

The Challenge of Organised Crime to State Sovereignty in the Balkans :
An Historical Approach

To what extent is organised crime posing a new challenge
to state sovereignty in the Balkans?

The role of organised outlaws in the formation of the modern state in the Balkans appears to fit the model put forward by Thomas Gallant in relation to Western states.¹ Gallant argued that rather than being antithetical to the development of the modern state, bandits had played an integral role in facilitating its formation.² His point that 'outlaws' were co-opted by the state and harnessed as part of the state's 'protection' resource, resonates with the experiences of the Balkan states. Though the Balkans have followed their own particular pattern of state development both in comparison to other regions and within the region itself, not only do they share characteristics common in other regions (of state-bandit co-operation in forming the modern state), they have also experienced relatively late (in comparison to Western states) the emergence of the modern state.

The recent history of state-bandit co-operation in forming the modern Balkan state has left a legacy of anti-modern activities that are nevertheless still widely perceived as legitimate. Further development of the modern state has thus been hindered, a hybrid emerging instead, and state sovereignty has never been fully achieved. A conception of this hybrid state is a prerequisite for an interpretation of how the Balkan states should enforce international regulations following from a generalist (Western-influenced) notion of 'organised crime'. International agreements on combating organised crime which fail to take into account the historical specificity of the region can even give a boost to organised crime (as argued here later in comparing the illicit trades in weapons and drugs). Assumptions that organised crime is a relatively new phenomenon, that organised crime groups are distinct anti-social movements that lack popular legitimacy, have the

¹ Here 'Balkans' are taken to mean the following states of the Balkan peninsula: Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia (FYROM), Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Greece.

² Thomas W. Gallant 'Brigandage, Piracy, Capitalism, and State-Formation : Transnational Crime from a Historical World Systems Perspective,' in *States and Illegal Practices*, ed. J.M.C.Heyman (Berg: Oxford, 1999), p25, 30-32.

danger of underestimating both the scale and rooted nature of organised crime in the region.

In recent years, organised crime has been recognised by international and regional inter-governmental bodies and independent research institutes as an increasing and serious challenge to states. The frequency of international agreements, conferences, and growth of domestic legislation in many states relating to this issue, demonstrate the extent to which the issue has leapt to centre stage in international politics, and equally serve as evidence of the degree of concern raised by the challenge of organised crime. In general terms, the challenge of organised crime has been described by some as a product of globalisation, a relatively novel challenge to the state that has sprung from the new, post-Cold War efficacy of cross-border activity.³ This new and favourable environment for the expansion and strengthening of organised crime groups was first established by the collapse of communist regimes, creating as it did internal power vacuums in these states to be filled by the nomenklatura, increasing numbers of safe havens and ready availability of various types of resources (small arms and light weapons in particular).⁴

Some have also emphasised the need to distinguish the organised crime groups of today from those which functioned during the Cold War era, stressing the need for conceptual distinction between the types of action which flourished under very different market conditions.⁵ However, another perspective claims that what is being lauded as a novel challenge is in the Balkans simply an age-old tradition repackaged. The novelty of the challenge posed by organised crime in the Balkans could therefore be interpreted as one brought about by an external impetus : international concerns and pressure to harmonise legislation - thus highlighting and attempting to de-legitimise activities which have been the norm in the region. These primordialist arguments refer to bandit and tribal traditions which stretch back centuries in the Balkans, claiming that these have long been the root of instability and conflict against the state, and should be seen as the fathering

³ E.g. Louise Shelley 'Transnational Organised Crime : An Imminent Threat to the Nation-State?,' *Journal of International Affairs* 48 (2) (Winter 1995), p464-466.

⁴ Ingeborg Schroeder 'Transnational Organised Crime. Illicit Trade and European Security,' in *Illicit Trade and Organised Crime - New Threats to Economic Security?*, EU DG for External Relations (Italy, 1998), p77; *Report of the UN Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, UN General Assembly, 27 August 1997, p73.

⁵ Vadim Volkov 'Organised Violence, Market Building, and State-Formation in Post-Communist Russia,' in *Economic Crime in Russia*, ed. A.V.Ledeneva and M.Kurkchiyan (Kluwer Law International: Britain, 2000), pp.43-61.

traditions of contemporary organised crime in the region.⁶ If traditions today labelled 'organised crime' have had a long history in the Balkans and have managed to coexist while the modern state has developed, it would be doubtful whether these traditions could now be typified as a challenge at all, and even less a new one. It is clear, therefore, that in order to assess the degree to which organised crime is a new challenge (or a challenge at all) to states in the Balkans, an historical approach should be taken to unravel the relationship between the state and the development of organised crime in the region.

