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Gingeras, Ryan

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In the Hunt for the “Sultans of Smack:” Dope, Gangsters and the Construction of the Turkish Deep State

Ryan Gingeras

This article traces the development and evolution of the Turkish heroin trade against the backdrop of the Republic of Turkey’s long transition from imperial core to nation-state. In taking up heroin’s relationship to modern Turkey, I would like to specifically explore the meaning and manifestations of what many inside and outside of academia have called the “deep state.” Heroin, I argue, was and is one of the most vital enablers of the factional “deep state” rivalries that compete for power in Ankara, adding a steady violent dimension to local and national politics.

Perhaps thankfully, we appear to have outlived the days when Turkey was synonymous with drugs. Popular Western media has by and large abandoned labored references to *Midnight Express* and embraced a more pleasant and inviting image of Turkey as a delightful crossroads of tourism and trade. The intersection of dope, instability, and violence has instead shifted further east to Afghanistan, now unquestionably the beating heart of the world’s heroin trade. The Afghan state, we are told, has become a function of, and a hostage to, drugs. A successful conclusion in the war against the Taliban and al-Qa’ida’s remnants, let alone the return of a stable and viable Afghan government, hinges on heroin’s defeat.

There was a time when contemporary Turkey was spoken of in similarly urgent terms. In the midst of the “smack epidemic” of the early 1970s, the United States under the Nixon Administration vigorously pressed Turkey to suppress its native opium crop. The tremendous political and economic pressure levied upon the Turkish government was indicative of not only a new brand of domestic conservatism in the White House, but also of the dire political context of the period. At this time, Turkey’s democracy looked increasingly tenuous. Violence between leftist and rightist factions plagued numerous corners of the country. Ankara’s invasion of Cyprus in 1973 stoked fears of war between two NATO allies, leading to concerns that American efforts to forestall Soviet influence in the eastern Mediterranean would collapse. In short, much depended upon Ankara’s ability to right its ship of state.

That storm has long since passed. Turkish democracy, despite a series of direct military interventions at the top, has proven solvent. Disagreements over the wars in neighboring Iraq have tested, but not undone, Turkey’s economy or Ankara’s relationship with the United States and Western Europe. Beneath this façade of stability and cooperation, drugs and violence continue to loom large within the Turkish body politic.

Ryan Gingeras is an Assistant Professor in the Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, CA. His most recent book is *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009). He is currently working on a full-length manuscript on the history of organized crime and drug trafficking in the Republic of Turkey.

Arguably, Turkey’s presence in the international drug trade has not only grown, but also diversified. More importantly, several bloody scandals in the last two decades have served to remind the Turkish public of the profound effect narcotic traffickers have upon the management of domestic affairs. Yet unlike the 1970s, a shroud of silence muffles much, if any, discussion of the weight of these issues.

This article follows in the footsteps of several prominent scholars who have attempted to reevaluate how narcotics have helped shape the modern world. In approaching the development of the modern Turkish Republic, I wish to put the heroin trade at the center of this state’s long transition from imperial core to nation-state. Rather than exile heroin to the margins of the historical development of state institutions, I intend to give the centrality of narcotics the same discursive legitimacy as other pivotal resources in the Middle East. Like the role of oil in constructing the modern states of Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, or Iran, one cannot fully understand the modern Republic of Turkey without gauging the local, national, and transnational forces related to the flow of heroin in, through, and out of Asia Minor.

Although there are certain basic similarities between crude oil and opium sap (both are unrefined, relatively inelastic products that have taken on increasing importance in the modern era), it is not my intention to press the petroleum analogy too far. In taking up heroin’s relationship to modern Turkey, I would like to specifically explore the meaning and manifestations of what many inside and outside of academia have called the “deep state.” The term itself in Turkey (*derin devlet*) has raised eyebrows and blood pressures for several decades now. Colloquially speaking, it is used to refer to “criminal” or “rogue” elements that have somehow muscled their way into power. Such actors are too often described as marginal interlopers who have somehow invaded and poisoned the genuine and pure Turkish body politic. In this article, I opt for a broader definition of the characteristics and players that comprise the “deep state.” Over the following pages I wish to use the shifts within the global heroin trade as means to chart and explain certain core conflicts within the modern development of the Turkish state. Heroin, I will argue, was and is one of the most vital enablers of the factional rivalries that compete for power in Ankara, adding a steady violent dimension to local and national politics.

FROM OTTOMAN SAP TO TURKISH SMACK: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TURKISH HEROIN

The trade and consumption of opium, the raw sap drawn from the poppy plant, appears to have followed lockstep with the development of organized society since antiquity. Its presence within the grand Mediterranean marketplace can be dated back to as early as the Bronze Age.¹ One may say, with a tinge of irony, that the cornerstone of the Ottoman Empire rests somewhere within a field of poppies. Osman Gazi, the Empire’s titular founder, was born in the town of Söğüt, a sleepy place lying within a day’s travel from the lush fields surrounding modern-day Afyon (meaning poppy in Turkish). By the time of his great grandson, Bayezit I, the state Osman had engendered would encompass much of the Anatolian lands best suited for the production of opium.

1. Alfred McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003), p. 3.

In addition to the territory lying between Afyon and Yozgat, peasants and traders made the poppy a staple crop in the environs of Aydın, Balıkesir, Kütahya, Konya, İsparta, and elsewhere in western and central Anatolia.

