

GLOBALIZATION, CONDUCT NORMS AND ‘CULTURE CONFLICT’

*Perceptions of Violence and Crime in an Ethnic Albanian Context*¹

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The paper examines whether violence in contemporary Albania is a structured phenomenon linked to Albanian customary laws, such as the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini, or whether it is a product of social confusion and ‘culture conflict’. It argues that the expansion of Western legal norms in the Albanian territories has caused a ‘culture conflict’ within the society, which has subsequently led to an increase in crime. The conclusions drawn are based on a cross-national survey with ethnic Albanian respondents from Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, carried out during 2006.

‘Culture of Violence’ or ‘Culture Conflict’?

In criminology, ‘social disorganization’ and ‘culture conflict’ explanations have been frequently applied to elucidate and explain various forms of conflict such as crime, war, race relations, suicide and more (see Sutherland 1939 [1934, 1924]; Sellin 1938; Bain 1939; Shaw and McKay 1942). Edwin Sutherland (1939) argued that social disorganization is the basic cause of systematic criminal behaviour and stated that cultural conflict is a specific aspect of social disorganization. A cultural system can be disorganized in the sense that there are conflicts between values, norms and beliefs within a widely shared, dominant culture (see also Yinger 1960). Similarly, Thorsten Sellin (1938) sought first to clarify the relations between social and legal norms, which, in his view, rapid urbanization had placed in a state of conflict. For Sellin (1938), law embodies the normative structure of the dominant cultural/ethnic group. Criminal law contains crime norms which reflect mostly the values of the group(s) successful in achieving control of legislative processes. Conversely, conduct norms that mirror the socio-cultural values of the other, less influential groups often enter into conflict with the governing norms. Hence, the conflict of conduct norms arises either as a result of a process of group differentiation within a cultural system, or as a result of contact between norms drawn from different cultural systems. If the legal norms of one group are extended over areas formerly not cognizant of them, such extension might cause confusion and violation of these norms by persons living in the subjected area (Sellin 1938). In the 1960s, Marvin E. Wolfgang expanded Sellin’s theoretical approach, arguing that all acts of brutality have an unfolding personal logic that draws upon accepted practices within a society (or a sub-group within a society). In his subculture of violence theory, he argued that violent assaultive crimes have to be

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viewed in terms of the historical, social and cultural context from which they spring (Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967: 150). The social habitat of any individual determines a whole system of values which emerges to him/her as self-evident, although it might not be self-evident for another individual from a different social habitat. According to these theoretical frameworks, both culture and 'culture conflict' should shed some light on the origin of violent crimes.

There are also links between the aforementioned theoretical frameworks and social control theories that deal with the treatment of right and wrong (see Hirschi 1969; Black 1993). Unfortunately, from the second half of the twentieth century onward, many scholars have focused on a single category of social control, law, narrowing their concerns to legal life in modern Western societies (Black 1993: 2). Most recently, the 'objectivity' of Western law has been re-examined, bringing culture once more to a central position in scientific investigation (Karstedt 2001: 286). In particular, scholars have been researching the links between globalization, the applicability of Western legal norms to non-Western societies, and an increase in crime. While we do not want to equate contemporary cultural globalization with 'modernization', 'Westernization' or 'American cultural imperialism'; we do accept that in recent years, Western societies, directly or indirectly, have tried to impose their influence in regions with socio-cultural systems different from their own.

This paper explores both the role of culture and 'culture conflict' in shaping contemporary Albanian views on violent crime in Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia. Although many violent crimes in an ethnic Albanian³ context have been linked to an Albanian 'culture of violence', this paper assumes that, because of people's attachment to their traditions, and because culture is often a source of protection against violence (Krug *et al.* 2002: 16), cultural norms should be taken seriously when studying crime. The paper therefore explores ethnic Albanian perceptions of violence and crime, and depicts some differences between Albanian and Western value systems. For example, in modern Western societies, violence and crime are commonly regarded as immoral, illegal and illegitimate. The wish to avenge is considered a leftover of an archaic epoch (Waldmann 2001: 435). According to modern conceptions, it is the responsibility of the criminal justice authorities to prosecute criminals. The forbidding of violent 'self-help' is deeply rooted in the Western value system; hence, people often do not openly admit a wish to punish severely someone who has done them an injustice, and Western understandings of violent crime often fail to consider violence as cultural capital (Aijmer and Abbinik 2000; Messner and Rosenfeld 2001: 11; Arsovska and Craig 2006).