Organised crime's contribution to the inter-linked disintegrative forces of violence, political instability and alternative loyalty and confidence structures (from providing another source of protection than the state) is perceived as a challenge to the most fundamental attribute of the modern state : sovereignty.⁷ Pre-modern states had weaker domestic political control, their ability to preserve their territorial integrity, loyalty to the state and to claim a monopoly of the legitimate use of violence was unreliable. A clarification of the use here of the term 'the modern state' is therefore necessary to underline the related concepts of state sovereignty, and challenges to this.

Theories of the formation of the modern state can be perceived as overwhelmingly informed by the experience of Western Europe, and consequently misleading and unhelpful when analysing the transformation of the state in the Balkan region. Firstly, the notion of the internal structure of the 'modern' state is imbued with the liberal ideological bias of the Weberian credentials of statehood. A modern state is particularly expected to enforce the separation of public and private spheres. In contrast, "privatistic" political practices, such as clientelism, brokerage, corruption, favouritism, nepotism, feuds, etc., would be considered contrary to those of the modern state, governed by principles of the common good, rationality, modernisation, progress, etc.⁸ With this in mind, it is hard to see how a distinction could clearly be drawn between the 'pre-modern' and 'modern' Balkan state, since the states of the Balkans have maintained

⁶ Ali Karaosmanoglu 'Crisis in the Balkans,' *UN Institute for Disarmament Research, Research Paper no.22* (UN: NY, 1993), p14-15; Mark Galeotti 'Albanian Organised Crime : The Threat to Europe,' *Cross Border Control* Issue 12, p10.

⁷ E.g. by H. Richard Friman and Peter Andreas 'International Relations and the Illicit Global Economy,' in *The Illicit Global Economy and State Power*, ed. Friman and Andreas (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc.: USA, 1999), p 12-13.

⁸ Giorgio Chittolini 'The "Private," the "Public," the State,' *The Journal of Modern History* 67 (4) supplement (December 1995).

strong “privatistic” political cultures and are struggling to maintain stable democracies, which could be seen as the unstated but assumed telos of Western notions of development. This is not to imply that modern, Western states are not affected by corruption. The question rather is one of the prevalence of privatistic trends and their perceived prominence in social relations in the Balkans. The difficulties in matching the model of the modern state to the Balkan candidates for such a title is useful in demonstrating that indicators of the strength of the state, the modern state, and the challenge to it (bandits or organised crime), which rely on such a model, may also need to be adapted or substituted for others.

Although Charles Tilly has claimed that the development of the Greek state shared the essential attributes of those of the ‘Western European family’ of states, Greece does not appear to fit the model he has proposed.⁹ The development of the Greek state has, rather, had more in common with the development of other Balkan states than with the emergence of the states of Western Europe. Indeed, the radically different form of development of the Greek state and conditions under which it emerged, in comparison to other Western states, has been pointed out by Nicos Mouzelis, as a vital component to understanding the contemporary structure of the Greek state.¹⁰

However, it is also valid to note that standard characteristics of ‘modern statehood’ have shifted over time. Thus, it may be argued that Greece is an example of a state which modelled itself on the form of modern statehood offered by the West in the nineteenth century. The privatistic features of the Greek state would thereby not preclude it from claiming modern statehood, if judged by the standards of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, instead of developing organically, the motivating factors propelling the development of the Greek modern state were overwhelmingly political, rather than social or economic. The Greek state-makers lifted Western socio-political structures : indicative of this pattern was the growth of the Greek state bureaucracy, which was unrelated to necessity. The consequential disjunction between foreign structures and internal traditions was the formalising of the rules of political behaviour. Formalism meant that

⁹ Charles Tilly includes Greece in his study of the emergence of Western states: Charles Tilly ‘Reflections on the History of European State-Making,’ in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Tilly (Princeton UP, 1975) p12,13,31, and his model features of the background to European state-making which do not correspond to the Greek experience, p21.

state structures were a shell which could only function by way of the rules of patronage and clientelism. As Mouzelis makes clear, individual motivations are not more particularist or corrupt in Greece than in the West, but the framework in which any ambition is to be realised in Greece requires utilising networks of patronage that in other Western states would be channelled through other more collective frameworks.¹¹ Since Greece has not proceeded to update the model at the same pace as the Western states, full transition to what would now be considered a modern (Weberian) state has been elusive, the structure of the Greek state remaining caught in a compromise between traditional and modernist practices.¹² It is this hybrid model which encapsulates the Balkan experience of state formation.

The second obstacle to the adoption of the Western model of modern state formation to the Balkans is that the particular multiethnic and multicultural realities of states in the Balkan region mean that modern notions of an overarching national identity have been able to signify greater cultural unity in Western European states than comparably attained in Balkan states. This point has been made in relation to Western conceptions of Albania, which have at times implied an ethnic and cultural coherence to Albanians dating from as early as the fifteenth century. In light of the important geographical and cultural differences which have separated the Ghegs and Tosks of Albania, and the specific use of state mechanisms, under the Hoxha regime, against the 'difference' challenge posed by the Ghegs, one can argue that a modern Albanian state has only been created, in terms of promoting a shared, singular Albanian identity, (and with much effort), since the Second World War.¹³ State-building myths based on contractarian theories are particularly weak

¹⁰ On the contrasting formation of Greek socio-political institutions and their underdevelopment: Nicos P. Mouzelis *Modern Greece : Facets of Underdevelopment* (Macmillan, London 1978), p140.