Opium appeared to have no great impact upon the Ottoman Empire until the 19th century. Contrary to the popular images favored by Orientalist artists and writers (i.e., a moderately stoned Ottoman *efendi* relaxing casually with his waterpipe), consumption of opium as a narcotic was limited. Both the seed and the sap from the poppy were instead used for a variety of purposes, such as for cooking oil, flavoring (such as in bread), and medicinal purposes. Although neither Muslim nor Christian farmers monopolized the harvesting of opium, trade in poppy-related products became associated with Armenians by the 19th century.²

Events half a world away transformed opium's status in Anatolia at the turn of the 19th century. From their vast holdings in Bengal, agents of the East India Trading Company conceived of a radical plan to penetrate and subvert the Chinese marketplace. The illicit trafficking of British-Indian opium reaped a terrible windfall of profit for the East India Trading Company at the expense of addicts along China's southern coast. When the ruling Qing dynasts attempted to thwart further sale of British opium to its population, war was declared. The outcome of the First Opium War served not only to solidify Western colonial interests in East Asia, but also to transform China into the global epicenter of opium consumption during the ensuing decades.³

The Ottoman government responded to the dramatic rise in demand for opium by instituting a state monopoly (*yed-i vahet*) on the drug. Under the *yed-i vahet*, poppy production and profits soared. Although never rivalling the production capabilities of Bengal, Ottoman opium would at one point account for 10% of China's overall consumption of the drug.⁴ By mid-century, cargo ships transporting Ottoman opium increasingly plotted a westerly course towards Great Britain and the United States. By the turn of the 20th century, Ottoman opium accounted for anywhere between 66% and 89% of American consumption.⁵

At first, the Ottoman government hoped that this increasing demand for the poppy's tar would provide a needed financial lifeline. Proceeds gleaned from the state's control over the trade, instituted in 1828, flowed directly into the newly reformed Ottoman military. However, direct state control over the production of Ottoman opium did not last long. In 1838, a year before the sweeping reforms undertaken by Sultan Abdülmejid I, Great Britain compelled Istanbul to abandon its monopoly over all agricultural products. Thereafter, Western merchants and manufacturers swarmed over Anatolia's poppy crop, dominating all aspects of the Ottoman opium trade (with the exception of

2. İbrahim İhsan Poroy, "Expansion of Opium Production in Turkey and the State Monopoly of 1828–1839," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (May 1981), p. 196; A. Üner Turgay, "The Nineteenth Century Golden Triangle: Chinese Consumption, Ottoman Production, and the American Connection, II," *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (1984–1985), pp. 65–66.

3. For further reference on this subject, please see Alfred McCoy, "Heroin as a Global Commodity: A History of Southeast Asia's Opium Trade," in Alfred McCoy and Alan Block, eds., *War on Drugs: Studies in the Failure of U.S. Narcotics Policy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 237–279.

4. Poroy, "Expansion of Opium Production in Turkey and the State Monopoly of 1828–1839," p. 192.

5. Turgay, "The Nineteenth Century Golden Triangle," p. 93.

its harvesting of course).⁶ This would remain the case well into the 20th century.

As the demand for Ottoman opium grew through the early 20th century, a revolution in the drug's consumption was slowly taking place. The identification and extraction of morphine, the addictive component in opium, would lead to a new and booming industry of mass-produced pain medication. Nascent pharmaceutical giants like Merck and Bayer were among the first to capitalize on this new product. The second great turn in opium's long history would occur in 1875 with the invention of heroin, a synthetic intoxicant comprising an admixture of morphine and acetic anhydride.⁷ Heroin soon joined an emerging pantheon of new and readily available narcotics (such as cocaine) found over the counter throughout the Western world.

By the turn of the 20th century, heroin's entrance into the public domain spawned a gathering wave of hysteria in the West regarding the effects that the drug held over society. At its root, debates over the consumption of heroin, along with cocaine or marijuana, comprised an important tangent within broader concerns over the racial and imperial insecurities found within both the United States and Great Britain.⁸ By the outbreak of World War I, Washington and London had taken strong steps to curtail, and eventually prohibit, both the sale and consumption of heroin at both a domestic and international level. These efforts came to final fruition with the convening of the International Opium Convention in The Hague in 1912. The Ottoman Empire, still one of the largest producers of opium at the turn of 20th century, undersigned neither the Hague agreement nor a similar convention laid out in Versailles in 1919.

The empire's collapse and its reconstitution as the Turkish Republic under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk did not change this fact. International pressure upon Turkey, again with the United States in the lead, continued unabated into the early 1930s. During the first years of the young Republic, Western and Japanese firms operated a series of factories in Istanbul tasked with processing raw Anatolian opium into morphine.⁹ Despite a declared eagerness to halt the sale of the illicit drug, contraband Turkish dope continued to find its way into the Western marketplace with little governmental oversight.¹⁰ Ankara's promise to curb factory production of morphine and ban the trafficking of heroin in 1931 ultimately proved to be cosmetic.¹¹ Turk-

6. Poroy, “Expansion of Opium Production in Turkey and the State Monopoly of 1828–1839,” p. 202.

7. McCoy, “Heroin as a Global Commodity,” pp. 5–6.

8. See, for example, Anne Foster, “Prohibiting Opium in the Philippines and the United States: The Creation of an Interventionist State,” in Alfred McCoy and Francisco Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009), pp. 95–105; Dominic Streatfeild, *Cocaine: A Definitive History* (London: Virgin Books, 2001), pp. 142–179.

9. F. Cengiz Erdinç, *Overdose Türkiye: Türkiye’de Eroin Kaçakçılığı, Bağımlılığı ve Politikalar* [*Overdose Turkey: Heroin Smuggling, Addiction and Politics*] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004), pp. 53–69; W. Kernick, “Turkish Drug Trade Presents Problem,” *The New York Times*, January 18, 1931.

10. Alan Block, “European Drug Traffick and Traffickers between the Wars: The Policy of Suppression and its Consequences,” *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Winter 1989), pp. 315–337; Clarence Streit, “Vast Narcotic Ring Revealed in Europe,” *The New York Times*, October 21, 1930; Clarence Streit, “Narcotics ‘Lost’ Exceed Seven Tons,” *The New York Times*, December 19, 1930.

11. Arnold Taylor, *American Diplomacy and the Narcotics Traffick, 1900–1939* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1969); “Turkey Restricts Narcotic Output,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 1931; “Would Destroy Narcotics,” *The New York Times*, June 30, 1931.

ish opium continued its steady trickle out of Anatolia well until the outbreak of the World War II.

