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**Organized Crime, Terrorism and Modern Corruption: How
Organized Crime Can Be a Risk to National Security?
Case study: The Balkans**

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1. Introduction

The term “organized crime” is used as if it denoted a clear and coherent phenomenon, when in fact it is an ever-changing, contradictory and diffuse construct.¹ It is a term that has been and continues to be used very loosely. There are literally scores of definitions of organized crime, but nothing approaching a universal consensus on what it is.² Some definitions are based on organizational goals, such as profit, other focus on the properties of organizations, such as persistence and durability, some refer to structure and some emphasize methods of tools used by organized criminals to achieve their ends, such as violence and bribery.³

Per Transnational Crime Convention, organized crime means “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, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit”.⁴

Organized crime in the Balkans has its roots in the traditional clan structures. In these largely rural countries, people organized into clans with large familial ties for protection and mutual assistance. Starting in the 15th century, clan relationships operated under the *kanun*, or code, which values loyalty and *besa*, or secrecy. Each clan established itself in specific territories and controlled all activities in that territory. Protection of activities and interests often led to violence between the clans. The elements inherent in the structure of the clans provided the perfect backbone for what is considered modern-day Balkan organized crime. Many years of communist rule led to black market activities in the Balkans, but the impact of these activities was limited to the region. When communism collapsed in the late 1980s and early 1990s, it led to the expansion of Balkan organized crime activities. Criminal markets once closed to Balkan groups suddenly opened, and this led to the creation of an international network. Within the Balkans, organized

¹ Lampe, Klaus, “*Organized Crime in Europe: Conceptions and Realities*”, *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, (2008), 7.

² See Lampe, Klaus, “*Definitions of Organized Crime*”, <http://www.organized-crime.de/organizedcrimedefinitions.htm>.

³ Grabosky, Peter, and Michael Stohl, “*Crime and Terrorism*”, SAGE, (2010), 5.

⁴ United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto, Palermo, (2000), Art. 2 (a), 5.

crime groups infiltrated the new democratic institutions, further expanding their profit opportunities.⁵

This marked the beginning of a new era and by the mid 1990s, the relatively orderly Cold War system had given way to a world of greater uncertainty and an ever-growing number of perceived threats to nation states.⁶ By the end of the 20th century cross-border crime has become a key issue for policymakers and law enforcement agencies in Europe. Their approach shifted from domestic organized crime to the international arena and transnational crime.⁷ In the era of globalization, these new developments coupled with immense technological changes rise a lot of concern over nation-states vulnerability to cross-border criminal activities. On one hand, technology facilitated criminal groups to control their activities regardless of where they are, as they don't need any more a territorial base.⁸ And on the other, increased communication abilities enabled them to expand their reach into all corners of the world and to develop working relationships with terrorist organizations.⁹ For example, the presence of al-Qaeda in the Balkans, where Ayman Al-Zawahiri operated terrorist training camps, weapons of mass destruction factories and money-laundering, and drug-trading networks throughout Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey and Bosnia. Major Balkan terrorist training camps included Zenica, Malisevo and Mitrovica in Kosovo. Elaborate command-and-control centers were also established in Croatia, and Tetovo, Macedonia as well as around Sofia, Bulgaria. In Albania, the main training camp included even the property of former Albanian premier Sali Berisha in Tropje, Albania, who was then very close to the Kosovo Liberation Army.¹⁰

⁵ Global Security, "Balkan Organized Crime", <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/balkan-organized-crime.htm>.

⁶ Felsen, David, and Akis, Kalaitzidis. *"A historical overview of transnational crime"*, Handbook of transnational crime and justice, (2005), 3.

⁷ Williams, Phil. *"Transnational criminal networks"* Networks and networks: the future of terror, crime, and militancy, (2001), 61-64.

⁸ Dinicu, Anca, *"Fata nedorita a globalizarii: Crima Organizata si Terorismul"*, Army Academy, (2004), 3.

⁹ D'Alfonso, Steven, *"Why organized Crime and Terror groups are Converging"*, Security Intelligence, (2014), <https://securityintelligence.com/why-organized-crime-and-terror-groups-are-converging/>.

¹⁰ Kurop, Marcia Christoff, *"Al Qaeda's Balkan Links"*, The Wall Street Journal Europe, (2001), <https://www.deepcapture.com/wp-content/uploads/Al-Qaeda-Albania-Macedonia.pdf>.