¹¹ On the theory of formalism and its application to Greece: Mouzelis *Modern Greece*, p137-140.

¹² Argued by Keith R. Legg 'The Nature of the Modern Greek State,' in *Greece in Transition : Essays in the History of Modern Greece, 1821-1974*, ed. J.Koumoulides (Zeno, London 1977), p283-296.

¹³ Ghegs and Tosks speak different dialects and historically had considerably different social structures and behaviour patterns. The Ghegs lived in the northern mountainous regions, were divided between Catholics and Muslims, and had a strongly tribal-based society. The southern lowlands were inhabited by the Tosks, who were Muslims and had experienced far greater influences from outside powers (due to occupation). Paul Lendval *Eagles in Cowebs: Nationalism and Communism in the Balkans* (Macdonald, London 1969) p180; Miranda Vickers *The Albanians : A Modern History* (Tauris: London, 1999), p26,30; Isa Blumi 'The Politics of Culture and Power : The Roots of Hoxha's Postwar State,' *East European Quarterly*, XXXI, no.3 (September 1997), p385; Isa Blumi 'The Commodification of Otherness and the Ethnic Unit in the Balkans : How to Think about Albanians,' *East European Politics and Societies* 12 (13) (Fall 1998), p545.

in the Balkans. As Kalevi Holsti noted in the case of states formed after 1945, such theories are inappropriate because the two assumptions that 1) the state is the creation of a community, in which the community is an assumed whole, and 2) that only the members of the community are involved in the act of state creation, are false.¹⁴ This holds for the Balkans too, where political and territorial boundaries have been frequently redrawn by outside powers, and where a plurality of communities which at times have been shifted around, have meant that usually no such singular conception of the community from which the state emerges has been the condition for statehood.

Thirdly, a related point is that the Western model of state formation uses a conception of civil society and consequential contestation of authority which do not suit the development of the state in those regions which had been under Ottoman rule, where civil society developed far later, state centralisation far earlier, and where the method for dealing with threats to the state was often likely to be negotiation and bargaining rather than attempts to crush opposition by force.¹⁵ Pacification of popular resistance to the processes of modern state formation was also never conclusively achieved in the Balkans, unlike the case of the development of the state in Western Europe.¹⁶ This is particularly significant in the context of the link between organised crime and Balkan traditions associated with it, for it has been claimed that the continued existence of such groups which have never been fully 'conquered' by the state have continued their pattern of alternating between support for and opposition to the state, perpetuating instability in the region and preventing the completion of the states' metamorphosis into modern, sovereign states.¹⁷

Moreover, much of the literature on the development of the modern state has concentrated on the relationship between the state and societal elites.¹⁸ Accounts of the formation of the modern state have therefore either neglected non-elite groups (such as

¹⁴ Kalevi Holsti *The State, War, and the State of War* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p99.

¹⁵ Karen Barkey *Bandits and Bureaucrats : The Ottoman Route to Centralisation* (Cornell University Press, 1994), p1-2, 40-41; Mark Mazower *The Balkans* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson: London, 2000), p23; For a contrasting account of the development of the modern state in Western Europe: *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, ed. Tilly (Princeton University Press, 1975).

¹⁶ Description of this process in Western Europe: Charles Tilly 'Reflections on the History of European State-Making,' p42, 71.

¹⁷ Xavier Bougarel ' "Yugoslav Wars : The Revenge of the Countryside" : Between Sociologist Reality and Nationalist Myth,' *East European Quarterly*, XXXIII, No.2 (June 1999), p172.

¹⁸ Barkey *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p55.

bandits and peasants), or have over-emphasised their relevance in response to the political requirements of the day. For example, regarding the history of the development of the modern Romanian state, Western-influenced accounts refer mainly to international politics and to the role of the Romanian intelligentsia and noble classes,¹⁹ while a cult of partisan warfare and heroism that developed during the Second World War encouraged communist-influenced interpreters of the country's history to inflate the extent and importance of these traditions.²⁰ The question of bias in historical writing becomes important when attempting to assess the legacies of competition for loyalty of populations between states and groups which one can identify as part of the tradition of organised crime.

Bearing in mind these theoretical and historiographical constraints, the notion of the 'modern state' is here applied to Balkan states, hopefully balanced with a sensitivity to the particularism of their development.

