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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Wheeling and Dealing in War: Smuggling, Stigma and Separatist Rebellions

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ABSTRACT:

Organized crime is both a liability and an asset for rebel movements. Illicit channels of supply – notably for arms and fuel – are often the only possible ones. Yet, this can come at the costs of political de-legitimization. The state resisting violent separatism as well as adherents or bystanders may consider separatists illegitimate for associating with readily-vilified criminal actors, and rebel groups cannot publicly embrace it without opprobrium. But why are some separatists stigmatized more than others for their criminal alliances? This article focuses on separatist rebel movements in order to explore the unique challenges of legitimacy and stigma that smuggling poses. Based on a comparative analysis of six case studies, I analyze variance in the legitimacy costs associated with criminal practices. I argue that the stigmatization of organized criminal smuggling in separatist governance depends on whether the smuggling is symmetrical, matched and shared by host state institutions, or asymmetric, unmatched by and unrelated to the host state.

KEYWORDS:

Keywords: war, mafia, rebellion, smuggling, separatism

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1. Introduction

Greek arms dealer Basil Zaharoff (1849-1936) was arguably history's greatest smuggler. In an unsurpassed life of war profiteering, Zaharoff's cunning and indiscriminate arms-dealing in the late 19th century and during the Great War earned him the moniker "Merchant of Death." In his youth, he worked for Istanbul firefighters – as an arsonist. Mid-career, he thrived as a gigolo, marrying multiple women under false pretenses, including a wealthy Philadelphia heiress. The con-artist sold submarines to competing sides by notifying them, in turn, that the other had just acquired it. After selling his notoriously dysfunctional Nordenfelt submarine to the Greeks, he rushed to the Turks to warn them of Greece's new weapon. Frightened, the Turks purchased two in panic. He then rushed to the Russians, alarming them of Turkey's new submarines; Russia quickly bought two of its own. The fact that none of the submarines actually worked was mere detail. In old age, Zaharoff was the richest man in Europe. He was immortalized in cinema in Graham Greene's *The Third Man*, the character memorably silver-screened by Orson Welles. This social type – the cynical, "pure" opportunist who would, in the midst of carnage, sell his own proverbial mother to the highest bidder – looms large in our imagination of war.

In rebel separatist contexts, there is ample opportunity for such opportunists. A good contemporary prototype is Kerubino Kwanyin Bol, a luminary of the early South Sudanese independence movement. Albeit not primarily a smuggler, his dizzying reversals of allegiance between host state and separatists were a sight to behold. Said to have fired the very first emancipatory shot of the Second Sudanese Civil War, he symbolically initiated the movement. In the garrison of Bor, he led a militarily-senseless but personally-enriching mutiny. In 1987, he was imprisoned for plotting against the separatist head, John Garang. Ten years later, he defected to the host state. "With its blessing he spent the rest of the year razing his own region, killing hundreds of people and stealing their cattle, food and seed corn" (Baker 2001, 81). Having squeezed the lemon dry, he abandoned the government and returned to the warm embrace of the separatist side. In 1998, he switched allegiances *yet again* when the host state appointed him Deputy President of the South. Alas, the plunder and extortion that came with the position was short-lived, as his separatist ex-comrades assassinated him in 1999.

With characters such as these, to speak of political conviction is sheer cynicism. One frustrated analyst, who had enough of the lip-service paid to such self-proclaimed national emancipators, noted: "it might be more accurate to call some groups that bear the names of political parties by their real name, that is opportunist bandits" (Baker 2001, 81). An entire literature has emerged – often reductionistic – to demote rebellions of various sorts to mere organized criminal predation (Grossman 1999; Brito and Intriligator 1992; Hirshleifer 1991). Of even broader relevance is the stupendous body of scholarship on "greed" and "grievance" as relative drivers of civil war, which tended to downplay the latter (Collier and Hoeffler 2004; for sample of critiques, see Ballentine et al. 2003, Vinci 2006). In a classic statement, Collier (2000) observed that organized criminal rent-seeking is so central to civil war that "predation may be the sole means by which a rebellion can sustain itself financially"; he and his colleagues assembled a deluge of empirical evidence buttressing the "argument that greed is more important as a predictor of rebellion than is grievance" (839-840).

The conventional wisdom became, succinctly put, that "rebellion is motivated by greed" (840), most especially in societies with steep economic crises, high youth unemployment, and reliance on natural resource exports. Even though the "greed"/"grievance" dichotomy has been criticized as crude and overly-idealized, the bulk of the studies – at least tacitly – are unsympathetic to "greed"-oriented social actors.[1] The opprobrium

[1] Indeed, many critiques of the greed-grievance binary are geared at "exonerating" one or another rebellious movement from the perceived smear on their motivations and, consequently, to correct misguided foreign policy

against war opportunists is not just moral, but on the grounds of efficacy as well. Citing Staniland (2012) and Weinstein (2006), Kalyvas reminds us that "[t]here is indeed a body of evidence suggesting that cohesive groups are more resilient in the face of state repression and that groups composed of opportunistic individuals should perform poorly and victimize the population" (2015, 11). Criminal opportunism and war profiteering, it would seem, have little to recommend them.

Yet one man's opportunist, as Milton Friedman remarked, is another man's statesman. When states are frail, failing, or splitting through separatist rebellion, the desperate demand for stable statesmanship – i.e. for opportunism – acquires an extraordinary urgency. Indeed, for entire ethno-racial, tribal or sectarian communities, a critical mass of skilled violent opportunists can spell the difference between survival and annihilation. A profound tension therefore arises in the moral economy of rebel governance. On the one hand, "at-any-cost" pragmatists who are prepared to seize resources are necessary for violent self-defense; any rebel movement engaged in warfare needs organized crime to keep command of the situation. On the other hand, marrying high-minded nationalist ideals with low-minded, petty smuggling interests taints the emancipatory cause in the eyes of the in-group constituency, the government enemy, and the world outside the conflict zone still innocent enough to be shocked.