The collapse of communist regimes in former east and central European states, alongside conflict in the former Yugoslavia, produced a wave of migration into western Europe that was unprecedented since the Second World War. The EU was ill-prepared to react effectively to this development and, although some level of humanitarian response was afforded to asylum applicants from the former Yugoslavia, the mainstay of the EU's response was one of control in an effort to limit migration and length of residence in the EU. But in its attempt to control entry, the EU unwittingly provided a ready market for criminal networks ready to exploit this situation with the provision of a smuggling service for those wishing to gain illegal entry to 'fortress Europe'. In turn, attempts by illegal migrants to enter the EU, often at the hands of organized criminals, facilitated the development of concerns centered on the interconnections between migration, crime and security in the EU.¹¹

This paper will analyze in Chapter 3 the evolution of organized crime in the Balkans after 1990s, its challenges and threats to national security and in Chapter 4, will shed some light on the relationship between organized crime and terrorism and its challenges to the international community. We will argue that the nature of organizational life is changing in a way that the criminal organizations that thrived a century ago bear little resemblance to those that are active today, and due to their complexity, it will be more difficult to predict their future moves. For the purpose of this discussion, organized crime will be defined as a criminal activity consisting of three or more persons who collaboratively engage in criminal activities, with a degree of structure and coordination, in which their motivation is often, but not always, financial gain.

2. Theoretical Framework

To better understand the developments of organized crime networks in the new era and to appropriately answer the research question, the study will use the Complex System Theory.

A "complex system" is a group, or organization which is made up of many interacting parts and it's concerned with the behaviors and properties of systems.¹² The field of complex systems it's about understanding indirect effects and cuts across all traditional disciplines of science, as well as engineering, management, and medicine. It focuses on certain questions about

¹¹ Goodey, Jo. *"Migration, crime and victimhood: responses to sex trafficking in the EU"*, Punishment & Society, (2003), 417.

¹² Mitchell, Melanie and Newman, Mark, *"Complex systems theory and evolution"*, Encyclopedia of Evolution (2002), 1.

relationships and how they make parts into wholes. These questions are relevant to all traditional fields, for example: How our minds work, how family relationship work, how society work? etc.¹³

A pioneer in the field of complex phenomena was the Nobel prize economist and philosopher Friedrich Hayek, who was inspired by Karl Popper and Warren Weaver's works.¹⁴ Man has been impelled to scientific inquiry by wonder and by need. Of these, wonder has been incomparably more fertile and there are good reasons for this. Where we wonder we have already a question to ask. But however urgently we may want to find our way in what appears just chaotic, so long as we don't know what to look for, even the most attentive and persistent observation of the bare facts is not likely to make them more intelligible. Intimate acquaintance with the facts is certainly important, but the systematic observation can start only after questions have arisen. Until we have definite questions to ask we cannot employ our intellect and questions presuppose that we have formed some provisional hypothesis of theory about events.¹⁵

Karl Popper stated that "Long-term prophecies can be derived from scientific conditional predictions only if they apply to systems which can be described as well-isolated, stationary, and recurrent. These systems are very rare in nature; and modern society is not one of them."¹⁶ Once we understand that modern social phenomena have become quite complex, we also realize that it is difficult to describe it in a traditional method and to control it by using a traditional method.¹⁷ And so, complexity theory implies non-linearity, openness, co-evolution and self-organization.¹⁸ It argues that systems invariably oscillate between patterns of linearity and non-linearity. In a "linear" world, we tend to expect a proportionate and non-varying relationship between cause and effect. Relationships between causes and effects vary widely. The output produced by our actions

¹³ Bar-Yam, Yaneer. "General features of complex systems", Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS), UNESCO, EOLSS Publishers, Oxford, UK, (2002), 3.

¹⁴ Bunge, Mario, "Critical Approaches to Science and Philosophy", Transaction Publishers, (1964), 200,

¹⁵ Ibid., 332-335.

¹⁶ Popper, Karl, "Conjectures and refutations: The growth of scientific knowledge", Routledge, (1963), 457.

¹⁷ Sim, Youn-Soo. "International Relations & Complex Systems Theory", 51st Annual Meeting, Tokyo, Japan. Vol. 51. No. 2. (2007), 2.

¹⁸ Cudworth, Erika, and Stephen Hobden. "Anarchy and anarchism: towards a theory of complex international systems", Millennium: Journal of International Studies, (2010), 399-416.

often does not adhere to proportionality, due to the vast numbers of actors and interactions which shape and constrain our interventions¹⁹.

Edward Lorenz depicted this disproportionately eloquently with what he deemed “the butterfly effect”.²⁰ For example, the self-immolation of a fruit seller in Tunisia can set in motion a wave of protest and revolution, unseating brutal tyrants who have clung to power for decades. If such seemingly insignificant events really can produce such volatile, system-wide reverberations, we need to rethink our ability to predict anything.