Conversely, the use of violence in an Albanian context has frequently been represented as being a structured archetype of social control. Vendetta⁴ has been regarded as a social mechanism that prevents violence from spreading (Grutzpalk 2002: 117; Rosenthal 1996: 137). According to the fundamental Albanian customary laws, such as the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini, the willingness to use violence and to take justice into one's own hands has been considered a main criterion for assessing an Albanian 'Man of Honour' (Oakes 1997). But to what extent is this still the situation today in Albania, Kosovo and

³ The term 'ethnic Albanian' refers to ethnic Albanians from Albania, Kosovo, and Macedonia (on ethnicity see Eriksen 1993).

⁴ In this paper, blood feud, vendetta and revenge killings are considered synonyms. However, Albanian authorities make distinction between blood feuds (done according to customary laws) and other revenge killings.

Macedonia? Where do vengeance, honour killings and ‘modernity’ intersect? How has the Western legal system affected the Albanian social habitat? Is it culture itself, or a socio-cultural confusion, that has caused an increase in violence and crime? With these questions in mind, the study reported here investigated contemporary understandings of four Albanian cultural elements emphasized in the Kanun—honour, revenge, hospitality and the subordination of women. It concluded that the expansion of Western legal norms to the previously isolated Albanian territories has caused a ‘culture conflict’ among the Albanian population, and has contributed to the increase in crime.

Violence in Albania, Kosovo and the Diasporas

Within Albania, Kosovo and the respective Diasporas a history of intense violence is readily identifiable but not necessarily understood from a Western perspective. Various studies (Waldmann 2001; Schwandner-Sievers 1998; International Crisis Group 2000) have pointed out that the level of violence in an Albanian context has been steadily rising since the fall of communism. In 2002, the World Health Organisation (WHO) listed Albania as fifth in the world regarding murders committed in the late 1990s (28 per 100,000). In 1997 alone, the police reported 1,542 murders in Albania. When comparing murder rates within the Balkan region, the UN Mission in Kosovo reported that during 2002, Albania experienced the highest murder rate (12.2 per 100,000 people). According to the International Crisis Group (2000), the increase in violent crime is linked to various disturbing social phenomena such as revenge killings. The police, for the period from 1998 to 2004, reported 1,994 murders, of which 8.5 per cent were blood feuds.⁵ In the period from 1992 to 1996, 9.5 per cent of all murders were blood feuds (Tabaku 2007).

Other sources report higher figures. According to the Albanian press, in 2005, 600 families with their 2,000 children were living in isolation to avoid the law of blood (Chatelot 2005). In the late 1990s, the National Reconciliation Committee of Albania estimated that 1,370 families were self-imprisoned at home and 711 children were prevented from attending school due to fear of revenge. One Albanian NGO—‘MJAFT!’—estimated that blood feuds are the reality for over 7,000 northern Albanians today. Gendercide Watch (2002) reported that from 1992 to 1996, press reports in Tirana spoke of more than 5,000 murders linked to vendettas. A survey conducted by Tirana University (2000) highlighted that 210,000 Albanians are ‘affected’ by blood feuds, including about 1,250 people locked in their houses for fear of being killed (UK Home Office 2004).

Besides blood feuds, there are many problems linked to violence against women that—as many organizations argue—must be analysed in the context of the Albanian culture. According to them, the study of domestic violence is complicated, because this issue is supported by the patriarchal mentality rooted in the Albanian culture (UNICEF

⁵ The Albanian authorities are aware that blood feuds create a bad image for their country, and slow down the EU integration process; hence, they might have been inclined to deny/hide the existence of such hideous phenomena in recent years. According to police statistics, the numbers of traditional blood feuds had dropped from 5% in the first half of 2006 to 0% in the first half of 2007. However, this might be due to the fact that the Albanian authorities have created a separate category for traditional blood feuds apart from revenge killings. In addition to blood feuds, 10% of all crimes against persons in the first half of 2006 and 8% in the first half of 2007 were revenge killings.

2000; Baban 2004; International Crisis Group 2000; Amnesty International 2006). Reports explain that, often, the Kanun is mentioned as the main source for the discriminated position of women; however, this argument needs to be further analysed, as it is often founded on a speculative basis. For a long time, statistics on domestic violence in Albania were missing. In 1996, the NGO Refleksione organized the first national research and found that 64 per cent (out of 849 females) of women surveyed experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse. According to the WHO, in the period from 1992 to 1996, in Tirana alone 1,200 women reported that they had been sexually abused (Krug *et al.* 2002). The Counselling Centre for Women in Tirana has received more than 5,000 registered calls in less than five years (UNICEF 2000).