Organized crime is both a liability and an asset for rebel movements. Illicit channels of supply – notably for arms and fuel – are often the only possible ones, and successful insurgency may require systematic smuggling in wartime. Yet, engaging with saliently-criminal elements in the contentious locality can come at the costs of political de-legitimization. But why are some separatists stigmatized more than others for their criminal alliances? This article focuses on separatist rebel movements in order to explore the unique challenges of legitimacy and stigma that smuggling poses. I survey six notable separatist rebellions selected to illustrate how this tradeoff – between the unsentimental necessities of warfare and the deep stigmatization of mafia alliances – unfolds. Based on a comparative analysis of (1) the Kurdish rebel movement in Turkey, (2) the Casamance movement in Senegal, (3) postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina, (4) the Kurdish movement in Iraq, (5) Boko Haram in Nigeria, and (6) Gazan Palestinian rebels in Israel, I analyze variance in the legitimacy costs associated with criminal practices.[2] These cases are selected as illustrations of preliminary, exploratory cases of separatist stigmatization outcomes, not as definitive categories for a Weberian ideal-typology. I argue that the stigmatization of organized criminal smuggling in separatist governance depends critically on whether the smuggling is symmetrical, matched and shared by host state institutions, or asymmetric, unmatched by and unrelated to the host state.

2. The Moral Economy of Separatist Smuggling

Mafias' role in rebel governance raises unique issues of illegitimacy and discreditation.[3] The host state, in addition to considering violent insurgency illegitimate *per se*, is predisposed to treat rebel movement

interventions against them. For a critique of U.N. approaches to African conflicts misperceived as "greed"-oriented, see Berdal (2005).

[2] For details on case selection and primary and secondary sources, see Mandić (2021, 179-209).

[3] For our purposes, I define "mafias" following Stephenson (2015) as organized criminal associations of gangs which "try to establish violent control over markets and territory, […] a system of 'fractured authority' at the local level" (21). For simplicity, I use "organized crime" and "mafia" as synonymous. For detailed conceptualization of mafias vis-à-vis separatist movement organizations, including methodological dilemmas

challengers as especially illegitimate when they are affiliated with organized crime. Separatist movements are an excellent example. Their principal misfortune since the Cold War is that they bear the burden of *triple* stigmatization.

First, many of those on whose behalf they speak remain unmoved by separatist agitation. Their sublime rhetoric aside, separatists have a popularity problem not merely with their host state tormentors, international law, and foreign powers – but with their own titular constituencies.[4] It is understandable that most separatist dilemmas are posed to the population in unfree conditions of haste, censorship, repression, voter exclusion, or foreign occupation. Separatist rebels often bypass democratic tests altogether (Kosovo and Azerbaijan, for example, declared independence without referenda). When the question of secession is put to a referendum in free conditions (as in Scotland in 2014 or Quebec in 1995), it turns out that people are deeply divided. When separatist referenda return with over 90% support (e.g. Kurdistan and Catalonia in 2017, not to mention Crimea and Donbass in 2014 or Transnistria in 2006), this tends to say something about the referendum, not about the popular will. Contrary to nationalist myths of popular unity, most citizens appear to be risk averse, misinformed, or otherwise opposed to their countrymen in favor of independence. Separatist demands and ideologies tend to be divisive, and elites that mobilize for them are hard-pressed to gain overwhelming majorities without major crises – such as wars.[5]

Second, separatist rebellions are considered *ipso facto* illegitimate by most governments in rejecting host state rule. Principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and constitutionalism are all against them – *even if* their methods and ranks were saintly instead of criminal. Less disruptive alternatives always exist, after all. Multi-ethnic state breakdown is equally conducive to unificationist, macro-nationalistic movements that seek to redraw and combine boundaries without separatism (Snyder 1982). More fundamentally, the demand to redraw state boundaries and sever a piece of territorial sovereignty – instead of "merely" asking, as most revolutionaries do, for new regimes within extant borders – assaults the very foundation of modern statism. Demanding new house management and refurbishing is one thing. Tearing off the living room (and even appending it to a neighboring country *à la* irredentist separatists) is quite another. Taking Weber's canonical approach to the modern state to its logical conclusion, Tilly (1985) famously observed that organized criminal violence evolves into legitimate governance.[6] It was the centralization of the state apparatus through inter-state rivalries that drew the "uncertain, elastic line between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' violence" on that uneasy continuum (173). As the administrative bureaucracies for extracting capital and exerting force expanded to

in separating the two, see Mandić (2021).

[4] On international law regarding separatism, see Walter et al. (2014). When Washington and Moscow accuse each other of "double standards" regarding separatism, both are absolutely correct. The U.S. sponsors secession in Yugoslavia and Sudan, but condemns it in Crimea and Donbass; correspondingly, Russia deplores separatism in Kosovo and Chechnya, but creates it in Ukraine and Georgia. The "gangsterism" of global and regional powers' foreign policies, in this sense, has also been explored (Hulsman and Mitchell 2009).

[5] Notable exceptions include South Sudan in 2011. In the main, however, questions about statehood or autonomy, independence or federation, war or peace, are deeply discordant in public opinion. In democratic arenas with free debate, they do not produce clear majorities. Referenda, furthermore, depend fatefully on question wording (Riegl and Doboš 2017, 53-84). For a striking case of retroactive fabrication of separatist popularity after a war for independence, see Jović (2017).

[6] Weber's definition of the state has become hegemonic (Brett and McClean 2017; Lottholz and Lemay-Hébert 2016). Yet an incorrect, normative interpretation of "legitimate use" surprisingly persists. There is no doubt that Weber's understanding of "legitimacy" essentially referred to *popular perceptions* of it by a critical mass of the subjugated population (Swedberg 2005). The definitional clause that is most relevant for separatist rebellions is "within a given territorial area," because what separatists do is reconfigure this domain. The "threat and application of physical force" within the state proper and the separatist territory become separate, parallel issues of legitimacy (265-6). Uniquely among rebels, separatists seek the elusive "monopoly" in a different scope from their host state.

become "relatively unified and permanent," so did their legitimacy (ibid). What is unique about separatist movements – unlike internal reformist rebellions, or non-separatist revolutionary insurrections – is their rejection of the boundaries of the very polity, reopening questions of *where* the state should be centralized to begin with, *which* administrative bureaucracies are even candidates for legitimate authorities, and *who* qualifies as the population participating in legitimization processes. Separatists, in other words, are fundamentally threatening because they bypass entirely the usual arena of legitimacy by (1) rejecting the majority population's sentiments as irrelevant, and (2) seeking the Weberian "monopoly" only on a subset geographic area. As such, their organized criminal activities have different standards and thresholds for becoming legitimate governance. Little wonder that the U.N. Charter is scathing against separatism in consecrating the principle of territorial sovereignty, and that modern constitutions treat secession as the ultimate sin. In sum, separatism is an uphill battle – legally, politically, and morally.[7]

