



BALKAN CRIMINOLOGY

TACKLING BALKAN OC

by Connecting the Dots Between News Headlines, Indictments and Research

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INTRO - BALKAN CRIMINOLOGY

understand ► detect ► find ► check

- **WHAT IS BALKAN CRIMINOLOGY?**
WHAT DO WE DO?

- **network** of academics, researchers and experts on crime and criminology in the Balkans, acknowledging that the Balkans are a **criminological space *sui generis***

- understand the phenomenon
- detect the challenge/problem
- find a solution
- check if it works




SOUTHEASTERN
EUROPE

BALKAN
proper

Europe

 Balkan Region

 Southeastern Europe

Getoš & Donlon (2015), p. 4

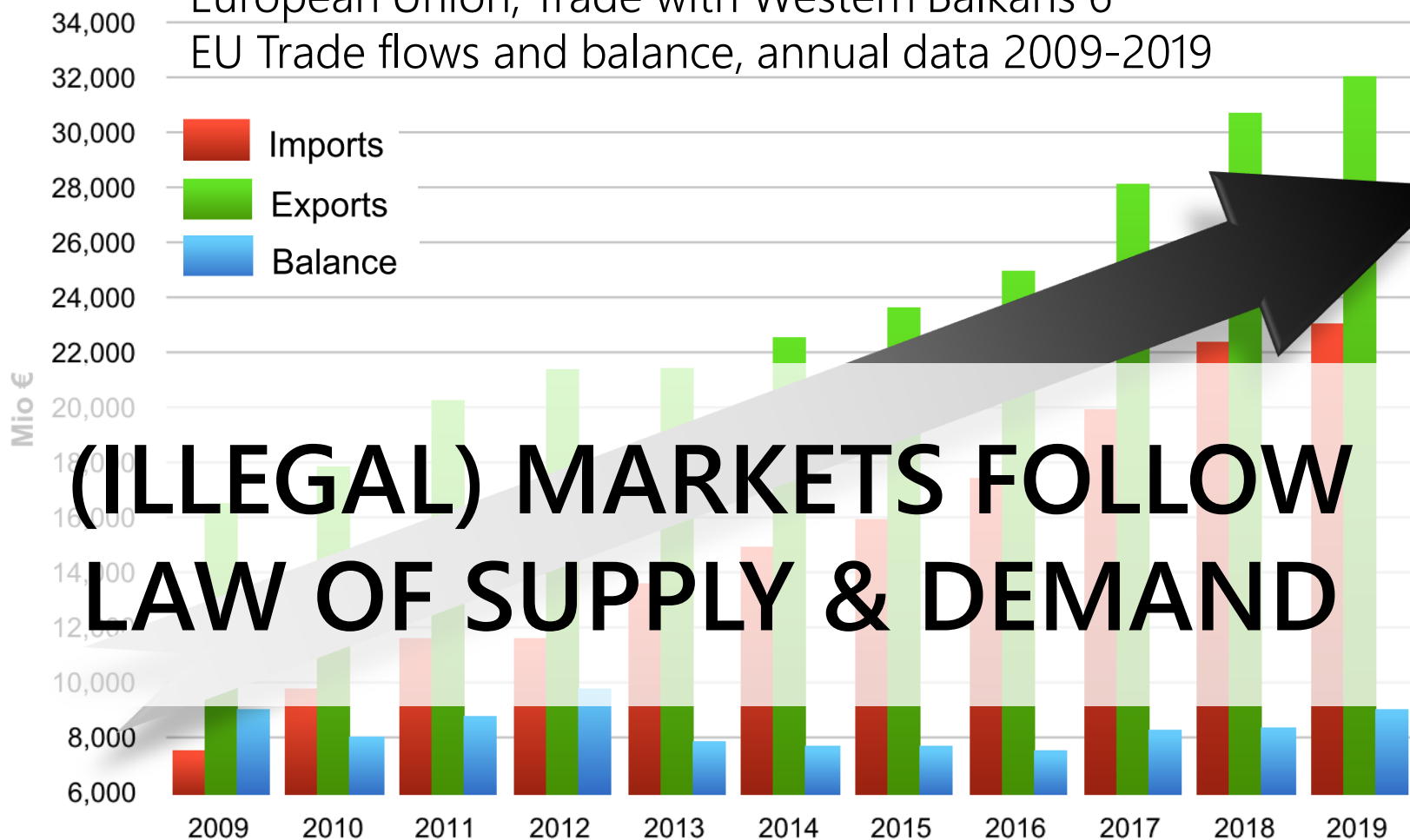
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BASIC TERMS (illegal) markets

European Union, Trade with Western Balkans 6

EU Trade flows and balance, annual data 2009-2019



**(ILLEGAL) MARKETS FOLLOW
LAW OF SUPPLY & DEMAND**

Source: Eurostat Comext, Statistical regime 4





BASIC TERMS

general traits of illegal markets


- **NO GENERAL MODEL** on how illegal markets function due to heterogeneity of illegality on markets
- **GENERAL TRAITS** of illegal markets

crucial importance of **formal institutions** and **enforcement** through the state for **(legal) market development**

social ties play a pre-eminent role as a functional substitute

! PERSONAL RELATIONS !





