new territories as part of broader migration streams, turning to a more nuanced migration-push approach. He argues that state-sponsored relocation programs, as well as escalating police enforcement and competition with criminal rivals, lead mafia members to move involuntarily to new territories.

The remainder of the supply-side discussion focuses on the utility of arguments that equate the economic decisions of organized crime groups with those of legitimate firms considering foreign expansion. Varese points in particular to the shortcomings of resource acquisition and investment-seeking approaches as explanations for mafia relocation, arguing that the need for physical relocation

has become less important in both regards in the increasingly global economy. The final supply-side factor, relocation to develop or capture new markets, could be much better developed in the volume. Varese argues that without the migration push of “police repression or mafia infighting,” mafia members would be unlikely to decide to move to a new market (p. 20). Unfortunately, consideration of economic-push effects is missing here, particularly a discussion of ways in which market saturation at home or in existing areas of territorial expansion would lead members of mafia groups to explore new territories.

Varese defines demand-side factors as the “conditions in the new territory” that shape the “presence of genuine demand for criminal protection” (pp. 21, 23). A prominent theme in the organized crime literature is that demands for private protection emerge where the state lacks capacity to settle disputes in legal markets, where “entrepreneurs seek to sell legal commodities illegally,” and particularly in illegal markets (p. 23). The volume contributes to this literature in at least two important ways. First, it turns to the role and origins of trust in social relations, drawing on civic engagement arguments developed by Robert Putnam and applied by other scholars. Where high levels of civic engagement are typically seen as a check on mafia expansion, Varese argues in detail that coexistence is possible and not limited to those portions of society dealing in illegal goods. Engaged sectors of society, he posits, may welcome private protection due to the market advantages it may bring in legal or informal markets.

Second, the volume adds to the literature on private protection by exploring the impact of different types of market opportunity. Domestic-oriented markets, such as the construction sector, raise issues of control over labor and rivals, which have long been seen by scholars as conducive to demands for private protection. Varese contrasts this pattern with export-oriented economies, particularly those where local producers are not competing for access and control of the same foreign markets. Under such conditions, he argues, there is relatively little demand for private protection, and as a result, mafias have little to offer domestic producers.

The remainder of the volume explores these arguments through paired comparisons of efforts at mafia expansion. Three of the four case study chapters focus on a specific mafia organization and an example of its successful and failed transplantation. Varese explores the domestic expansion of the ‘Ndrangheta into the northern Italian regions of Piedmont and Veneto, the international expansion of the Russian Solntsevskaya into Rome and Budapest, and the historical expansion of the Sicilian mafia into New York City and Rosario, Argentina. The fourth chapter turns to an overview of recent expansion by various Hong Kong and Taiwanese triads into mainland China.

The case studies, while structured with a focus on supply and demand factors, are more a narrative illustration

of the plausibility of the book’s central arguments. Varese draws on a varying mix of secondary literature, government analyses and criminal justice files, media reports, and field interviews. The chapters are highly engaging, offering detailed contextual background and identifying key members of the various organizations, their paths to the new territories, and their activities upon arrival. The cases lend support to the author’s emphasis on migration push as a critical supply-side factor, and on patterns in the demand for private protection as shaping successful mafia transplantation.

Aspects of the case selection are puzzling, however. Varese acknowledges challenges in case selection and the considerations that inform his choices. Yet further discussion would help to clarify the logic of particular pairings, such as New York City with Rosario instead of Buenos Aires. The focus on the ‘Ndrangheta’s transplantation within Italy is more puzzling. The author writes that “[t]he ‘Ndrangheta has clearly demonstrated a remarkable ability to establish branches abroad” (p. 34). Yet his response to the absence of “in-depth studies of the ‘Ndrangheta’s transplantation into new territories” is to explore movement from southern to northern Italy (p. 34). He correctly observes that the chapter’s findings challenge prominent social capital arguments on the impact of high civic engagement. But looking beyond Italy could have addressed this literature, as well as conventional globalization arguments and economic approaches to the *transnational* expansion of organized crime.

These concerns aside, *Mafias on the Move* offers a compelling and cautionary tale of the unintended consequences of state actions. Enforcement efforts within the mafia’s home territory involuntarily displaced mafia members into new regions. In some of these destinations, state choices on economic transitions, democratic reforms, and anticorruption initiatives enhanced the demand for private protection in ways that facilitated the mafia’s successful transplantation. The illustration of this argument across a diverse selection of countries and time periods is among the ways in which Varese provides an insightful challenge to the conventional wisdom on the impact of globalization and an essential contribution to the literature on organized crime.

The Politics of Human Rights. By Andrew Vincent. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 272p. \$99.00 cloth, \$35.00 paper. doi:10.1017/S1537592712000059

— Keith Tester, *University of Hull*

Jacques Maritain once reflected on his participation in the discussions that led to the promulgation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. In his book *Man and the State* (1951) he said that all of the participants in the discussions were agreed about the importance of human rights and indeed what human rights meant, but as soon