Kosovo experiences high levels of violent crime, too. According to Dukajin Gorani, director of the Human Rights Center in Pristina, 'You think twice before getting in an argument in Kosovo because someone always ends up dead. In this part of the world, there is a strong belief in customary law which means an eye for an eye. In our lifetime the rule of law has never achieved anything, only guns have provided a measure of justice [...]' (Farnam 2003). Linking this to the Kosovo conflict, statistics show that the Serb population of Kosovo had fled, fearing revenge attacks. A rash of killings has shown that such fears are not unfounded. As many as 1,000 Serbs and Roma have been murdered or have gone missing since 1999 (Human Rights Watch 1999; Nikolic-Ristanovic 2007). Hence, Kosovo has the potential for greater violence, and the March 2004 riots by ethnic Albanians in which at least 15 people died confirmed again the seriousness of the problem. The Kosovo Law Centre reported that during the period 1999–2005, the following offences: 1,103 murders; 2,146 aggravated/grievous assaults; 17,717 harassments; 570 rapes; 262 sexual assaults; and 3,436 domestic disputes were committed in Kosovo (with a population of about two million people). Regarding motivations, 17.67 per cent of all murders have been linked to blood feud (Demolli 2006: 65).

The situation in Macedonia—a country with a considerable ethnic Albanian minority (20–25 per cent)—resembles the other countries. According to foreign internal reports and embassies, the most dangerous areas—where violent incidents occur commonly—are those populated by ethnic Albanians. Macedonia, according to various accounts, regularly experiences revenge killings, kidnappings and trafficking of women for sexual exploitation and frequently committed by ethnic Albanian perpetrators. In 2001, it also experienced killings committed by Albanian paramilitary structures. On the other hand, ethnic Albanians feel suppressed by the Macedonian government and frequently complain of widespread discrimination (Bureau of Democracy 2006). For years, Albanians in Macedonia have been living in isolation without proper education, which makes the situation even more terrifying.

International reports have confirmed that police abuse, government failure to uphold the rule of law, revenge killings, domestic violence, and widespread violations of children's and women's rights are just a few of the many lawless activities of the ethnic Albanians (Human Rights Watch 2003; UK Home Office 2004; Amnesty International 2006). As a result, Albanians have often been depicted as belligerent people with no respect for the rule of law. Although they do not deny being restless individuals with a warlike spirit, they also argue that this is their 'national character', which has helped them to preserve their identity and survive in troublesome times (Prato 2004: 70).

Methodology

Understanding violence

Although it is notoriously difficult to define violence, for this study, we have used the WHO definition (Krug *et al.* 2002: 5) in order to facilitate scientific measurement.⁶ One of the most complex aspects of this definition is the concept of *intentionality*. According to the WHO, there is a distinction between the intent to injure and the intent to use violence, because violence is often culturally determined. Some people mean to harm others but, based on their cultural beliefs, do not perceive their acts as violent (Walters and Parke 1964; Krug *et al.* 2002; Wolfgang and Ferracuti 1967). Also, a perpetrator may intentionally commit an act that by 'objective standards' is judged to be dangerous, but he/she may not perceive it as such. Additionally, the WHO differentiates between three broad categories of violence: self-directed; inter-personal; and collective. In this paper, we are mainly concerned with inter-personal violence, which is violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals (Krug *et al.* 2002: 6).

Furthermore, research has shown that no single factor explains why some individuals behave violently or why violence is more prevalent in some communities than in others. Violence is the result of the complex interplay of individual, social, cultural and environmental factors (Krug *et al.* 2002: 12). In our study, we took into consideration the ecological model (see Bronfenbrenner 1979; Chaulk and King 1998) in order to understand the multifaceted nature of inter-personal violence; however, we have not explored in depth all levels of this complex model. The model considers violence to be the product of multiple levels of influence on behaviour. The first level seeks to identify the biological and personal–historical factors that an individual brings to his/her behaviour; the second explores how proximal social relationships increase the risk for the perpetration of violence; and the third examines the community contexts in which social relationships are embedded.

Although we refer to the different levels of the model, our main focus is on the fourth level, which examines the larger societal factors that influence perceptions of violence. Included here are those factors that create an acceptable climate for violence, those that reduce inhibitions against violence, and those that produce and maintain gaps between different segments of society (Krug *et al.* 2002: 13). More specifically, we explore cultural norms that support violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts and the norms that entrench male dominance over women.