Thus, in system complex theory long-term prediction is nearly impossible but subtle regularities and trends can be uncovered. More specifically, rather than predicting that the system will be in a particular state at a particular moment in time, you can predict the form that this evolution is likely to take.²¹ Complexity theory which is rooted in the chaos theory, offers a new set of conceptual tools to help explain the diversity of and changes in the modern era undergoing globalization. It suggests unpredictability instead of predictability in the cause and effect models. Non-linear dynamics result with instability thus the movement, change and unpredictability are necessary for survival in the system. The whole world and its systems are sensitive, making massive and unpredictable changes in outcome to be produced by a small-scale change called “butterfly effect”. Also, very similar conditions can produce very dissimilar outcomes in different situations, thus each action in similar condition could not give always same success or conclusion.²²

Therefore, to answer the research question - How organized crime can be a risk to national security? - we first need to understand how organized crime works, namely how it does what it does. Taking into consideration that everything is made of parts, we need to figure out how those parts are working, how relationships between parts give rise to the collective behaviors of a system (organized crime networks), and how the system interacts and forms relationships with its

¹⁹ Glover, W, Robert, “*Compatibility or Incommensurability: IR Theory and Complex Systems Analysis*”, E-International Relations, (2012), http://www.e-ir.info/2012/07/21/compatibility-or-incommensurability-ir-theory-and-complex-systems-analysis/#_ftn10

²⁰ Lorenz, N. Edward, “*Reflections on the conception, birth, and childhood of numerical weather prediction*”, Annual Review of Earth and Planetary Science, (2006), 43.

²¹ Galatzer-Levy, Robert M. “*Psychoanalysis and dynamical systems theory: Prediction and self-similarity*”, *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, (1995), 1110.

²² Erçetin, Şefika Şule, and Santo Banerjee, ed. “*Chaos, Complexity and Leadership 2013*”. Springer, (2015), 494.

environment (governments and terrorist organizations). For this matter, the study will use a qualitative methodology by relying on press accounts - by keeping the journalistic speculation to a minimum - and legal documents as the primary source of information. But it will also use secondary sources such as: scholarly journals and books. Finally, this paper will not try to predict the future, but will try to predict the form that organized networks are likely to take.

3. The evolution of organized crime in the Balkans

Globalization opened many opportunities for crime, and crime is rapidly becoming global, outpacing international cooperation to fight it.²³ Huntington defined these organizations as having operations and activities located in two or more countries. According to him, transnational organizations, seek to mobilize their resources and optimize their strategies to efficiently penetrate the territories in which they operate.²⁴

In the Balkans, organized crime has become a rapidly growing transnational phenomenon. In many regions, organized criminal groups have become so entrenched and governments so corrupt, that arrest and prosecution is at worst impossible and at best a distant concern.²⁵ The collapse of the economies of the post-Communist East resulted in increased migration by Eastern Europeans across Western Europe's borders. Relatively weak law enforcement and border controls in the post-Communist states also meant an increase in corruption and illegal activities, including drug trafficking; alcohol and tobacco smuggling; trafficking in dangerous materials, firearms and illegal immigrants; money laundering; and more corruption.²⁶

History and politics have provided fertile ground for the growth of organized crime in the Balkans. Centuries of foreign rule and decades of communism have left civil society weak, and prevented the establishment of transparent and stable political structures. The resurgence of nationalism, the spread of conflict in the successor states of former Yugoslavia, the breakdown of government power in Albania, weak justice system, and economic problems have all nurtured

²³ Lilley, Peter, *Dirty dealing: The untold truth about global money laundering, international crime and terrorism*, Kogan Page Limited, UK, (2006), 28.

²⁴ Felsen, David, and Akis, Kalaitzidis. *"A historical overview of transnational crime"*, Handbook of transnational crime and justice, (2005), 4.

²⁵ Thomas, M. Sanderson, *"Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines"*, SAIS Review of International Affairs, (2004), 50.

²⁶ Felsen, David, and Akis, Kalaitzidis. *"A historical overview of transnational crime"*, Handbook of transnational crime and justice, (2005), 12.

organized crime in the Balkans. Many newly established criminal organizations have close links to the political and economic establishment, as well as to former members of the security and intelligence services. These contacts have meant that criminal groups have been the first beneficiaries of the social and economic changes in Eastern and Southeastern Europe following the collapse of communism. These groups adapted quickly to the new market economy, establishing strong and durable networks before the region's newly democratized states could build defenses against them.²⁷

Unlike traditional organized crime groups, Balkan groups do not appear to operate under a traditional hierarchy, but rather around ethnic associations and friendship ties. They also appear to be more agile, organic, and project-based. Balkan OCGs are adept at adopting new technologies, thus increasing their ability to expand their criminal market base through cyber-enabled fraud and they engage in a myriad of criminal activity.²⁸

