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**THE AFTERMATH OF YUGOSLAV WARS: THE BIRTH OF
ORGANIZED CRIME**

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I hereby declare that I have compiled the paper independently and all works, important standpoints and data by other authors has been properly referenced and the same paper has not been previously presented for grading.

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ABSTRACT

The violent breakup of Yugoslavia got the world's attention when a series of independence declarations turned into a bloody civil wars. As the world was witnessing massacres towards different ethnicities, an organized crime started to flourish in the region. The criminality was connected to the war and was even used as an asset. Smuggling of weapons and goods turned out to be one of the most important elements of surviving against a stronger and better-equipped enemy. However, the skills, methods, and connections gained during the war continued to exist even when the war was over. This lead to a situation where criminals started sponsoring their own personal lives with the expense of war. Smuggling routes established originally to serve the purpose of trafficking medicines, foods and goods, were transformed to routes for drugs and humans. The weak law enforcement enabled criminals to work in peace and grow their empire and even get a foothold into the creation of the new states. Contributing to the general discussion on the situation of Western Balkan organized crime and its influence using qualitative research literature reviews and discourse analysis, the paper argues that the Yugoslav wars were the major reason for the birth of organized crime in the western Balkan region and the findings throughout the paper support the claim.

Keywords: Organized crime, state building, Yugoslav wars, corruption.

INTRODUCTION

During the collapse of Yugoslavia and after it, the whole Western Balkans was in a state of unstable situation. The war on independence and ethnic conflicts had torn the whole region to pieces and the western part of the peninsula itself. This meant, that governments could not function in the proper way and provide the services for their citizens. Wars against former "allies" turned into ethnic cleansing and a huge number of war crimes were conducted. While the general focus was on fighting and gaining an independence, or trying to stop a nation gaining it (depending on the perspective), an another major problem was growing in the shadows, hiding from the daylight and later becoming one of the biggest reasons for the slow development of the region, the organized crime.

Due to the chaotic situation in the 90s, the international community became greatly involved in the development of the region and nowadays, the region is still under the lens of different organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and many more. Therefore, a lot of topic related literature exists, and many of these mentioned organizations have brought out their overviews of the current situation in the Western Balkans. For instance, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has provided a document about organized crime in the Balkans, how the criminal groups function in the region, what are the ways they operate, how they are connected even to the highest level of state officials and how they influence on the development of the region as well as how they gained their power during the war. In addition to that, scholars have made research on the influence of the organized crime in the region and the spillover effects on Europe.

Currently, the Western Balkans, consisting of countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, the Republic of North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia are trying to get rid of their reputation as a corrupted region with ethnic disputes, and in a sense, some the of the countries have succeeded in it, for example, Croatia and Slovenia, but not all countries have. A prove for this is the participation of the international community in a form of civilian crisis

missions, where the aim is to enhance the rule of law, police and civil administration. But the problem still lies inside the country itself, the newly born governments after the war, had organized crime involved in state-level already from the beginning and the trend is still going on. As long as this culture of criminality exists, the region will remain the same and progress will be slow also in the future.

In order to understand the organized crime problem in the region, their code of conduct has to be researched. Their ways of operating, methods and everything related in their actions. Has to be understood, how criminal organizations function and what is the basis. As explained later in the text, organized crime is profit driven, so in this sense, the question is gaining money and utilizing it forward to strengthen their position in a global perspective, since these organizations are not just limited in their home soil.

Keeping the above-mentioned factors in mind, the paper claims that **the Yugoslav wars were the major reason for the birth of organized crime in the Western Balkan region** and analyses how organized crime is involved in state building. The aim of the paper is to find how it all happened and why in order to understand what kind of consequences wars can have for later generations. In the paper, qualitative methods literature review and discourse analysis are used as a methodology, analyzing UN official documents as well as several other papers, where expert analyses are being provided, crime statistics are being examined and local people giving their opinion on how the criminal groups have a strong grip from power wielding stakeholders, and in some perspectives, organized crime is seen as one of the foundations of the states, a leading pillar, a mafia state.

The first chapter thoroughly will be answering to the 1st research question on how has organized crime evolved in the Balkans and what were the different forms of it. The second chapter will be evaluating the appearances of organized crime in Western Balkans and answer the 2nd research question on how it has been one of the key elements of state-building process, as well as explain how organized crime was used as an asset and that way gave its own contribution to the development of “mafia state” The final chapter before the conclusion will focus on the 3rd research question concerning on how the criminality in the Western Balkans have influenced on the police cooperation in Europe and how the international community is trying to prevent organized crime groups gaining more foothold and becoming bigger international threat.

