Pre-publication, accepted version.
For citations, please use final version forthcoming in the *Journal of Historical Sociology* (2021).

Trouble with the Outlaws: Nationalist Bandits, the Greek State, and the Contestation of Political Legitimacy over the Longue Durée

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Following the publication of Hobsbawm's classic but controversial books *Primitive Rebels* (1959) and *Bandits* (1969), a long-running debate took hold about the nature of the relationship between outlaws and states. Hobsbawm's depiction of 'social bandits' in early modern Europe was rebuffed by a range of scholars who felt that this characterisation grossly conflated myth with reality (see further Gravel, 1985). As concerns bandit-state relations, three schools of thought came to predominate, in which bandits were variously understood to have ultimately been either self-interested actors, proto-revolutionaries, or conservative agents doing the bidding of the state and its elites. Meanwhile, a rich body of scholarship has developed on the practices by which, over time, tales of outlaws in various jurisdictions around the world – bandits, their sea-faring counterparts, pirates, and their modern equivalents –, have been etched into folklore, song and other forms of memorialisation, whether demonising or romanticising them. One of the most interesting but underexplored lines of enquiry has been the use to which such tales have been put by states and societies. To the extent that this question has been addressed, it has extended the study of the political significance of bandit-state relations beyond a focus on physical interactions between bandits and the state, towards one that also encompasses consideration of the political functions of their interplay at a symbolic level.

To date, a small number of studies pursuing this line of enquiry have considered the usage and indeed manipulation of bandit memorialisation by newly minted modern states, and the longer-

term appeal amongst some societies of romanticised lawlessness. Little attention has been paid, however, to the interplay between state and societal uses of bandit tropes, or to their employment by political outlaws, over generations.[1] Drawing on the case of Greece, this article examines the political significance of bandit-state relations for states, societies and political outlaws, taking a long historical perspective to shed light on the extended political use and reverberations of the symbolic referencing of bandit pasts.

The article begins by charting the role of bandits in the maintenance of state order in the period preceding the Greek War of Independence against the Ottoman Empire. It goes on to address debates about the role of bandits within the struggle for national liberation that arose during, and in the decades following, the establishment of the modern Greek state. The broader transhistorical appeal and contested inheritance of bandit heroes is then considered, with examples drawn from amongst the Greek partisan movement during the Second World War, and, more especially, from within the country's longest running urban guerrilla group of the late 20th century, 'November 17'. The article argues that the adoption of a protracted historical perspective on bandit-state relations facilitates insights into the extent and depth of contention that has repeatedly emerged over the Greek state's treatment of political outlaws, by furnishing evidence of the long political reverberations of bandit-state relations over time, and underscoring in this regard the paradox that surrounds the state's own use of bandit tropes; namely, that although the state has long championed nationalist bandit-rebel-heroes as part of its mythologised foundations, in so doing it has promoted a trope that has served to inspire and been used to justify attacks on its own authority by anti-state groups. The state's romanticisation of bandit history has thus come with significant jeopardy attached.

[1] A rare exception of a work considering the cross-generational political potency of bandit tropes is that of Seal (2011). More broadly, see also Herzfeld (1986).

Bandits and Political Order

The history of banditry in Greece is one that illustrates the way in which outlaws have as often supported states as undermined their authority. Such histories caution against assumptions – all too common in scholarship on contemporary groups of outlaws – about the inherently antithetical relationship between the two. Across Europe, the assessment of the role of bandits in the formation and consolidation of modern states is very much a mixed one. On one hand, bandits provided fighting power that was crucial in establishing some modern European states and in helping them to advance their authority by acting as local instruments of state coercion in the internal pacification of populations. On the other hand, the conditional and impermanent nature of alliances between bandits and states hindered the consolidation of those same states (see, e.g., Giddens, 1985; Tilly, 1985, 1975; Thompson, 1994; Gallant, 1999). In the Greek space, whilst bandits would dispense coercion on behalf of Ottoman authorities, during the Greek struggle for independence they proved indispensible to the physical and ideological establishment and expansion of the modern state, even if their role was then also ultimately faulted for hindering the consolidation and modernisation of the modern state (an experience comparable to that of bandit-state relations in neighbouring jurisdictions; see, e.g., Koliopoulos, 1987).