And so, the extent of the development of organized crime has recently caused the Balkan region to be treated not only as a transit region but increasingly considered a place of destination and storage for drug trafficking, human trafficking, weapons smuggling and money laundering, as well as a place where various forms of organized economic and financial crime are committed.²⁹

3.1 Drug trafficking

Countries in the Balkans have been noted as major drug trafficking transit points, with increases in the cultivation of cannabis and the trafficking of cocaine. Per International Narcotics Control Board, Bulgaria is one of the largest producers of cannabis, together with Albania, Montenegro, Moldova, Serbia, Macedonia and Ukraine.³⁰ Moreover, the cannabis cultivated in Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo region is not distributed only in Greece, Italy, Slovenia, and Hungary but also trafficked to Turkey with the aim of exchanging it over there with heroin.³¹ In Romania, the quantity of seized heroin increased by almost 150 per cent in 2013, from 45 kg seized in 2012 to

²⁷ Berdal, R. Mats, and Serrano, Mónica eds. *“Transnational organized crime and international security: business as usual?”*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, (2002), 129-131.

²⁸ FBI, *“Transnational organized crime”*, Organized Crime – What we investigate, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/organized-crime>.

²⁹ Krasniqi, Kole, *“Organized Crime in the Balkans”*, European Scientific Journal, Kosovo, (2016), 211.

³⁰ International Narcotics Control Board, *“Analysis of the world situation”*, (2015), 87-88. http://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/AR2014/English/AR_2014_E_Chapter_III_Europe.pdf

³¹ Krasniqi, Kole, *“Organized Crime in the Balkans”*, European Scientific Journal, Kosovo, (2016), 211.

112 kg in 2013.³² Another alarming fact is that not only drugs which are produced in Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Albania and Macedonia pass through the Balkans to Europe. Acetic anhydride which is produced in the European Union and is used for the production of heroin in Afghanistan and Turkey is also smuggled on the Balkan Route to Turkey and other Oriental countries.³³ And classical synthetic drugs such as Amphetamine, Ecstasy and new drugs which are mainly produced within the European Union are taking the same route to Turkey and the East.³⁴

Besides, there are no signs of a slowdown in the number, type or availability of new substances and the European drug market continues to evolve.³⁵

3.2 Money Laundering

Money laundering is another activity strongly bonded with organized crime and one of its pre-eminent and crucial operating sources, as it forms a way of monetary profit recycling. After drug trafficking, organized financial crime is the favored crime for OCGs within the Balkans.³⁶

Money laundering refers to banking and financial activity that seeks to make illegal funds and monies appear legitimate. And so, the first step to the money laundering world is to get yourself a bank account or at least get into the banking system.³⁷ For example, both the internet and small box adverts offer anonymous credit cards. Many are “for life”. The process involves buying a Panamanian off-the-shelf company that then sets up a bank account on which a credit card is issued. Only the lawyer setting up the corporation knows who you are: the banking relationship is with the Panamanian entity (which has absolutely no reporting requirements). The bank then issues a credit card on the account, which can be used on a worldwide basis.³⁸

In 2016, the Mossack Fonseca leak, which is a world’s fourth biggest provider of offshore financial services, has raised public outrage after it revealed the names of several business people

³² International Narcotics Control Board, “Analysis of the world situation”, (2015), 87. http://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/AR2014/English/AR_2014_E_Chapter_III_Europe.pdf

³³ Fiander, Les, “Acetic anhydride trafficking in Europe”, Organized Crime Networks, Europol, (2011), 2-4. <https://www.paris-pact.net/upload/4b63025503cbc299204e7f7699fce54f.pdf>.

³⁴ Europol, “EU Drug Markets Report: Strategic Overview”, European Monitoring Center, (2016), 25-27.

³⁵ European Monitoring Center, “European Drug Report: Trend and Developments”, (2017), 18-19, <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/4541/TDAT17001ENN.pdf>.

³⁶ Papapetrou, Alexander, “Organized Crime in the Balkans”, Linköping University Sweden, (2008), 36.

³⁷ Lilley, Peter, “Dirty dealing: The untold truth about global money laundering, international crime and terrorism”, Kogan Page Limited, UK, (2006), 10.

