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## **Book Review: Mafia Brotherhoods: Organized Crime, Italian Style**

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*Mafia Brotherhoods: Organized Crime, Italian Style*, by Letizia Paoli. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. pp. xiv, 289.

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Letizia Paoli's *Mafia Brotherhoods* is the fourth comprehensive scholarly study of the Mafia phenomenon in Southern Italy available in English following Henner Hess's (1973) *Mafia and Mafiosi*, Pino Arlacchi's (1986) *Mafia Business*, and Diego Gambetta's (1993) *The Sicilian Mafia*. Like Gambetta, she draws on *pentiti* statements to reject earlier claims that there are no Mafia associations in the form of clear-cut organizational entities. But she is closer to the interpretations provided by Hess and Arlacchi when she emphasizes the cultural aspects of Mafia membership and argues that Mafia associations are "multifunctional entities" (p. 177) and not merely enterprises selling private protection, as Gambetta has proposed.

*Mafia Brotherhoods* is a well-structured treatise that is tremendously complex and rich in detail. In five main chapters, it examines the Sicilian Cosa Nostra and the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta from various angles, highlighting similarities and differences and trends over time up to the turn of the 21st century. In the introduction, Paoli briefly compares the American Cosa Nostra to its Italian counterparts. Chapter 1 deals with the structure of individual Mafia groups and the superordinate bodies of the two Mafia associations. Chapters 2 and 3 focus primarily on cultural and ideological aspects, namely the meanings of Mafia membership, secrecy, and violence. The fourth chapter deals with the economic and Political dimensions of the Mafia phenomenon, and chapter 5 analyzes the relationships between Mafia and politics.

Cosa Nostra and 'Ndrangheta, Paoli explains, constitute the core of the Mafia phenomenon in Italy. They are loose confederations of about 100 Mafia groups each (also called *cosche*, or families) that respectively claim sovereignty over a territory, usually a town or village. The individual families have remained the real centers of Mafia power even after coordinating bodies were created in the Sicilian Mafia in 1957 and in the 'Ndrangheta as late as 1991. The strength and weakness of the two Mafia associations lie in the brotherhood bonds through which their members are connected. The rite of Mafia initiation establishes not only a status as "man of honor" but also an almost religious communion that creates obligations of correctness and solidarity. These ties promote trust and provide a basis for specific purposive contracts. The weakness of brotherhood bonds lies in the limited pool of potential novices who already have to subscribe to the values underlying the Mafia code. As Paoli observes, internal cohesion and the sociopolitical position of the Mafia associations have been considerably weakened during the past decades because of the modernization of society in Southern Italy and the increasing importance attached to material values over the traditional code of honor. However, the process of deligitimation and marginalization of the Mafia may have lost considerable strength in the face of continued unemployment, institutional inefficiencies, and efforts to reform anti-Mafia legislation "promoted by politicians and state officials colluding with the Mafia or sharing mafiosi's judicial interests" (p. 212), including Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

*Mafia Brotherhoods* is certainly the reference work on the Mafia and 'Ndrangheta, but there are also some caveats. The first point of critique is the adversarial approach taken with regard to particular mafiologists. The thrust of the argument often centers more on proving

their contributions wrong than on exploring to what degree they can be fitted into an overall framework. This shifts the emphasis away from the question of what the Mafia is to statements about what it is not. The result is that on certain issues, the reader is confronted with seemingly incompatible assessments. For example, Paoli rejects the popular notion of the Mafia being an economic enterprise (p. 141), stressing that Mafia groups or the Mafia association as a whole do not systematically plan or coordinate profit-making activities (p. 144). At the same time, in also rejecting the notion that Mafia groups can be classified as power syndicates specialized in the sale of protection, she emphasizes that “Mafia groups and their members are actively involved in a plurality of business activities” (p. 174). Both views are integrated in the proposition that there is an “overlap between force-using and profit-seeking enterprises” (p. 176). But this view of the multiplicity of goals and functions, it seems, can only be maintained when the empirical referent remains fuzzy. Indeed, when Gambetta (1993) speaks of the Mafia as “an industry of private protection” (p. 155), he refers to the Mafia association as a set of firms that share a particular trademark, whereas Paoli, in the last instance, speaks about the individual members of Cosa Nostra and ‘Ndrangheta who “have used the cohesion created by status and fraternization contracts to pursue extremely different ends and carry out greatly varying functions” (pp. 18-19). It is interesting that in one remark, Paoli seems to fully agree with Gambetta when she states that “the extortion racket is, without exception, the only economic activity run by the group as a whole” (p. 170).