But third – and herein lies the difficulty – separatists are criminal in the eyes of the host state because of their organized criminal bedfellows.[8] For centuries, alliance with criminals served as occasion to stigmatize rebels: a flagrant *corpus delicti*. In the colonial period, revolts were belittled as "mere banditry" (Shah 2004, 43).[9] Students of today's "failed states" report that mafias are critical drivers of disorder, violence, instability and other lamentable developments: "organized crime," a typical study concludes, "is best perceived as a vicious cycle that is first attracted to instability and state weakness but then creates its own momentum, feeding off of and reinforcing further chaos" (West 2002, 6). As it turns out, criminal bedfellows are often indispensable for violent rebellion to proceed. The histories of war and peace, insurgency and counter-insurgency, and nation-building and national-disintegration, are strikingly intertwined with the history of organized crime. Scholars have explored the pivotal role of mafias on state-building in Italy (Duggan 1989), Latin America (Garzón 2010), Japan (Siniawar 2011), China (Murray 1994; Zhang 2008), Russia (Volkov 2002) and – make no mistake about it – the United States (Andreas 2013). In his classic *Dark Side of Democracy,* Mann (2004) groups together "soldiers, policemen, criminals, hooligans and athletes" (9) as violent constituencies readily mobilized to be genocidal perpetrators. Mafias and separatism, furthermore, share many causes. Foremost among them, the sudden transition from centralized to state economies unleashed by the end of the Cold War have generated both pervasive border-reconfigurations and massive privatization schemes and smuggling in post-communist societies. As Kalyvas (2015) put it, the "acute need to finance insurgency following the drying up of Soviet assistance led many surviving or potential rebels to seek alternative resources, especially illicit ones" (7). Modern warfare, furthermore, may be especially conducive

[7] It should be noted that this is a dominant but not consensus view in the literature. Cf. Bartkus (1999), who argues that the end of the Cold War ushered in an era of unprecedentedly weak host state resistance to separatism. Noting the exceptions of Iceland's secession from Denmark, and Norway's from Sweden, she contends that "[r]arely before 1991 have net security, economic, and prestige interests weighed in favor of the state allowing a secession without mitigating circumstances" (55). Since then, the implication is, opposition to separatism has waned.

[8] When smuggling is considered particularly inhumane by elites, adherents or bystanders, separatists can hardly mobilize with it. Organ smuggling in Kosovo and nuclear smuggling in South Ossetia are notable cases (Mandic 2021, 82-105).

[9] Concurrently, of course, imperial forces routinely recruited criminals directly from prisons for punitive operations and other dirty work (Mann 2004, 164-6), "lured by freedom and loot" (178). Many contemporary governments are likewise hypocritical in judging rebels for smuggling, as many of them exist solely on organized criminal footing. Mobutu's Zaire – for which the term "kleptocracy" was coined – is the clearest example. A veritable mafia-regime, the state was reduced to a council of warlords overseeing traffics in diamonds, gold, arms, etc. patronized by the President himself, who personally exercised discretionary control over 95% of national revenues (Reno 1998, 149).

to mafias: "[i]f, as seems likely, insurgency warfare, or war among the people, or low-intensity operations continue to become more prevalent […], then the line between war and criminality will erode" (Lever 2012, 240). Hirschfeld's (2015) model of gangster-states explains separatist rebellion outcomes (such as frozen conflicts) as the "regeneration" of mafias after kleptocracies without secessionist challengers collapse. In all, it is eminently expectable that separatist governance borne of war be intertwined with opportunistic smuggling.

3. Stigmatization of Separatism

It should now appear obvious why rebel separatists in the Sahel, the Balkans or Southeast Asia rely so much on mafias. How could they not? Regional smuggling routes – sometimes centuries-old – predestine them to massive inflows of contraband. These are typically bridge territories in the middle of massive regional supply chains (in heroin, migrants, or Kalashnikovs) that are intensifying under globalization. When one criminal cartel is successfully eliminated, another ascends to replace it. Across generations, one mafia succeeds another in a seemingly-irrepressible flow of contraband. Those hapless governments hosting insurrectionists can no more avoid mafia-separatist alliances than one can avoid earthquakes between tectonic plates.

But it is *not* the case that all smuggling is perceived as equally deplorable, scandalous or unfair. Below, I survey six cases of advanced rebel governance – separatist authorities short of independent statehood, but significantly autonomous from central state control – who owe their success, if not their existence, to massive, systematic smuggling: the (1) Kurdish rebel movement in Turkey, (2) Casamance movement in Senegal, (3) postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina, (4) Kurdish movement in Iraq, (5) Boko Haram in Nigeria, and (6) Gazan Palestinian rebels in Israel. As will become apparent shortly, the first three of these cases – of what I will call *symmetrical smuggling* – attract less stigmatization than the latter three cases of *asymmetric smuggling.*

But first, what is stigma? Sociologist Irving Goffman famously defined it as "spoiled identity." Stigmatization is the public association of a particular identity category (such as a separatist ethnic or tribal identity) with shameful or disgraceful traits or activities (such as criminality and smuggling) to "spoil" it for social closure around an in-group (such as the titular ethnonational population of the host state).[10] Within the stigmatizing repertoire of nationalists, criminality and deviance are central. The accusation that one-or-another group is inherently rule-breaking, law-disobeying and delinquent is among the most potent ways to discredit aspirations – both at the micro-level of individuals, or the mezzo-level of rebel movements. For our purposes, I define *stigmatization of separatism* as the portrayal of separatist movements as criminals and smugglers, thus discrediting or downplaying – at least implicitly – their secessionist, irredentist or autonomist claims. Stigmatization, in this sense, can be considered one of the ideological forces of Weberian delegitimation that separatist challengers have to face.

Needless to say, as with other domains, levels of stigmatization hardly correspond to *actual* levels of organized criminal alliance. As indicated earlier, there is no doubt that every single one of these six separatist rebellions was fatefully reliant on smuggling for its mobilization (for details, see Mandić 2021). Yet half of these cases – Kurdistan in Iraq, Borno State in Nigeria, and Gaza in Israel – have been notably more stigmatized than the other three. For a rough demonstration of this, one can survey the Global Organized Crime Index, an authoritative data set of mafia and smuggling indicators by the Global Initiative Against Transnational

[10] For an excellent sociology of nationalist stigmatization, see Powell and Lever (2017). The ghettoization of the Roma in Europe, who are a curious outlier among separatist constituencies even though they are the second-largest landless minority in the world, is especially interesting because their ghettoization and spatial segregation are significantly buttressed by "their ready association with criminality" (684) – just as with separatist movements globally (Mandić 2021).