1. THE EVOLUTION OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN WESTERN BALKANS

Organized crime in the Western Balkans has seen a major development from small scale smuggling and bandit action to a more advanced and hierarchically functioning system. The evolution of criminal groups can be seen from the late 80s to early 2000s and during that time, the Balkan region suffered a major crisis and war, which itself can be seen as fuel for the development of massive organized crime. The war itself, provided a platform for organized crime to grow, in sense quite “peacefully” environment, because the center of attention during the war was not the criminal activities. As the international community started to notice the growing trend in criminality in the region, by that time it was too late. In the following chapters, the evolution of organized crime, before, during and after the war, will be explained and how it has influenced the region itself and the surroundings of it.

Before the collapse of Yugoslavia, the Balkan peninsula did not have massive organized crime, at least in the scale of what it had become during the war and after it. Historically though, there has always been illicit activity in the region, (Binder 2011) which is partly explained by the geographical location of the Western Balkans as a transit route for drugs to Europe, but because of the strong communist rule, organized crime groups had no room to grow. Despite the situation in Yugoslavia, criminality still existed, but in a different form.

Communism is said to promote two things, which later will have a huge impact during the war and after it, and in a sense can be seen as the foundation for modern organized crime in the Western Balkans. The first one is Black markets and the second one is security services. As a communist regime, markets usually tend to be limited, so smuggling of goods was essential if one wishes to get goods out of the official economy and what comes to the smuggling, it is connected to corruption, since border officials have to be bribed in some cases. Of course, it is easy to understand, that if smuggling routes are established for transporting goods, that cannot be found from official markets, drugs and weapons are easy to put in the same cargo. What comes to the

security service, one of the key parts of absolute communist governance is the internal security police and agencies related to intelligence. As these agencies were seen highly important, they possessed a lot of power and were essentially immune to all supervision and operated partly above the law and as one can imagine, this autonomy leaves room for corruption. (UNODC 2008, 48)

The two main fields of criminality before the war of Yugoslavia eventually joined forces and this meant, that underground operators started working for security services. The career criminals started doing the dirty work for their country and many of the operations were conducted overseas. The killing of people, spying and extortion as an example, were the jobs these criminals were hired to do. Protecting of the Yugoslav diaspora was the main task and some of the security issues arrived from other countries and therefore the use of criminal contractors was seen as a good option. (Ibid.) These people had the connections to overseas, but most importantly, they were not seen as an official Yugoslav agent, so in case of capture, they could not be so easily connected to any state or nation.

When the communist regime collapsed in 1989, the whole region opened to lawlessness. This basically meant, that what had been moderately strong border defenses and controls, did not exist anymore. The same goes for the police forces. (Binder 2011) Even before the war, the Western Balkans were in a situation, where the economies were collapsing, unemployment boomed and even some level of starvation was witnessed. For some people, the path of criminality was an easy option and especially to law enforcement officers, who still had an impact on issues. The corruption became very strong in the region and even today, we still cannot see the end of it.

The final remark was the fall of Yugoslavia and the outbreak of civil wars. The fighting which began in 1991 in Croatia and Slovenia, had spillover effects to Bosnia from 1992 to 1995, and even further to Kosovo from 1998 to 1999. (Ibid.) During these years, organized crime started to flourish. Different levels of criminality could be seen, from the bottom of shoplifting to the highest pillar, the corruption in state level and to mass murders conducted during the war, which can be identified as a war crime as well, but taken into an account the nature of the Yugoslavian wars, some of the events occurred during a state of unclear circumstances, so in that sense it has been a difficult task from the perspective of the international law.

During the war, criminals were used as an asset same way as before the war. Later on from this paper, the issue will be explained more detailed, but generally, to say, criminals tend to have certain

leverages. The same situation is with the secret service. When the war broke up, each ethnic side used their own paramilitary units to do the dirty work, who were originally part of the secret service. However, the most alarming trend during the war was the cooperation of different ethnic criminal groups, despite belonging to opposing force, and several international organizations investigating crime has reported, that during the war, and even today, the different ethnicity and religion is not a barrier, what comes to the business of making money and gaining material interest. Now keeping this in mind, surely can be said, that some of the problems in Western Balkans are because of the birth of criminality and the nature of the region. (Krasniqi 2016, 215). Generally, the Western Balkans and especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, are considered as a region of ethnic disputes, which is one of the main reasons why the region is not gaining much progress. Interestingly, if criminals are able to cooperate despite their different ethnic background, why cannot the politicians and those who determinate the future direction of the country.