In order to understand the evolution of the trade in Turkish heroin in the immediate pre- and post-war period, one must look closely at the intricate transnational network that fostered and enabled its sale. Turkey remained throughout this period only the supplier for the raw material necessary to produce heroin. Processing and shipping were industries instead controlled by an array of multinational actors. A smattering of Jewish, Greek, and Lebanese merchants and smugglers led the way for most of the interwar period. Scholars continue to debate the roles American and Italian organized crime figures played during this period. For the most part, like cocaine up until the 1970s, trafficking in heroin remained an *ad hoc* or “mom and pop” business until the 1950s.¹²

A new global order seems to have gripped the heroin trade after World War II. Warrants and government crackdowns in both the United States and fascist Italy served to severely hamper (but not end) the business dealings of the La Cosa Nostra crime families and their affiliates on both sides of the Atlantic. The effects of the Depression and fighting on the high seas produced a drought in both the production and consumption ends of the spectrum worldwide. The new prosperity of postwar America was accompanied by a steady increase in the use of narcotics.¹³ By the mid-1950s, an emerging collective of transporters began to assume a large portion of opium’s flow out of the eastern Mediterranean. US narcotics officials maintained for much of the Cold War that a conglomerate of Corsican Mafiosi controlled much of the opium traded out of Turkey via Beirut (the main entrepot of Turkish opiates).¹⁴ Between 1948 and 1967, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics (FBN), grandfather of Washington’s contemporary Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), maintained a regular station of officers tasked with “assisting” local police in investigating and prosecuting both traffickers and producers connected to the Turkish end of the “French Connection.” Bureaucratic resistance (rooted in both corruption and national pride) and the lack of funds from Washington only partly hindered American efforts in Turkey. As of 1958, one FBN officer reported that it was impossible to make a case against major violators due to the amount of political and economic influence wielded by Turkish kingpins in Istanbul.¹⁵

The impact that the “French Connection” would have upon American society ultimately resounded within the halls of the White House. In the midst of the social upheaval and emerging counter-culture of the late 1960s, President Richard Nixon seized upon the heroin issue with a vengeance. At the center of this campaign was Turkey, which,

12. McCoy, *Politics of Heroin*, pp. 24–30; Kathryn Meyer and Terry Parssinen, *Web of Smoke: Smugglers, Warlords, Spies and the History of the International Drug Trade* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1998), pp. 281–286.

13. Jill Jonnes, *Hep-cats, Narcs and Pipe Dreams: A History of America’s Romance with Illegal Drugs* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 119–140.

14. See, for example, Directorate of Intelligence, “The French-Turkish Connection: The Movement of Opium and Morphine Base from Turkey to France (December 1971),” CIA-RDP 73B00296R000300070022-8, CIA Records Search Tool (CREST), National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.

15. Memorandum Report, Bureau of Narcotics, District 17 (re: Turkey), October, 22 1958; Turkey, 1957–1959; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970; Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170; National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.

according to officially cited sources, produced 80% of the heroin consumed by addicts in the United States. It was immaterial that some government sources placed Turkey's contribution to the global drug trade much lower (perhaps between 3 and 8%); the Administration argued that more "dramatic results" could be attained in Turkey as opposed to declaring a drug war in Laos, Thailand, or Burma.¹⁶ It is possible that Nixon's motivations may have also been the product of international, as well as domestic, concerns. In addition to the havoc caused by Turkish and Greek tensions over the fate of the island of Cyprus, recently declassified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) documents suggest that the heroin trade was also a destabilizing force in Iran (which according to one memorandum purportedly possessed one quarter of the world's opium users).¹⁷

Discussions between US and Turkish officials over the issue of heroin were first held in January 1970. Turkey's response to US overtures was allegedly courteous, but shaded with reluctance.¹⁸ Production of opium, Ankara claimed, was conducted under clear government supervision. In 1967, the state had banned the harvesting of poppies in all but 12 of the 21 previously existing opium-producing provinces (this number was ultimately reduced to four). State regulators in Afyon, Denizli, İsparta, and other provinces paid a set price for the sap and saw to it that the crop made its way to legally-sanctioned manufacturers of morphine. Yet with smugglers paying twice the going governmental rate (\$11 a kilo in 1970) and hundreds of thousands depending upon opium production as a source of income, leakage was inevitable.¹⁹

Turkey, on "humanitarian grounds," ultimately agreed in 1971 to ban the opium poppy.²⁰ \$35 million in American aid, directed at economic and policing assistance, helped to sweeten the deal. In the shadow of the Vietnam War, Nixon heralded the agreement as a whopping success. The accord, the President declared, was "by far the most significant breakthrough that has been achieved in stopping the source of heroin in our worldwide offensive against dangerous drugs."²¹

At first Nixon was largely correct. State forces clamped down hard on local growers. Peasants throughout Anatolia responded rancorously as greater poverty and starvation loomed.²² In 1974, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, who had campaigned against the

16. Edward Epstein, *Agency of Fear: Opiates and Political Power in America* (London: Verso, 1999), pp. 86–89.

17. CIA/ORR/OTI, Job SOTO 1315A, Box 24, Folder S-3686-S3716, "Subject: Production in Iran," p. 2.

18. "Turkey Agrees at Meeting to Tighten Curbs on Opium," *The New York Times*, January 23, 1970.

19. Felix Belair, "U.S. Loan to Turkey Dismays Narcotics Officials," *The New York Times*, June 14, 1970; Directorate of Intelligence, "The French-Turkish Connection: The Movement of Opium and Morphine Base from Turkey to France (December 1971);" Alfried Friendly, "Turkish Program Curbing Opium Poppy," *The New York Times*, June 11, 1970; "Turkey Rebuffs U.S. on Opium Ban," *The New York Times*, September 11, 1970.