Research sample and hypotheses

The research investigates ethnic Albanian respondents' views on specific criminal situations. It also investigates how ethnic Albanians perceive various offenders. It has been argued that one of the most effective methods of capturing immediate impressions of people is the person perception method. Previous research has documented its validity and utility (Collins and Brief 1995; Hughes 1998; Hastrof *et al.* 1970). In this

⁶ The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

study, participants were asked to read a vignette and rate targets on seven-point scales in terms of how justifiable versus unjustifiable or honourable versus dishonourable they perceived the target. Vignettes have been used to elicit cultural norms derived from the respondents' attitudes, as well as to explore the participants' ethical frameworks and moral codes (Finch 1987).

During 2006, we conducted a cross-national survey with 864 ethnic Albanian respondents from three countries with large ethnic Albanian populations: Albania, Macedonia and Kosovo/UNMNIK. We used cluster sampling,⁷ a structured questionnaire and extensive face-to face interviews. Before proceeding with the main research ($N = 726$), a pilot testing of the questionnaire was conducted ($N = 138$). The results of the pilot were almost identical to those of the main study concerning answers to the same questions attesting to the validity and reliability of the research. In our analysis, we occasionally refer to both the main and the combined study (pilot and main) simultaneously. The sample is not representative of the whole ethnic Albanian population, as the aim was not to generalize the findings for the whole population, but to make comparisons between various sub-groups. The key demographic variables for the selection of our sample were: country, subculture (Gheg/Tosk), area (rural/urban), age, gender, socio-economic status and education. In Kosovo and Macedonia, we used the same variables, with only one difference—the subcultural division. Since Kosovo is almost entirely populated by Ghegs, we interviewed them mainly. In Macedonia, as there is a small percentage of Tosks, our sample also contains Macedonian Tosks.

Basing our assumption on prior research,⁸ we postulated that cultural norms promoted by the Kanun of Lek Dukagjini will play a significant role in shaping ethnic Albanians' perceptions of violence and crime. Since research shows that the Kanun is mainly associated with the Albanian Gheg subculture—populating north of Albania, Kosovo and parts of Macedonia—we anticipated significant differences in perceptions between Albanian Ghegs and Tosks. In general, we hypothesized that older Ghegs from rural areas would know the Kanun better and would support more offenders that have committed 'honour' crimes than other types of crime, whereas younger, less educated Ghegs and Tosks, who only know the laws superficially, would justify various crimes, using the Kanun laws as a shield. We also postulated that the Tosks would be more supportive of profit-oriented crimes than honour crimes because of the greater Western influence in south Albania (in its proximity to Greece and Italy). Overall, we expected to see some inconsistency and diversity in answers because of the general social confusion. Finally, we hypothesized that there will be significant differences in perceptions between the respondents from the three countries due to different socio-political environments.

'Three-Way' Loyalty System: State, Religion and Culture

The population of Albania has been traditionally divided into two major sub-groups according to dialects. It is estimated that there are 2,900,000 Tosk and 300,000 Gheg speakers in Albania. The majority of Gheg speakers (between 1,400,000 and 2,000,000)

⁷ The population was divided in units and smaller subunits. At each level, the units and the subunits were randomly selected.

⁸ A survey on the Kanun estimated that over 50% of teenagers polled respected the Kanun laws and were willing to take revenge (International Crisis Group 2000). Ismet Elezi conducted a survey which shows that today a few people under 35 know the exact wording of the Kanun – yet many invoke it as an excuse to kill (Mortimer and Toader 2005).

live in Kosovo. In Macedonia, there is a small percentage of Tosks; however, the dominant Albanian population is Gheg (242,250) (McClea 2001). In addition, Ghegs and Tosks also have many social differences according to public perceptions. The Ghegs are thought to be stern and courageous people, while the Tosk are known to be friendly and better educated. In general, Tosks are considered more open-minded in comparison to the traditional Ghegs (Zhelyazkova 1999).

Prior to the changes introduced by the Communist regime, Albanians were a tribal people and, during the Ottoman reign, many of them were converted to Islam. However, when the communist regime took power in 1944, the traditional lifestyles started to change drastically. Cultural, ethnographic, linguistic and economic differences between the south and the north were suppressed with a policy of repression. Communist authorities believed that the way to achieve national unity was to abolish the differences of tribe and religion (Zhelyazkova 1999). Already, in 1967, Albania declared itself as the world's first atheistic state, closing its borders to any foreign influence. The collapse of the Communist regime brought numerous rapid changes, leaving the people angry, confused and lost in a three-way loyalty system (state, religion and culture).