The situation of organized crime and criminality in general after the war can be best described as United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime writes in their document crime and its impact on the Balkans. In the case of Bosnia, criminal capital gained during the criminalized war has been converted to political capital after the war. Those who gained the most from war, have successfully transformed their "dirty" wealth into a "clean" one and present themselves as legitimate economic elites. (UNODC 2008, 53) Now, this statement describes the situation after the war perfectly. Those who actually were in power during the war remained in it and even gained more, (Gordy 2004, 14) and from this, we have many examples, which can be found later from the text.

When the situation in the Western Balkans started to cool down, organized crime was seen as a major threat to the development of the countries from the aftermath of war. However, the state institutions were unable to successfully combat it, mainly because they were involved in it. (Strazzari 2007, 190) Corruption and participation to illegal activities such as smuggling during the war was something that the state had their hands on and that influenced to the development of organized economic crime, where much of the international monetary aid was vanished and ended up in the pockets of criminals (Krasniqi 2016, 216). As international aid was something that the Western Balkan countries received significantly, it still could not eliminate the problem. As from the author's personal experience, there is truth behind this. During the time in Sarajevo, there could be seen big blockhouses, which were halfway done. The idea behind this was to get the international monetary aid for the construction of buildings and when the money was received, the building of the structures stopped immediately and the company disappeared with the money.

As one of the analysts who worked for the European Union Police Mission (EUPM) in Bosnia claims in her studies, organized crime started to flourish after the war, because of the wartime conditions. (Brady 2012, 6) There is a number of reasons why this is the case, which will be eventually explained in the text, but one the main reasons are the weak government with internal corruption, weak border protection and police and the involvement of criminals in government positions. In addition to that, the organized criminal clans have managed to build up a system of high conflict community, a social, political and economic system which in many cases is seen more important institution than the state itself (Tsekov 2002, 6; Stanchev 2004, 247), and individual's own decision making process is heavily dependent on it. (Arsovska & Kostakos 2008, 374)

1.1. Forms of organized crime in the Western Balkans

There are many different forms of organized crime and some of them are more connected to the crisis and some of them have evolved in its form after the war. Corruption was very popular during the war and especially after the war when the region started to stabilize. Corruption is the abuse of official position. An example of this can be a policeman fining a ticket and keeping the money itself. One of the biggest problems in corruption is, that it takes away the credibility of an official actor, for example, the police and other law enforcement units. In addition to corruption, many forms of illegal smuggling exist. These include human, drug, firearms, oil and cigarette trafficking and the recent events in the world has provided the criminal organizations an opportunity to broaden their businesses to smuggling of illegal migrants.

1.1.1. Corruption

In Western Balkans, three major forms of corruption exist and they are following; The number one is the "street corruption". This refers mainly to bribing, either money or another material gain. Bribing the officers in the border controls, enrollment to schools or medical staff. Basically, anything that has to do with the public sector. The second one is commercial corruption. This has to do with the situation on common markets. It can be illicit linkages, evading regulations or destroying the competition and creating a monopoly position in the markets. The third one is the most dangerous and serious, it is the "supreme corruption", which is connected to commercial corruption, but in a more severe way. The actors here are connected to political power, bribing

individuals with decision making power and gaining leverage by their decisions that favor them. The connections to top political and economic power wielders result in market distortions, damage the state and are overall a threat to national security. These actions are the tools of organized crime, which enable them to continue with the selected path. (FER 2002, 30)

Problems facing the corruption is, that any corruption is usually linked with politicians, high governmental officials and people from big businesses and sometimes even the combination of these, and when anti-corruption campaigns are set up, the accused stakeholders have already had the information of such operations way ahead, so they have been able to cover their traces, so that they cannot be tracked. So it simply does not work, that the officials who should be doing the job of prosecuting and searching for evidence are in the payroll of the searched “victim”. As long as this kind of action continues, it is very hard to find a solution and if taking into consideration the opinion of the businesses representatives, corruption is ranked 3rd highest obstacle in the business world as well (UNODC 2013; Osmani 2015, 265).

