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Studies

CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION

TERRORISM FUNDING AND ANCIENT ARTIFACTS, PARTNERSHIP FOR PROFIT

Abstract: My work aims at encouraging the interdisciplinary or “bridge-building” approach of different academic disciplines. Experts in Security Studies, Political Science, History, Archaeology, naming just a few, need to cooperate, to corroborate and to collaborate in order to preserve, defend and recover, ancient artifacts and cultural heritage, from the sticky hands of artifacts smugglers and terrorist funders. Who thought about the fact that a bomb that kills people in various parts of the world, was funded by illicit art and artifact smuggling? The world is getting inter-connected, we have pluses, but we also have minuses. We have advantages but we also have disadvantages. But, most important, we have more responsibilities. Who is investing in education is investing in future, the one that does not know the past, is forced to repeat it. The one that has respect for the previous generations of humans, no matter the area, protects their heritage. It is easier to destroy than it is to repair and to build. Ancient artifacts are a honey trap for terrorists. The global heritage that escapes from destruction, process that takes place because of radicalization and in the name of the modern Islamic heritage, is getting lost on various trade routes, in the global name of profit, the common language of terrorist organizations. They say that ideas and ideals are bulletproof, but in order to have the bulletproof vest, you need to buy it, and this is the moment when, and the reason why, illegal smuggling of ancient artifacts takes place.

Keywords: *Terrorism, Smuggled Artifacts, Terrorism funding, Insecurity, Non-state actors.*

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ISIS AND TERRORISM FUNDING

In Iraq, security concerns fuel illegal antiquities trade. Want to buy a Sumerian tablet, over 3,000 years old, listed as the property of a gentleman in Sussex, England, and passed down as a family heirloom? On the auction site liveauctioneers.com, the “battle” for the “Sumerian clay tablet” starts at £550 (\$750). The object weighs just 70 grams (2.5 ounces), but bears traces of cuneiform writing, the oldest recorded in the world, and is listed as the property of a gentleman in West Sussex, UK. This specimen is accompanied by expertly produced provenance letters. However, the ownership history of such objects can be more difficult to prove. They may not have been passed down through inheritance but through smugglers and middlemen. The exploitation of looted antiquities is a real problem in Iraq, where corruption is widespread and archaeological sites are poorly protected. In the case of some artefacts, it can be hard to prove that they were not in fact stolen from the lands that once held the Sumerian empire in the 4th millennium BC. Chris Wren of the British firm. TimeLine Auctions, the parent company of liveauctioneers.com, says they are aware of the possibility

that looted, black-market traded, or other stolen materials could end up on the market. The Sumerians, Assyrians and Babylonians all trod on the ancient land that is now called Iraq, and that makes it a favorite smugglers' ground. The region abounds with archaeological sites where smugglers engage in "exhumations" and random excavations, said Laith Majid Hussein, director of the Iraqi State Council for Antiquities and Heritage. "We don't have statistics on the number of antiquities that end up being smuggled," Majid said. Corruption and the prevalence of armed groups have encouraged the growth of this lucrative business. At a site in southern Iraq, where Sumerian and Babylonian civilizations flourished, a security guard described the challenges they face. One day, I saw a truck arrive with three armed men. They started digging, and when I intervened, they started shooting in the air and shouting at me: Do you think this place is yours?" said the guard, who asked not to be named to protect himself and the site's location. The lack of resources to protect ancient sites in Iraq is dire. In a country where an estimated 27% of its 40 million citizens live below the poverty line, authorities say they have other priorities. Iraq's ancient sites are concentrated in the south around the Kut, Samawa and Nasiriyah areas. From there, smugglers transport their loot to the marshes in the south and to Amara, a city not far from Iran, which has become a hub for antiquities trafficking, according to an archaeologist who asked to remain anonymous. The stolen antiquities are then taken to Iran to cross the sea in fishing boats to Gulf countries. Alternatively, they may be smuggled overland through the western Iraqi desert, which borders Jordan, Syria and Turkey. An Iraqi government source said the money made from trafficking feeds criminal networks in a country where armed groups, some close to Iran, have grown in number and power. Corruption also plays a role in a country where government officials are poorly paid. Transparency International, the corruption watchdog, ranks Iraq 160th out of 180 countries in the extent of corruption. When the Islamic State (ISIS) group occupied large swathes of Iraqi territory between 2014 and 2017, jihadists used bulldozers, pickaxes and explosives to loot dozens of pre-Islamic sites and their treasures. Nimrud, a jewel of the Assyrian empire founded in the 13th century BC and located outside Mosul in the north of the country, was one such target. Jihadists have also engaged in smuggling, said a European security expert, speaking on condition of anonymity: "This has made them money, but it has affected Syria more. The group has done well from the trade in illegal antiquities, according to a 2020 report published by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, a Geneva-based organization. It said that in 2015, „of IS's annual revenues, estimated to be between US\$2.35 billion and US\$2.68 billion, antiquities trafficking and taxation (in the state) accounted for US\$20 million." Earlier this month, the United States returned to Iraq some 17,000 archaeological treasures dating back more than 4,000 years that had been looted in recent decades. Despite welcoming such measures, the Iraqi government source said it believed the problem lay with neighboring states complicit in the smuggling. The Iraqi state is weak, archaeological artefacts are not a priority. The cuneiform tablets from a lost city, Irisagrig, were returned to

