

The products of large human organizations, for example, the conduct of economies and warfare, are emergent network effects of the internal activities of these organizations.

One common and persistent organization is the “Crime Syndicate” network.

<https://melconway.com/Home/pdf/RestoringForce.pdf>

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Crime Syndicates are homeostatic networks containing two subnetworks that I’ll call Economy and Enforcement. These two subnetworks conduct the two major functions of the whole network: mission and persistence.

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The Economy subnetwork conducts the mission of the network. For example, in a protection racket it collects and distributes the money flow. In politics it employs political processes to enhance the welfare of its members.

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The Enforcement subnetwork keeps the whole operation from coming apart; it contains the threat and punishment pathways. In a protection racket it keeps not only the “protectees” in line but the soldiers as well.

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The two networks will intersect in a few key nodes, for example, The Boss. But there can be many other intersections in an operation as complicated as the Republican Party.

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In the Economy subnetwork of the Republican Party you'll find beneficiaries such as financial interests and foreign intelligence services bribing politicians and judges, and driving active measures such as propaganda, disinformation, hacking, and spying.

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You might also find those same beneficiaries in Enforcement, primarying and blackmailing politicians, intimidating government officials and trial witnesses and their families, and farming out work to external enforcement networks.

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Detailed tracing of the message pathways in the two subnetworks is necessary in order to understand authoritarian politics. I am continually dismayed that I don't see in almost all journalists and politicians the necessary interest in such low-level detail.

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What's particularly dismaying is that the behavior of a Crime Syndicate is almost always blamed on The Boss. This is myopic. Without the interactions of mutual interests surrounding him, The Boss would be twisting in the wind.

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Political analysts must elevate their thinking away from individual agency and toward network effects as the fundamental mechanisms in politics. This is the only way to understand the uniform, cult-like, public behavior of politicians who express differing views in private.

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We need to invent an accessible notation (like what you see on the wall in detective shows with pictures and colored string) that reveals these network effects in specific Crime Syndicates. And then we need our journalists to speak to us in this language.

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