



Mobility of OC: Vietnamese

BUILDING A SAFE AND RESILIENT CANADA

The existence of criminogenic and criminal market conditions are the main factors in the emergence of organized crime. History, the economy, and state support are other factors to consider. Sometimes emergent and strategic networks cannot be divided.

In 2010, Morselli, Turcotte, and Tenti wrote a report on *The Mobility of Criminal Groups*, for Public Safety Canada. The report reviewed several case studies and prior commentaries and, based on an inductive, evidence-based process, offered a conceptual framework for understanding how organized crime groups come to establish themselves, successfully or unsuccessfully, in places outside of their area of origin.

The purpose of this report was to offer a brief response and elaboration to Morselli et al's (2010) analysis of the key causes and inhibitors for the mobility of criminal groups. The author conducted two pieces of original empirical work into Vietnamese organized crime within the British and Vietnamese context during the last three years. The research involved a significant number of interviews with law enforcement personnel from the United Kingdom, Vietnam, and contacts in other countries, including Canada. A further fifty interviews were conducted with illegal Vietnamese migrants, some of whom were directly involved in cannabis cultivation or money laundering. This report then provides some broad commentary on the viability and accuracy of Morselli's framework.

The work on the movement of Vietnamese organized crime broadly supported the conclusions drawn by Morselli et al (2010). There is little evidence of sophisticated and monopolistic Vietnamese criminal organizations strategically moving from elsewhere in the world to the United Kingdom to continue their criminal enterprise. Rather, the existence of criminogenic and criminal market conditions, in particular lax United Kingdom law enforcement and the

insatiable demand for cannabis, are the key contextual factors for the 'emergent' actions of mobile Vietnamese criminal groups. However, it ought to be acknowledged that within the broad label of 'group' there might be specific Vietnamese criminal networks which behave in a strategic way and that the theoretical split between the emergent and the strategic can be less clear in practice.

This report also found that the push and pull factors put forward in Morselli et al's paper are helpful, but do not completely account for why parts of the Vietnamese diaspora have so quickly come to dominate the cannabis cultivation market. The answers to this problem partly reside within specific political and cultural contexts of the Vietnamese themselves and the macro-economic climate that easily enables illegal working. The push versus pull factor framework proved to be a fruitful tool of analysis and could potentially make a direct contribution to the development of strategies for the prevention and suppression of organized crime. However, due to the complexities and unpredictability of mobile criminal groups it is unlikely to prove to be a potent predicative tool.

This report concluded that Morselli et al (2010) are fully justified in concluding that those who argue that organized crime consists of numerous sophisticated criminal groups which are globally mobile and strategically motivated are guilty of over-exaggeration and failure to consider the available criminological evidence. In addition, their list of push and pull factors provides a useful analytical framework within which to consider any case study of a mobile criminal group. However, the author suggests adding the following factors: (i) the immediate political and cultural history of a group; (ii) macro economic climate; (iii) availability of employment in the grey economy; (iv) the differences in exchange rates and business regulation; and (v) state support; and (vi) national or



provincial support.

Rather than suggesting that law enforcement agencies try to use their classification of push and pull factors in a predictive way, this report noted that they could move away from the prohibitionist paradigm or tackle some of the long standing policing problems which beset the policing of mobile criminal groups. For example, law enforcement agencies could consider undertaking further efforts to: (i) utilize innovative crime prevention techniques; (ii) increase information sharing between both law enforcement agencies and government; (iii) encourage the role of strategic policing oversight for international crime problems; and (iv) increase community policing resources at a national and local level.

Note: This report was part of a series of three papers by European experts on the migration of criminal groups, who reviewed a framework proposed by Morselli, et al. The framework outlining the push and pull factors in the mobility of criminal networks can be found in Research Brief number 4.

Silverstone, Daniel. (2010) *A Response to "The Mobility of Criminal Groups": A Reflection in Light of Recent Research on Vietnamese Organized Crime*. Ottawa, ON: Public Safety Canada.

Morselli, Carlo, and Mathilde Turcotte, with Valentina Tenti. (2010) *The Mobility of Criminal Groups*. Ottawa, ON: Public Safety Canada.

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