³⁸ Ibid, 12.

and leaders from the Balkans who were using its services.³⁹ And more recently, Balkan states linked to Russian money laundering scheme. Media reports of an alleged global financial scheme to launder over \$20 billions of suspect money from Russian banks, have linked Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Croatia to some of the dubious transactions. The Balkan country with the biggest number of transactions was Bulgaria. This scheme was first reported in 2014 by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP).⁴⁰

This process of money laundering has devastating social consequences. It provides the fuel for drug dealers, terrorists, arms dealers, and other criminals to operate and expand their criminal enterprises. Left unchecked, money laundering can erode the integrity of nation's financial institutions.⁴¹

3.3 Human trafficking and migrant smuggling

Organized crime in the Balkans could not have developed to this point without establishing networking and cooperation between regional groups belonging to organized crime. These groups, becoming more and more criminally sophisticated all over the Balkans, are characterized by their ability to work together and to adapt to any new social circumstances well enough in order to achieve their criminal goals.⁴²

Human trafficking has different characteristics in different regions, but in the post-communist Europe it generally meant “migration prostitution”, namely, the recruitment of unwitting young woman into prostitution, and their transportation to developed markets in Western Europe.⁴³ With regard to human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation, numerous reports note the decline in detected victims, but it also suggest that this may be related to more

³⁹ Deacu, Elena, “*Panama Papers: Ce romani sunt implicati in cel mai mare scandal mondial*”, Jurnalistii, (2016), <http://www.jurnalistii.ro/panama-papers-ce-romani-sunt-implicati-in-cel-mai-mare-scandal-mondial/>.

⁴⁰ Preasca, Ion, “*The Russian Laundromat Exposed*”, OCCRP, (2017), <https://www.occrp.org/en/laundromat/the-russian-laundromat-exposed/>.

⁴¹ Papapetrou, Alexander, “*Organized Crime in the Balkans*”, Linkoping University Sweden, (2008), 38.

⁴² Krasniqi, Kole, “*Organized Crime in the Balkans*”, European Scientific Journal, Kosovo, (2016), 212.

⁴³ Berdal, R. Mats, and Serrano, Mónica eds. “*Transnational organized crime and international security: business as usual?*”, Lynne Rienner Publishers, (2002), 136.

sophisticated trafficking techniques.⁴⁴ However, the exact number of victims of human trafficking is not known.⁴⁵

In 2015, more than one million irregular migrants reached the EU. More than 90% of these irregular migrants used facilitation services at some point during their journey and in most cases, these services were provided by migrant smuggling networks.⁴⁶ With Bulgaria, Egypt, Hungary, Iraq, Kosovo, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey being the most common nationalities or countries of birth for these suspects involved in human smuggling.⁴⁷ Per Valeri Grigorov (former director of Bulgaria's border police), human trafficking and smuggling through Bulgaria is very well organized. Immigrants and refugees are taken from the Turkish border to the Serbian border within 72 hours.⁴⁸ In Romania, the Directorate for Investigating Organized Crime and Terrorism (DIICOT), arrested 25 nationals for smuggling over 100 migrants between August-December 2016. The criminal network was financed from Turkey, and the migrants were originating from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey and Morocco.⁴⁹

Increased control over borders benefited organized criminal groups. While human trafficking and migrant smuggling are two distinct crimes, frequently the two phenomena overlap. Smuggled migrants are generally unaware of the risks involved in these transactions and they often become victims of abuse by organized crime syndicates. In addition, they are vulnerable to become victims of human trafficking.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ United Nations, “*Crime and its impact on the Balkans and affected countries*”, Office on Drugs and Crime, (2008), 14-15, https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Balkan_study.pdf.

⁴⁵ United Nations, “*International Migration Policies: Government Views and Priorities*”, Economic and Social Affairs, (2017), 93, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/InternationalMigrationPolicies2013/Report%20PDFs/z_International%20Migration%20Policies%20Full%20Report.pdf.

⁴⁶ Europol, “*Migrant Smuggling in the EU*”, Europol Public Information, (2016), 5.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁸ Andreev, Alexander, “Bulgaria fears a tide of refugees”, Deutsche Welle, (2016), <http://www.dw.com/en/bulgaria-fears-a-tide-of-refugees/a-19464129>.

⁴⁹ Buga, Marian, “*Gruparea de traficanti de migranti destructurata de DIICOT Arad era finantata din Turcia, iar migrantii erau introdusi ilegal in tara prin Serbia si Bulgaria*”, News.ro, (2017), <https://www.news.ro/eveniment/gruparea-de-trafficanti-de-migranti-destructurata-de-diicot-arad-era-finantata-din-turcia-iar-migrantii-er-au-introdusi-ilegal-in-tara-prin-serbia-si-bulgaria-1922405326002017011216593731>.

⁵⁰ United Nations, “*International Migration Policies: Government Views and Priorities*”, Economic and Social Affairs, (2017), 93, http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/InternationalMigrationPolicies2013/Report%20PDFs/z_International%20Migration%20Policies%20Full%20Report.pdf.