Iraq after being confiscated from Hobby Lobby.¹

Iraq has, and not only from my point of view, old and well rooted ties with the illicit trade of ancient artifacts. As Annelies Pauwels also considers: "*The self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) recently shocked the world by destroying a number of archaeological sites throughout the region under its control, among which also the ancient Assyrian cities of Nineveh and Nimrud. Determined to impose its culture as the dominant one in the region, Daesh – the Arabic equivalent of ISIS – calls for the destruction of all cultural property referring to other religious groups, as well as Islamic artefacts they consider haram or forbidden in Islam, such as religious shrines and art depicting human faces. In reality, the trade in looted artefacts from Syria and Iraq to the rest of the world represents a major source of income for the terrorist group. Since the outbreak of the civil war in Syria, different groups involved in the conflict have been engaged in such activities in order to pay for their weapons. Supposedly, not only rebel groups but also Syrian regime soldiers took advantage of the trafficking in looted artefacts. In Iraq, the looting of archaeological sites was practiced before the current conflict. Both during the country's isolation after the first Gulf War and after the 2003 invasion, plundering and antiquities trafficking became a common source of income for insurgency groups. After they took over vast areas of northern and eastern Syria and Iraq, ISIS has become the major player in smuggling the region's cultural goods. Despite the fact that they did not start the practice of archaeological looting in both countries, ISIS is believed to have intensified and accelerated the pre-existing situation. In fact, the current looting in the region is estimated to be massive and has been referred to as "the worst-case scenario".*"² What can we underline from the rows cited before? We can clearly see that Daesh not only shocked the world by destroying cultural heritage represented by archaeological sites, ISIS also looted artifacts from Syria and Iraq, an act of hypocrisy, at least from my point of view. Bullets can be bought with dollars from looted artifacts and antiquities illegal trade, but the reason of their shooting must be religious and the enemy is haram, isn't this an irony and a illogical thing? A good practice is represented by the resolution 2199 (2015), adopted by the UN Security Council, which extends to Syria the prohibition of trade in cultural objects already in place for Iraq since 2003 under resolution 1483. In the following rows I will cite very important ideas: "*Cultural Heritage*

15. *Condemns the destruction of cultural heritage in Iraq and Syria particularly by ISIL and ANF, whether such destruction is incidental or deliberate, including targeted destruction of religious sites and objects;*

16. *Notes with concern that ISIL, ANF and other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida, are generating income from engaging directly or indirectly in the looting and smuggling of cultural heritage items from archaeological sites, museums, libraries, archives, and other sites in Iraq and Syria, which is being used to support their recruitment efforts and strengthen their operational capability to organize and carry out terrorist attacks;*

17. *Reaffirms its decision in paragraph 7 of resolution 1483 (2003) and decides that all Member States shall take*

¹ MOLDOVAN 2021.