If traditions of banditry are to be incorporated into the study of the history of organised crime, an explanation and justification for this stretching of the term 'organised crime' is required. As Karen Barkey (in *Bandits and Bureaucrats*) has convincingly shown, under Ottoman rule co-operation and collaboration between bandit and state was a frequent occurrence - whether for external use (hiring bandits as irregulars to fight wars) or internal use (for enforcement of tax collection and hiring them to protect trade routes through mountain passes).²¹ This means that, unlike the example of Italian bandit traditions, for instance, one cannot in the Balkan case base a distinction between 'mafiosi' and bandits on those which functioned within or outside of civil society and the domain regulated by law.²² This point is made clear by the fact that tribes acting as persistent raiders and bandits - whose very identities were often blurred - were at times granted legal dispensation by the Ottoman state to continue with these activities.²³

¹⁹ E.g. Frederick Kellogg *The Road to Romanian Independence* (Purdue University Press: Indiana, 1995); and Vlad Georgescu *The Romanians : A History* (Tauris & Co.: London, 1991).

²⁰ As claimed by Barbara Jelavich *History of the Balkans : Twentieth Century* (CUP, 1983, 1996), p.298-9.

²¹ Her study focuses on the 17th century.

²² Distinction proposed by Janet Schneider and Peter Schneider 'Is Transparency Possible? The Political-Economic and Epistemological Implications of Cold War Conspiracies and Subterfuge in Italy,' in *States and Illegal Practices*, ed. J. Heyman (Berg: Oxford, 1999), p117.

²³ John W. Baggally *The Klephtic Ballads in Relation to Greek History (1715-1821)*, (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1936), p4.

Current definitions of organised crime, such as that used in the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, for example;

“a structured group of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with the Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.”²⁴,

might be equally applicable to the bandits of the pre-modern era, restricted of course by the comparability of illegal offences committed by such groups over time.²⁵ The fact that the Convention used a generalist definition of organised crime and the activities it entails was due to the recognition paid to the fact that the phenomenon of organised crime is evolving so rapidly and thus that a tighter definition might miss out on regulating in possible future areas of diversity of organised crime activity.²⁶ With this in mind, one can argue that whatever was being smuggled in the pre-modern era would be justifiably included as illicit trade in the sense used when referring to organised crime today.

Therefore, the general definition above can be used as a working basis to chart the development of state practices outlawing such activities.

The term ‘organised crime’ was itself only invented in the 1920s,²⁷ originally referring to smuggling activities such as those in which armed bandits and tribes of the Balkans had previously been involved, but which were increasingly being clamped down on by state authorities (in the case of weapons) or were being newly prohibited (such as drugs) and therefore were a new commodity to be trafficked in this way.²⁸ Though practices of banditry were widespread and historically rooted in the Balkans, until the rise of national

²⁴ Article 1, *UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime*, adopted 15 November 2000. UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, <http://www.odccp.org/palermo> .

²⁵ The characteristics of transnational organised crime outlined by the World Ministerial Conference on Organised Transnational Crime held in Naples in 1994 are similarly wide enough to be considered applicable here. List of characteristics in the ‘Naples Political Declaration and Global Action Plan Against Organised Transnational Crime,’ Section II, Subsection A, Paragraph 12, in *The World Ministerial Conference on Organised Transnational Crime*, UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Newsletter, Nos 26-27, (Vienna, November 1995).

²⁶ Dimitri Vlassis *The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime and its Three Protocols : Development and Outlook*, Paper presented at conference on Organised Crime, All Souls College, Oxford, June 2000, p10-11.

²⁷ Nicolas Queloz ‘Les actions internationales de lutte contre la criminalité organisée : le cas de l’Europe,’ *revue de science criminelle et de droit pénal comparé*, no.4 (octobre-décembre 1997, Paris), p765.

²⁸ William J. Chambliss ‘The Consequences of Prohibition : Crime, Corruption, and International Narcotics Control,’ in *Drugs, Law and the State*, ed. Harold, Traver & Mark Gaylord (Hong Kong University Press, 1992), p.15; Paul B. Stares *Global Habit : The Drug Problem in a Borderless World* (Brookings Institution: Washington DC, 1996), p15, 19.

independence movements against the Ottoman Empire these groups were largely dealing in licit goods - the gains of cattle raiding, plunder and theft. However, as regards trade in illicit goods, although the Ottoman Empire forbade Christians within its territories to carry weapons, in practice it would try to co-opt persistent and invincible bandits and armed tribesmen, paying them bribes to pacify them, and even arming them, as it did with the *armatoloi* units.²⁹ This at least was the case until weapons began to be smuggled in large quantities from outside the Empire to support fledgling resistance movements. The development of the Macedonian revolutionary groups in the late 1890s marked a period of intense frustration on the part of the Ottoman authorities.³⁰ Loud protestations towards the Bulgarian government over trade in contraband followed after it became clear that there was a considerable movement of arms from Bulgaria to the Macedonian groups. Although a few weapons could be bought by Albanian Muslim gunsmiths in Tetovo, the Macedonian groups largely armed themselves with the help of Bulgarian arms merchants, who supplied them with obsolete Russian army rifles which had been acquired as a consequence of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. One of the ways contraband was smuggled over the borders is still familiar today in the Balkans: hidden in bags of rice and tobacco carried over by a mule train. The Ottoman authorities considered this such a dangerous development that at one point (in 1896) the vali, Abdul Kazim Pasha, called a meeting of all the European consuls in Skopje to highlight the problem of banditry and rebels.³¹