Before national liberation was achieved, organised groups of bandits in the Greek space were known as *kleftes* (thieves). Their members also comprised the majority of what were known as *armatoles*; units of armed men hired chiefly as guards by the Ottoman state. Depending largely on the profitability and dangers periodically facing either group, membership between the two vacillated considerably (Clogg, 1986). For this reason, kleftes and armatoles have tended to be considered together, as two halves of the banditry phenomenon during Ottoman rule, to the extent that they have often been labelled together as 'kleftarmatoloi' (see, e.g., Georgos, 1999). The term *kleftes* dates from at least 1480 (i.e. around the start of Ottoman rule in Greece), and was used to

denote bands of bandits within the Greek space who lived predominately in mountainous regions and on hills outside villages, attacking and robbing visible symbols of wealth and authority, Greek as well as Turk (Clogg, 1986).[2] They were by no means unique in this regard by regional comparison; the Bulgarian haiduks and Serbian hadjucks arguably their functional counterparts (Stojanovic, 1984; Hobsbawm, 1971; Dakin, 1977;).[3] Mountain-dwelling populations within Greece, such as the Souliots, the communities of the Agrapha ('Unwritten') mountain region and of the Mani area of the Moreas, tended to be considered 'lawless' in popular parlance, but the Ottomans afforded them an autonomous status. There appears to have been an overlap between the existence of autonomous communities living beyond the law of the Ottoman Empire and with dispensation to do so, and the presence of kleftic brigades, whose activities became recorded in folktale and song (Georgos, 1999).

In the Greek space, as with neighbouring regions that constituted similarly challenging frontier regions for authorities governing from a distance to manage and enforce law, the Ottomans hired bands of mercenary soldiers, the armatoles, to act as local gendarmes. The earliest known record of armatoles has been found within chronicles from around 1300 that were linked to the founder of the Ottoman dynasty, Osman I, who used their services to spy on Christian subjects of the empire. The Ottomans appear to have inherited the armatole system from the Byzantines, who employed men with a similar role in the same geographical spaces of their empire.[4] The first documented contracts between groups of men that later came to be seen as the definitive armatoles – ranging from 200 to 500 men – and the Ottoman Empire, were in the early eighteenth century (Rhodakis, 1999).

[2] The term 'Turk' to describe Muslim Ottomans (distinguished from their Muslim Albanian mercenaries) is used in literature on the period and there is recorded use of the term by 'Greeks' in the 1700s. See, e.g. Makriyannis (1966).
[3] On Greek denial of the similarities, see Herzfeld (1986).
[4] Byzantine rulers offered land to 'barbarians' to settle along their empire's borders in exchange for military services to defend the empire's authority. The settlers were called 'omospondoi' ('confederates'), and they replaced the earlier 'akrites' ('frontier men') who were often forced to move further inland from the borders. See further Rhodakis (1999a).

The principal duties of the armatoles were to guard mountain passes and protect Ottoman officials, merchants and travellers, against other bandits.[5] The Ottomans initially attempted to guard the mountain passages that were so important to trade and tax collection themselves, but later subcontracted to Albanian mercenaries, and then, as the trade route grew, resorted to hiring Christians (Rhodakis, 1999a). These armatoles were overwhelmingly recruited from kleftic groups, however, whose daring raids were sometimes designed to impress Ottoman authorities with their potential value as armatoles (Koliopoulos, 1999). From the same pool of men were also commonly hired guards, or 'kapi', by the landowning 'kotsabassis' class, particularly in the Peloponnese region (Dakin, 1977; Clogg, 1986). Both armatolic and kleftic bands were similarly structured, being led by a 'kapetanios', who was the wealthiest individual amongst them. Specific taxes were raised by village populations who also fed and housed the armatoles, and their wealth was supplemented by lending money at high interest, but the principal source of income for the armatoles was from raiding others' territories (Rhodakis, 1999a). At that juncture, mainland Greece was divided between 14 and 18 armatolics, and armatoles were deployed to different areas in order to prevent them having close connections to the area they policed (ibid; Clogg, 1986). Nevertheless, not all kleftes were hired as armatoles, nor were all armatoles former kleftes.

The degree of autonomy accorded to armatoles by the Ottoman Empire is the key to their later hallowed role in the Greek struggle for independence. The armatoles enjoyed an extraordinary status within the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the Greek space, where they were largely Christians yet were allowed to carry arms and additionally had been given dispensation from the general requirement to pay tax to Ottoman authorities.[6] While this may seem at first to have

[5] The term 'armatoloi' is believed to originate from the Italian designation 'armatores', used in this case to denote a 'captain at arms,' a service similar to a provincial gendarme with considerable local autonomy (Rhodakis, 1999a).
[6] On the eve of the most widespread revolt yet carried out by armatoles, in 1770, the Ottomans ordered all Christians be disarmed. The revolt took place with the co-operation of the kotsabasis and had both been encouraged by Russia

bestowed significant privilege on these chosen few of the empire's Christian subjects, it was also more simply recognition on the part of the authorities of the de facto power of groups of strong men who lived in areas – typically mountainous – that were very hard to otherwise subdue (Georgos, 1999; see also Boeshoten, 1991; Baggally, 1936). Indeed, this was a not uncommon conundrum faced by the Ottoman authorities in the broader region, and one to which they applied similar strategies, either offering amnesties, hiring, or conceding autonomy to populations dominated by groups of armed men that were too powerful or elusive to be overcome (Mazower, 2000; Vickers, 1999; Palairet, 1997). Despite the power demonstrated by such autonomy, historians such as Barkey (1994) have pointed to the use of armatolic units to collect tax from local populations on behalf of the Ottoman authorities and to subdue revolt wherever it appeared, suggesting that the pre-revolutionary armatoles were far from the representatives of independent Greek spirit that they were later portrayed to have been.