² PAUWELS 2015.

appropriate steps to prevent the trade in Iraqi and Syrian cultural property and other items of archaeological, historical, cultural, rare scientific, and religious importance illegally removed from Iraq since 6 August 1990 and from Syria since 15 March 2011, including by prohibiting crossborder trade in such items, thereby allowing for their eventual safe return to the Iraqi and Syrian people and calls upon the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, Interpol, and other international organizations, as appropriate, to assist in the implementation of this paragraph".³ Sadly, the real level of involvement of Daesh in the antiquities trade and their *modus operandi* has not fully been established: "Nevertheless, Daesh is believed to play an active role in controlling the trade; not only are they in charge of the looting by providing permissions and levying taxes to looters, but they also monitor the finds and decide which objects are to be sold or destroyed. The useful objects are smuggled by intermediaries to the neighboring countries Turkey, Jordan and Iran through traditional smuggling routes. At this point, internationally connected antiquities dealers and collectors are thought to act as a link between the illicit and licit trade. A large number of artefacts supposedly end up in antiquities markets in Jordan, where they are being sold to tourists. Stolen antiquities from ancient Mesopotamia are being sold not only through antique dealers, but also through the Deep Web. Even certain auction houses have been reported to sell on the open markets illegal artefacts from ISIS controlled regions, accompanied by false documentation. Such antiquities appear to be particularly desired by private buyers in Europe and the United States, but also in the Gulf countries and China. In fact, many of the stolen artefacts end up in private buildings, where they are being exposed as a status symbol. However, it is also expected that a majority of the stolen cultural goods are being held in storage rooms for future sale at higher prices".⁴ We can clearly see that ISIS has a huge role, as a deep state, in the illegal and illicit antiquities trade process. ISIS is a non-state actor that is underestimated, and sadly, a lot of people think that it fully disappeared. Another interesting document that is emphasizing the dangers of the Trafficking in Cultural Property and Other Related Offences, is represented by the Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 18 December 2014, and I will illustrate some rows from the given Resolution: "Alarmed at the growing involvement of organized criminal groups in all forms and aspects of trafficking in cultural property and related offences, and observing that illicitly trafficked cultural property is increasingly being sold through all kinds of markets, inter alia, in auctions, in particular over the Internet, and that such property is being unlawfully excavated and illicitly exported or imported with the facilitation of modern and sophisticated technologies ... Guideline 16. States should consider criminalizing, as serious offences, acts such as:

- a. Trafficking in cultural property;
- b. Illicit export and illicit import of cultural property;
- c. Theft of cultural property (or consider elevating the offence of ordinary theft to a serious offence when it involves cultural property);
- d. Looting of archaeological and cultural sites and/or illicit excavation;

³ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2199 2015.

⁴ PAUWELS 2015.

- e. Conspiracy or participation in an organized criminal group for trafficking in cultural property and related offences;
- f. Laundering, as referred to in article 6 of the Organized Crime Convention, of trafficked cultural property. ...

Guideline 48. States should consider applying the Guidelines in any situations, including exceptional circumstances, that foster trafficking in cultural property and related offences, in the framework of the above-mentioned conventions and other relevant international instruments".⁵

In this chapter, we have seen the power of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, and its deep state policies. We can clearly see the need of a true partnership between: citizen - state institutions - legislation. This triad needs to be strengthened, in order to be more efficient. We must not forget the fact that terrorists manage illicit trade operations in ways that are similar with the methods used by transnational criminals, category of people with they often interact. In some respects, they also mirror the practices of legitimate business: they have diversified to many different products, seek effective supply chains, and manage supply chains in order to reduce risk and enhance the chance of delivery of their trade goods.⁶ We should take in consideration the words of Louise I. Shelley: "Curbing illicit trade by terrorists is not just the responsibility of government or law enforcement bodies. It requires a whole-of-society approach, including business, civil society, and researchers. Journalists are also key to understanding the complex networks that support crime, terrorism, and the trade that finances and facilitates their operations. Only when various members of society address the threat of illicit trade that funds terrorists and equips operations, is there a hope of stemming this activity. Society must be nimble, as terrorists will try to find new ways to exploit the new technical capacities that become available. Additionally, governments and society must ensure the resources needed by their citizens are provided, so that they do not turn to terrorists and criminals to have those needs met."⁷

As I have previously stated, we can clearly see the need of a true partnership between: citizen - state institutions - legislation. This triad needs to be strengthened, in order to be more efficient.