Organized Crime (GI-TOC).[11] GI-TOC assembles government analyses (primarily by the host states themselves), civil society observatories' reports, and other sources on smuggling and related criminal activities.[12] Their country reports take host states as units of analysis, but selectively single out separatist territories and organizations as smuggling "hotspots" and culprits. In doing so they partly reveal, albeit indirectly, the relative stigmatization of various separatist causes by governments, civil society observers, media portrayals, and other sources. Table 1 presents a content analysis of separatist stigmatization in our six cases. As we can see, separatist rebels in Iraq, Nigeria and Israel are more frequently stigmatized for their smuggling.

Table 1 - Indicators of separatist stigmatization.

	Turkey	*Senegal*	*Bosnia-Herzegovina*	*Iraq*	*Nigeria*	*Israel*
Indictments of separatist-specific smuggling	1	3	2	6	8	6
Explicit qualifications of separatist movement organizations as "mafia-style groups" or agents of smuggling	1	1	0	2	5	1

Source: Country Profile Reports, GI-TOC's Global Organized Crime Indices.

Notes: Symmetrical smuggling cases white, asymmetric smuggling cases in gray. Coding was done of all surrounding paragraphs of text containing all relevant separatist identity categories ("Kurd," "Palestinian," "Diola," "Serb," etc.) in all permutations and synonyms (e.g. "Diola"/"Jiola," "Kurd"/"Kurdish"/"Kurds," etc.), as well as major separatist movement organizations and leaders (e.g. "Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance," "MFDC," "Republika Srpska," "Milorad Dodik," etc). When rebel territory or separatist-controlled checkpoints and transportation means were evoked as sites of smuggling without reference to host state, this was coded in the first row (e.g. "Human smuggling is also particularly prevalent in Iraqi Kurdistan"). When separatist movement organizations were specifically named as primary agents of smuggling or qualified as a "mafia-style group," this was coded in the second row (e.g. "Cannabis cultivation, both licit and illicit, is widespread […] and controlled largely by the Kurdistan Workers' Party"). I did not double-count. Ambiguous mentions, such as

when host states conducted smuggling that was wrongly attributed to separatists (e.g. "Indeed, there is ample evidence linking high-level [Turkish] politicians to the purchase and subsequent illicit sale of millions of dollars' worth of Islamic State oil disguised as Turkish and Iraqi Kurdish oil.") were excluded.

[11] The Index is available at: https://ocindex.net/, and their latest 2021 flagship report is GI-TOC (2021). Criminal markets are operationalized as "as the political, social and economic systems surrounding all stages of the illicit trade and/or exploitation of commodities or people." In addition to ten types of smuggling, the index captures four kinds of "mafia-style groups."

[12] On a global ranking of national organized criminal severity on a 1-10 scale, with higher values indicating higher criminalization, we find Israel at 4.42 (124th/193 countries descending ranked as most criminalized), Senegal at 4.82 (102nd), Bosnia-Herzegovina at 5.89 (49th/193 countries ranked by most criminalized), Turkey at 6.89 (12th), Iraq at 7.05 (8th), and Nigeria at 7.15 (5th). These are estimates of holistic criminalization of the countries as wholes. In Table 1, however, notice how the relative stigmatization of separatist movements *within* these cases is quite another distribution.

What explains this divergence between actual and indicted criminalization? Why are Kurds in Iraq, Boko Haram in Nigeria, and Gazan Palestinians in Israel more likely to be stigmatized? Put differently, why are Kurds in Turkey, the Diola in Senegal, and Serbs/Croats/Bosniaks in postwar Bosnia & Herzegovina seemingly more immune to separatist stigma? Below, I argue that the crucial difference is that the latter three are instances of *symmetrical smuggling*, in which the opportunistic separatist use of smuggling is readily overshadowed and relativized by similar, salient, and often more egregious criminality by the host state.

4. Symmetrical Smuggling

Symmetrical smuggling is a case where separatist organized criminal activity towards rebel financing and mobilization is saliently matched, shared, or superseded by the host state's own organized crime. There is a symmetry, in other words, of smuggling between separatist rebel actors on the one side and their host state on the other, so that the latter's perceived "criminality" can relativize and even overshadow the separatist stigmatization.

4.1. Kurds vs. Turkey

Kurdish nationalists engaged in smuggling in Turkey have the good fortune, so to speak, of being in one of the most criminalized host state smuggling nations in the world. Between 1913 and 2003, Kurdish insurgents achieved as many as twenty-four distinct, major rebellions (Chatty 2010, 265). The Turkish state, arguably the most endangered of host states, historically played the most aggressive role in suppressing the nationalist movement. During the Cold War, Ankara acquired a potent new weapon in its war against the separatists: organized crime. Massicard (2010) traces the Turkish instrumentalization of mafias for anti-Kurdish activities to the "period of terror" of the 1970s, when Turkey's invasion of Cyprus precipitated a petrol crisis, an embargo, food shortages and hyperinflation, creating a criminalized "state of near civil war" with a new class of "armed groups [who] obtained sought-after resources, particularly weapons, most often through contraband and smuggling" (51). From these roots blossomed a major network of heroin-smugglers and thugs-for-hire geared towards confronting Kurdish insurgents over decades.

Even Western Cold Warriors in Turkey could not resist narcoprofits. As part of the Truman Doctrine, Operation Gladio involved the training of anti-separatist *gladios*: men "recruited directly from prisons," "captured PKK deserters," and "terror units [who] became rich by raising private taxes along the 'Heroin Highway'" from Afghanistan. Initially created as aids to Western intelligence services to fight communism, the *gladios* were soon "given a new target, the PKK".[13] On breaks from combatting Kurds, they lined their own pockets, generating a world-renowned drug route:

> *The gladios and the mafia took control of lucrative drug-trafficking routes from eastern producers for the large European market. They grew in size and influence as they amassed huge, illicit fortunes (Beyerle 2014, 238 fn1).*

It was therefore a "NATO-linked international counterinsurgency organization within the Turkish security system" that midwifed the mafia (Ganser 2005, 244). When the Cold War ended, however, the organized crime did not. Turkish agencies continued nurturing and expanding anti-separatist mafias, as "unnamed 'profiteers' turned to fraudulent exports, extortion, gambling, drugs and arms trafficking," seizing the "perfect opportunity

[13] For a network analysis of the reincarnation of *gladios* in Ergenekon in the 2000s, see Demiroz and Kaupcu (2012).

for drug and arms smuggling in conjunction with the state's protection" (Gunter 1998, 132). In the 1990s, a series of internal denunciations between rivaling sectors of the Turkish security apparatus revealed an entire web of lucrative trafficking masquerading as anti-terrorist operations against the PKK. Many outlaws "rekindle[ed] their political contacts made in the 1970s, [and] found a way forward in the official security forces" (Massicard 2010, 53).