BASIC TERMS

corruption vs **bitnost**

- **corruption enhances the stability of illegal markets** by stabilising criminals' low expectations with regard to effectiveness of law enforcement

Beckert & Wehinger (2012), p. 11-12

- highly corrupt environments → stable illegal markets
- law enforcement → tradable commodity
- actual corruption in the Balkans → overestimated
- **bitnost & patronage legacy** → pandemic problem





BALKAN ORGANISED CRIME root causes & accelerators

- **Balkan OC uniqueness** due to unique combination of root causes and accelerators
- **root causes** of Balkan OC evolved over centuries
 - favourable geo-strategic position
 - (failed) foreign dominations & dictatorships (ethnic mosaic)
 - **BANDITRY** → pandemic, dating back to the Ottoman Empire
 - security sector-criminal groups nexus (SFRJ 1945-1992)
 - economic backwardness **INFORMAL ECONOMIES!**
 - culture of impunity **BITNOST!** Tarantini (2016), p. 9-10
- 3 more recent **accelerators** 'boosting' Balkan OC
 - Yugoslav wars (1990s) → **crime-CONFLICT** nexus
 - political & economic transition → **crime-POLITICS** nexus
 - Balkan 'black hole' of Europe → **crime-TERROR** nexus





BALKAN ORGANISED CRIME

crime-politics nexus

- war acted as “a highly effective mechanism for **criminalised social advancement**”

Andreas (2004), p. 49

- NO real political turnover
- war profiteers & local criminals
- instead of prosecution → upward mobility

Tarantini (2016), p. 12

- **main beneficiaries** of economic & social transformations after the collapse of communism
→ **HI-interest & criminal groups**

- instead of functioning democracy, communist authoritarianism has been replaced by **authoritarianism of organised crime**

Tarantini (2016), p. 12





BALKAN ORGANISED CRIME types & threats

Balkan OC types by **apparent (il)legality**

- small (semi-specialised) criminal groups & networks
- corporate-type (mafia)
- private security sector (war/intelligence veterans)
- legitimate businesses with close political ties
- HI-interest groups: **'THE UNTOUCHABLES'**



LEGALITY



**LAW ENFORCEMENT
ATTENTION**



THREAT





BALKAN ORGANISED CRIME types & threats

UNIQUE BALKAN OC CONTEXT

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LEGALITY



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THREAT





COMBATTING BALKAN OC norms & institutions

■ state of the art?

- SEE EU member states
- SEE non EU member states
 - harmonisation towards EU directives and normative standards
 - creates uncertainty in practice
 - training & workshops
 - practical problems solved only slowly through reforms
 - eventually: adoption of EU directives and normative standards

**NORMS = PRECONDITION
≠ SOLUTION FOR TACKLING OC**

- ## norms: implications for tackling OC?
- little if any at all!
 - why?






OC RESEARCH challenges & solutions

- **OC RESEARCH – THE CHALLENGES**
 - **special** problem: **OC definition** (mafia, untouchables, criminals)
 - general problem: 'dark figure' of crime and 'construction' of crime
 - **special** problem: **OC 'dark figure'** (illegal markets & transaction crime)
 - general problem: official crime statistics methodology
 - **special** problem: **OC statistics** methodology and comparability
- **SOLUTIONS**
 - combining findings from different sources & using wide range of approaches and methodologies → **CONNECTING THE DOTS**
 - main sources: **scientific research, investigative journalistic reports, criminal investigations (ongoing/finalized), NGO reports**





OC RESEARCH connecting the dots...

▪ CREATING SYNERIES

- availability of data & resources
- avoid duplication & coordinate projects more meaningfully
- detecting & differentiating between ordinary criminals working in groups, OC networks, untouchables and criminal state capture

▪ CREATING CROSS-SECTIONAL NETWORKS

- informal regional/national/local permanent/ad hoc networks involving different players (academia/journalist, practitioners, NGOs) → fast data circulation & quick detection of new phenomena/trends/routes

Examples of good practice: Europol platform for experts

▪ BUILDING TRUST

- suspicion & skepticism towards/between different players due to conflicting (operational) goals
- opportunities for exchange and building strong personal relationships



Thank you for your attention!



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