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION AGAINST ILLICIT ARTIFACTS TRADE, PARTNERSHIP AGAINST TERRORISM

In the fight against terrorism, detecting illicit sources of income and dismantling these sources, represents an important factor. Europol, as co-leader of actions that are aiming at fighting against illicit artifacts trade, plays a key role in implementing entire operations by facilitating information exchange, and providing analytical and operational support. The WCO also facilitates intelligence exchange among different agencies through a special user group created on its CENComm communication platform. INTERPOL connects Balkan and European participating

⁵ United Nations General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session Agenda item 105, 2015.

⁶ SHELLEY 2020.

⁷ SHELLEY 2020.

countries, facilitating the exchange of information through its secure communications system. Dedicated experts also support this kind of operations by double checking searches against stolen artifacts, in order to locate and identify stolen and missing items. Countries that participate at this kind of operations include: Albania, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxemburg, Malta, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom. In 2010 the European Union set up a four-year Policy Cycle to ensure greater continuity in the fight against serious international and organized crime. In 2017 the Council of the EU decided to continue the EU Policy Cycle for the 2018 - 2021 period. This Policy Cycle aims to tackle the most significant threats posed by organized and serious international crime to the EU. This is achieved by improving and strengthening cooperation between the relevant services of EU Member States, institutions and agencies, as well as non-EU countries and organizations, including the private sector where relevant. For example, despite constraints imposed by the COVID-19, the 2020 edition of the Pandora operation targeting the illicit trafficking of cultural goods has been the most successful to date with over 56 400 cultural goods seized. These objects include archaeological objects, furniture, coins, paintings, musical instruments and sculptures. Running between 1 June and 31 October 2020, this operation represented the involvement of customs and law enforcement authorities from 31 countries. During the operational phase, tens of thousands of checks and controls were carried out in various airports, ports, border crossing points, as well as in the auction houses, museums and private houses. As a result, more than 300 investigations were opened, and 67 individuals arrested. Given the global nature of this crime, operation coordination units working 24/7 were established by Europol on one side, and the World Customs Organization and INTERPOL on the other, to support the exchange of information as well as disseminate alerts, warnings and perform cross-checks in different international and national databases. This operation was led by the Spanish Civil Guard, with the international coordination supported by Europol, INTERPOL and the WCO. This operation was carried out in the framework of the European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT). From my point of view, the huge number of 27 300 archaeological artefacts that were seized as a result of a single investigation carried out by French Customs, represents a real success. A suspect was arrested, who now faces a prison sentence and a fine of several hundred thousands of euros. The Italian Carabinieri Corps reported more than 2 700 cultural goods seized including ceramics, archaeological goods, art and books valued at €1 155 000. The Hellenic Police carried out 34 arrests and recovered a total of 6 757 antiquities, including ceramic and marble objects, as well as 6 452 coins, 5 533 of which were recovered in one single investigation. In one case, two Greek nationals were arrested for trying to sell 6 marble and clay antiquities for €150 000. A total of 50 metal detectors were seized, and 6 of them were seized directly in archaeological

sites, clearly demonstrating that such sites are under threat. The number of metal detectors seized, tells a lot about the simple and cheap ways in which antiquities are looted. If you know the “playground”, you only need the tools. Within the framework of the Operation Pandora, the Dutch National Police organised a five-day cyber patrol week focusing on online markets. We can clearly see that even the Cyber-Space authorities helped a lot in this process. Law enforcement from 15 countries, with the support of Europol, INTERPOL and WCO, identified suspicious sales online, as a result of which 15 new investigations were opened.⁸ Another successful story.