3.4 Arms trade

Arms trafficking is the least visible aspect of organized crime activity in the region. In essence, it unfolds on two levels: one is the trade of small arms, mostly handguns and assault rifles, aimed at the Western European markets (Italy and Holland). But there is also ample evidence that the Serbian government was involved in illegal exports of arms and military equipment on a much grander scale⁵¹

The connection between events in the former Yugoslavia and trans-border crime in the Balkans was most clearly visible during the trade and arms embargos, imposed by the UN on post-Yugoslav states. The embargo - violating trade in states like Croatia and Bosnia - Herzegovina - was to a great extent directed towards illegal import of weapons, while for Belgrade the crucial illegal import was oil. This made smuggling to be essential for their survival, and to secure their republics' independence.⁵²

The wars in former Yugoslavia left massive quantities of weapons and other military hardware, from small arms to plastic explosives and even light artillery, outside of effective government control.⁵³ And so, the Balkan countries have sold for more than €1.2 billion in weapons in the past 5 years to Middle Eastern Countries.⁵⁴ Thousands of assault rifles, mortar shells, rocket launchers, anti-tank weapons, and heavy machine guns are pouring into the troubled region, originating from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia. Since the start of the Syrian conflict in 2012, these eight countries have approved the shipment of weapons and ammunition to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, and Turkey.⁵⁵ Much of the weaponry is believed to be send to Syria.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Stojarova, Vera. "Organized crime in the Western Balkans", *HUMSEC Journal*, (2007), 10

⁵² Papapetrou, Alexander, "Organized Crime in the Balkans", Linkoping University Sweden, (2008), 42.

⁵³ Stojarova, Vera. "Organized crime in the Western Balkans", *HUMSEC Journal*, (2007), 10.

⁵⁴ Angelovsky, Ivan, et.al., "Revealed: the £1bn of weapons flowing from Europe to Middle East", *The Guardian*, (2016), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/27/weapons-flowing-eastern-europe-middle-east-revealed-arms-trade-syria>.

⁵⁵ Marzouk, Lawrence, et.al., "Making a Killing: The 1.2 Billion Euro Arms Pipeline to Middle East", *Balkans Arms Trade*, Balkan Insight, (2016), <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/making-a-killing-the-1-2-billion-euros-arms-pipeline-to-middle-east-07-26-2016>.

⁵⁶ Angelovsky, Ivan, et. al., "The Coyote's Trail: A Machine Gun's Path from Serbia to Syria", *Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project*, (2017), <https://www.occrp.org/en/makingakilling/the-coyotes-trail-a-machine-guns-path-from-serbia-to-syria/>.

Also, vast quantities of weapons left over from the war are still owned by civilians and may easily find their way into the hands of terrorists on the black market. Milojko Brzakovic, director of the Zastava Arms factory, said that several weapons used by militants during the Paris attacks were made in Serbia in the late 1980s.⁵⁷

4. Transnational organized crime and Terrorism

The nexus with transnational organized crime is increasingly a focus for security planners in their analyses of terror groups and their approach is often described by the phrase “methods, not motives.”⁵⁸

There are indeed many differences between organized crime groups (OGC) and terrorist groups. Organized crime groups are not built around adherence to religious or ideological tenets, while groups like al Qaeda or Hamas are fundamentally based on religious beliefs and motivations. For example, the removal of secular or corrupt leaders is a goal of many terrorist groups. By contrast, the existence of these very leaders is essential to the existence of certain organized crime groups. Most criminal networks want to maintain the status quo, namely to keep the system “wired.” Terrorists often seek out media coverage, whereas organized criminals avoid it. Furthermore, terrorists often take responsibility for their actions, while organized criminals do not. Criminal syndicates generally cultivate and maintain networks of illegal transportation, bribed or threatened customs officials, politicians, judges, police and intelligence officials, and have in many cases settled into some form of understanding with a host country. Should al Qaeda or Hezbollah operators and financiers enter into this equation they would most likely draw unwelcome law enforcement attention.⁵⁹

However, there are also striking similarities: Both criminal types commit fraud, theft, forgery, and violent street crime; Both traffic in drugs and human beings; Both extort, intimidate, and bribe and both do business in the legitimate economy, too; Both use subterfuge to conceal their real purpose; Granted, their motives appear different: organized crime focusing on making

⁵⁷ BBC, “Paris attacks weapons ‘made by Zastava Arms in Serbia’”, BBC News, (2015), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34954048>.

⁵⁸ Shelley, Louise et. al., “Methods and motives: Exploring links between transnational organized crime and international terrorism”, *Trends in Organized Crime*, (2005), 4.