Another point of critique is the prominence of references to Weber, Durkheim, and others throughout the book. This is often but not always helpful in clarifying certain aspects, and at times, these references appear to have been given too much weight in the analysis. One of Paoli’s key theses is that the unity of both Cosa Nostra and ‘Ndrangheta depends on what Emile Durkheim has called “mechanical solidarity,” a collective consciousness based on likeness. According to Paoli, Mafia associations first came into being through the mutual recognition of the “institutional similarities, including parallel features in the organizational model, culture, and normative rules” (p. 52). However, there is no evidence to support this claim. In fact, it is at odds with the fact that, as Paoli herself explains, there are Mafia groups that are not affiliated with the two large Mafia associations (p. 160). The relevance of “mechanical solidarity” gains some plausibility when one assumes that the Mafia is primarily about cohesion and male bonding, as the title of the book suggests, and not about conflict avoidance. But a more plausible explanation of the *raison d’être* of Mafia associations would probably have to focus more on the aspect of territorial control, which requires some degree of intergroup accommodation and coordination to peacefully settle disputes and to keep new competitors out of the protection market. Instead of drawing parallels between segmentary societies and the Mafia, then, one could perhaps better interpret the “Mafia universe of meaning” as a culturally grounded legitimization of the mutual recognition of potentially competing groups.

These caveats notwithstanding, *Mafia Brotherhoods* is a significant contribution. Paoli’s description, based on an unprecedented database, brings many new insights, while some controversial propositions and some less intensely analyzed facets ensure that the debate on the nature and functions of the Southern Italian Mafia associations will continue.

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*Slovenia: Criminal Justice Systems in Europe and North America*,  
 by Katja G. Sugman, Matjaz Jager, Nina Persak, and Katja Filipcic.  
 Helsinki, Finland: European Institute for Crime Prevention  
 and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, 2004. pp. 82.

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This short work provides a lucid and informative introduction to the legal framework underpinning the criminal justice system in Slovenia. Slovenia is a small nation of about 2 million, mainly Catholic people, speaking their own distinctive Slavic language. It is an alpine country of a little more than 16,000 square kilometers, placing it halfway in size between the states of Connecticut and Massachusetts. Slovenia is a relatively well-developed, mineral-rich country, which, as a former constituent republic of the Federation of Yugoslavia, happily escaped most of the trauma and bloody chaos of the breakup of the former communist federal power, which was ruled from Belgrade and dominated by the Serbs. Slovenia was recognized by the European Union as an independent state as early as 1991 and in 2004 became the first and, as yet, only former Yugoslav republic to join the European Union as a full member. It borders on Croatia and three European Union states: Italy, Hungary, and Austria. Austria has important historical ties with Slovenia and played an important role in its early recognition by the European Union, which helped protect and stabilize its independence. Austria has also clearly influenced its criminal justice system.

This text focuses on providing clear-cut, current legal information, most of which relates to the Slovenian Criminal Code, which entered into force on January 1, 1995, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, adopted in September 1994. Little attention is given to historical background, but the brief outline of the tumultuous political transitions experienced by Slovenia in the past century leaves the reader somewhat awestruck at the number of changes of regime and legal system and at the fact that this small nation appears at last to have secured a stable place among the democratic states of Europe. We learn that until 1918, Slovenia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and so followed the Austrian Criminal Code of 1852; from 1929, it was part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, run as a dictatorship by King Aleksander, who introduced a new, eclectic criminal code; then, in 1941, it was overrun by the Axis powers, Germany, Hungary, and Italy, who shared the territory and declared their own fascist legal codes in force in their respective sections of the country. After the war, the federal Yugoslav criminal code was in force, and this was heavily influenced by Soviet criminal law doctrine until 1951, when, following Tito's confrontation with Stalin, a new homegrown code was introduced. Later, the new Constitution of 1974 allowed some leeway to the Yugoslav federal republics to legislate for their own regional criminal codes, and the authors tell us that Slovenia used this modicum of autonomy to develop a code, "inspired by the ideas of a more democratic and humane criminal law" (p. 8).