1.1.2. Illegal smuggling and trafficking

Human trafficking is another popular form of criminality in the Western Balkans. The trafficking mainly focuses on woman and children and it can be seen as a form of contemporary slavery and one of the most lucrative forms of organized crime. The main objective of human trafficking is prostitution but there are other forms as well, such as house chores, coercive marriage, debt servitude, false adoption and many forms of sex entertainment, where sex-tourism and pornography act big role. (Ibid.)

Although human trafficking is mainly focused on the mentioned fields, there is another form of trafficking. Men and women from Western Balkans are heading to central Europe in search of a job (Ibid, 31) and when it happens illegally, criminal organizations tend to be organizing the transportation, so it becomes smuggling and therefore it does not take away the fact, that even the people might be doing it willingly, it is a criminal activity. This kind of activity can be sometimes difficult for the law enforcement to investigate, because the routes what the smugglers are using, do not differ from the routes they are using to transport the victims of, for example, prostitution. Especially after the migration crisis in Europe, a massive number of people went through the Western Balkans and the criminal organizations made huge profits, by setting up transportation and other necessities and they surely did not do it out of generosity, it was profit-driven action, which is the basic foundation of organized crime.

In the Western Balkans, the trafficking of drugs and illegal firearms turned out to be one of the most prominent forms of trafficking, especially after the war, when the society was collapsed. As mentioned earlier, one of the main methods for survival during the war was the smuggling of weapons to the countries from elsewhere. Now after the war, most of the weapons were seen useless and because of the connections of organized crime groups and the armies, the criminals got their hands on to the weapons and the smuggling of guns started, this time to other direction. Other criminal organizations in Europe and Middle-East were the main clients but it is known, that some of the terrorist organizations have been on the list as well. For the organized crime groups, the task was relatively easy, since all the smuggling routes what had been established during the war still existed, and what comes to the drug trafficking, the situation was almost the same and when taking into an account the fact, that after the war, border controls were very weak, (Hozic 2004, 41) it is not a surprise, that the trafficking was a very popular way of earning money. Because of the social situation after the war, criminality was sometimes seen as an only option for survival, as stated earlier. This meant, that organized crime groups had no problems with recruiting new staff in their ranks. So what comes to the trafficking, acting as a mule for the criminal organization was one option to earn money.

As most of these mentioned forms of criminality have evolved already during the 90s, the smuggling of migrants has to be mentioned. In past years, it has become one of the most lucrative forms of organized crime in the Western Balkans and the criminal organizations have taken advantage of the situation of these desperate people and turned it into a profit. Especially the war in Syria has launched big numbers of refugees and migrants into Europe and because of the geographical location, most of the refugee flow goes through the Western Balkans. As it happens, the flow of people is happening on the same routes as other forms of trafficking, such as narcotics and weapons. (The Global Initiative 2017, 10) So in that sense, organizing a transport system for refugees should not be a difficult task and as mentioned, it has turned out to be very profitable action for criminal groups operating in the region. Even today, the border controls are still relatively weak and when thinking about the terrain of the Western Balkans, it is not a miracle, that illegal border crossings happen in the area. Although has to be remembered, that it is not safe to walk wherever one wishes, the marks of war are still present and some of the forests are full of mines, but with a proper guide, that is not a problem and for sure this has been a marketing trick for smugglers to advertise, that one should not start to journey alone, better pay for someone to guide you “safely” through.

Cigarette and fuel smuggling was a major form of organized crime in the Western Balkans, especially during the war. Where access to these products was much harder than today. Serbia was the major country who suffered the sanctions imposed on them and therefore oil was smuggled from the neighboring countries. The activity was operated by the cooperation of Serbian and Montenegrin security services, as well as criminal groups connected to these services. The lack of oil and fuel could be seen in Bosnia and Herzegovina too, during the siege of Sarajevo, where the smuggling of these goods became vital for survival. (Ibid, 13)

Cigarettes had a similar story, being as one of the lucrative forms of illegal business in the region. The products were usually produced locally and then transported abroad but there have been cases, where the cigarettes have been manufactured in an EU country, then shipped to Montenegro for example and then shipped, or in this case, smuggled back to EU country and this is all to avoid high purchase taxes. In past few years there has been arresting's against the so-called "tobacco mafia" personnel and within the ranks of these organized crime groups, there has been former police chiefs and customs officials. (Ibid.) This illustrates the fact, that the organized crime groups have very much power in the Western Balkan region and corruption is something that the whole area will be suffering from, and one of the biggest reasons for this is, the legacy of the Yugoslav war and its impact on the growth of organized crime, because it has a massive influence on future governments (Politi 2001, 39).