With the process of globalization, new laws emerging from the dominant Western value system were steadily imposed on Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia and, as such, did not emerge naturally from within the society. Hence, the gap between the people and the 'state' remained wide and society was not organized with reference to the values expressed in the law (Valinas and Arsovska 2007). The governments have been ratifying Western laws in order to bring their countries closer in alignment to the EU/NATO; however, they have not always understood the values behind such moves. After the fall of Communism, in their struggle to find their identity, Albanians also started to return to religion. However, as a result of an atheist past, many did not follow a 'true' religion. The situation was similar with the revival of the cultural codes, such as Kanun of Lek Dukagjini. These codes were forbidden during Communist rule, but, in lawless post-Communist societies such as Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, people tended to associate themselves with different laws, in order to avoid anarchy. Despite the fact that Albanian customary laws do not converge with state laws, it has been argued that many Albanians prefer to ignore perplexing state laws in favour of self-interpretations of the ancient creeds (Arsovska and Craig 2006). In this paper, we are particularly interested in the role of these codes in promoting/restricting violent and criminal behaviour in contemporary Albanian society.

The Traditional Kanun

The Kanun of Lek Dukagjini, formalized as oral laws in the fifteenth century, sets up the rules upon which Albanian culture is based, primarily focusing on the concept of honour, hospitality and the word of honour—*besa* (a principle of unity, reconciliation and inviolable trust) (Fox 1989). The influence of the Kanun among the ethnic Albanians has been enormous, although the impact has been somewhat greater among the Ghegs than among the Tosks. According to Durham, for the ethnic Albanians, 'Lek said so' obtains far more obedience than the Ten Commandments. 'The teachings of Islam and of Christianity, the Sharia and Church law, all have to yield to the Canon of Lek [...]. For all their habits, laws, and customs, the people, as a rule, have but one explanation: it is in the Canon of Lek' (Durham 1994: 25). Containing 1,262 articles and

first published in 1933, the Kanun has been particularly described as an expression of the de facto autonomy of the northern Albanian clans during the Ottoman Empire (Fox 1989; Hasluck 1954: 14).

The Kanun is a formal expression of the deeply felt concept of honour of the Albanian people (Malcolm 1998: 18; Schwander-Sievers 1998). It details the entirety of a law according to which a person can protect his community against the attacks of third parties. This protection includes the moral obligation to apply retaliatory attacks until the honour is re-established. The Kanun states: 'There is no fine for an offence to honour. An offence to honour is never forgiven. The person dishonoured has every right to avenge his honour; no pledge is given, no appeal is made to the Elders, no judgment is needed, no fine is taken. The strong man collects the fine himself' (2–600). One who meets these revenge obligations from the Kanun is taken to be 'cleansed white' (Waldmann 2001: 440). The Kanun also includes specific clarifications on how the honour should be restored when the laws are disobeyed. For specific types of violations, it encourages that financial compensation, mediation and reconciliation take place (Valinas and Arsovska 2007).

Moreover, the Kanun elucidates the concept of hospitality, which involves uncompromising protection of a guest, even one with whom the host is in a state of blood feud. The Kanun stipulates that the life of the guest should be placed before your own life: 'An offence against a father, a brother, and even a cousin without heirs may be forgiven, but an offence against a guest is not forgiven' (Fox 1989: 136, Article XCVIII). The Kanun also places enormous attention on the submissive role of women. Albanian society has a long patriarchal history in which women had to obey their husbands (Baban 2004; Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights 1996). According to the Kanun, a man has the right to beat and publicly humiliate his wife if she disobeys him and he can kill her for two reasons: *infidelity* and *betrayal of hospitality* (Baban 2004). If the wife does not 'conduct herself properly toward her husband', the man is expected to cut her hair, strip her nude and drive her with a whip through the village. The Kanun further provides: 'If a husband beats his wife, he incurs no guilt ... and her parents may not make any claims on him because of the beating. If a man beats his wife bloody, and she complains to her parents, the man must give an explanation' (UNICEF 2000). One of the notorious articles states that 'a woman is known as a sack, made to endure as long as she lives in her husband's house' (Fox 1989: Article XXIX).

Under Communism (1944–91), the ruling party prohibited the use of the Kanun. Problems of domestic violence were considered taboo and nobody dared make them public (UNICEF 2000). The Communist leader, Enver Hoxha (1944–85), described the blood feud as a legacy of feudalism. Under his regime, it was strictly forbidden to 'defend the honour of the family'. Anyone practising the customs was severely punished; murderers were condemned to death and their families driven into isolation (Jolis 1997: 30). During this period, the state demanded total obedience to its institutions.