Perhaps ironically, it was Turkey's nurturing of anti-Kurdish mafias that empowered Kurdish separatism to itself broaden its criminal base. Throughout western Europe and the Middle East, legal business and political initiatives on behalf of the separatist cause (such as the YEK-KOK or satellite TV offensives like Medya-TV) co-exist with PKK-run narcotraffickers who dominate heroin distribution in the same countries. Today's Kurdish mafias are routinely singled out by the UNODC for their "clan-based – and hierarchically organized structures" (UNODC 2010, 124). But this is by no means a reflection of national unity. Kurds are notoriously mankind's largest stateless people. Consequently, it is to be expected that factionalism plagues their nationalist movement. Given its enormity, the Kurdish population includes several notable subnational ethnicities – such as Alevis and Zazas – who periodically signal dissent from mainstream conceptions of Kurdishness. This heterogeneity and intranational infighting allowed for the ascent of mafia figures such as Sedat Bucak of the Siverek tribe. Bucak – and hundreds of others like him – rose to become a new criminal class with considerable autonomy, bargaining power, and contraband. "[B]y engaging in criminal activity," Massicard (2010) concludes, the…

> *Bucak tribe used the protection they received [from the Turkish state apparatus] to get involved in trafficking drugs and weapons —which also meant they could pay the "voluntary" village guardians. Thus in 1996, members of the Bucak family were arrested with 262 tones of hem Once the tribunal established that it wasn't illegal to possess hemp at one's residence, they were acquitted. This case is far from exceptional; from 1985 to 1996, 284 korucu [village guards] were accused of murder, 84 of drug-trafficking, and 69 of weapons-trafficking. The protection accorded to the korucu probably incited them to participate in criminal activities, often in forming links with the underworld. […] This led to an increased number of armed civilian groups, officially operating on behalf of institutions but difficult for them to control (56)*

Another mafia, the Soylemez Brothers, smuggled drugs and arms and ruled over significant turf through extortion before they were arrested as sacrificial lambs, "fed to the media to satisfy public opinion angered over reports of official corruption." Analysts suspect they were encroaching on rivals' turf, falling "into a blood feud with the Bucak tribe" (Gunter 1998, 127).

The ultimate absurdity from a nationalist perspective, of course, is that Turkish and Kurdish mafias are significantly intertwined. Dutch analysts, for example, "observed numerous instances of close cooperation between Kurdish and Turkish drug trafficking groups in Western Europe" (Bovenkerk et al. 2003, 36). When a Turkish parliamentary inquiry pointed to the pervasive use of mafias on the part of the state security apparatus, the military denounced the report as "separatist propaganda" (Massicard 2010, 68). It was nothing of the sort: in fact, the state's criminal machine was so potent that it (somewhat inadvertently) incubated a separatist smuggling enterprise with its own agenda. It is very difficult to single out Kurdish narco-smuggling for opprobrium when Turkish smuggling is so saliently paired with it.

4.2. The Maquisards in Senegal

In Senegal, it is often difficult to observe where separatist organized crime begins, and where its host state complement ends. In the low-intensity conflict between rebel Casamance and the rest of Senegal (1982-2014), smuggling – particularly of locally grown and cultivated marihuana – proved a formidable shield against government incursion, as well as a barrier to anything greater than mere separatist autonomy. But, to be sure, organized crime *outside* separatist territory dominates the Senegalese economy as a whole. A poster-child of African democracy and development, Senegal nevertheless had 60% of its GDP in the illegal sector, according to World Bank estimates. Notable mafias included the Mouride Brotherhood, embedded in the Touba-based Sufi community. Their realm is so substantial that the entirety of "Casamance region is largely peripheral to Senegal's main clandestine trading activities" (Meagher 2014, 508).

Nevertheless, smuggling by separatist authorities of Casamance proved consequential and able to compete meaningfully for criminal market share with the rest of the country. Rebel reliance on mafias was noted from the very beginning of the movement. As early as the 1990s, a leading researcher of the Casamance war economy found that the "buying power" of separatist insurgents "comes from trade in various 'conflict goods'" (Evans 2000, 649). In 1991, a negotiated settlement asked that the separatists disarm in exchange for host state economic investment in the Casamance region. Much of the separatist insurgency (especially its military wing) refused, continuing to push for secession. It was not a bluff, as the host state had modest means of encroaching on the rebels' smuggling empire. Ever since, it has eluded scholars how "to distinguish between maquis [guerrilla] economic violence and general banditry" (Evans 2004, 11). On-the-ground observers all emphasize the centrality of organized crime in any potential reconciliation with the insurgent authorities:

> *It has proved a source of income for those in the arms, timber, car, cashew nut and Indian hemp (marijuana) trades. […] There are a number of more or less liberated areas in the northern Casamance dedicated exclusively to the cultivation of Yamba. If lasting peace is to be achieved, this 'mafia' has to be taken into account (Directorate General for Development [DGD] 2003, 77).*

This mafia, however, is not exactly a united front. The separatist-criminal economy was geographically and politically bifurcated into the Front Nord, headed by Sidi Badji and stretching from Gambia to the Casamance river, and the Front Sud, led by Abbé Diamacoune, extending between Guinée Bissau and the river. The latter was more maximalist in its separatist demands, did not lay down arms, and refused to negotiate with the host state when the Front Nord did in the 1990s. When fighting each other as well as the host state, both Fronts increasingly terrorized their own population.