As within neighbouring Balkan spaces, piracy and banditry in the Greek space were not a novel challenge to face the Ottoman state in either the 18th, 19th or 20th centuries (Rhodakis, 1999a). Practices that had fluctuated over the centuries nevertheless gained a new resonance in their connection to the struggle for national self-determination, though the relationship between the two was by no means simple. Rather than being fuelled by an absence of or simple resistance to the state's mediating influence, banditry was in many ways perpetuated and shaped by the Ottoman state, whether through co-option, truces, and alternating patterns of co-operation with bandit groups, or by the state's periodic decommissioning of armatoles (an armatole rarely being a permanent position; Rhodakis, 1999a). Moreover, the Ottoman state was by no means alone in engaging in such relationships with bandits. Periods such as the early to mid-1700s, in which

and preceded the Russo-Turkish War that ended in 1774. The Turks offered amnesties to kleftes and armatoles in 1779 (Rhodakis, 1999a; Clogg, 1986).

kleftes were most co-operative with the Ottoman state, tended to overlap with conditions in which there was minimal foreign intervention encouraging dissent and antagonism between the Empire and other states (Barkey, 1994). But there were other powers who sponsored, hired and decommissioned bands of men in the Balkans for such work, including the Venetians, Austrian-Hungarians, Russians, French and the British, who thus similarly had a hand in shaping the ebb and flow of pro- and anti-state operations that were carried out by such groups (see further Barkey, 1994; Rhodakis, 1999b).

Bandits and Political Revolution

The point at which bandit practices began to constitute a rebellion aimed at liberating a Greek nation from Ottoman authority has been almost endlessly debated. Alongside pirates, the kleft-armatoles, as autonomous and semi-autonomous units that came to comprise the bulk of the fighting force against the Ottomans, played vital roles in achieving Greek independence from four hundred years of Ottoman rule. It was kleftarmatolic leaders who sounded the opening shots of the Greek national liberation struggle (other attempts by an intelligentsia of Greek émigrés based in Russia to foment national revolution having failed). Their uprisings in March 1821 in the Peloponnese established the heartland of the revolt against Ottoman rule (Clogg, 1986). Especially during the first year of the revolution, they bore the brunt of the struggle as the only major fighting force against the Ottomans (in conjunction with the uprising by sea of the captains of the Greek piratical fleets).

Initially, the kleftarmatolic leaders fighting in support of Greek liberation from Ottoman rule gave considerable deference for the struggle to the political leadership of the 'Filiki Etairia', a secret society that had been established in Odessa by Greek émigré merchants in 1814 to prepare the Greeks for insurrection. Even in the early stages of the revolution, however, kleftarmatolic units

would only selectively follow the orders of the 'national' government (which was being led by members of the Filiki Etairea). There was no functioning overall military command structure and co-operative military action took place only by agreement between group leaders of kleftarmatolic units (the 'regular' army being at that juncture a single, relatively insignificant, unit; see further Rhodakis, 1999b). As the struggle continued, Greek political leaders found kleftarmatolia to be an increasingly unreliable fighting force. By 1823, when the Greek revolt won the recognition of Britain, divisions in the Greek struggle were already evident. That year, two rival Greek governments were formed. One promoted democracy 'for the common man', represented the revolution's military forces, and was led by the kleftarmatolic generals Kolokotronis and Androutsos. The other promoted a liberal constitutionalism that promised to enshrine the interests and westward-looking ideals of a Greek aristocracy comprised of Peloponnesian primates, notables, and politicians from the Ottoman-Greek Phanariot elite, who had returned to Greece from positions of authority in the Ottoman Empire (primarily from Istanbul and Romania). The two assemblies were eventually united in 1826 (see further Clogg, 1986).

No sooner had national independence been formally achieved in 1832, than Greek political elites strove to dismantle the power of the bandit armies whose efforts had secured the nation's victory, viewing their continuing activities as a significant challenge to the achievement of *de facto* sovereignty for the state.[7] The elite party of primates, kostabasides and Phanariots sought to replace the kleftarmatolic structure of guerrilla units with a regular Greek army based on the European model of the day. A negative campaign was launched to bury the reputation and claims to legitimacy of bandits who sought to return to their pre-independence practices, for whom the new name issued by the Greek state was 'listés': a classical name for robbers, introduced with the clear

[7] Greece was proclaimed a sovereign monarchy by France, Britain, Russia and Bavaria in May 1832. Previously, the 1927 Treaty of London between Britain, France and Russia, had created an autonomous, but not sovereign, Greek state (Clogg, 1986).

intention of making a distinction between those designated dishonourable bandits and the now-venerated kleftarmatoles (Herzfeld, 1986; Koliopoulos, 1987).