2. THE APPEARANCE OF ORGANIZED CRIME IN WESTERN BALKANS

Organized crime became one of the key elements of warfare during the Western Balkan crisis. It was used effectively throughout the war, helping the conventional military units when legal means were not adequate. It consisted of the use of paramilitary units, smuggling of goods during the arms embargo and even ethnic cleansing. The outcome was that organized crime became part of the system and was a generally accepted method. The drawback however was; it was part of the state building process, and therefore consequences of it can be seen even today.

2.1. Organized crime as an asset

The term organized crime is used to distinguish more systematic and sophisticated forms of illicit enterprise from conventional criminality and encompasses a wide range of profit-driven criminal activities transnationally, but it has a domestic focus as well profiting from various criminal actions, which will be introduced later in the text. (UNODC 2008, 47)

During the Yugoslav wars, even though the first intention of the organized crime groups is to make a profit, these crime groups were also involved in the war, used as an asset. The best example of this is the use of paramilitary forces and other criminals, who were the ones doing most of the dirty work and ethnic cleansing. The paramilitary groups were not part of the official armed forces of any of the concerned countries during the war, but they had their own uniforms and they took part in the action alongside the regular armies, as mentioned earlier (Ibid, 48). Most of the staff were common criminals with football hooligan background and some were even convicts, released from prison to serve solely this purpose (Ibid.). The use of paramilitary troops could be seen as a tactical weapon, since prosecuting these units was hard because officially they did not represent any actor so their traces could be easily covered. Another major reason is, that at the beginning of the conflict, the national militaries of each side was in limited use, partly because of the disputes in

the military staff, because the army consisted of many different ethnic backgrounds. The official Yugoslav army was not enthusiastic at all, only 15% of conscripts turned up for the service in Belgrade and this supports the claim, that the use of official assets was not very efficient (Ibid, 50).

Another major issue about these paramilitary units is, that they were not only soldiers doing what soldiers should be doing, they were also criminals in the battlefield. Jusuf Prazina, known as Juka of Sarajevo, was an offender during the war who ran officially a collection agency but unofficially extortion one. He had a staff of 300 racketeering with him, who later became part of his paramilitary unit called "the wolves". the group was so effective in its task, that Juka was given command of the special forces of the army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, although he was later discharged and arrested for his behavior and continued criminality. (Ibid, 51) This is a good example of a situation where the dirty work of the war is done by someone unofficial state level actor. The paramilitary units, therefore, were seen as much more effective. The question is, what did fuel these people, who intentionally searched for an option to be part of massacres and looting? The motivations for these can be found racism to undifferentiated racism, but generally, it was profit-driven action (Ibid.).

These actions what were conducted during the war, have very much characters of organized crime. First off, it was organized action, secondly, there were more than three members in the group and it was planned action, which therefore fulfills the requirements of the organized crime group. In addition to that, the paramilitary troops operating the area were stealing international aids and then sold to desperate communities, who saw these units more of a savior, without knowing the origins of the goods. Corruption was common during the war and the most significant one is the indication of international peacekeepers involved in it. The most known example is from Sarajevo, where goods were smuggled to town through the tunnel going under the airport, which was controlled by the UN and sold with extortionate prices (Ibid.). As is seems to be, peace operations themselves may contribute to crime, especially organized and controlled crime. (Schroeder & Friesendorf 2009, 138)

2.2. The strengthening of criminality in the Western Balkans

When looking at the situation during and especially after the war in the former Yugoslavia, has to be remembered, that smuggling networks and other criminal activities played a critical role during the war. Smuggling of weapons and other military material through tunnels and networks was a widely known tactic, especially after the economic sanctions imposed on Serbia and Montenegro. Can be even said, that into some degree military success in the field was depended on the success of smuggling operation or other criminal activities where the ransom was collected and traded into ammunition or such. (Andreas 2004, 5)

The smuggling happening in the war was something that each side got good at. As stated earlier, it was seen as a part of the strategy of the military or paramilitary in many cases and something had to be done. When a unit is fighting against an opponent, which is stronger and better equipped, it is inevitable to create solutions. The problem, however, was, that after the war, some people had got very good at this and when the war was over, legitimate income was not easy to get, especially where one can really earn money. This led to a situation, where former soldiers continued on their smuggling businesses. Something that might have been approved by the people during the war, was seen criminal activity now, because, during the war, one can justify the actions by saying that this has to be done in order to fight the enemy, but after the war this claim has no ground anymore and the real reason is profit, as stated earlier.