Concurrently, however, both sides of the separatist-territory-based organized crime, notably the marihuana-peddling one, have invested their demographic, economic, and cultural capital in maintaining the separatist *status quo*, but without further escalation towards secession. Official rebel figureheads – represented in the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance [MFDC] – nominally "lead" a movement of narco-funded constituencies whose opposition to host state intrusion is critical to their survival. As long as the relevant mafias pay their dues through kickbacks, bribes and taxation for the separatist cause, that is. Half-sincere secessionist posturing among MFDC leaders earned them some host state cooptation, by rebel elites replaced earlier independence demands with ambiguous calls for greater regionalism (1999-onwards). The smuggling continues, as does the frozen conflict stalemate. Whatever else its obstacles to meaningful reintegration are, Senegal is significantly complicit in the very rebel smuggling economy that threatens its sovereignty.

4.3. Postwar Bosnia

Since the Dayton Accord in 1995, separatist smuggling in Bosnia & Herzegovina has not only been reciprocated and "mirrored" by opposing ethnic sides (notably Serbian and Croatian); it has also been overshadowed by overwhelming organized crime by the fragile, central host state itself. The aftermath of the Bosnian War (1992-1995) was profoundly shaped by the wartime mafia's postwar integration into Bosnian politics and society, with fateful consequences: ethnic antagonism, parliamentary paralysis and economic stagnation. Organized crime ushered in no less than "a radical social transformation" with smuggler "black market entrepreneurs" emerging "as a nouveau riche criminalized elite" (Andreas 2004b, 4; for an assortment of colorful criminal characters from Bosnia-Herzegovina, see Pugh 2003, 65 n4). The upward mobility of delinquents, outlaws, and asocial personalities was violently enhanced: "many who lived on the margins of society experienced a rapid rise in status that would have been inconceivable in peacetime. War, in short, has been a highly effective mechanism for criminalized social advancement" (Andreas 2004b, 4). Far from receiving their comeuppance, conflict opportunists were rewarded.

Nor were war profiteers restricted to civil society and the private sector. Torn by Republika Srpska irredentist threats to the east and Croatian separatism to the west, Bosnia-Herzegovina saw considerable infiltration of criminals into formal state institutions – from top to bottom. The Municipality of Vlasenica, for example, was won by a convicted kidnapper who, through nepotism, struck a plea agreement after admitting to organizing the abduction of a rival only two years previously (Spaic 2016). He was not alone. In September 2016, ahead of municipal elections, an investigative report found that nearly fifty candidates for mayoral and other top positions were under investigation, charged or convicted for organized crime (BIRN 2016). Ranging from money laundering and extortion to violence and kidnapping, the charges illustrated the extent of mafia penetration of electoral politics. On the Serbian side, an exemplary organized criminal figure was Milorad Mandić. His lucky break occured when, gun-blazing, he pinched 150,000 deutsche marks from a Ministry of Interior vault in beseiged Sarajevo. A masterful sanctions-buster, he smuggled arms and fuel. Recruited by state security, he later became Minister of Justice and Deputy Minster of Interior for the Bosnian Serb government. In the postwar period, he overcame multiple arrests and seizures of his bank accounts. He remains "one of a handful of people often referred to as the real power-brokers in the region" (Corpora 2004, 63-4). On the Bosniak side, separatist warlord Fikret Abdić – one of the most spectacular smugglers in all of Europe in the 1990s – succesfully ran for office. The convicted war criminal was re-elected mayor of the Velika Kladusa municipality that he had spearheaded as a separatist enclave during the war.

The local political scene was mirrored by criminalization of the highest stratum. Pugh points out that the "mafias/black economy" is the scapegoated tip of an iceberg, beneath which the "survival/grey economy," the "clientist/nationalist economy," and "official/white economy" (Pugh 2003, 56-7) preserve organized crime at the macro-level of the dysfunctional torn state of Bosnia-Herzegovina. One need not accept his indictment of "neo-liberalism," "ethnic privatization," and other moving targets in his analysis to appreciate the evidence for organized criminal parasitism of all ethnic sides. "War profiteers were often a new breed of gangster of rural origin" (Pugh 2003, 53), most of whom outlived the war unscathed. A major instrument of mafia resilience was self-absolution. A generous amnesty law, which pardoned all wartime trafficking, tax evasion and embezzlement of humanitarian aid, was largely created by the smuggler kingpins themselves, many now high-level politicians. "I hereby absolve myself. Signed, myself" was effectively the substance of the law. Those who "had investigations and indictments pending against them," hereby declared themselves immunized from persecution before privatizing their way into the upper echelons of Bosnian wealth and power (Andreas 2004b, 5).

In sum, smuggling, money-laundering and systematic embezzlement by wartime-generated criminal patron-client networks was arguably the war's greatest creation. Decades after the war, even Bosnia-Herzegovina's banking system was chronically dysfunctional, "so lacking in confidentiality that wealthy clients were targeted

by organized crime" regularly and in plain view (Pugh 2003, 57). A bifurcated border system emerged, with a multiethnic "customs racket" stripping $30 million annually from the country; a cool $4.5 million "going to illicit payments to grease this criminal organization" (Festić and Rausche 2004, 30). But, having absolved themselves, the smuggler class – across ethnic lines – was shielded from stigma and rewarded with high status. It is very difficult to reserve stigma for one-or-another separatist side when the organized criminal symmetry is so enormous.

5. Asymmetric Smuggling

In contrast to these preceding cases, *asymmetric smuggling* refers to separatist organized criminal activity towards rebel financing and mobilization that is largely unilateral and unmatched by the host state's own organized crime. There is an asymmetry of smuggling in the sense that separatist rebel actors are saliently alone in their activities and independent of the central state apparatus, so that their perceived criminality is easier to stigmatize as uniquely "theirs" within the broader polity.

5.1 Kurds vs. Iraq

Unlike their comrades-in-arms in Turkey, Kurds in Iraq smuggle without any meaningful intermingling with their Shia and Sunni neighbors or Baghdad's central state apparatus. Partly, this is because the central state apparatus remains highly fractured. Unprecedentedly devastating sanctions in the 1990s ("genocidal," Dennis Halliday called them) and a murderous US-led invasion and occupation (2003-2011) could hardly leave behind a functional state. There was never any shortage of organized crime in Iraq – and occupying American forces in March 2003 quickly discovered as much. In the summer following the fateful invasion, an expert-packed UN delegation conducted a study of organized crime for the post-Hussein era (UNODC 2003). "Integral to the [anti-occupation] insurgency's success was the failure by the Americans to engage with arguably the most important demographic in Sunni Iraq – the tribes." Why were the tribes important? "[T]he tribes ran smuggling rings, gray-market merchant businesses" and all manner of organized crime (Weiss and Hassan 2015, 42-43). When delegation member Dr. Phil Williams, world-renowned scholar of mafias, attempted to convey the team's alarming conclusion, he was met with "hostility and indifference" from the U.S. military. Subsequent failures of the occupation have proven the report prophetic: mafia inheritances have crippled reform, fueled sectarianism, and created a global organized crime hub in the Middle East. Ultimately, this criminal proliferation was the central reason that the Iraqi army – universally detested for its corruption – went into headlong retreat against a much-smaller Islamic State (Cockburn 2015, 11-6, 64-5).