Restrictions on free travel within Ottoman territories began to be imposed as a result of the perceived problem relating to the trafficking of weapons to rebel/bandit groups - particularly evident in Macedonia, where by 1902 travel was severely restricted (lack of proper visa documentation when travelling outside one's region could lead to arrest).³² However, regarding the contemporary issue of trafficking in people, this issue did not

²⁹ Vickers *The Albanians*, p40; Baggally *The Klephtic Ballads*, p4-8. For definitions of *armatoloi* and *klephtes*: Richard Clogg *A short History of Modern Greece*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge University Press, 1986), p26-7.

³⁰ Ottoman efforts to strengthen central authority increased in 1909 - the law on guerrilla bands making punishable by death membership of a *cheta* - against the fledgling Albanian nationalist movement, whose Catholic tribes were provided with ample supplies of weapons by Montenegro: Vickers *The Albanians*, p63-5.

³¹ The trafficking in contraband was considered dangerous because of its direct links to the rebels' activity. Financial support from Bulgarians was being translated into the perpetrating of illegal acts in the Ottoman provinces, i.e. the carrying and use of weapons by Christians against the Ottoman authorities. Duncan M. Perry *The Politics of Terror : The Macedonian Liberation Movements 1893-1903* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 1988), p51, 61-62, 68, 164-166.

really arise in the Balkans as an international concern related to organised crime until the latter half of the twentieth century. Although the majority of states introduced passports around the time of the First World War, and there had historically been a demand for slaves in the Balkans, by the 18th and 19th centuries people were not marketable commodities in the Balkans in the way that they are today - slaves were rather captured Balkan peasants who remained within the region.³³

It was international governmental pressure for concerted action on drug regulation which managed to give a great boost to organised crime activity in the region. In the 1920s, governments had been pressed to take action due to public alarm at overproduction by drug manufacturers and consequential massive diversions from legal supply channels. The international treaties on drugs of 1925 and 1931 were clearly effective in reducing the flow of drugs from the legal drug manufacturers to the illicit market, but heralded the new development of clandestine factories which sprung up to fill the demand for suppliers.³⁴ When the League of Nations began to increase enforcement procedures in Western Europe of the 1925 International Opium Convention, Turkey became the favoured location for criminal operators.³⁵ The successful clamp-down in Western Europe led to notable cases of manufacturing companies which had been put out of business there as a result of their notorious smuggling links, moving to Turkey to restart operations.³⁶ The illicit drugs trade was already extremely mobile: the 1931-2 'clean-up' operation of drug factories in Istanbul was followed by the emergence of considerable quantities of manufactured drugs which, as a result of the Turkish action, had begun to be exported from Bulgaria.³⁷ Transnational criminal networks reaching far beyond this were also being established: in the early 1930s some European criminal groups which had moved to Turkey to obtain heroin and morphine then moved on to China where they could set up a base of operations with little hindrance from weak authorities. Greek and

³² Ibid, p159.

³³ On landlord buying of slaves in 17th century Romania: Daniel Chirot *Social Change in a Peripheral Society : The Creation of a Balkan Colony* (Academic Press: New York, 1976), 53-4; On bandits' appetite for slaves: Miodrag Stojanovic *Hajduci i klefti u narodnom pesnistvu* ('Haiduks and Klephts in Folk Poetry'), Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Special Editions no.18 (Institute for Balkan Studies: Belgrade, 1984), p232.

³⁴ Kettill Bruun, Lynn Pan, Ingemar Rexed *The Gentlemen's Club : International Control of Drugs and Alcohol* (University of Chicago, 1975), p14-15, 223.

³⁵ William B. McAllister *Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century : An International History* (Routledge: London, 2000), p34-37, 57, 67, 91-92.

³⁶ Arthur Woods *Dangerous Drugs : The World Fight Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotics* (Yale University Press, 1931), p105.