⁵⁹ Thomas, M. Sanderson, “Transnational Terror and Organized Crime: Blurring the Lines”, *SAIS Review of International Affairs*, (2004), 55.

money and terrorism aiming to undermine political authority, but the perpetrators have similar profiles, and are often the same individuals.⁶⁰

Generally having been thought of as distinct threats, the interplay between terrorism and transnational organized crime is evolving, by oscillating between objectives and modalities that were once thought uniquely “terrorist” or “criminal”.⁶¹ And even though links with organized crime are not always so clearly identified, they exist and there are indications that intermediaries may be members of an OCG or suppliers for OCGs.⁶²

Irregular migration services are often provided by specialized facilitating networks or OCGs. In January, Romanian Police arrested 20 persons after conducting raids at suspected people-smuggling locations in the country. The suspects smuggled between August-December 2016 over 100 refugees and migrants from Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Afghanistan and Morocco.⁶³ And per German Intelligence Services, terrorist organizations like ISIS are using the influx of migrants into Europe to smuggle terrorists “camouflaged as refugees”. The statement came after the arrest of an Algerian man who was smuggled into the country through the Balkan route.⁶⁴

Most cases of terrorist smuggling involved EU foreign fighters travelling back and forth to conflict areas in Syria and Iraq.⁶⁵ Hungarian counter-terror chief Zsolt Bodnar, stated that the majority of Paris attackers used migration routes to enter Europe.⁶⁶ Although the subjects were born in Europe,⁶⁷ they traveled to join ISIS in Syria and posed as Syrian refugees on their way

⁶⁰ Shelley, Louise et. al., *Methods and motives: Exploring links between transnational organized crime and international terrorism*, *Trends in Organized Crime*, (2005), 10.

⁶¹ Reitano, Tuesday et.al., *Examining the Organised Crime: Terror Nexus and its Implications*, The Global Initiative, (2017), 2, <http://globalinitiative.net/examining-the-organised-crime-terror-nexus-and-its-implications/>.

⁶² Europol, *The nexus between organized crime and terrorism in the EU*, Brussels, (2015), 4.

⁶³ Touma, Ana Maria, *Romania Raid Migrant-Smugglers Hideouts*, Balkan Insight News, (2017), <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/romania-launches-mass-raids-against-smugglers-01-26-2017>.

⁶⁴ Smale, Alison, *Islamic state using migrant crisis to smuggle in terrorists, German official says*, The Orange County Register, (2016), <http://www.ocregister.com/2016/02/05/islamic-state-using-migrant-crisis-to-smuggle-in-terrorists-german-official-says/>.

⁶⁵ Idem.

⁶⁶ Rothwell, James, *Majority of Paris attackers used migration routes to enter Europe, reveals Hungarian counter-terror chief*, The Telegraph, (2016), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/02/majority-of-paris-attackers-used-migration-routes-to-enter-europ/>.

⁶⁷ BBC, *Paris attacks: Who were the attackers?*, BBC News, (2016), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34832512>.

back by using fake passports. They arrived in France via the Eastern European route.⁶⁸ In 2015, 500 people were trafficked, mostly by Bulgarians nationals, from Turkey via Bulgaria to Serbia. Bulgarian officials confirmed that this route was not new and has been controlled by organized gangs for decades, as bosses of the human traffickers not only have good contacts with representatives of the local border authorities, but also with the highest governmental levels in Sofia.⁶⁹

On one hand Europe's migration crisis was a great opportunity for organized crime networks, as the profits from human smuggling were rivaling those of narcotics trafficking and the black-market arms trade.⁷⁰ But on the other, this crisis facilitated also the convergence between organized and terrorist group. The Balkan Route is heavily controlled by organized crime and any activity along this route is likely to present an opportunity for convergence. Based on the geography of these areas, it appears that convergence between organized crime and terrorist groups is more likely to occur at the borders between the relatively stable EU region and its borders with less stable countries.⁷¹

Furthermore, for terrorist organizations, it is a natural step to use the support and the expertise of criminal groups from Europe for the acquirement of forged documents, money laundering, human smuggling etc., which are likely to have more experience in these activities.⁷²

The transport networks in the Balkans are used by militant Islamist groups for logistical support⁷³ and the Balkans region is considered as "safe haven" for a bundle of war profiteers, career criminals and Islamic fundamentalists due to the weak governmental structures and deteriorating economies.⁷⁴ The defining characteristics of the alliance between terrorism and

⁶⁸ Rothwell, James, "Majority of Paris attackers used migration routes to enter Europe, reveals Hungarian counter-terror chief", The Telegraph, (2016), <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/02/majority-of-paris-attackers-used-migration-routes-to-enter-europ/>.