2.3. Organized crime in state building

During the Yugoslav wars, organized crime in Western Balkans became a vital element for state survival. As mentioned, the smuggling of weapons was a highly important activity for the weaker side during the war. When Yugoslavia collapsed, most of the weapons remained in the hands of Serbia and Montenegro. Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had to come up with a solution, how to fight against a superior enemy and a solution for that was the smuggling of weapons from elsewhere. The linkage to state building and governance comes in the way of state officials taking part in illegal activities, which were not seen as such, more of a necessary step. With such action conducted during the war, there can be seen a connection between the conflicts and organized crime and the linkage to the growth of it (Hajdinjak 2002, 5).

In 1990, when Croatia started conducting their plan of independence, Yugoslav People's Army (YPA), which was controlled by Serbia mostly, was sent to Croatia to disarm the Croatian Territorial Defence Force (TDF), which was more of a local unit operating in a given territory. The YPA managed to confiscate most of the weapons from the Croatian side and this left the Croats in a situation where they had to come up with something, in order to continue with their plans of independence. This is the part where the smuggling comes in. The Croatian authorities set up channels of illegal import of weapons. This was actually a violation of UN Security Council resolution but even today it is seen as a legitimate step, in order to secure the independence of Croatia. (Ibid, 9) The activity was controlled by newly born Croatian Ministry of Defence and its agents took over the smuggling operations. (Ibid.)

As it claims, the activities in the Western Balkans were highly connected to illegal activities and the example of Croatia is just one among the many others, where a state is highly connected organizing the criminal activities and even controlling it. (Stokes 2005, 11) Some experts even claim, that the Yugoslav wars gave birth to Mafia states, where the state is the ultimate protection racket (Global Initiative 2017, 15). But it is essential to point out the fact, that matters were much different before the wars. Organized crime got its power from the war and used it as an asset in growing but in order to survive from the war, organized crime was needed. Although when the war was over the criminal groups eventually kept on going with their businesses and having strong linkages to the state level, it was too late back up.

As it turns out to be, the criminal activity was mostly connected to the new state building and was something that the new states grew up with. (Zaharia *et al.* 2018, 259) Most of the new Western Balkan states formed after the collapse of Yugoslavia had officials in high government positions, who were during the war running illegal smuggling routes and participating in other crimes, such as the most notorious one, ethnic cleansing. Because of the given situation, governments were in a position where the bond between the criminal organizations or gangs and the state was inevitable and as the cooperation was kept ongoing, a blending of these two was "natural" progress. This led to a status of criminalization of state power and enabled an environment for corruption (Giatzidis 2007, 334). The state finances were used for criminal interests mainly from the public treasury and the political elite was the one gaining profit (Ibid.).

The aftermath of the cooperation of states and criminal groups lead to a situation, which we can still see today in the Western Balkans, where criminal organizations are controlling the decision

making progress, both in politics and economy. This means, that as the state should serve its people, it is serving criminals and this is one of the reasons why the Western Balkan region is definitely lacking in progress.

A Serbian criminologist Dobrivoje Radovanovic has reported, that the state security service has been greatly responsible for the existence of organized crime in Serbia since 1992. The use of underworld bosses as state associates against the battle for Serbian national interests in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and other parts. The secret police were involved in plundering, war crimes, and war profiteering and they enabled every significant criminal to have a security service identity card. The outcome was the blending of the underworld, secret police, and the regular police. (Ibid, 336)

During Slobodan Milosevic's time, governments even intentionally merged with organized crime. (Anastasijevic 2008, 432) Later after the war, international organizations started to pressure the Western Balkan states, asking how things have really turned out. Serbia, convicted as the prime offender of the war, faced many accusations of several war crimes and international investigations began. Now it is clear, that when the state has taken part in illicit activity and even supported it, they surely want to make sure, that the criminals who have taken part in the war, are protected from the prosecutors. Firstly, the state is afraid that the criminals might start to talk, this leads to a situation where the state is sponsoring the organized crime in order to keep their secrets. The second outcome is, that if the state wishes to start cooperating with international actors with the prosecution of criminals and their war crimes, it is highly likely, that the state itself will reveal their dirty history. So the outcome is, that neither of the parties wishes to be revealed, so cooperation with the state and organized crime continue and both will protect each other and those people in high government positions with a shady history.