Russian drug traffickers apparently constituted the majority of the illegal groups arriving in China at that time.³⁸

While before the First World War, Germany had been the world's foremost supplier of morphine, heroin and cocaine, following the war Turkey and Yugoslavia were increasing their production capacities and by 1936 were the main suppliers of European and US drug manufacturers.³⁹ Producer states in the Balkans in the 1920s also included Bulgaria and Greece, and indeed in the late 1920s Greece was also the main source of illegal hashish in Egypt.⁴⁰ By the 1950s, Bulgaria, Greece, Yugoslavia and Turkey were part of the small group of seven countries to be allowed to legitimately produce opium.⁴¹ Despite their own drugs production, the supply of drugs from Turkey directly affected Balkan states because it was through them that the drugs would travel to the West. Their close interest in international pressure on Turkey to curtail its drugs production was demonstrated in the negotiations over the 1953 Opium Protocol. Britain insisted that Bulgaria (as well as the USSR) should be included in the list of major exporters which then comprised of Yugoslavia, Turkey, Iran and India. However, Yugoslavia and Greece refused to sign the Protocol unless Turkey agreed and signed it, for Turkey could flood their markets with illicit drugs if it were not given a large enough share of the licit market. If manufacturers were consequently to denounce the Protocol, Greece and Yugoslavia would be left with their hands tied. The outcome was that Turkey, Yugoslavia and Greece refused to sign the Protocol, choosing to promote instead the completion of the Single Convention which contained weaker controls on the drug business.⁴² Drug traffic and use expanded in the Balkans correspondingly to the increasing productivity of the Turkish supply route, which was in turn given added momentum whenever other drug producers were the focus of international regulatory pressures.⁴³ In contrast to the growth of the illegal market in weapons, therefore, the drug trade in the Balkans was

³⁷ S.H.Bailey *The Anti-Drug Campaign : An Experiment in International Control* (Edinburgh Press, London 1936), p57.

³⁸ As reported by US officials in China in 1934: Stares *Global Habit*, p19.

³⁹ Bailey *The Anti-Drug Campaign*, p5.

⁴⁰ Macedonia and Thrace were significant producers of opium between 1878 and 1912, concentrated mainly in the Vardar valley. Michael Palaret *The Balkan Economies c. 1800-1914 : evolution without development* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p343. Egypt's campaign for international prohibition of cannabis did not succeed till 1961. Bruun et al., *The Gentlemen's Club*, p14, 184,

⁴¹ On the 1953 Opium Protocol: Ibid, p16-17.

⁴² McAllister *Drug Diplomacy*, p181, 203-206. Single Convention adopted in 1961: p211.

largely developed as a response to the international stimuli of non-regional intergovernmental pressures on the states of the Balkans. To a significant degree, this was part of a wider shared experience of the impact of anti-drug legislation - drug controls gave rise to unauthorised production and contributed to the development of the back market worldwide.⁴⁴

While the direction of drugs trafficking was for a market external to the region, and only in recent years a problem related to domestic consumption in Balkan states, these states had a far harder time convincing their populations that weapons not authorised by the authorities were a threat to the viability of the modern state. Firstly, Balkan populations had a long tradition of carrying weapons.⁴⁵ Secondly, non-officiated weapons holders had been the very founders of the modern state, liberating them from Ottoman rule. Once civil society had begun to take root, bandits had proved that their activities were not necessarily limited to those premised on an economic rationale - they often headed social movements that led to the formation of the modern state in the region. There are examples of notable bandit and tribal involvement in the national independence movements of Greece, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria.⁴⁶ The role of bandits in Balkan national independence movements is contentious, and it certainly differed in significance for each state. Though there were notable cases where *armatoloi* fought for the Turkish side against their own national group,⁴⁷ bandits overwhelmingly constituted a vital part of the rebels' armies and were crucial to the

⁴³ E.g. The effect of the Iranian opium ban in the 1950s: *Ibid*, p198. On increasing drug use in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Romania as partly a result of their being major conduits for heroin traffic of drugs to the West: Stares *Global Habit*, p43.

⁴⁴ Bruun et al., *The Gentlemen's Club*, p241, 275; LaMond Tullis *Unintended Consequences : Illegal Drugs and Drug Policies in Nine Countries* (Boulder, London 1995), p171.

⁴⁵ On Montenegro: Christopher Boehm *Montenegrin Social Organisation and Values : Political Ethnography of a Refuge Area Tribal Adaptation* (AMS Press: New York, 1983), p73; on Serbia: Gale Stokes *Politics as Development : The Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth-Century Serbia* (Duke University Press: Durham and London, 1990), p108, 281-2; on Albania: Vickers *The Albanians*, p40, 123; on Macedonia: Hugh Seton-Watson *The East European Revolution* (Methuen: London, 1950), p325.

⁴⁶ E.g. Kolokotronis in Greece: Clogg *A Short History of Modern Greece*, p26-28, 57-59; Serbian Tchetniks: Seton-Watson *The East European Revolution*, p126; Croatia's Ustasha: Bougarel 'Yugoslav Wars,' p171-2; Bosnian bandits, Macedonian komitadjis and VMRO, and Bulgarian *haiduks* like Panayot Hitov: E.J.Hobsbawm *Bandits* (Penguin 1969, 1971), p100, 48, 71-2, 104; Albanian tribes: Lendval *Eagles in Cobwebs*, p178, 180.