⁶⁹ Papakotchev, T. Andreev, "People-smuggling: the trade with refugees in Bulgaria", Deutsche Welle, (2015), <http://www.dw.com/en/top-stories/s-9097>.

⁷⁰ Dettmer, Jamie, "Europe's Migration Crisis a Boon for Organized Crime", Europe, (2015), <https://www.voanews.com/a/europe-migration-crisis-a-boon-for-organized-crime/2952482.html>.

⁷¹ Europol, "The nexus between organized crime and terrorism in the EU", Brussels, (2015), 6.

⁷² Shelley, Louise et. al., "Methods and motives: Exploring links between transnational organized crime and international terrorism", *Trends in Organized Crime*, (2005), 37.

⁷³ See chapter 3 on Arms trade and Drugs trafficking.

⁷⁴ Arsovaska, Jana and Basha, Dimal, "Globalizing the Western Balkans: Transnational Crime, Fundamental Islam and Unholy Alliances", *Etudes Caribeennes*, (2012), <https://etudescaribeennes.revues.org/5871>.

organized crime are not limited only to access to specialized knowledge like money laundering, operational support and financial support.⁷⁵ This may include also specialized services like counterfeiting and a countless number of other: Pristina (Kosovo capital), is considered a “factory” for fake travel documents such as passports and Schengen visas,⁷⁶ and Romanian prepaid cards are sold for being used in several conflict areas, including Iraq and Syria.⁷⁷

Activities of terrorists and organized criminals frequently reinforce each other, where terrorists engage either directly or indirectly in organized crime activities such as trafficking, smuggling, extortion, kidnapping for ransom and the illicit trade of natural resources, for financial and/or material benefits. Such benefits contribute to undermining state security, stability and social and economic development, which in turn may create or maintain the conditions for organized criminal groups to flourish.⁷⁸

5. Conclusions

Combating OGCs is one of the major challenges due to their complexity and their easily adaptable skills to the trends in globalization. In some Balkan countries, state institutions have not been able to successfully combat organized crime due to their involvement in corruption, and the involvement of official or political structures in criminal activities. At the same time, there is a lack of transparency and cooperation between local and international institutions and between the Balkan states.

Organized crime is a serious growing threat to national and international security with dire implications for public safety, public health, democratic institutions, and economic stability across the globe. In the Balkans, there are two main strategies for fighting transnational organized crime - Preventive and repressive - but to address this phenomenon, policy makers and practitioners should move beyond traditional law enforcement methods to adopt a more nuanced, phased and

⁷⁵ Protopapas, George, “*Islamic terrorism and organized crime threaten Balkans*”, Modern Diplomacy, (2015), http://moderndiplomacy.eu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=684:islamic-terrorism-and-organized-crime-threaten-balkans&Itemid=157.

⁷⁶ Balkan insight, “*Kosovo Police in Fake Passport Bust*”, (2008), <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/kosovo-police-in-fake-passport-bust>. See also, advertisements on this regard on forums like <https://www.virtualvienna.net/topic/buy-counterfeitreal-fake-passport-drivers-license-id-cardthierrylondi817gma/>.

⁷⁷ Romania Insider, “*Intelligence Service: Romanian prepaid cards are used in Iraq and Syria*”, Daily News, (2016), <https://www.romania-insider.com/intelligence-service-romanian-prepaid-cards-are-used-in-iraq-and-syria/>.

⁷⁸ Reitano, Tuesday et.al., “*Examining the Organised Crime: Terror Nexus and its Implications*”, The Global Initiative, (2017). <http://globalinitiative.net/examining-the-organised-crime-terror-nexus-and-its-implications/>.

multi-sector approach. For example: analyzing and responding to the similarities and distinctions between the enabling factors in which criminality and terrorism are likely to result.

This evolving relationship between terrorism and organized crime also poses significant challenges to the international community. Progressing from simple co-existence towards a symbiotic relationship, the lines between these seemingly distinct activities are becoming increasingly blurred. It makes difficult to differentiate between “pure” terrorist groups, their criminal counterparts or something in between. Consequently, the fight against organized crime is being undermined by a critical lack of awareness regarding their links with terrorist groups, and this can be argued the other way as well. Moreover, EU is unprepared for and unable to currently conceptualize due to the unpredictable variation across several critical factors, including climate change, migration, and technological development. The future evolution of organized crime and its nexus with terrorism will become more complex and chaotic and will be facilitated by technological advancements, including but not limited to, encryption, virtual currencies, the evolution of 3-D printing and the dark web.

To conclude, organized crime in the Balkans will continue to pose serious threats to the national security and no one jurisdiction or country can combat it on its own, thus, effective and continued national and international cooperation is critical. But, to what extent does corruption affect the international cooperation?

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