



Shadow Trade: Unraveling Maritime Smuggling Between the Russian and Ottoman Empires (1853-1914)

Dr Anna Sydorenko

Institute for Mediterranean Studies

ABSTRACT

The project “STASH: Shadow Trade: Unraveling Maritime Smuggling Between the Russian and Ottoman Empires (1853-1914)”, funded by the European Research Council-Starting Grant 2024, aspires to advance our knowledge of inter-imperial relations beyond conventional geopolitical approaches. This project focuses on the little-explored area of illegal trade relations in the context of evolving conflicts between the empires, the changing landscape of legal trade during an era of increasing globalization, and the shift from sail to steam technology. Specifically, it will comprehensively analyse various facets of the smuggling of both goods and people within the established trade routes, connections, and networks. The analysis will examine the macrostructure of the smuggling linkages, focusing on the hinterland of production/origin of clandestine trade and the foreland, the destination of material and human cargoes. It aims to identify the main nodes of export and import and the means of transportation. The STASH project will delve into who participates in these activities, the methods and timing of partnership formation for such endeavours, the prevailing practices, established routes, and the responses of the empires to the problem of smuggling. Furthermore, it will explore the intricacies of the legal systems within the empires involved to understand how smuggling was prosecuted and how the central state and periphery adapted to address the challenges posed by smuggling activities. Understanding the smuggling seascape and how these two neighbouring powers navigated their shadow relations adds depth to our comprehension of the broader Eastern European economic, social, and political relations. It introduces new layers to our comprehension of the region’s modern history. The project will make a significant contribution by offering a historical perspective on phenomena that have contemporary political, geopolitical, economic, and social impacts in both times of peace and times of war.