The situation in Kosovo and Macedonia was somewhat different from that of Albania during Communism. Towards the end of the 1960s, the Yugoslav policy towards Kosovo became more tolerant. In the period between 1966 and 1981, the rights of the Albanians were widely guaranteed, and the autonomy of Kosovo within Yugoslavia strengthened (Malcolm 1998). Albanians had their own educational system and their own Albanian-led government. Nikolic-Ristanovic (2007) explains that, in Kosovo, 'leftovers' of old

tradition were very much alive during Communism. The Kanun was also practised by parts of the ethnic Albanian population in Macedonia who lived in remote areas secluded from central governmental law. People needed their own ‘legal system’ to deal with problems that were not dealt with by the state.

The Kanun and ‘Modernity’: Analysis of Results

Waldmann (2001: 440) indicates that after the downfall of Communism—accompanied by a decline of state authority— ‘Kanun morality’ experienced an upward revaluation. Nonetheless, our research shows that, today, many original elements of the Kanun have been forgotten, or degraded to the level of mere reflexes of ‘self-defence’. Since society and culture are not static, the effects of Communism, globalization, ‘modernization’ and ‘Westernization’ on ‘Kanun morality’ cannot be ignored. These factors have seriously affected the traditional practice of the Kanun. Ethnic Albanians today are acquainted to some degree with the contents of the code from oral tradition, although only a few know the laws properly. This naturally leads to self-interpretations of the laws, often used for justification of criminal behaviour (Mortimer and Toader 2005; Arsovska and Craig 2006). Although the results presented below show that self-selected elements of the Kanun (e.g. exaggerated sense of honour, gender subordination and revenge) have remained part of the Albanian mindset, in themselves, they might not be key factors in increases in violent crime. Our research points out that the recent wave of violence and crime in an Albanian context seems to be greatly a product of socio-cultural disorganization and ‘culture conflict’, and, to some extent, of political dissatisfaction, poverty and traditional culture.

Knowledge about the Kanun

In this study, the ethnic Albanian respondents were very supportive of traditional norms, and 79.4 per cent (out of 726) stated that tradition is important for them. Since the Kanun laws are considered to be the foundation of the Albanian culture, we tried to assess the respondents’ actual knowledge of these laws; 89.9 per cent (out of 726) [90.2 per cent (out of 864)] of the respondents stated that they have heard about the Kanun and 23 per cent have read the Kanun; 69.7 per cent [70.6 per cent] of the respondents knew the Kanun from oral tradition. Only 10.2 per cent [10.9 per cent] said that they respect the laws, whereas 72 per cent said they do not. When asked whether they would take revenge in the name of the Kanun, 10.2 per cent [11.6 per cent] stated that they would and 16.8 per cent [16.4 per cent] were undecided.

We also provided the respondents with a ‘knowledge’ test in order to measure their ‘real’ knowledge of the Kanun (see Figure 1). The respondents were given nine statements and were asked to state whether these statements—in their opinion—are true or false according to the Kanun. The statements reflected various important cultural elements, such as honour, hospitality, and revenge.

We can observe that the scores were more or less normally distributed around point zero, suggesting that the knowledge of the Kanun is quite poor and the correct scores being probably attributable to random luck instead of real knowledge of the Kanun. Nevertheless, we did one test comparing the test results of the people who have read the

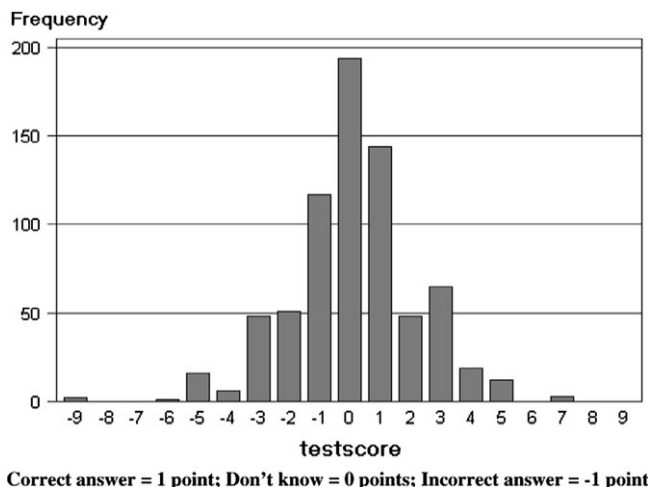


FIG. 1 Score on the 'Kanun' test.