20. Terence Smith, "Turkish Premier Vows to Halt Illicit Opium Traffic," *The New York Times*, May 2, 1971.

21. John Herbers, "Nixon Says Turks Agree to Ban the Opium Poppy," *The New York Times*, June 30, 1971.

22. Henry Kamm, "Turkish Farmers See Poverty in Ban on the Poppy," *The New York Times*, October 3, 1973; Juan de Onus, "Opium Poppy Gone, Turkish Farmers Ask Why Has U.S. Done This to Us?," *The New York Times*, August 9, 1973; Steven Roberts, "Turkish Farmers Insist the Opium Poppy is Still Staff of Life," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1974.

ban as a parliamentary candidate, announced that opium production would resume but under a far tighter regime of government control. To the dismay of the White House, Necmettin Erbakan, head of the National Salvation Party, stated that, in addition to the suffering of tens of thousands of farmers, legitimate demand on the part of pharmaceutical companies for high-grade Turkish opium compelled the government to change its mind.²³ Carl Sulzberger, who was *The New York Times*' foremost foreign correspondent at the time, noted in an emboldened headline that, "Turks cannot even imagine the horrors of mass addiction among American youth."²⁴

Unbeknownst to this heir of the *Times*' fortune and Washington policymakers, the threat of Turkish heroin would eventually diminish, only to be replaced by a larger, far graver problem. As a result of a combination of factors exclusive of Ankara's policies (such as the end of the "French Connection"), Turkish heroin was slowly losing its principle status as a drug of choice among American addicts. Through the enterprising efforts of the Ochoa brothers, Carlos Lehder, Pablo Escobar, and many others, South American coke burst upon the global drug scene by the mid-1970s.²⁵ It must be noted that the emergence of cocaine in the 1970s was not a purely organic, market-produced phenomenon. Under the auspices of Cold War politics, collaboration between trafficking syndicates and clandestine agents affiliated with the US and various South American governments did much to turn cocaine into a lucrative vehicle used in part to fund combative efforts against perceived Soviet encroachment.²⁶

Despite the decline, but not total elimination, of the Turkish heroin trade, drug trafficking did not disappear from Turkey during the closing decades of the 20th century. If anything, Turkey's role in the drug trade expanded and took on new dimensions. During the last two decades of the century, Asia Minor became a node of distribution, transit, and production of illegal narcotics. Heroin smuggled from Central Asia (which had formerly provided opium to local markets in South Asia and Iran), amphetamines, and other synthetic narcotics have increasingly made their way via this portion of the eastern Mediterranean. A stable series of trade routes have solidified among portions of the Turkish diaspora in Europe and within the former Ottoman lands of Bulgaria, Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, and Montenegro.²⁷ These phenomena, historically speaking, are entirely new, marking a dramatic shift away from the country's role as a passive supplier to an active and ostensibly autonomous manufacturer and dispenser of illicit drugs. American interests have also taken a different turn in the years between the

23. "Turk is Bringing Opium Message," *The New York Times*, March 13, 1974; "Turkey Asks U.S. Ideas on Opium Curbs," *The New York Times*, July 8, 1974.

24. C.L. Sulzberger, "The Opium of the People," *The New York Times*, August 24, 1974.

25. Andres Lopez Restrepo and Alvaro Camacho Guizado, "From Smugglers to Warlords: Twentieth Century Colombian Drug Traffickers," *Canadian Journal of Latin American & Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 28, Nos. 55–56 (2003), pp. 249–263; Streatfeild, *Cocaine*, pp. 218–280.

26. For further reading on the "deep politics" of the drug trade and South American politics, see Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998); Gary Webb, *Dark Alliance: The CIA, the Contras and the Crack Cocaine Explosion* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998).

27. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre, "The French Connection In Real Life," *The New York Times*, February 6, 1972. According to sources cited by *The New York Times*, the development of smuggling network among members of the Turkish diaspora in Europe may have been initiated by the "French Connection."

Nixon and second Bush administrations. In comparison to Mexico and Columbia (to name just a couple of examples), Washington appears to maintain a more understated or moderate presence in drug enforcement activities in Turkey.²⁸

With the increasing strength and complexity that has marked the most recent turn in Turkey's role within narcotics trafficking, several key questions remain unanswered. Who are the figures that run the drug trade and what are the internal and external dynamics that govern trafficking enterprises in Turkey? How large is Turkey's contribution to the contemporary heroin market and how were traffickers able to recover and then expand their base of operations after 1974? Perhaps most important of all, what effect has the drug had over the Turkish political and economic systems? At best, I can only offer partial answers. But in stating these questions, I wish to offer an alternative strategy in the hopes of excavating this largely suppressed aspect of Turkish history. Perhaps, I would argue, it is best to delve first into the history of what one could call "organized crime" in Turkey and the ways in which criminal syndicates have shaped the course of Anatolia's transition from empire to nation-state. If this history is juxtaposed with the evolution of modern heroin trafficking, one notices several striking moments of overlying interests.

THE MAKING OF A SMACK SULTAN: REASSESSING ORGANIZED CRIME AND PARAMILITARISM IN ANATOLIA

Contemporary analogies aside, a singular Turkish mafia has never existed.²⁹ One cannot find a region or a subculture within Anatolia that possesses or has produced organizations or phenomena akin to the Camorra of Naples or even the *tong* brotherhoods of southern China.³⁰ That is not to say, however, that organized crime in Turkey does not exist or is without historical precedent. In this section, I will trace the modern

28. Karen Tandy, "United States Policy towards Narco-Terrorism," presented before the Committee on International Relations, US House of Representatives, February 12, 2004, <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct021204.htm>. According to Tandy's testimony, the DEA (in addition to British customs officials) has largely taken a limited supporting role in assisting Turkish security personnel in apprehending suspected drug traffickers in Turkey. The largest bust cited by Tandy was the discovery of 495 kilos of pure heroin in 2002. By the DEA's own accounting, over 1,200 tons of heroin were produced in Afghanistan that year alone.

29. See Ryan Gingeras, "Beyond Istanbul's 'Laz Underworld': Ottoman Paramilitarism and the Rise of Turkish Organized Crime, 1908–1950," *Journal of Contemporary European History*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2010), pp. 215–230.

