

Crime, Ethnic Minorities and Procedural Justice in the Balkans

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Guest Editor's Introduction

The idea for a special issue of the European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research on '*Crime, Ethnic Minorities and Procedural Justice in the Balkans*' emerged at the journal's Editorial Board annual meeting during the 12th European Society of Criminology Conference in Bilbao (at a restaurant with delicious traditional Bask dishes, gratuity of Springer). Almost two years on and the special issue is completed thanks to the impeccable time keeping of the Editorial office and the contributors. This time gap from inception to production is an achievement in its own right. More so considering that there is no universal agreement as to the exact geographical and administrative delimitation of the *Balkans*, and language barriers, compounded by the fact that Criminology has been historically a poor relation to Criminal Justice and Law studies outside the Anglo-Saxon world, have hindered on-line searches for potential contributors from the Balkan academia. The call for contributors was thus distributed by the European Society of Criminology (ESC) e-bulletin (thanks to Professor Kerner) and various social networks linked to the ESC.

With regards to what consists the Balkans, the geographically-challenged Guest Editor, despite living part-time perhaps in the Balkans (Thessaloniki), learnt from Encyclopaedia Britannica that the Balkans or the Balkan Peninsula *usually* includes Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova and the modern states of the Former Yugoslavia, that is Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, [Former Yugoslavic Republic of] Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia. 'However, there is not universal agreement on the region's components. ... Generally, the Balkans are bordered by Italy on the northwest, Austria and Hungary on the north, Ukraine on the north and northeast, and Greece and Turkey on the south. The region is washed by the Adriatic Sea in the west, the Ionian Sea in the southwest, and the Black Sea in the east. In the north, clear geographic delimitation of the Balkans becomes difficult because the Pannonian Basin of the Great Alfold (Great Hungarian Plain) extends from central Europe into parts of Croatia, Serbia and Romania. To the south Greece is primarily a Mediterranean country ... although its northern regions of Epirus and Macedonia [with Thessaloniki being the main city and Greece's second capital] can be considered parts of the Balkans.' (Crampton 2014: online entry). The reader surely noticed the word 'usually' in the Encyclopaedia

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Britannica's definition above. A helpful map of the region albeit with a slightly different delimitation of the Balkans is given in the first Fig. of the first article to this Special Issue, based on UNODC.

The rarity of long-established stand-alone Criminology departments in Balkan academia highlights the need for a Special Issue of the EJCPR on '*Crime, Ethnic Minorities and Procedural Justice in the Balkans*' to showcase some of the criminological thinking and research as well as inform about crime and criminal justice in the area. The Balkans' recent history of dramatic economic, political and social changes, not to mention civil war, since the 1990s (some perhaps still on-going) exacerbates the interest and originality of the current EJCPR Special Issue's focus. The recent historical changes may have potentially created new or expanded existing crime opportunities nationally due to anomie (Merton 1938) and cross-nationally due to weakened border controls, which warrant more or new criminal justice responses. However, the same changes according to the civilising perspective (Elias ([1939]1978) also have the potential to reduce crime and promote accountability of criminal justice agencies. The unprecedented influx of immigrants to Greece and Italy, the first entrance points to the EU and allegedly a prosperous life during the 1990s, mostly from Albania 'exported' the development of new crime opportunities (for instance, hate crime against non-nationals) and need for increased criminal justice responses. The strain to limited economic resources, social welfare and experience as host countries (and for Greece the substantial numbers of newcomers compared to the country's size) has perhaps hindered complete assimilation of Balkan emigrants and more than 20 years after the first wave xenophobia against 'ethnic minorities' persists.

The themes explored in the following seven original contributions to the Special Issue fall into three main topics:

- Political accountability and violence (Favarin);
- New crime opportunities (Arsovska, Kambellari, Muftić); and
- Attitudes towards the criminal justice system and criminal justice responses (Reisig et al., Maljević and Muftić, Muftić, Antonopoulou and Pitsela).

In the first article to this Special Issue, in addition to, as mentioned, providing an informative map, Favarin explores the association between democracy and crime (via the polity democratisation score and homicide rates, respectively) in ten countries from 1955 to 2011. She employs (fixed effects panel) regression analysis and instrumental variables methodology to test how much democracy affects homicides, controlling for other macro contributors to homicide rates. She finds that consolidated democracy together with increased wealth and employment levels of young people considerably reduce homicides cross-nationally.

The next three articles deal with new crime opportunities focussing on Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The first two studies of this set follow purely qualitative analysis methodology. Kambellari discusses how lack of regulation and/or weak law enforcement have created opportunities for corporate crime in Albania resulting in considerable environmental and financial costs. She analyses the current law against corporate crime and makes recommendations for transforming an effectively ineffective law to empower law enforcement agents and promote corporate responsibility. On a related issue Arsovska explores the opportunities and pathways for ethnic Albanians' involvement in transnational organised crime in their own country and/or as migrants in the host country. She concludes that such an involvement is the

result of a mixture of limited alternatives for legitimate employment, opportunities created by globalisation and ethnic social networks.

Trafficking of human beings for sexual exploitation is one type of organised crime that seems to thrive since the fall of the communist regimes (TRANSCRIME et al. 2004). Based on cross-section data from interviews of border officers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Muftić investigates (a) their knowledge about legislation and investigation techniques to deal with this crime type and (b) whether such knowledge and/or training affected their ability to recognise and control sex trafficking. She employs bivariate analyses and limited dependent variables (ordinal and logit) regression modelling of a number of indicators of sex trafficking knowledge and experience over training and other relevant officers' characteristics to conclude that training plays an important role in the border officer's ability to perform their duties but there is a long way to go until the crime of sex trafficking is recognised as a priority and the needs of victims are met. This fourth article links the topics of new crime opportunities and criminal justice responses.

The final set of works presented here focusses entirely on criminal justice attitudes and responses. Staying on in Bosnia and Herzegovina Maljević and Muftić explore students' attitudes towards electronic monitoring of offenders via descriptive and bivariate analyses. They find that this type of punishment is considered appropriate for low level crime involvement, soft and ineffective without any degrading connotations. Reisig, Tankebe and Mesko test the Tyler's hypothesis of law compliance based on attitudes and beliefs about procedural justice and police legitimacy. They analyse a cross-section data set of young people's attitudes in Slovenia via regression analyses of compliance with different laws against low-level crime over respondents' perceptions of police legitimacy and other relevant characteristics. The results indicate that the Tyler hypothesis does not hold universally and requires further investigation and refinement. The final contribution to the Special Issue comes from Greece on account of its North and North West regions being perhaps situated in the Balkans. Antonopoulou and Pitsela explore the prevalence of non-Greeks in the different stages of the criminal justice system, from stop and search to imprisonment, since 1990 via descriptive analyses. They find an overwhelming presence of foreign nationals in the country's criminal justice system with sometimes an exponentially increasing trend, especially since the economic recession. The authors explore the role of political discourse and crime media coverage for this trend and touch upon the dark figure of criminal victimisation against non-Greeks, ending with policy recommendations.

I hope you enjoy reading the current Special Issue of the EJCPJ on '*Crime, Ethnic Minorities and Procedural Justice in the Balkans*' as much as I enjoyed editing it. It includes original contributions that expand knowledge in criminology and criminal justice disciplines, whether the reader has a special interest in the Balkans or not.

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