In 2019, an international police operation involving over 350 police officers, supported by Europol (within the framework of EMPACT) and Eurojust, dismantled an international organised crime group involved in large-scale trafficking of looted archaeological items resulting in the arrest of 23 individuals, 80 house searches, and the seizure of around 10 000 cultural items. A real success story about the importance of cooperation. Operation Achei, was led by the Italian Carabinieri Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage supported by Europol and Eurojust, the French OCBC, the German Bavarian LKA, the Serbian Criminal Investigations Directorate and the British Metropolitan Police Service – London. The investigation began in 2017 to fight the looting of archaeological sites in Calabria, southern Italy where the cultural heritage includes important traces from the Greek and Roman period. The investigations revealed that the illegal excavations were managed by a well-structured organised crime group able to carry out all phases of the trafficking. The different rings of the network, led by two Calabrians living in the province of Crotona, included looters, fences, intermediaries and mules operating from different Italian regions. The key facilitators were also acting from Djion, Munich, London and Vršac coordinating the supply chain. The damage caused to the Italian cultural heritage by this criminal group is very significant as it the criminals were looting archaeological sites for many years. Europol Analysis Project FURTUM supported the investigation by coordinating the information exchange, holding several operational meetings, preparing the action day and providing on-the-spot analytical support in Italy to cross-check operational information against Europol’s databases. Eurojust supported the execution of the European Investigation Orders and arranged a coordination centre to follow the action in real-time.⁹ Common operational meetings and common information exchange, two elements that lead to success.

In 2021, More than 19,000 archaeological artefacts and other artworks have been recovered as part of a global operation spanning 103 countries and focusing on the dismantlement of international networks of art and antiquities traffickers. 101 suspects have been arrested, and 300 investigations opened as part of this coordinated crackdown. The criminal networks handled archaeological goods and artwork looted from war-stricken countries, as well as works stolen from museums and archaeological sites.

⁸ EUROPOL 2020.

⁹ EUROPOL 2019.

Seizures include coins from different periods, archaeological objects, ceramics, historical weapons, paintings and fossils. Facilitating objects, such as metal detectors were also seized. These results were achieved during the global Operation ATHENA II, led by the World Customs Organization (WCO) and INTERPOL, which was carried out in synchronization with the Europe-focused Operation PANDORA IV coordinated by the Spanish Civil Guard and Europol in the framework of EMPACT. Details of both Operations, which ran in the autumn of 2019, can only be released now due to operational reasons. Law enforcement officers paid particular attention to the monitoring of online marketplaces and sales sites, as the Internet is an important part of the illicit trade of cultural goods. During what was called a 'cyber patrol week' and under the leadership of the Italian Carabinieri, police and customs experts along with Europol, INTERPOL and the WCO mapped active targets and developed intelligence packages. As a result, 8,670 cultural objects for online sale were seized. This represents 28% of the total number of artefacts recovered during this international crackdown. Afghan Customs seized 971 cultural objects at Kabul airport just as the objects were about to depart for Istanbul, Turkey. The Spanish National Police, working together with the Colombian Police (Policia Nacional de Colombia), recovered at Barajas airport in Madrid some very rare pre-Columbian objects illegally acquired through looting in Colombia, including a unique Tumaco gold mask and several gold figurines and items of ancient jewellery. Three traffickers were arrested in Spain, and the Colombian authorities carried out house searches in Bogota, resulting in the seizure of a further 242 pre-Columbian objects, the largest ever seizure in the country's history. The investigation of a single case of online sale led to the seizure of 2,500 ancient coins by the Argentinian Federal Police Force, the largest seizure for this category of items, while the second largest seizure was made by Latvian State Police for a total of 1,375 coins. Six European Police forces reported the seizure of a hundred and eight metal detectors, demonstrating that looting in Europe is still an ongoing business. This is the second time that Europol, INTERPOL and the WCO have joined forces to tackle the illicit trade in cultural heritage. Given the global nature of this crackdown, a 24-hour Operational Coordination Unit (OCU) was run jointly by the WCO, INTERPOL and Europol. In addition to assisting with information exchanges and issuing alerts, the OCU also carried out checks against various international and national databases, such as INTERPOL's database on Stolen Works of Art and Europol's European Information System.¹⁰ As we can see, ancient artifacts are like a honeypot for criminals.