Rebel governance in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq seized this opportunity at the jugular. The organized criminal infrastructure in northern Iraq – where the Kurds terrorized by the Hussein regime reside – had deep roots, with "older modes of production and regional market relations that predated Iraqi independence in the 1950s" (Hickok 2003, 78), stretching back to the Ottoman empire. Come the crippling embargo of 1992, the separatist regional economy of the north was well-prepared "to take advantage of the smuggling opportunities created by the sanctions while also seeking to assert influence over the distribution of aid." After the sanctions, an estimated daily oil racket of $50,000 went to the separatists "for smuggled oil and gas crossing the border into Turkey across the bridge at Harbur" (Hickok 2003, 84-5). The separatist direction of the economic regionalism was unambiguous:

> *Kurds in northern Iraq began to position themselves to manipulate the limited extant market activities – smuggling, pastoralism, small-scale agriculture, extortion of international aid workers – for immediate gain without any consideration of the long-term impact on rebuilding the region's economic infrastructure. By mid-1995, for example, Masud Barzani, whose forces controlled the border crossing with Turkey, was no longer sharing the 50,000 US dollars per day in taxes derived from petroleum smuggling with his fellow Kurdish leaders, despite a 1992 agreement (Hickok 2003, 87).*

Things only got better from there: "The lucrative underground petroleum smuggling economy, which surged after the [first] Gulf War, gave the Kurdish nationalist elite financial resources to propel their own political party organizations and nationalist activities" (Natali 2001, 282-284). A critical juncture occurred in 1996, when separatist militias failed to seize strategic centers in northern Iraq, including hydro-electric production sites. Submitting to international pressure, Hussein struck a deal with Kurdish separatist leader Barzani which included "direct military support" and eliminating the "internal embargo on the Kurdish provinces" (Hickok 2003, 87). Ultimately, Western ground forces were withdrawn from northern Iraq, ushering in the creation of a "UN-managed welfare state" in the separatist north (88). UN peacekeeprs thus "created an artificially independent rentier state reliant on oil revenues, international aid, and pseudo-taxation of smuggled goods" (89).

Today's Iraqi Kurds – and their Kurdish Regional Government – continue to profit significantly from smuggling, with accompanying "backyard distilleries" and "topping plants" in the Iraqi north. In 2012, disgruntled Baghdad officials estimated the loss of the untaxed smuggled oil at $5.65 billion, or half of Baghdad's overall funding the Kurdish government (ICG 2012, 7, 11). It is no exaggeration to say that smuggling is the backbone of Kurdish separatist success in Iraq – and that no comparable organized criminal enterprise has saliently matched it inside the country.

5.2. Borno State in Nigeria

With its bold and independent smuggling network, Boko Haram is perhaps the most stigmatized of all separatist movements in its region. Separatism is traditional in Nigeria (Tamuno 1970). With some 200 ethnic groups and an unfortunate imperial location, it could hardly have been otherwise. The Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West and the Ibo in the East, have all undergone important separatist episodes. British colonial rule empowered different Nigerian constituencies, and some against others. The post-independence civil war (1966-70) signaled the force of the separatist Ibos; Biafra, the Fulani aristocracy and northern Nigerian elites are other conspicuous separatist movements.[14] In recent years, the Boko Haram insurgency (2009-present) refocused attention on northern separatism in a disastrous cycle of violence with pronounced human trafficking and smuggling elements.

Indeed, the organized criminal dimension of Boko Haram has been deeply underestimated in favor of an emphasis on their terrorist tactics. Much of what is described as the group's "terrorism" is textbook smuggling. A review of evidence for "convergence" and "confluence" of the terrorist AQIM with Boko Haram concludes that, unlike the former, "Boko Haram is not entirely a terrorist group […] While AQIM's interests are purely political, it is also clear that Boko Haram's interests are profit-related" (Sowah ND, 26). This is visible not just in Nigeria itself but regionally. In Niger, Boko Haram is almost entirely restricted to banditry and extractive

[14] For an analysis of Biafra separatist dynamics as a "last resort" by the Ibo community, see Bartkus (1999, 119-124).

criminal excursions (not, for example, sustained cross-border territoriality in the style of other Islamic insurgencies). In 2016, for instance, a hundred militants raided the southern Nigerien village of Bosso (far from separatist jurisdiction), which they pillaged thoroughly before leaving. Boko Haram has also – indicatively – kept a polite distance from the Tuareg cause.

Throughout the rebellion, massive smuggling and extortion rackets were the backbone of the insurgency. Even when external patronage and local sponsorship dried up, Boko Haram managed to continue enough violent criminal extraction for self-sustenance:

> *Boko Haram also increased its criminal activities through multiple bank robberies to compensate for the loss of revenue from local political sponsors after the election of new governors in Borno and Kano in the 2011 elections. Because it does not follow the orthodox Salafi model, it is unlikely that it received substantial funding – if any at all – from wealthy Saudi or Qatari individuals. Furthermore it probably requires relatively little funding for the types of attacks it has hitherto carried out (Pérouse de Montclos 2014, 12).*

To be sure, Nigeria as a whole is quite familiar to gangland banditry, including in the oil-rich and developed Niver Delta area.[15] Boko Haram did not invent mass abductions and hostage trafficking, for example. Between 2006 and 2009, kidnappings skyrocketed to five hundred as smuggled arms "flooded into the Niger Delta region, usually via the port of Lagos" (Ibid., 39). Migrant smuggling networks across Africa have their smuggler tentacles through Nigeria. Much of the human trafficking is a seasonal, cyclical labor service which notably dovetailed on the 2014-6 refugee wave into Europe. More Nigerian migrants arrived in Italy during the European migrant crisis than from all regional African neighbors *combined* (Molenaar and El Kamouni-Janssen 2017, 17). Finally, piracy in Nigeria's south is also significant. The famed Somali pirates, for example, pale in comparison to the naval outlaws in Nigeria's territorial waters. "Originally carried out by organised Nigerian militant groups with political aims related to oil in the Niger delta," most pirate attacks "are now perpetrated by purely organised criminal groups, motivated by the low-risk high-yield nature of piracy operations" (Shaw et al. 2014, 11). Shares of this black market go to corrupt government officials in the Nigerian Navy and Coast Guard. Nevertheless, by comparison to Boko Haram's smuggling and racketeering, the banditry and smuggling of the rest of Nigeria cannot compete and – more importantly – is entirely unrelated to north's organized crime scene.