It was neverthless again to bandits that the political elite soon turned for assistance in state-building. By the 1830s, only half of the soldiers in the new state's army were Greek, the remainder being German. After 1832, when the French, British and Russians installed the Bavarian King Otto in Greece, Greek forces had been disbanded. Few Greek irregulars were willing to be absorbed as regular regiments of the new state; many felt they had not been sufficiently rewarded for the part they had played during the war, and returned to banditry (Dakin, 1977; Clogg, 1986). Aiming to resolve continuing problems of lawlessness and the weakness of the official army, between 1849 and 1851, all bandit leaders were given amnesties and reinstated into the Greek army (Koliopoulos, 1987).

When the Greek state began to seek expansion in the 1850s and 60s, moreover, it was compelled to solicit the assistance of bandits once more, since Britain and France would not permit Greece to use her regular armed forces in actions directed against the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire (Koliopoulos, 1987). Greek irredentist sentiment was founded on the guiding principle, known as the 'Megali Idea', that the state should seek to expand to embrace Greeks still living within the Ottoman Empire. Thus it was, for example, that when nationalist uprisings began to stir on the island of Crete in 1866 against Ottoman rule, groups of bandits were shipped out en masse from Greece to provide support, with some observers of the time comparing the transit to the export of a penal colony. Sending outlaws from the Agrapha region to help the insurgents in Crete also had the additional benefit for the Greek state of dissipating tensions that had been building in the former (Koliopoulos, 1999).

Continuing tensions in the relationship between the Greek state and bandits came under the international spotlight in 1870, however, when a group of upper class Englishmen were kidnapped and eventually killed in Greece by a band of brigands, in an episode known as the Dilessi/Marathon Affair. At the time, British officials and commentators raged that Greece's position as member of the 'civilised' world of nations was in question as a result (see Tzanelli, 1992). Influential Greeks (most notably Gennadios, 1870, who wrote his account in English in order to address a British audience) were keen to distanciate the country from the bandits, arguing that most of the bandits had in fact been nomadic shephards of Slav rather than Greek in origin, and that Greece was a victim of attacks by such groups (see further Koliopoulos, 1996; Tzanelli, 1992). As exposed by the Athens correspondent of the British national newspaper *The Times* in an article of 3 June 1870 (cited in Tzanelli, 1992), however, a key member of the group that perpetrated the kidnap and murder – Takos Arvanitakis – was a brigand chief who had not only participated in King Otto's military invasions of Thessaly and Epirus during the Crimean War (1853-56), but had subsequently been employed by the Greek state to pursue brigands.

Many have since posed questions about the national identity of bandits who participated in either the consolitation or the formation of the modern Greek state's national borders, and, relatedly, their motivations and their latter worthiness of celebration as national heroes. Had their actions in the War of Independence really been motivated by commitment to a notion of Greek identity and a desire for freedom for Greeks, or by a desire for personal fortune, power and autonomy? The elusiveness of simple answers stems in part from the fact that bandit identity and behaviour were characteristically diverse. Regional and local boundaries may have defined bandit groups, but cross-border migration was common, and even as the War of Independence was launched, the very concept of the Greek nation was present in only a very rudimentary state amongst those living in the Greek space (Clogg, 1986).

For some critical observers, the prime motivations of the kapetanioi and their men appeared to be personal gratification and power, their utmost loyalty to the local rather than to the national, their prioritisation of their own autonomy even jeopardising at times the victory of the entire liberation struggle (Herzfeld, 1986). Evidence certainly mounted of the bandits' mercenary approach to the struggle, and the limits of their attachment to the Greek cause. As the fighting raged, the reputation of the armed formations was severely damaged by news of their brutality and plundering of all – whether Greek or Turk, villages or monasteries – that fell into their hands (Dakin, 1977; Clogg, 1986; Gallant, 1988).[8] Amongst both the prominent philellenic community abroad and nationalists within the Greek space, many were disheartened by the unreliability, self-indulgence and self-interested manoeuvrings of various armed groups.