Also in 2021, An international crime gang that ransacked ancient sites in Bulgaria and trafficked stolen archaeological goods whose total worth exceeds several millions of euros has been broken up as a result of an international police operation coordinated by Europol. 8 individuals were arrested, and some 4,600 archaeological items were recovered as a result of this sting. Nicknamed Operation MEDICUS, this effort was led by the General

¹⁰ EUROPOL 2021 a. Operation ATHENA II.

Directorate for the Fight against Organised Crime of the Bulgarian Ministry of Internal Affairs together with the British Metropolitan Police and the German State Criminal Police of Bavaria. Europol supported the investigation by coordinating the information exchange and holding several operational meetings to prepare for the action day. 5 suspects were arrested in Bulgaria, and 3 in the United Kingdom (UK) as they entered the UK with a significant quantity of archaeological material concealed within a hide in their vehicle. This operation dates back to October of last year, the details of which can only be released now due to operational reasons. The investigation which led to these arrests dates back to March 2018 when the Bulgarian police, after being informed by their British counterpart, began looking into this suspicious trafficking of cultural goods out of their country. Among the trafficked items were ceramics, glass funeral urns, lamps, arrowheads, spears and ancient coins. Most of the seized items date back to the Roman period and come from military camps once located in Northern Bulgaria. Furthermore, some other artefacts belong to Bronze Age, early Iron Age, Middle Ages and Ottoman period. The illegally excavated archaeological goods were brought out of Bulgaria and smuggled into the UK by means of private transport operators. Germany was their preferred transit country. This case confirms that the most common way to dispose of archaeological goods illegally excavated is by entering the legitimate art market. This modus operandi takes advantage of the fact that the existence of these goods is not officially known, therefore their illicit origin can be hidden by providing them with a false back story (fake documents of provenance).¹¹ The very last phrase of this paragraph tells us all.

Another important operation is represented by Customs and other law enforcement authorities from 29 countries, coordinated by the Spanish Civil Guard and supported by Europol, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization (WCO), have joined forces against the trafficking of cultural goods. During operation Pandora III, law enforcement authorities assigned thousands of Police and Customs officers to focus on online market and key hot spots, with the aim of disrupting the activities of criminal groups involved in this form of trafficking. In total, 59 individuals were arrested and over 18 000 cultural goods seized, including archaeological items, furniture, coins, paintings, musical instruments and sculptures. During the checks, objects that may facilitate the trafficking of cultural goods, such as metal detectors were also seized. Most of the objects seized during the operation were from European countries; however, more than 30 objects originated in countries outside Europe such as Colombia, Egypt, Iraq and Morocco. Fighting the illicit trafficking of cultural goods online is a key challenge. Criminal groups take advantage of digital platforms such as websites, social media and instant messaging apps to sell cultural artefacts of unlawful provenance. Within the framework of operation Pandora III, a cyber patrol week was organised by the Dutch Police as part of a multi-disciplinary law enforcement initiative: twenty-six experts from 21 countries, Europol, INTERPOL and WCO

¹¹ EUROPOL 2021 b. OPERATION MEDICUS.

mapped active targets and developed intelligence packages. In total, 169 suspicious websites were targeted, resulting in the seizure of 682 objects. Between 22 and 30 October 2018, the 29 participating countries carried out numerous checks: inspections in auction houses, art galleries, museums and private houses, resulting in 49 arrests and 67 administrative sanctions, controls at ports, airports and border crossing points, resulting in four arrests, three administrative sanctions and 201 cultural goods seized; inspections at hot spots (i.e. archaeological sites), leading to six arrests, 49 administrative sanctions and 909 cultural goods seized. Around 10 000 archaeological artefacts were seized as a result of a single successful investigation carried out by the Spanish Civil Guard; 91 ceramic objects and 109 ancient coins were seized by the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in private premises and mail centers. In a single investigation, 419 cultural objects were seized by Polish Police (Policja); Dutch Police spotted a 15th-century bible that had been stolen in Germany over 25 years ago. This rare edition was seized and returned to Germany; Romanian Police (Poliția Română) seized 128 pieces of ancient Roman military personal equipment, 134 pieces of antique ceramics and 189 coins (from the Hellenistic, Roman Republican and Roman Imperial periods) which had been stolen from archaeological sites; German Customs seized an ancient Mesopotamian crystal cylinder seal that had been shipped to Germany by post. The investigation is ongoing.¹²

