

FOREWORD

The penetration of organized crime into the security sectors of countries in transition is one of the darkest aspects of the post-communist transformations of states. During the past 15 years the growing impact and influence of organized criminal groups was felt not only in the countries in transition but also in the European Union (EU). This process was facilitated by the increasingly free movement of people, goods, and finances around Europe.¹

In the countries in transition, it is still impossible to give a comprehensive account of the multiple interests of corrupt state and security sector officials, on the one hand, and criminal bosses on the other hand, and the overlap of these interests. The characteristics of such criminal partnership correspond to certain trends in the overall political development of the states of Southeast Europe. Whereas Bulgaria underwent a peaceful political transition, post-communist reforms in the Western Balkans coincided with the disintegration of the former Yugoslav Federation, in whose place several independent states were established and, as a result, this conflict-ridden region lagged behind. Despite such divergent developments, the idea of “partnerships in crime” in both Bulgaria and the Western Balkans can be considered in a single report, due to numerous similarities between the corruption patterns and the formation of larger—regional and international—criminal networks involved in the smuggling of consumer goods and the trafficking of people, drugs, and arms throughout the 1990s.

Undoubtedly, the issues analyzed in this report are open to more than one interpretation, especially where the role of communist security services is explored. For instance, in Chapter 2, which focuses on Bulgaria, a task force from the Center for the Study of Democracy has considered a number of diverse, and often conflicting, views and recommendations of Bulgarian decision makers, former and current security officers, reporters, and security experts. The task force has not incorporated the most extreme viewpoints which either demonize the communist-time security services or, conversely, consider any security sector reforms to be incapacitating to the services. The authors of this report do not claim to be the final authority on these matters. The report is a necessary contribution to heightening public awareness of the considerable risks arising from criminal partnership within the security sector and the need for measures to counteract and prevent it.

¹ “2003 European Union organised crime report”, Europol, 2003, p.8.

Chapter 3 of the report, dedicated to similar security sector problems in the Western Balkans, is a contribution of Marko Hajdinjak, a Slovenian researcher who lives and works in Bulgaria.