Throughout the war, kapetanioi had frequently attempted to demonstrate their indispensability to it by withdrawing their troops during critical points in their campaign (Makriyannis, 1966). Most of the famous kleftarmatoles also made truces with the Turks. Georgios Varnachiotis, the first armatole to raise the revolt in western Greece, surrendered to the Turks after the fall of Souli and was proclaimed a traitor (see Lidderdale in Makriyannis, 1966: 267-234). Gogos Bakolas, a former armatole who had worked for the Ottoman provincial governor, surrendered to the Turks after fighting for liberation, but returned to action in 1828 and managed to regain his reputation. Most well-known is the case of Odysseus Androutsos, whose figure continues to adorn posters in Greek schools and churches as a hero of the struggle (Herzfeld, 1986). Androutsos was a kapetanios who became Commander-in-Chief of Western Greece, but made numerous agreements with the Turks,

[8] Indeed, raids by klefts on Orthodox Christian monasteries during the War of Indepdendence was nothing new; on similar past practices (see, e.g., Cayli, 2017).

and later surrendered to Greek forces, who imprisoned him.[9] As late as the 1880s, bandits were still seeking employment with the Ottomans for armatolic positions and modifying their behaviour accordingly. And banditry continued unabated right up until the 1920s and 1930s, despite the best efforts of the country's gendarmerie, thanks in no small part to the self-interested dispensing of patronage and protection by select Greek politicians (Close, 1995; Koliopoulos, 1999).

The wide array of evidence pointing to the importance of economic motivations in shaping kleftarmatolic actions appears to put pay to any notion of them simply being rebels driven by a commitment to a broader collective good. It is nevertheless important to acknowledge that negative concurrent and retrospective assessments concerning the brutality displayed by the irregulars in the war do not detract from the reality that such violence was more a reflection of, rather than an abbertation from, conflict practices of the time (Gallant, 1988). Despite swapping sides and withholding support, moreover, bandit forces still contributed a vital force that, along with the decline of Ottoman authority and the intervention of the British, French and Russians, made the revolution and construction of the Greek state possible (Mouzelis, 1978; Clogg, 1986). Even before the outbreak of the War of Independence, as Cayli (2019) has underscored, both political and non-political violence perpetrated by bandits played a vital role in combination with one another to heighten the strains on the Ottoman Porte of imposing rule in the region.

It is also important to recognise that bandits did substantively contribute more than simply brute force during Greece's struggle for independence. This point is best illustrated by juxtaposition with the other political groupings within the Greek space that played a key role in the establishment of the modern state; the Church elite and the Filiki Etairia. The primates of the Orthodox Church had

[9] Similarly, although most pirates provided invaluable support to the revolution, especially by forming blockades, many also sided alternately with the Greeks and the Turks, took advantage of co-operation with authorities to plunder for themselves, and a few even joined the Turkish Navy (Rhodakis, 1999a; Pantazopoulos, 1990).

run a senate in the Peloponnese region in the pre-independence period and formed a party that included the kotsabasides and politicians from the wealthy and influential Greek Phanariot class, a group linked by prior practices of privileged accomodation with Ottoman rule. The Filiki Etairia, meanwhile, was formed by Western-educated and Enlightment-influenced members of the Greek diaspora, who provided leadership and helped to raise funds and sympathy for the Greek cause in France, Britain and Russia (Mouzelis, 1978).

The elitism of the Filiki Etairea and of the party of the Church bound them together to form what amounted to a significant lobby for the adoption of western approaches to political development, both conceptually (the generation of nationalism) and organisationally (the imitation of Western models in designing the administrative structure of the new state). Their experience of what it was to be 'Greek' was arguably far further from that of the kleftarmatoles than that of the average peasant, notwithstanding the difficulties of asserting a distinct Greek identity in this period. Indeed, this disconnect manifests in the provisional constitution drawn up in 1821 by the first National Assembly, which is directed more to the ideals of enlightened European opinion than representing the values of the majority living within the new Greek state. The proposal made by the Filiki Etairea in the second National Assembly for the establishment of an oligarchy equally reflected the concerns of the elites they represented.

The kapetanioi, by contrast, defeated the proposal, calling by contrast for a constitutional democracy, with a view to maximising local independence (Rhodakis, 1999b; see also Dakin, 1977). The kleftarmatoles thus did have some conception of the type of autonomous local governance they were hoping to achieve, which challenges accounts that have emphasised their inconstancy and self-interest. As Herzfeld (1985) has suggested, critical scholarly assessment of the kleftarmatoles and their motivations have tended to be heavily reliant on pro-statist, Western-

oriented assumptions of the path to modernity that Greece needed to take. Though the need for cohesion and submission to a Greek central authority was well understood and acknowledged by some for the sake of the Greek cause, it does not follow that it was obvious to them that in fighting for liberation from the Turks they were heralding a period of less freedom for themselves (as their authority would be reduced under a sovereign Greek state), in which they would be expected to permanently and unconditionally surrender their autonomous use of armed force (see indicative discussion in Makriyannis, 1966). It is worth bearing in mind in this regard that in the period immediately preceding the outbreak of the revolution, the armatoles had been under tremendous pressure from, respectively, the brigand-turned-Ottoman Governor of Yannina, Ali Pasha, to weed out the kleftes, and from the Turks to fight against Ali Pasha or withdraw from conflict, as well as to defend their holdings from both parties (see further Rhodakis, 1999b).