In this article, we have seen international coordination against illicit artifacts trade, a real partnership against terrorism. Ideas and ideals are bulletproof, but it is hard for criminal minds to think and to act, on an empty stomach and with a sore throat. Therefore, we need to focus our attention and efforts on prevention and deterrence. If we invest in education, we will have excellent results. We also need to take in consideration the penitentiary education system.

PILLAGE OF CULTURAL SITES AND CULTURAL GENOCIDE

In today's so called modern world, the pillage of cultural sites and the horrible cultural genocide that takes place, demonstrate us the need for a change, and when I write change, I think about a good one, a positive one for us and for our descendants. *"Cultural genocide is the systematic destruction of traditions, values, language, and other elements that make one group of people distinct from another. Cultural genocide remains a recurrent topic, appearing not only in the form of wide-ranging claims about the commission of cultural genocide in diverse contexts but also in the legal sphere, as exemplified by the discussions before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and also the drafting of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. These discussions have, however, displayed the lack of a uniform understanding of the concept of cultural genocide and thus of the role that international law is expected to fulfil in this regard"*.¹³ Modern international law has prohibited the deliberate seizure, destruction or damaging of cultural property from the first codifications of the laws and customs

¹² EUROPOL 2021 c. OPERATION PANDORA III.

¹³ NOVIC 2016.

of war in the nineteenth century, this is the beginning of awareness creating. These earliest efforts made clear that although cultural and religious sites and monuments, and works of art and science, may be bounded to the territory of a state, they attracted international protection because of their importance to all humanity, such acts constituted war crimes, and perpetrators of such acts would be held to account. These basic tenets have been reiterated repeatedly in successive multilateral instruments for over 150 years.¹⁴ *"From the deliberate destruction of the monumental Buddhas in Bamiyan, Afghanistan by the Taliban in 2001 to the systematic and intentional destruction of successive World Heritage sites in Syria and Iraq in 2014-2015, the motivation for such acts by the perpetrators has evolved beyond solely demoralizing the local populace of the territory where the sites are located. The digital age, and the Internet and social media with it, has proliferated and globalized the propaganda potential of such acts of destruction of cultural heritage. Often the monuments, sites and shrines are not directly related to the cultural and religious practices of present-day inhabitants; instead, they are evidence of the multi-layered history and diversity of these sites. It is this cultural and religious diversity which the perpetrators find abhorrent and seek to expunge through such acts. The recording of these acts of destruction and their circulation on social and traditional media is designed to demoralize not only the local populace but the international community as a whole. Accordingly, the acknowledged universal importance of these sites and monuments to all humanity has increasingly elicited a coordinated response by intergovernmental organizations like the United Nations and its agencies, including UNESCO, to hold the perpetrators to account."*¹⁵ As we can see, an often neglected but fundamentally important victim of conflict is the physical manifestations of a community, a people, a nation, and implicit, their heritage.

CONCLUSIONS

During the pages of my work, we have seen that there is a huge need for an interdisciplinary or "bridge-building" approach of different academic disciplines. Experts in Security Studies, Political Science, History, Archaeology, naming just a few, need to cooperate, to corroborate and to collaborate in order to preserve, defend and recover, ancient artifacts and cultural heritage, from the sticky hands of artifacts smugglers and terrorist funders. We discovered that Iraq has, and not only from my point of view, old and well rooted ties with the illicit trade of ancient artifacts, and we have seen how ISIS acts as a deep state. On the other hand, we discovered that in the fight against terrorism, detecting illicit sources of income and dismantling these sources, represents a crucial factor. We witnessed the importance of: Europol and INTERPOL. During the last pages, we have seen together that in today's so called modern world, the pillage of cultural sites and the horrible cultural genocide that takes place, demonstrate us the need for a change, and when I write change, I think about a good one, a good one for us and for our descendants. Who is investing in education is investing in future, the one that does not know the past, is

¹⁴ VRDOLJAK 2016.