Kanun versus those who have not. The results indicated that the knowledge of both groups is equally poor.

Respondents were also asked if they personally agree with the statements, irrespective of whether the statements were accurately portraying the Kanun. Five of these statements were promoting violence and highly aggressive behaviour according to the Western value system (see below). Nonetheless, a significant part of the sample agreed with at least one or more of the statements; 340 out of 726 respondents did not agree with any statement; 162 agreed with one statement; 93 agreed with two statements, and 131 agreed with three or more violence-promoting statements.

After trying to predict the number of aggressive statements that participants agreed with by making use of linear regression analysis, we found two significant predictors, namely political dissatisfaction and country (see Table 1). The more respondents agreed with the statement that the political situation in their country has been very bad, the more they supported violence. However, the greatest differences could be observed between countries. Albanians from Albania supported violence to the largest extent, while Kosovo Albanians supported violence the least. It is interesting to point out that people who have read the Kanun did not support violence more. However, when we replaced the predictor 'Have you read the Kanun' with the predictor 'Do you respect the Kanun' and controlling for all other variables listed above, we observed very significant differences in answers between people who respect the Kanun and those who do not ($p < 0.0001$). People that stated that they respect the Kanun supported more violent behaviour.

Considering all the Kanun statements presented to the respondents, the highest level of agreement was with the following statement: 'There is no fine (financial compensation) for an offence to honour. An offence to honour is never forgiven and blood must be taken'; 35 per cent (254 out of 726) respondents agreed with the statement and 22.3 per cent did not provide an answer (see Figure 2). This was a statement taken from the Kanun that explicitly promotes revenge killings.

A significant number of people were also supportive of the other violence-promoting statements. 17.8 per cent (129 out of 726) agreed that a woman who has committed

There is no fine (financial compensation) for an offence to honour. An offence to honour is never forgiven and blood must be taken.

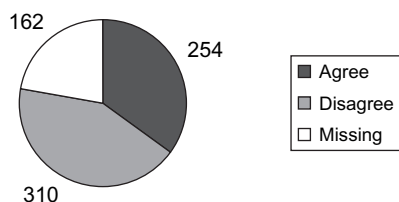


FIG. 2 Agreement with statement promoting revenge killings.

adultery should be killed and no one should ever avenge her murder. 21.2 per cent did not provide an answer. Moreover, 12.7 per cent of the respondents agreed that: A man has the right to beat and publicly humiliate his wife if she is disobedient. He can cut her hair, strip her nude, expel her from the house and drive her with a whip through the village. 18.7 per cent did not provide an answer. Respondents were also asked whether they agree that a crime can be re-compensated with blood: if someone threatens you, or beats you for no reason and you kill him, you don't incur his blood

TABLE 1 Results of linear regression analyses⁹

	Story 1		Story 2	Story 3	Story 4	
	Aggression	Office robbery	House robbery	Blood feud	Partner violence	Dictator
	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate	Estimate
Age	0.00	-0.01 [†]	-0.01*	0.00	0.01 [†]	0.00
Poverty	-0.04	0.00	-0.09 [†]	-0.13 [†]	-0.10	0.06
Economy	-0.04	0.00	-0.04	-0.09*	-0.04	0.15**
Politics	0.06*	0.03	0.00	0.08 [†]	0.05	0.23***
Corruption	0.00	0.02	0.02	0.07 [†]	0.08 [†]	0.11*
Cultural norms	0.04	0.03	-0.02	0.11*	0.14***	-0.04
Education	-0.03	-0.08	-0.01	-0.08	-0.13*	-0.02
Gender						
Male-Female	0.13	0.19	0.15	0.24 [†]	0.64***	-0.07
Read Kanun						
Read-not read	0.17	-0.01	0.12	-0.25	0.00	0.07
Urban/rural						
Urban-Rural	-0.09	0.30*	0.22*	0.21	-0.08	-0.41*
Ethnicity						
Geg-Tosk	-0.15	-0.83***	-0.43**	0.26	0.03	0.42*
Country						
Albania-Kosovo	0.95***	0.41 [†]	0.48**	1.26***	0.77**	-0.06
Albania-Macedonia	0.32*	-0.08	-0.18	0.65**	-1.23***	-1.01***
Kosovo-Macedonia	-0.63***	-0.49*	-0.66***	-0.62*	-2.00***	-0.95**

[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

⁹ Ordered logit and probit analyses led to very similar results.

and you are not considered guilty. 24.2 per cent agreed, and 23 per cent did not provide an answer.