The legendary armatole General Makriyiannis, whose memoirs have become an iconic contemporaneous source (uniquely amongst kleftarmatolic leaders, he learned to read and write with the express purpose of recording the trajectory of the independence struggle for posterity), certainly blasted kleftarmatolic leaders such as the renowned General Kolokotronis for not submitting totally to the Greek cause and to the centralised administration of the struggle. Yet Makriyannis himself proved to be only a conditional ally of the new state, who ultimately could not countenance giving what he saw as factional and self-serving leaders the unquestioning support they demanded, and was imprisoned as a result (Makriyannis, 1966; see also Lidderdale in Makriyannis).

In addition, despite widespread depictions of bandits as ‘lone wolves’ (representations that kleftarmatoles themselves embraced and promoted), and critiques that abound on their related lack of genuine ties to any particular class or land, they were in fact deeply bound in social relationships.

As Gallant (1988) has shown, kelftarmatolic bands were composed largely of extended kin groups. Remarkably, all the major Greek bandit groups of the pre-revolutionary era were referred to by the names of the families that formed each of their cores (see also Barkey, 1994; Koliopoulos, 1999). Equally, the factors influencing the behaviour of bandits were the same as those operating on all peasant families. Tensions that existed between bandit groups and other peasants were likely to have been aggravated by similar factors on the mainlaind as have been identified in relation to bandit-peasant populations in Crete and Cyprus, for instance; namely, conflicting interests between them stemming from their different occupations as pastoralists and agriculturalists (Bryant, 2003).

Bandit Heroes: Transhistorical appeal and contested inheritance

Whether or not the enduring reputations of bandits as nationalist heroes of the revolution were sufficiently merited, their deeds were fused into a sanitised and romantic whole by re-interpretations that enabled them to be woven into the centre of a new national consciousness. The political debts and compromises incurred by the modern Greek state in its establishment led to the idealisation and glorification of each of the principal Greek actors and their role in contributing to independence (Clogg, 1986). The years that followed the establishment of the Greek state were suffused with what became known as ‘laographia’: the purposeful re-shaping of literature and art in order to construct an attractive and persuasive story about the ‘imagined community’ of Greeks who had established the new state. Such a story effectively necessitated a complimentary re-telling of the parts played by the Church and of the Filiki Etairia as well as of the kleftarmatoles, and a downplaying of the rifts that had plagued them. The slogan of rebellious Balkan bandits, ‘Freedom or Death,’ was incorporated into the Greek state’s rallying national anthem, the ‘Hymn to Liberty’. National school curricula emphasised the contribution of bandits as heroes in the gradual development of the independence movement, and have continued to celebrate them. Their images

and names became ubiquitous, from the designation of streets, to their portraits in public buildings. Even Greek Orthodox sites of workship, such as the Agia Sophia Cathedral in London, have had gilted portraits of kleftarmatolic leaders of the revolution on permanent display.

Paradoxically, however, the very strength and fidelity of official advertising of the bandit-rebel-hero ideal has also provided a reliable stream of inspiration and justification to anti-state traditions in the country. The priviledging of romanticised bandit history in Greek national consciousness points to a contradiction at its core, and towards a jeopardy for the modern state whose foundational myth relies on the idealisation of outlaws battling official authority. As with all components of political culture, that related to the romanticisation of banditry has of course experienced its own share of ebbs and flows in modern Greek cultural discourse. Though the physical realities of the world of bandits are no longer present nor imagined in Greece, as Koliopoulos and Veremis have attested, there has nevertheless been a constancy to popular attraction to the mythologised qualities and actions of the bandit-heroes, fed by a diet of promotion by official bodies across the generations (Koliopoulos and Veremis, 2002).

The attraction of the mythologised attributes of the bandit have been a source of explanation and legitimacy as well as an influence in the construction of social behaviour. That element of Greek national sentimentality over the brandishing of individual and group autonomy and identity, as encapsulated in the bandit-rebel type, over adherence and affiliation to the rules dictated by the common good, may be considered a reflection of such bandit-rebel values that have acted as a contributory factor to the longstanding and widespread cynicism that has been recorded about the value of obeying the law (see, e.g., Hirschon, 2000, 1992; Triandis et al., 1972; Triandis and Vassiliou, 1972). In practical terms, this has been demonstrated, for example, by the tenacious commitment to the illegal ownership and use of light weapons evident in some regions, in the

lengthy history of commonplace tax avoidance in the country, and the widespread perception that the state remains a source of funding to be exploited by whichever political party and their extended network of clientelist relations succeds in winning its control (see further Xenakis, 2013). The legitimacy of the bandit concept is thereby translated into a modern relativism towards crime, a perspective which the Greek state has given unremmiting fuel by perpetuating the mythologised bandit as a foundational element of the nation's birth.