Even though the above-mentioned action is a code of conduct for Western Balkans, there are people who still act according to law and in one of the testimonies against organized crime, a statement was given saying, that Arkan (paramilitary criminal of Serbs) and his men from battlefield are unquestionable rulers of Serbia in all the existing businesses and in some point he was considered more powerful than even the state itself. The man was engaged in all businesses, politics, he even created his own political party. But even the "greatest" is not safe when it comes to criminality and the power game. A rumored deal was made between other politicians and mobs, that this man has to be put aside and he was murdered later on. (Vivod 2015, 9) Another example

of a shady past coming to haunt in the future is the murder of Serbia's prime minister Zoran Djindjic, who was killed by a sniper in 2003. It is believed that the prime minister himself was compromised by assisting organized crime in the 90s and the hit was payback for carrying out reforms of bringing Serbia closer to Western Europe. (Bovenkerk 2003, 45) This event demonstrated the power of nationalism in the region, where "traitors" will be shut down. (Hatzopoulos 2003, 26)

3. THE INFLUENCE OF BALKAN CRIMINALITY TO EUROPE'S POLICE COOPERATION

When the Yugoslav war broke up, much of the international attention turned towards the Western Balkans. Many of the International organizations expressed their worry on the region and clearly something had to be done. Probably the first major International organization to actually intervene the area was NATO with their bombings on Serbia and the international response, in general, was mainly UN, NATO and U.S led (OSCE BiH). After the war, when the international peacekeeping troops were deployed to the region, the situation was stabilized, although the ethnic tensions are still there and can be seen even today.

The outcome of the Yugoslav war gave birth to a whole new level of cooperation in Europe. The European Union took the leading role to ensure the stabilization of the region from the early 2000s (Ibid.), and in 2003, the EU launched their first Civilian Crisis Management Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the European Union Police Mission (EUPM). The operation itself was launched under the Common Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The aim of the operation was to help establish a sustainable, modern and professional multi-ethnic police force for BiH, and assist the local police (EEAS 2012). EUPM's main center of attention was to fight against organized crime and corruption (Ibid.).

The Yugoslav war, the strengthened organized crime, and the EU's converged cooperation on security are all outcomes of each other. As mentioned, the aftermath of the Yugoslav war created a situation for organized crime to grow in the region because of several reasons, which are explained in the other parts. However, when looking at positive aspects from the crisis and its influence on Europe for instance, it created a situation where the EU had to come up with a solution to a problem, and therefore the first EU mission was established. The EU had to start cooperating more closely and member states and their police forces had a common "enemy", the organized crime, which had a clear impact on the security of the European Union. From this moment on, the

EU member states and other international actors such as Interpol and Europol started to coordinate more frequently.

A case example of effective police cooperation in Western Balkans between global actors was seen in September 2018. 8300 officers combined forces to tackle crime in the region. Half million people, vehicles and premises were checked against existing databases. The operation was coordinated by EMPACT Firearms and Europol and it had parties from Interpol and Frontex. The aim was to fight against illegal trafficking of firearms and drugs, facilitated illegal migration and document fraud, which are all methods of what the organized crime groups use. The operation was a success since 180 people got arrested. Migrant smugglers, illegal migrants, drug traffickers, firearm traffickers, and other criminals were in the list. The most worrying factor is the fact, that the coordinated hit lasted only four days, and during that time 286kg of drugs and 159 firearms were seized. (Europol 2018)

For Europe, this means, that the Western Balkans are surely a massive transit route. An estimated 90% of the Afghan-produced Heroin is going to Europe and this operation conducted by the mentioned stakeholders proves, that this is the case. For the European and national law enforcement agencies, this means, that there is a lot to do. One of the problems itself is the Schengen agreement. Once the products, whether it is drugs or weapons, enter the Schengen zone, it has free access, and this has forced the countries of Europe to do more cooperation, because border controls are not there anymore, so police investigation has to be more effective. As the European Commission states, effective cooperation between the law enforcement authorities is required in order to prevent cross-border crimes, (European Commission 2019) and this is exactly the reason, why cooperation is needed, because when the crime is happening in two or more countries, it becomes an international issue, and it becomes a problem of the whole Europe, not just one single member state. Therefore, the Western Balkan organized crime groups are under the surveillance of the Europol, and the recent agreement to strengthen juridical coordination between Albania and the EU is another example of taking steps combating the cross-border crimes (Papachristou 2018).