¹⁵ VRDOLJAK 2016.

forced to repeat it. The one that has respect for the previous generations of humans, no matter the area, protects their heritage. We should bear in mind the fact that it is easier to destroy than it is to repair and to build. Ancient artifacts represent a honey trap for terrorists. The global heritage that escapes from destruction, process that takes place because of radicalization and in the name of the modern Islamic heritage, is getting lost on various trade routes, in the global name of profit, the common language of terrorist organizations. They say that ideas and ideals are bulletproof but, we have discovered that in order to have the bulletproof vest, you need to buy it, and this is the moment when, and the reason why, illegal smuggling of ancient artifacts takes place and exists.

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Annex IV

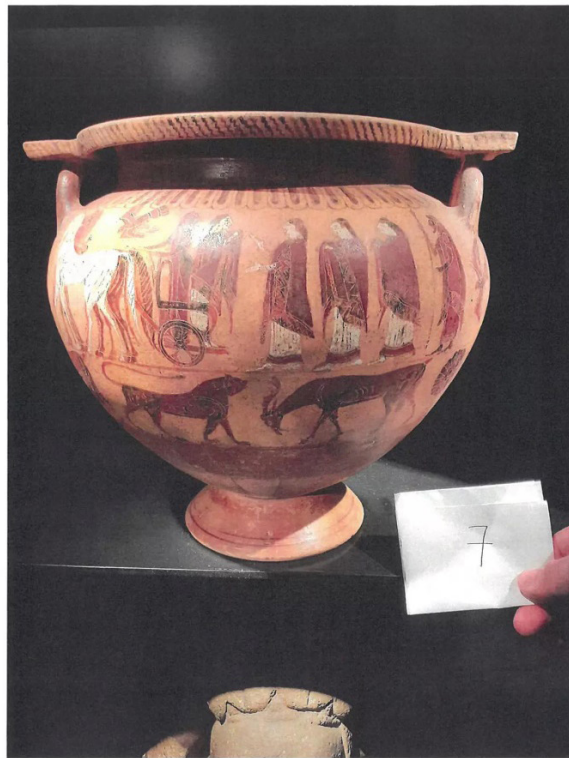


Fig. 1. The 2020 edition of the Pandora operation <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/over-56-400-cultural-goods-seized-and-67-arrests-in-action-involving-31-countries>



Fig. 2. The 2020 edition of the Pandora operation <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/over-56-400-cultural-goods-seized-and-67-arrests-in-action-involving-31-countries>



Fig. 3. The 2020 edition of the Pandora operation <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/over-56-400-cultural-goods-seized-and-67-arrests-in-action-involving-31-countries>



Fig. 4. Operation Achei <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/23-arrests-and-around-10-000-cultural-items-seized-in-operation-targeting-italian-archaeological-trafficking>



Fig. 5. Operation Achei <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/23-arrests-and-around-10-000-cultural-items-seized-in-operation-targeting-italian-archaeological-trafficking>



Fig. 6. Operation ATHENA II <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/101-arrested-and-19000-stolen-artefacts-recovered-in-international-crackdown-art-trafficking>



Fig. 7. Operation ATHENA II <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/101-arrested-and-19000-stolen-artefacts-recovered-in-international-crackdown-art-trafficking>



Fig. 8. Operation MEDICUS <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/police-recover-%E2%80%9898millions%E2%80%99-in-stolen-treasures-after-busting-archaeological-crime-gang-in-bulgaria>



Fig. 9. Operation MEDICUS <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/police-recover-%E2%80%998millions%E2%80%999-in-stolen-treasures-after-busting-archaeological-crime-gang-in-bulgaria>



Fig. 10. Operation Pandora III <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/over-18-000-items-seized-and-59-arrests-made-in-operation-targeting-cultural-goods>



Fig. 11. Operation Pandora III <https://www.europol.europa.eu/media-press/newsroom/news/over-18-000-items-seized-and-59-arrests-made-in-operation-targeting-cultural-goods>