Thus, it is to this extent of little surprise that the explicit featuring of mythologised bandit traditions in state discourse has been found replicated in the ideology and symbolism of anti-state groups in Greece, with the evident intention of benefitting from the aura of sanctified political legitimacy which envelops the bandit trope. Various political groups sharing nationalist goals, both those acting as proxies of state authority and those defying it, have sought to establish the kleftarmatoles as their own authentic political lineage, as a means by which they can persuade the broader public of their legitimacy as political actors.

Notably, during the Second World War, the Greek partisan movement, which similarly took cover in the country's mountainous regions, often invoked kleftic history and folklore. When the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS) toured villages pitching for support and recruits, its leader, Aris Velouchiotis, would speak of the way in which the guerrillas ('andartes') belonged to the long tradition of Greece's struggle for independence, encouraging young men to think of becoming an andarte as a chance to emulate the heroes of the 1820s. Of those who did, many chose as their nom de guerre names of heroes of the War of Independence, examples including kapetans 'Androutsos' and 'Karaiskakis', and even a 'Kolokotronis'. As Mazower (1993) writes, these had already been household names for generations of schoolchildren, and many andartes were recorded as having

framed their experiences in the resistance as a resurrection of the spirit of ’21 (Mazower, 1993: 310-11; see also Eudes, 1972; Papakonstantinou, 1985).

Emulation had its limits, however: the andartes were keen to distinguish themselves from bandits, not least because the early 1940s was a period in which banditry involving sheep stealing and other forms of theft was on the rise in rural areas. Although it did not always succeed, the ELAS leadership sought by contrast to maintain strict discipline amongst the andartes, and to redistribute plundered goods to villages when this was feasible (Eudes, 1972; Mazower, 1993). Ultimately, as illustrated by the derogative use of the term ‘bandits’ by the Germans’ and British to refer to the andartes, negative connotations of banditry were still very much present too, and the andartes were clearly alert to the need to push back against the association (ibid).

The Second World War was immediately followed by civil war, after which ensued decades of anti-communist rule, including a military dictatorship between 1967-74. When, in the mid-70s, the Right loosened its grip on the country, and left-wing groupings were finally allowed to participate legally as a more liberal democracy emerged, the rise to power of the socialist PASOK party brought with it a national rehabilitation of the memory and reputation of the Greek partisans. PASOK used this thawing of older politico-cultural tropes to make romantic connections between their defiant stance towards the US and the bandit-rebel resistance of yore (see, e.g., Papandreou, 2014). But, as the country began to witness a growth in anarchist and far-Leftist urban guerrilla attacks against Rightists associated with the former dictatorship and their allies, the efforts of the state and media to expose those responsible gave rise to concerns amongst the broader Left that former partisans were once again being targeted for repression, and that disparate actors across the state apparatus and media complex with affiliations to the dictatorship were trying to discredit the entire anti-dictatorship struggle in so doing (see, e.g., Kastriotis, 2002; Moulopoulos, 2002).

The early 2000s saw the klephtarmatolic legacy once again come to the very fore of public debate during the 2003 trial of members of the Greek leftist urban guerilla group November 17 (N17), whose political outlook had clearly been deeply shaped by a shared perspective of the enduring lessons of the Greek War of Independence. The group operated without capture for a remarkable 27 years, during which time it killed 23 people (of Greek, US and British origin) perpetrated numerous bomb attacks on symbolic official and corporate targets, and carried out several bank robberies (see further Brady Kiesling, 2014). At the trial, the accused described their activities in the post-dictatorship era as continuations of preceding liberationist activities in the country.

One member of N17 who was convicted as such during the trial, Christodoulos Xiros, drew on the genesis of the Greek state in his statement to the Court, likening his prosecutors to the 'mercenary' magistrates who had condemned to death two leading kelftarmatolic heroes of the Greek War of Independence, Generals Kolokotronis and Plapoutas. Xiros relayed how these magistrates had stripped authority from two colleagues who refused to sign false accusations that had been drafted by the English Prosecutor Manson against the accused in conjunction with the Bavarian authorities then running Greece (court statement of 30 July 2003 reproduced in *Ta Nea*, 31 July 2003). Xiros drew a parallel between the betrayal of the Greek magistrates for the sake of foreign interests in the 1800s, on the one hand, and the Greek government's establishment of a special legal procedure to try N17 under pressure and guidance of the United States and Britain, including by exempting 190 of 220 eligible judges from trying the case (Gilson, 2003). For Xiros, Turkish domination and military dictatorship had been overcome, but Greece was now under the sway of the US and its independence was at best weak, at worst insignificant, legitimating the resumption of guerilla

action.[10] Xiros' high estimation of claiming lineage to kleftarmatolic heroes was once again in full public view just over a decade later, following a jail break, when he issued a video statement in which he appeared with pictures of Kolokotronis and Karaiskakis on prominent display behind him (reproduced and reported on by *I Avgi*, 20 January 2014).