30. There is some debate over whether or not the contemporary mafia is somehow linked with traditional *kabadayı* figures residing in cities throughout the Ottoman Empire. Local strongmen, or *kabadayı*, have historically asserted themselves as business or personal mediators in working class and poor neighborhoods. Most were managers of bathhouses, cafés, and firemen. Many of the more prominent organized figures in recent years, such as Dünder Kılıç, have claimed the title of *kabadayı* for themselves. In terms of the overlap of drug trafficking and organized crime in Turkey, there is as of yet no evidence that *kabadayı* figures played a role in the development of the trade in the country. More to the point, there are those (like Kılıç) who have argued that *kabadayılar* and mafiosi are distinct and separate phenomena. See Frank Bovenkerk and Yücel Yeşilgöz, *The Turkish Mafia: A History of the Heroin Godfathers* (Lancs, UK: Milo Books, 2007), pp. 77–82; Ulaş Yıldız, "Nerede O Eski 'Dayılar'" ["Where are the Old *Kabadayı*?], *Radikal*, March 7, 2001; Doğan Yurdakul, *Abi: Kabadayılar-Mafya Derin Devlet İlişkileri* [*Older Brother: Kabadayı-Mafia-Deep State Relations*] (Istanbul: Positif Yayınları, 2007), p. 36.

origins of Turkish criminal syndicates and how they relate to heroin trafficking and to the development of the Turkish state. Despite what the title of this article may appear to promise, I do not intend to unmask some great Turkish smack baron in the mould of Pablo Escobar or Kaiser Sozay. Instead, I would like to draw attention to moments in the recent past when mobsters, heroin trafficking, and politics have intersected and made their presence known to the Turkish public. Rather than treat such moments as isolated events or unrepresentative of contemporary Turkish society, I would like to integrate such intersections into a much broader, nuanced understanding of the continuities between the Ottoman past and the Turkish present.

Historians of the Ottoman Empire are readily familiar with the prominent roles bandits played in both forming and contesting the limits of the imperial administration in Anatolia. During the 17th and 18th centuries, bandits were at the same time the scourge of a stable empire and the source of invaluable troops and administrators.³¹ By the 19th century, the term “bandit” (*şaki* or *eşkiya*) was reserved for the most marginal and troublesome elements in Ottoman society, such as migrants, refugees, and other transient peoples. Although the terms “bandit” and “banditry” continued to be used into the 20th century, I would argue that the nature of armed criminal syndicates was rapidly changing towards the end of the imperial period. Rather than independently-run cohorts organized for the purposes of theft or extortion, gangs in Anatolia increasingly became the tools of political actors with specific social or economic agendas. Although some may argue that the “social bandit” (*à la* Robin Hood) may have never existed, I would argue that criminal syndicates took on an increasingly political veneer as institutionalized factions and functions inside and outside of the state. For this reason, I would classify many Ottoman criminals in the 20th century as paramilitaries rather than simple bandits.

One could say that the very last Ottoman regime was the product and beneficiary of organized crime and paramilitarism. The Revolution of 1908, which led to the formation of the Young Turk government of 1908–1918, was made possible through the assistance of “political gangs” loyal to Muslim notables in Ottoman Macedonia. The origins of this political alliance between the Young Turk revolutionaries and Muslim (largely Albanian) gangs in Macedonia was the byproduct of an ongoing collaboration between the two factions in an effort to stymie the work of separatist insurgents in the region during the first two decades of the 20th century.³²

With the establishment of the *de facto* Young Turk dictatorship in 1913, this alliance was expanded and given new meaning. Shortly before taking power, members of the inner circle of the imperial administration laid the foundation for an ambitious, multi-faceted clandestine arm called the Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa*). According to all available sources, the Special Organization drew a broad array of officers, officials, professionals, and notables into its upper ranks. Covert operations run by these agents extended into both international and domestic spheres. Fanning rebellion abroad, special recruitment, and political assassinations each fell under the mandate of

31. Fredrick Anscombe, “Albanians and ‘Mountain Bandits,’” in Fredrick Anscombe, ed., *The Ottoman Balkans 1750–1830* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006); Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

32. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 221–227, 254–258.

this political organ.

Among the groups that buttressed this newly created arm of the Ottoman state was an unknown series of provincial criminal syndicates. We know precious little about the full extent and character of these networks (which arguably could be found in every province in what remained of the Ottoman Empire). Yet, we can advance a few important generalizations. One critical source of recruitment for the paramilitary units used to execute the Armenian Genocide (an operation that was in part assigned to the Special Organization) was provincial gangs comprising recent Muslim immigrants from both the Balkans and the North Caucasus. In addition to running a variety of rackets (such as extortion, smuggling, and theft), many of these provincial gangs were employed as private militias for competing local interests within their home provinces. With the outbreak of World War I, the Special Organization called upon local notables (who could have been either landowners, merchants, or even appointed imperial officials) to supply their militias for state service.³³ Although the exact budget of the Special Organization is unknown to us (in fact it was kept secret from the Ottoman parliament as well), it may be surmised that this recruitment campaign was at least in part financed with property seized from murdered or deported non-Muslims.³⁴ Considering Istanbul's grander plans for the Ottoman economy, the transfer of stolen goods into the hands of hired assassins from the North Caucasus or the Balkans would have neatly coincided with the state's program to undermine or destroy the economic positions held by Armenians and Greeks in the Empire.³⁵

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the Republic of Turkey greatly unsettled Anatolia's criminal underworld. Many paramilitaries and gangsters who had previously been employed by the Special Organization were arrested, murdered, or exiled following a string of rebellions against the emerging Ankara government. Mustafa Kemal's ascendancy as President of the young Republic formally put an end to the Special Organization apparatus. A pivotal movement in this turn away from the Ottoman clandestine service occurred after a supposed attempt upon Mustafa Kemal's life in 1927. With the closing of the Izmir show trials, the last of several prominent Special Organization operatives were put to death or sentenced to long prison terms. In 1926, the *Gazi* laid the foundation for a new clandestine arm, ultimately to be renamed the National Intelligence Organization (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı* [MİT]) in 1965. Like many other state organs created during the Kemalist period, MİT's apparatus was staffed by loyal veterans of Mustafa Kemal's push for power and was a seemingly direct appendage of the ruling Republican Peoples' Party (RPP).³⁶

33. See, for example, Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 55–77.

34. Material gain, in either property or money, was often a central motivating factor for many who engaged in the deportation and murder of non-Muslims during World War II. See, for example, Stephan Astourian, “The Silence of the Land,” in Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göçek, and Norman M. Naimark, eds., *A Question of Genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 55–81; PRO/ FO 371/4158/105778, June 27, 1919.