⁴⁷ Odysseus Andoutsos, Giorgos Vanachiotis and Gorgas Bakolas: Alexis Politis 'The Revolt of Ali Pasha and the Greek War of Independence,' lecture given at the Taylor Institution of Slavonic and Modern Greek Studies, Oxford, 1st February 2001.

formation of the modern Greek state.⁴⁸ In this way, while there was an uneasy relationship between bandits and the new Greek state authorities, the administration felt impelled to use them as irregular forces in fighting for the expansion of the Greek state to achieve its 'Megali Idea,' because of British and French opposition to official Greek actions against the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Thus it was bandits rather than regular Greek troops that were shipped out en masse by Greece to help the insurgents of Crete in the late 1860s.⁴⁹

Typically bandit slogans, such as 'Freedom or Death', were adopted as a rallying cry for an independent Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece.⁵⁰ The new states were to adopt national school curricula which would emphasise the contribution of bandits as primitive rebels in the gradual development of their independence movements (for example in Greece and Bulgaria)⁵¹, although in Greece, distinctions were introduced to make clear the difference between bandits in general, klephts (as pre-revolutionary Greek nationalist fighters) and *listes* (a classical word for thieves or robbers which was introduced by the Greek state to characterise bandits who had resorted to their disreputable activities after independence).⁵² Moreover, the popular cachet surrounding the idea of the bandit in the Balkans demonstrated considerable durability - well-known bandit names of the Greek independence movement were reused as aliases by members of the Greek partisan movement in the Second World War,⁵³ and the militias which formed in the Yugoslav wars of disintegration also attached themselves to the symbolic figures and historic deeds of their mountains.⁵⁴

Weapons-carrying culture has therefore had access to general perceptions of legitimacy in the Balkans, and has not widely been seen as a threat to the state, but on the contrary has

⁴⁸ John Koliopoulos *Brigands with a Cause : Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821-1912* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1987), p293.

⁴⁹ John Koliopoulos 'Brigandage and Insurgency in the Greek Domains of the Ottoman Empire, 1853-1908,' in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, ed. D.Gondicas & C.Issawi (Darwin Press, Princeton 1999), 149-150, 154-5

⁵⁰ VMRO took the slogan from the Bulgarian revolutionaries: Perry *The Politics of Terror*, p40.

⁵¹ (despite the fact, as Karen Barkey argues, there was an equally strong, if not longer, history to be written of bandits as predators of the peasantry and opportunistic collaborators with both Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian authorities: Barkey *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p1-2, 12-13, 142; Bougarel 'Yugoslav Wars,' p164.

⁵² On this plus analysis of the constructing of Greek national identity and moulding of klephtic traditions to suit: Michael Herzfeld *Ours Once More : Folklore, Ideology, and the making of Modern Greece* (Pella, NY 1986), p61, 64, 67.

⁵³ Mark Mazower *Inside Hitler's Greece : The Experience of Occupation, 1941-44* (Yale University Press, London: 1993), p310-311.

rather been supported as its defender. This is evident from the disillusionment demonstrated by the populations when the newly independent states attempted to disarm them. In Albania, the internal affairs minister of the fledgling state, Zogu (a son of the chief of the Mati, a central Albanian Muslim tribe) had to resort to repression in attempting to disarm the lowland Albanians, and as Prime Minister in 1922 he found it impossible to enforce the new law against carrying arms among the northern tribes. The state found that it had to maintain the 'peace money' agreement formerly sustained by the Ottoman authorities, and gave the leaders of the northern tribes the rank of colonel in the national army. As Miranda Vickers describes, despite the fact that the northern tribes had played a leading role in the independence movement, there was considerable mistrust between the new state authorities and the people;

"Each month large groups of heavily armed highlanders would descend on Tirana to collect their gold from the war department. Technically, they were paid to provide the government with irregular reserve groups, but in reality they were paid to refrain from staging uprisings against the government."⁵⁵

By the 1930s, however, the balance had apparently stabilised - the central and southern tribes had been crushed by state force, and the northern tribes had been given positions within the state apparatus.⁵⁶

New states of the Balkans had to use cunning to outwit and disarm their populations - as in the case of Serbia, whose government in 1883 ordered the exchange of old and obsolete weapons of the national militia for new Mauser rifles, the best available in the world at that time. Unannounced to the population was that, rather than replacing the arms directly into the hands of the people, the new rifles were to be stored in state military magazines. The peasants reacted with the Timok rebellion, but this was their last major demonstration of its kind, and was crushed by the army.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, sometimes the populations managed to trounce the states' demands - for example, the communist-led Greek partisan movement (ELAS) was forced in 1946 to give up its arms as required by a peace agreement with the incoming Greek government (following liberation from German occupation). Many having taken refuge in Macedonia, the

⁵⁴ Bougarel 'Yugoslav Wars,' p167.

⁵⁵ Vickers *The Albanians*, p105.

⁵⁶ A popular saying in Albania in the 1930s went "True, there are no brigands in Albania, because all of them have gone to Tirana, where they rob with authority from behind desks." : *Ibid*, p117.