In an interview, another member of N17, Alexander Yiotopoulos, also drew on kleftic history to defend the group's decision to take up arms, arguing that – as demonstrated by the cases of the klefts during the struggle for independence, and the partisans during the Second World War – it was to be expected that official recognition for resistance fighters would only ever be awarded retrospectively. And Dimitris Koufodinas, N17's head of operations, during his trial also compared the group's mission to that of the kleftarmatoles who had defeated the Ottomans and won liberty for Greece (*CBS News*, 3 March 2003), even whilst denying that he was asserting an equivalence between himself and Kolokotronis: "In no way do I place my self beside Kolokotronis […]. We cannot place the small with the large" (cited in *MNA News*, 14 March 2003).

In an irony that was similarly evocative of long-term historical precedent, members of the PASOK government overseeing the trials themselves declared the accused to be simply bandits and criminals, who deserved to be tried as organised criminals rather than as politically-motivated outlaws, thereby triggering the potential for far harsher punishment (see further Xenakis, 2004). But although the trial showed that N17 had committed robberies to support their revolutionary activities, and managed to sweep away many of the myths that had surrounded the organisation that had eluded capture for 27 years, the fact that the members lived neither ostentatiously, nor were particularly wealthy, weakened the picture that the Greek state attempted to paint of them as

[10] N17 head of operations, Dimitris Koufodinas, also made this argument in his statement to the court, reprinted in *Ta Νέα* [Ta Nea], 25 July 2003.

criminals whose lofty principles were only a mask to their material motivations (see, e.g. indicative media summaries of the public mood by Gilson, 2 August 2002; Smith, 14 July 2002).

According to some mainstream coverage of the trial at the time, widespread sentimentality towards the bandit-rebel trope in Greek national identity had allowed a mental connection to be made in public consciousness between urban guerrilla groups such as N17 and the kleftarmatoles. Though the actions of N17 did provoke public horror, there were also reported reactions amongst the public of awe and wonder at their audacity, and a degree of sympathy towards the group's own framing of its actions as a noble struggle (see critical discussion by the prominent journalist Pretenderi, 2001). Until the arrest and trial of N17 members, only a very small proportion of the Greek public considered terrorism to be a real threat in Greece, and according to a survey carried in 2002, one in four people supported the positions of the group (Gilson, 25 July 2003*; Eleftherotypia*, 19 April 2002). According to a Eurobarometer survey of 2 October – 8 November 2004, the percentage of Greeks concerned about terrorism stood at 2%, far lower than the European average of 16% (*Eleftherotypia*, 15 February 2005). Whilst the context and modus operandi of N17 were clearly as different from those of klefticarmatolic bandits as they were from those of partisans of the Second World War, the group's doctrine was easily comprehensible and remarkably uncontroversial for the Greek public to hear, precisely because of its connections to a deeply entrenched national discourse mythologising bandit activity.

Taking the Long View of Bandit-State Relations

This paper has identified several contributions that can be derived from taking a long view of bandit-state relations. In Greece, notwithstanding peaks and troughs in its resonance over time, the utility of the bandit-rebel trope has stretched far beyond its initial function as an anchor for national

identity and state legitimacy after imperial rule, to serve as a foundational story by other actors seeking to justify their authority-defying actions. Both strategic and sentimental attachment to the bandit-rebel idea may have experienced fluctuation, but such attachment has also demonstrated remarkable persistence in social and political discourse, and is key to explaining the extent and depth of contention that has repeatedly surfaced over the Greek state's treatment of political outlaws.

As nevertheless underscored by the examples considered in this paper – bandity and the original kleftarmatoles of the 1800s, and their explicit political resonance for armed anti-state groups in subsequent generations – deployment of the bandit-rebel trope has been far from uncomplicated for either outlaws or for the state itself. Outlaws, repeatedly enticed into self-association with the trope, have faced accusations of banditry or of organised crime by the state as it has sought counteract such usage. Equally, the state has faced its own jeopardy in adopting a bandit-rebel trope as foundational to the nation's identity. As this long historical perspective has served to illustrate, the modern Greek state's decision not only to incorporate but to also subsequently foreground and rigorously promote the bandit-rebel trope has not always functioned to shore up the state's legitimacy. Rather, the reverse has been true, insofar as the trope has repeatedly given ideological nourishment and facilitated subequent groups of outlaws staking their own claims to legitimacy.

More generally, whilst bandit-state relations have attracted a wealth of scholarship, this paper has sought to demonstate that there nevertheless remains scope for new understandings and insights in this area by extending typical frames of analysis, both in terms of periodisation and in terms of the outlaws under scrutiny, in this case revealing the remarkably long political reverberations of the bandit-rebel trope across time and space. Indeed, this finding in itself suggests that a long historical approach is necessary to fully appraise the political significance of bandit-state relations, and

without it, a significant dimension of the enduring potency of bandit-state relations risks being missed.

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