35. See Ryan Gingeras, “Last Rites for a ‘Pure Bandit:’ Clandestine Service, Historiography and the Origins of the Turkish ‘Deep State,’” *Past & Present*, Vol. 206, No. 1 (February 2010), pp. 121–144.

36. Gültekin Ural, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan MİT'e: Abdullah Çatlı ve Susurluk Olayı* [*From the Special Organization to MİT: Abdullah Çatlı and the Susurluk Incident*] (Istanbul: Kamer Yayınları, 1997).

Until 1931, most of the major wholesalers in heroin were of foreign origin.³⁷ As one scans the records of the FBN, only one name appears in reports detailing local involvement in the trade. Nesim Toranto, an otherwise legitimate exporter, is said to have had extensive connections in the world of narcotics (including ties with Arnold Rothstein, arguably the single most powerful individual in American organized crime during the 1920s). Despite having lost considerable sums of money during World War II (under the auspices of the *Varlık Vergisi*, a wartime tax regime that particularly targeted non-Muslim business interests), the Toranto family appears to have been connected to the narcotics trade well into the 1950s.³⁸ After 1931, the withdrawal of Western and Japanese interests from Istanbul begot a new generation of native traffickers who had previously served as local apprentices. It is out of this cohort that the first generation of Turkish drug lords emerged.

Field reports from American narcotics officers tell us that Istanbul was a hotbed of narcotics activity during the 1950s. Istanbul's drug underworld was dominated by a handful of men who supplied Corsican and freelance traffickers alike. Most came from "minority" backgrounds (primarily Laz or Orthodox Christians).³⁹ Through these men, hires could procure "junk" to allied transporters based in Kilis (a southern Anatolian border town with a direct line to marketeers in Beirut). During these more innocent days in the trade, a determined Westerner could procure products by simply walking into local bars in the city (as George White, the first American narcotics official to fight the American war on drugs in Turkey, found out in 1948).⁴⁰ That is not to say that major traffickers in Istanbul did not have friends in high places.

Considering the degree to which the legal opium trade was regulated by Ankara, one is compelled to ask what roles politicians played in the illicit trafficking of heroin in and out of Turkey. The strange case of Turkish senator Küdret Bayhan offers us some hint as to the depth and profundity of the link between political and underworld figures. In March 1971, the senator from Niğde (who recently became a representative of the right-wing National Action Party) was arrested on the French/Italian border carrying 146 kilos of morphine. This scandal led to the arrest of three other elected officials. American law enforcement agents who purportedly played a key role in Bayhan's arrest later admitted to *The New York Times* that many Turkish citizens carrying official or "red" passports were often employed as couriers between Turkey and Marseilles.⁴¹

37. *The International Opium Convention: Point of View of the Turkish Producers, Traders, and Manufacturers, 1930; Turkey, 1930–1934; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970; Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170; National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD.*

38. William Garland to Mr. H. J. Anslinger, October 21, 1949; Turkey, 1949–1950; Subject Files of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, 1916–1970; Records of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Record Group 170; National Archives Building II, Silver Spring, MD; "Yüce Divana Sevki İstenen Eski Bakanlar" ["Old Ministers Transferred to the Supreme Court"], *Milliyet*, January 22, 1952.

39. Gingeras, "Beyond Istanbul's 'Laz Underworld,'" pp. 222–225.

40. Letter from George White to Harry J. Anslinger, June 10, 1948, George W. White Papers, Box 1, Folder 7, Special Collections Department, Stanford University.

41. Edward Herman and Frank Brodhead, *The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection* (New York: Sheridan Square Publications, 1986), p. 58; Henry Kamm, "Turkish Ban on Poppy: Delayed Impact Seen," *The New York Times*, October 10, 1972; Altan Öymen, "Çocuğa de bir Kırmızı Pasaport" ["A Red Passport also for Children"], *Radikal*, February 26, 2006.

If we accept the case of Küdret Bayhan as a possible window into this aspect of the drug trade in Turkey, it may be suggested that politicians at both the local and national levels had (and continue to have) important parts to play. Thinking comparatively, such alliances are not that uncommon. The contemporary state of Mexico, which, much like Turkey, was established upon a series of both statist and populist revolutionary principles, has evolved in locked step with the trafficking of illegal narcotics. Perhaps it is not too unfounded to suggest that the development of provincial political networks in such states as Baja California Norte, Sinaloa, or Michoacán may possess strong commonalities with the development of such Turkish provinces as Malatya, Afyon, Aydın, or Trabzon.⁴²

Neither the curtailment of opium production nor a “serious” crackdown on organized crime following Kenan Evren’s military coup in 1980 dealt a fatal blow to the Turkish underworld. Rather, at this point when Turkey’s role in the drug trade became more diversified and self-sustaining, criminal syndicates took on an increasingly political veneer. One reason for this may have to do with diverse business interests carried by major traffickers. In addition to heroin, property deals, casinos, and contraband smuggling (specifically of tea, nuts, tobacco, and weapons) may have allowed such major traffickers as Hüseyin Eminoğlu and Fahreddin Soysal to survive the ebb and flow of Turkey’s role in the drug trade.⁴³ Starting in 1969, factional street violence aimed largely at Turkey’s labor/left escalated across Turkey.⁴⁴ Underworld figures in Istanbul and elsewhere found themselves progressively drawn into this street conflict among young leftist and rightist militants. Out of this clash a new milieu emerged in Turkey, one that transcended political, criminal, and national lines.

