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# Organized Crime, Transit Crime, and Racketeering

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## Abstract

When organized crime reached the political agenda in the early 1990s, it was framed in terms of "Mafia-type" organizations and infiltration in (local) governments, geographical areas, and economic sectors (racketeering). This conception contradicted the phenomenon: the primary business of organized crime is more fittingly described as "transit crime," as opposed to the control of economic sectors or regions. Criminal groups should be viewed as "criminal networks" (instead of as pyramidal structures), as can be seen in several illegal activities: drug trafficking, human trafficking for sexual exploitation, smuggling of illegal immigrants, arms trafficking, and trafficking in stolen vehicles. The misconception of the nature of organized crime put criminal investigation strategies on the wrong track, but the changing view of organized crime is mirrored by a change in criminal investigation strategies. Flexible "prompt intervention" strategies are more common, as an alternative to the large-scale and lengthy "long-haul" strategies of the past. Both covert policing and infiltration and uncontrolled deliveries (of drugs) were regulated or forbidden and displaced by increasing reliance on "unobtrusive" methods of gathering evidence such as wiretapping and bugging. These methods may be effective in cases of transit crime. The innovative administrative approach may be more effective against racketeering than against transit crime.

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