As stated earlier, in order to fight against cross-border organized crime, international cooperation must be done. The European Union as an example has taken necessary measures and has set up EU funded projects. One of the case examples is a programme called instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), where the aim is to help Western Balkans to take action in investigating and

prosecuting complex criminal groups in an international context. For such kind of projects, Europol and Eurojust are closely associated and Interpol is a partner. (European Commission 2017) These projects are a result of the strengthening cooperation of European countries and as it is seen already in the 2000s, in order to have a safe and secure environment at home soil, the problems have to be tackled, where they originate from, but has to be noted, that as the European countries are becoming more cooperative, so are the criminals (Tarantini 2016, 6)

CONCLUSION

As it seems to be, that the Balkan wars and the violent breakup of Yugoslavia have been one of the major reasons for the spread of organized crime in the region. The paper itself explained how the criminals were used as an asset during the war, but it witnessed as well how the criminals started to use states as their asset and turned governments into corrupted “mafia states”. It also provides evidence, how weak government and crisis situations provide criminals a platform to grow since border controls and law enforcement cannot function the way they should. The criminal organizations noticed the weak points in the system and ruthlessly used them in their advantage to gain power. It answered to the three main research questions and analyzed how wars have a big impact on the future direction of the development of states.

When analyzing the thesis statement of Yugoslav wars being the major reason for the birth of organized crime in the Western Balkan region, it creates questions what if the war never happened, how would the region have developed. With a proper analyzing, organized crime would have had a smaller influence to the state building progress, since the access to deciding instruments would have been much harder. Law enforcement and border controls would be much stronger and international cooperation would be more efficient due to the lack of corruption.

As lessons learned perspective, one can learn, that if crisis and wars occur, the criminality does not disappear anywhere, it enhances and gains even more power and this is a key element to understand how wars have far deeper influence on the development of newly born states. Not just the rebuilding phase, but the overall direction of the countries.

Another finding from the paper is how the international community does not necessarily understand perfectly how the region functions. As stated, organized crime is involved in state-level officials and corruption is still strong in the region. Therefore, the international organizations have to understand, that the governments themselves protect the criminals in the fear of being blamed for the actions conducted during the war and it is important to know that some of those criminals

are considered as heroes and what is even more important to understand, is that these heroes might be the presidents or prime ministers of the states.

When considering the fact, that the organized crime has its influence on state-level authorities, further research questions could be, how to combat this. Time might be the only asset available. As long as those generations, who participated in the war are in control, there might be no change in sight, in the near future at least. The ethnic disputes and hate for other ethnicity is still strongly affecting the region and this is one of the reasons why decisions cannot be made, because the general opinion is, that if something benefits the other, it should not be done. The other reason is the fact, that most of the people who took part in the war, are now in ruling positions in governments and this means, that as explained, criminality was something acceptable during the war, and they still have the mentality that it is if it benefits their own country. Of course, this is not the case, and that is the reason why international community efforts are progressing slowly. Although progress is made in the region, the real progress will start when the new generation without suspicions will take over. As from the author's personal experience, one could witness the generation born during and after the war already had far fewer suspicions for other ethnicities, so in this sense there is hope.

What comes to Europe's police cooperation, the direction is correct. In order to combat organized cross-border crime, Europe and its law enforcement agencies have to cooperate. but has to be remembered that criminals are also cooperating and creating new networks. Globalization has had its own influence and it definitely shows on the trafficking routes and in the Balkans, functioning as a transit route to Europe. The answer for the 3rd research question on how has organized crime in the Western Balkans influenced the European police cooperation proves, that Europe definitely is willing to take care of its neighbors, but as stated, it is not an easy task since understating the complex situation of the region is needed.

In the context of the research work, a thorough discussion of the main reasons for the birth of organized crime was offered to find a possible explanation of what kind of consequences the explained events have had to the development, not only to the region itself but to whole Europe. The chosen literature reviews agree on the findings of this research work and place Western Balkan region as one of the most important regions for Europe since the Balkan peninsula is a bridge between Europe and the middle-east.

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