Perhaps the most representative figure to arise from this period is Abdullah Çatlı. Born in the central Anatolian town of Nevşehir in 1956, Çatlı’s youth was marked by transience and violent politics. In his early student years, he quickly ascended the ranks of the nascent neo-fascist Grey Wolves (*Bozkurtlar*) movement, a movement founded by Alparslan Türkeş (a retired Cypriot general and founder of the National Action Party, who also allegedly helped organize the coup against Adnan Menderes in 1960). At the age of 22, Çatlı was already implicated in the murders of several leftist intellectuals and activists in Ankara.⁴⁵ Fear of arrest and escalating violence led Çatlı to Istanbul, where he soon fell into a mixed circle of radical former military officers, right-wing party officials, smugglers, and covert agents. Among his first associates in Istanbul were gunrunners Abuzer Uğurlu and Bekir Çelenk, two men who also shared

42. A comparative approach towards the history of organized crime, as a means of expanding the role of gangsters in the making of the modern world, can most recently be seen in Luis Astorga, *Drogas Sin Fronteras [Drugs Without Borders]* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2003); Cyrille Fijnaut and Letizia Paoli, eds., *Organized Crime in Europe* (Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2004); Robert J. Kelly, ed., *Organized Crime: A Global Perspective* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986). See also Luis Astorga, “Organized Crime and the Organization of Crime,” in John Baily and Roy Godson, eds., *Organized Crime and Democratic Governability: Mexico and the U.S. — Mexico Borderlands* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), pp. 58–82.

43. “Kaçakçılıktan Sanık Milyoner Tevkif Edildi” [“Accused Millionaire Arrested for Smuggling”], *Milliyet*, August 14, 1959.

44. Soner Yalçın and Doğan Yudakul, *Reis: Gladio’nun Türk Tetikçisi [Boss: Gladio’s Turkish Triggerman]* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2007), p. 28.

45. Yalçın and Yudakul, *Reis*, pp. 57–69.

deep connections with heroin smuggling operations in Bulgaria and Italy. During this crucial stage in his life, Çatlı also became acquainted with the same circles as Mehmet Ali Ağca, a Turkish assassin most famous for his attempt on the life of Pope John Paul II, and Henry Arslanayan, one of the most prominent heroin traffickers in the eastern Mediterranean.⁴⁶

Abdullah Çatlı's activities, as well as his other associates, extended beyond the world of drugs. Beginning as early as 1979, Çatlı developed close relations with right-wing circles in Turkish intelligence. According to Yalçın and Yurdakul, this relationship was possibly engendered with the mysterious murder of Abdi İpekçi, an outspoken journalist and critic writing for the newspaper *Milliyet* (a murder for which Mehmet Ali Ağca was arrested and imprisoned).⁴⁷ It is now widely acknowledged that MİT employed Çatlı for a variety of violent and covert acts through the 1980s and 1990s. Although a complete accounting of his exploits cannot be confirmed, it seems reasonably clear that he played a role in the murder of several known Kurdish and Armenian militants and activists, as well as assisted in Ebulfeyz Elçibey's coup in Azerbaijan in 1995.⁴⁸

Further complicating the history of Abdullah Çatlı's various activities as both a state agent and a gangster is the even larger international apparatus that harbored him and coordinated his various assignments. At the root of Çatlı's career in the Turkish clandestine service was the creation of a "stay behind" unit operated by various intelligence services associated with NATO. "Operation Gladio," as it was revealed in the 1990s, comprised a deliberate partnership between notable figures within the international underworld (most notably drug traffickers) and various state security services. Under the direction of the NATO consortium, hired guns like Abdullah Çatlı (as well as Ağca, Uğurlu, and Çelenk) were employed to suppress or eliminate "subversive" leftists or dissidents living in various NATO member states.⁴⁹ Çatlı himself visited Miami in 1982 in the company of a known Gladio agent (and Italian neo-Nazi) and was considered "under the protection" of the CIA.⁵⁰

In 1996, Çatlı's double life as both a trafficker and government-backed assassin

46. Yalçın and Yurdakul, *Reis*, pp. 75–80, 127–128.

47. Yalçın and Yurdakul, *Reis*, pp. 82–90.

48. Yalçın and Yurdakul, *Reis*, pp. 156–159, 165–168, 230–232, 237–239.

49. Belma Akçura, *Derin Devlet Oldu Devlet [The Deep State was the State]* (Istanbul: Güncel Yayıncılık, 2006), pp. 34–55; Yalçın and Yurdakul, *Reis*, pp. 132–134. In a fascinating interview given to Belma Akçura, Yavuz Ataç, a former high-ranking military officer and contributor to Operation Gladio, explained in detail the recruiting efforts that led to Alaattin Çakacı, one of Turkey's most notorious heroin traffickers, to join the Turkish clandestine service. Ataç admits in the interview that Hiram Abas had been long acquainted with Çakacı before he was approached.

50. Yalçın and Yurdakul, *Reis*, pp. 152–156. Langley's reliance on and interest in right-wing or neo-fascist activists dates back to the closing years of World War II. In addition to sponsoring the activities of former Kuomintang and Shan militants in Burma (who were also among the chief suppliers of raw heroin in southeast Asia until the 1990s), the CIA also maintained an active profile in harboring and training former Nazi sympathizers from the Ukraine and Belarus for espionage purposes in the Soviet Union. For further discussion on the history of the CIA's relationship with right-wing or neo-fascist organizations, see Herman and Brodhead, *The Rise and Fall of the Bulgarian Connection*, pp. 61–64; Jonathan Marshall, "Opium, Tungsten and the Search for National Security," *Journal of Policy History*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1991), pp. 44–67.

was revealed to the public in dramatic fashion. His corpse, pulled from a mysterious car wreck in the town of Susurluk, was discovered along with Istanbul’s deputy chief of police and a known right-wing Kurdish militant. A broad state inquiry followed, complete with admissions as to the nature of this alliance between criminal syndicates, state security personnel, and right-wing politicians. Tansu Çiller, then-Prime Minister of Turkey, was unfazed by the allegations, calling those “who killed for the state” heroes.⁵¹