⁵⁷ Stokes *Politics as Development*, p281-2, 284, 291.

communists surrendered a large number of the arms which had been kept in villages there since Ottoman rule and retained for hiding many of their modern weapons, using them in the immediately ensuing Greek Civil War of 1947-49.⁵⁸

There were three principal reasons why arms-bearing people in the region resented the new states' attempts to criminalise the carrying of arms: firstly, they were not assured that the state had the necessary attributes (the sovereign ability to provide sufficient protection of its citizens);⁵⁹ secondly, the new state was not automatically legitimated in their eyes because of the pluralistic support base from which they achieved their independence, and thirdly, because carrying arms was seen as custom, and birthright, which should not be tampered with. The only way in which the state could successfully compete with these groups was to develop stronger central authority to crush those it could or else closely integrate them in government structures and thereby mould their behaviour and culture, hijack the myths of the bandit to legitimise its own existence in the eyes of the people, and attempt to modernise the practices of governance and societal interaction.

However, in making deals with certain groups and continuing some of the kleptocratic traditions of the Ottoman authorities, the coincidence of official corruption, nepotism and patronage, and a culture proud of rebelliousness typified in the bandit, meant that the development of sovereignty in the new states was being challenged from both within and outside of state structures.⁶⁰ The unstable political history of the early period in the new states' histories is indicative of the fractional backgrounds from which they emerged, and from which type of segmentation they were unable to free the management of state authority.⁶¹ For example, the unrest amongst both political and military elites and resumption of rural banditry in Greece in the 1830s, and the long-standing divisions between Ghegs and Tosks - the Tosks associating the Ghegs with political corruption

⁵⁸ Seton-Watson *The East European Revolution*, p325; Dominique Eudes *The Kapetanios : Partisans and Civil War in Greece, 1943-1949* (NLB: London, 1972), p232.

⁵⁹ Stokes *Politics as Development*, p281-2; Basil Gounaris *Steam over Macedonia, 1870-1912 : Socio-economic change and the railway factor* (East European Monographs, Boulder, Columbia University Press: New York, 1993), p289; Vickers *The Albanians*, p107.

⁶⁰ Kleptocratic Ottoman authorities: Barkey *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, p12, 100; Chirot *Social Change in a Peripheral Society*, p86, 103. New independent states seen domestically as corrupt, violent, illegitimate: Clogg *A Short History of Modern Greece*, p73, 84, 85; Blumi 'The Politics of Culture and Power,' p387-8.

⁶¹ An explanation of the opposition of groups at each level of social structure: Paul Dresch 'The significance of the course events take in segmentary systems,' *American ethnologist* (1986), pp309-324.

and authoritarianism under Zogu, and the Ghegs then equating the Tosks with the repression of the communist era.⁶² In this sense, there is significant resonance with Charles Tilly's notion of the state as organised crime writ large, in the shaky path of development of the modern state in the Balkans.⁶³ Consequently, a powerful tradition of activities which undermine the attributes of the modern state have remained within the boundaries of legitimate behaviour, as perceived by Balkan peoples themselves.

It is clear then that organised crime is not a new type of challenge to state sovereignty in the Balkans. Although organised criminal activity has not been a phenomenon of constant dimensions, neither have the attributes of modern state sovereignty been firmly rooted in the Balkans. There is a fine balance which has been struck in the development of the modern state in the Balkans, and overemphasising organised crime would underestimate the significance of the pre-modern characteristics of the state authorities, which equally share responsibility for preventing the fuller extension of sovereignty that modern statehood generally implies. External forces of great power politics and the growth of the international market, have increased the scope and strength of both pre-modern and modern symptoms of development in the Balkans. International efforts to regulate or prohibit goods have increased the profits to be made via the black market, and the growing facilitation of travel has expanded opportunities for individuals to exploit these markets. The challenge of organised illegal activity has increased at the same time as state power has increased, and it is possible that their development has been symbiotic. However, while co-operation between organised crime and the state was a constitutive block for the modern Balkan state, this heritage has also precluded support for and strengthening of state sovereignty. Consequently, it would be mistaken to identify the challenge to state sovereignty as emanating merely from groups of outlaws, external to the main body of society in the Balkans; traditions of organised crime are an old challenge to the development of state sovereignty in the Balkans, but have become symptomatic of widely-held notions which curb popular legitimising of state authority in general, and therefore the real challenge of organised crime to state sovereignty should be seen as part of its societal context.

(5,187 words)

⁶² Clogg *A Short History of Modern Greece*, p67-71; Vickers *The Albanians*, p118, 154, 155, 164.

⁶³ Charles Tilly 'War-Making and State-Making as Organised Crime,' in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. P.Evans, D. Reuschmeyer, T. Skocpol (Cambridge University Press, 1985), p169, 171, 175, 181.

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