5.3. Tunneling Rebellion in Gaza

Of our six cases, Israel is by far the most decriminalized host state with the highest standards of rule of law and meaningful anti-corruption instruments within the state apparatus. Gazan separatist smuggling is, by comparison to host state organized crime, the most glaring departure of all – and thus most readily susceptible to stigmatization.

Israel's economic strangulation of the separatist territory – a "closure" system – is fourfold: it isolates Palestine from Israel proper, the West Bank from Gaza, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Each of these measures alone, in its own right, had devastating effects on the separatist community; combined, they have been catastrophic (Roy 2002). (Over 90% of Gaza's drinking water is contaminated. A majority of the Gazan population is children.) Among other consequences, the fateful division of Palestinian separatism between the West Bank and Gaza has stigmatized Gaza's economy as something to be avoided at

[15] The organized criminal dimension of Nigerian internal division was clearly notable prior to Boko Haram: "whereas in 2004 most oil seized by militias was simply stolen, by 2009 most was being shut in or blockaded," which a Nigerian activist noted indicated that the "conflict has become more political in nature" (Beary 2010, 39).

all costs. Not only have major donors participated in the draconian sanction regime imposed on Gaza; they have also privileged the West Bank over Gaza in their programmatic work. In this way, donors have reinforced the division of Palestinians into two distinct and isolated entities by offering exclusivity—economic, political, and diplomatic—to one side and criminalizing the other (Roy 2012, 80).

But the most consequential closure for smuggling was the one sealing the Gaza Strip from Egypt. Israeli military operations against Hamas – notably operations Cast Lead (2008-9), Pillar of Defense (2012) and Protective Edge (2014) – left the separatist authorities few options except organized criminal sustenance. Billions of USD of physical damage were inflicted through repeated Israeli incursions. Even when ostensibly "withdrawing" from Gaza in 2005-6, Israeli Defense Forces demolished some 1,500 homes and erected a seven-meter-high fence between Rafah and the border on the Corridor.

The rise of a spectacular smuggling economy based on tunnels into Egypt was a natural consequence. Hamas' first penetration of the blockade was not entirely subtle: they bulldozed a path through the border wall, enabling hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to cross into Sinai for "short-term relief" of "long pent-up consumer demand" for everyday goods (Pelham 2012, 9). Soon, they turned to a flourishing underground economy as the *de facto* import-export agency for separatist sustenance. Everything from ordinary consumer goods (clothing, food, children's toys) to industrial commodities and construction materials (cement, steel, engines) flew into Gaza. Among the living, various exotic pets were smuggled, as were both combatants and non-combatants (notably children, selected for their size and agility to transfer contraband). Regarding war *materiel*, the ostensible reason for Israeli blockades, Hamas ironically did not have meaningful smuggling channels until Israeli assaults stimulated organized crime to create them:

> *In broad strokes, then, and allowing for the occasional exception, the picture prior to Protective Edge was this: Hamas had no rockets in its armory, no allies from whom to acquire them, no way to smuggle them in, and no wherewithal to manufacture them (Finkelstein 2014, 145).*

Tunnel smuggling ultimately grew from tens of millions of USD a year to tens of millions *per month*, with a peak annual black market of $650 million (Richemond-Barak 2018, 22; Sabry 2015, 97). Hamas simply began "tax[ing] proceeds from the sale of smuggled goods, giving the group a vested interest in the enterprise" (Zunter 2010, 17). Both Egypt and Israel unsuccessfully scrambled through diplomatic efforts to shut the smuggling bonanza down. Egypt, for its part, would occasionally begin anti-smuggling operations, even though much of its regional state apparatus was intimately involved in the cross-border trade into Gaza. Instead of "look[ing] the other way" as usual, one smuggler complained, post-2008 Egypt began "raid[ing] the homes, sheds, farms and shops of our Sinai suppliers" (Pelham 2012, 14). But the Palestinian side would typically smooth these differences over with additional bribes and tribal/clan arrangements. In 2012, for example, Hamas returned five – of the hundreds upon hundreds – of stolen cars to Egypt in a good-will gesture (Pelham 2012, 25).

The tunnel smuggling economy was in many ways a testimony to the ingenuity and resilience of organized criminal entrepreneurs. Their heroism, patriotism and supposed altruism was widely celebrated both inside and outside Gaza (often at the neglect of their opportunism). But this is somewhat misleading, since their entire criminal enterprise was largely a *compelled* move – given the severe blockade, smugglers were the only possible option. So long as that blockade was universally perceived as *itself* criminal, furthermore, the separatist Palestinian community had no doubt whatsoever that all the stigma belongs on the Israeli side. During the 2008-9 Gaza War, one tunnel operator – who noted that his profits over smuggling are in the hundreds of thousands of USD – nevertheless opposed, like all Gazans, the punishing blockade:

> *There will be no need for smuggling if crossings are open. And there will be no need for weapons if the occupation ends. That would be a much simpler way for the international community to approach the problem" (Karmi 2009, np).*

Politics aside, the observation is certainly correct: Hamas' rebel separatist governance, maintained and surviving through the tunnellers' activities, was a direct result of the punishing blockade which left no alternative. In the eyes of separatists, the smuggling was a mechanism for survival. But by comparison to Israel – and even the West Bank – its blatant criminality stood out.

6. Conclusion

Using six cases of criminalized rebellion, I have argued that separatist stigmatization depends at least partly on whether rebel smuggling is *symmetrical*, or matched by comparable host state activity, or *asymmetric*, or unmatched and easily singled out for stigma. Needless to say, this is merely a preliminary conjecture that requires further corroboration and larger-N sampling, and the case selection serves merely as an exploratory comparison to flesh out a neglected distinction. In particular, future research could fruitfully explore this distinction through analysis of media portrayals, propaganda campaigns, Security Council debates, etc. to capture broader patterns of characterization of separatist movements globally. My suspicion would be that rebels conducting asymmetric smuggling would attract far less disrepute for their criminality.

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