Since the “Susurluk incident,” the spectre cast by Operation Gladio and other alliances of this kind persists in Turkey.⁵² Observers both inside and outside of Turkey have also drawn attention to the connection between drug traffickers and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which allegedly controls the supply of heroin entering the country from Afghanistan and other portions of central Asia.⁵³

THE GENEALOGY OF THE “DEEP STATE:” HEROIN, PARAMILITARISM, AND THE HISTORY OF TURKEY

What do we make of these various connections that defined the life of individuals like Abdullah Çatlı? How do gangsters, politicians, smugglers, military officers, and clandestine agents all end up in the same boat? In order to describe this intricate relationship, Turkish commentators have coined the term the “deep state.” The precise meaning of this term, from the Turkish point of view, remains somewhat elusive. In 2005, former Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel stated somewhat cryptically that “the deep state is the military. The deep state is the state itself.”⁵⁴ I would opt for a broader, more complex definition. The deep state represents the political interplay between unacknowledged or unrecognized factions inside and outside the regular government. The deep state is not an entirely monolithic entity that shadows the bureaucracy, military, or civil society. Rather it is an eclectic, ever-evolving political theater of competition, one that includes elements both explicitly legal and outlaw in nature. Paramount to the operation and survival of the deep state is the extreme emphasis placed upon state security, a need that places both law enforcement and clandestine agencies in the forefront of both the formulation and execution of state policies.⁵⁵

51. Frank Bovenkerk and Yücel Yeşilgöz, “The Turkish Mafia and the State,” in Cyrille Fijnaut and Letizia Paoli, eds., *Organized Crime in Europe* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004), pp. 595–596.

52. Akçura, *Derin Devlet Oldu Devlet*, pp. 130–134. In addition to the murder of Hrant Dink, the 2006 fire bombing of a bookstore in Hakkari by plainclothes military officers has most recently raised fears of a “new Susurluk” conspiracy in Turkey. Although heroin or any other kind of drug trafficking has not been cited as a cause of the attack (rather the store was a suspected center of PKK activity), the fact that it took place in this eastern border town hints that drugs may be in the background of this story. For more recent turns in the evolution of the Turkish “deep state,” see Gareth Jenkins, “Between Fact and Fantasy: Turkey’s Ergenekon Investigation,” *Silk Road Papers* (Washington, DC: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and Silk Road Studies, 2009), pp. 1–84.

53. Karen Tandy, “United States Policy towards Narco-Terrorism.”

54. Akçura, *Derin Devlet Oldu Devlet*, p. 16.

55. For further discussion, see Peter Dale Scott, *The Road to 9/11: Wealth, Empire and the Future of America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 4–7; Ola Tunander, “Democratic State vs. Deep State: Approaching the Dual State of the West,” presented at *Government of the Shadows: Global Governance, Para-Politics and Organized Crime*, Asian Law Centre, University of Melbourne/Monash University, Melbourne, August 10–12, 2006, pp. 1–2.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have attempted to lay the foundations for a deeper historical excavation of two critical elements of what we can call the Turkish deep state. These two elements, heroin trafficking and organized crime, in many ways evolved independently from one another. In recent times however, heroin and organized crime have come to overlap. As these two Anatolian tangents have grown closer, violence within the Turkish political arena has increased. Upon closer inspection, trade in opiates and organized crime are not incidental to or exclusive of Anatolia's transition from an imperial hinterland to national core. I would instead suggest that both phenomena have provided a platform for a variety of actors seeking to contest and shape the Turkish state.

Since the 19th century, opium, morphine, and heroin have become staple products critical to Anatolia's economy. The proceeds from this trade have sustained the livelihoods of agricultural workers, merchants, politicians, and criminals alike for over two centuries. After several decades of foreign dominance, Ankara has fought very hard in one form or another to maintain this industry in both its legal and (arguably) illicit forms. Shifts in the value and legality of opium-based products have forced Turkish producers and dealers to evolve with the conditions of the times. Even with Anatolia's transformation from a center of opium production to an essential node in the heroin exchange, the trafficking industry has remained and grown more entrenched and complex. Turkey's resilience over the years begs further inquiry into how suppliers and producers in Turkey reinvented themselves (particularly between the 1960s and 1980s). The answer to this question, I would argue, lies in the history of organized crime in Anatolia.

Gangs in Anatolia did not always deal in heroin. Through the passage of both Ottoman and Turkish history, they occupied a schizophrenic position within society, operating as either willing agents or adversaries of the state. The emergence of a clandestine governmental apparatus, beginning with the Special Organization, complicated and expanded the roles played by criminal syndicates and paramilitaries. As both Istanbul and Ankara sought to consolidate and amplify their influence inside and outside of the state's borders, gangs came to be seen as a valuable, yet disposable, tool to implement a variety of policies that were contrary to the rule of law (such as mass murder and the suppression of dissidents). The increasing proceeds gleaned from the heroin trade have intensified the strength, organization, and lethality of Turkish criminal cartels, making them more self-sustaining and international in size and authority. Actors wishing to promote or contest state policy (be it Tansu Çiller or the PKK) have not ignored this trend. As well-financed and well-connected organizations with violent proclivities, heroin rings in Turkey have become powerful allies and agents in the Turkish political arena. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Turkish deep state is the presence of criminal syndicates that have their own articulate political notions and agendas. In this regard, it is important not to dismiss individuals like Abdullah Çatlı as simple-minded lackeys. Through his personal wealth, reputation, and connections, Çatlı was both a conductor and a tool of political change.

Looking beyond Turkey, it is important to remind ourselves of the near-universal nature of this type of cooperation between political and criminal networks. Too often the focus has been placed upon third world nations, particularly those labelled "narco-states." One need not go as far as to look at Afghanistan, Colombia, or Mexico. Indeed

the paths taken by narcotics traffickers, gangsters, and politicians have and do intersect in such powerful states as the United States, France, and China. More importantly, one must not ignore the roles played by intelligence services in sheltering or promoting foreign alliances made between members of the criminal underworld and the legitimate political and economic worlds. As historians continue to probe the evolution of the modern nation-state, it is essential for us to continue to break taboos and delve further into all aspects that inform and resist prevailing political and economic norms.