Hence, despite the fact that the knowledge of the Kanun is very weak, there is a significant percentage of people who support violent behaviour. These people assert that they respect the laws and the values behind them, but the test scores showed that they do not know them well. Mostly Albanians from Albania supported violent behaviour. There were no significant differences regarding ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status or education.

Profit and hospitality

Respondents were given two similar stories which describe one particular robbery. They were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale how justifiable the offender's behaviour was in their opinion. The difference in the stories was mainly the outcome of the crime and the setting in which the robbery occurred.

Story 1: An exchange office in Tirana was robbed yesterday. The offender J.A. had a weapon when he entered the office and demanded cash from the cashier. During the robbery the situation went out of control and the offender seriously wounded one person (T.R.) that wanted to stop the robbery. He managed to take 4,000 Euros from the office and run away. Later that day he was arrested by the police. The offender is an unemployed male with no previous criminal record. He has a wife and 2 kids. During the investigation he reported that he was desperately trying to find a job in Albania in the last 4 years but he was unsuccessful. His family always had serious financial difficulties in order to meet basic needs. He had to do something for his hungry children.

Story 2: Few days ago in the village of Mirdite in Albania a very rich couple (N.A. and F.A.) that were travelling in the North of the country were robbed while they were staying as guests in the house of Z.G. The money and jewellery they were carrying with them were taken. The value of the stolen goods was approximately 3,300 Euros. No one had been hurt and no other damage had been done. After 2 days of investigation the police found and arrested the robber Z.G., who was the owner of the house. The robber is the couple's very poor and unemployed friend Z.G. who invited them as guests in the house the night of the robbery. Z.G. has a wife and a sick child. He reported that he was unable to find a job for few years already, and he couldn't think of any other way to pay the expensive doctor's bills and medicines. So, he decided to take advantage of the situation and rob the couple. He didn't have any previous criminal record.

In the first story—an exchange office robbery—there was a seriously wounded person and the use of firearms. The reason for committing the crime was poverty. The second story was a 'simpler' house robbery in which there were no victims and no direct assault. The offender took money from his guests and his motivation was poverty and a sick child. Yet the setting of the second story involves a very important cultural element—being a guest in a house. As noted previously, according to the Kanun, the house of the Albanian belongs to God and the guest, and guests are highly respected. Hence, indeed, more respondents justified the offender in the first story (11.8 per cent [totally] justified; 9.5 per cent undecided¹⁰; 77.6 per cent [totally] unjustified) than in the second (7.3 per cent [totally] justified; 7.3 per cent undecided; 83.9 per cent [totally]

¹⁰ 'Undecided' means 4 on a 7-point scale.

unjustified), despite the fact that the impact of the crime in the first story was more serious.

When conducting linear regression analysis, the most significant differences could be found between Ghegs and Tosks when controlling for all other variables (see Table 1). In general, Ghegs justified profit-oriented crimes less than Tosks. Also, there were very significant differences between the countries, particularly between Macedonia and Kosovo. The Macedonian Albanian respondents supported profit-oriented crimes at the greatest level. The Albanian respondents were more supportive of the robbery when compared with Kosovo Albanians. There were no significant differences in answers between the Macedonian and the Albanian respondents. We also observed that people from villages justified profit-oriented crime less than those from urban areas. There was also suggestive evidence that the older the people are, the less supportive they are of profit-oriented crimes.

Controlling for the same factors, we tried to predict the level of justification in the second 'House robbery' story as well. The linear regression analysis showed similar results (see Table 1). Again, we could observe age differences with the same pattern as in the first story: older people justified the offender less, whereas younger people were more supportive of this crime, despite the cultural elements it contains. Moreover, people from urban areas tended to justify the offender significantly more than people from rural areas. Similar to the previous story, there were significant differences between respondents from Kosovo and Albania, and Kosovo and Macedonia; however, there were no significant differences between people from Macedonia and Albania. Macedonians and Albanians were the most supportive of this crime. Furthermore, there was suggestive evidence regarding differences between people who assessed themselves as rich and those who assessed themselves as poor: rich people were less supportive of the offender's behaviour than poor people. We also observed significant differences between Ghegs and Tosks. Ghegs were less supportive of this crime than Tosks, similar to the findings in the first story.

So far, the results pointed out that, in general, younger Tosks with lower economic status from urban areas that come from Macedonia or Albania are most supportive of profit-oriented crimes. Moreover, ethnic Albanians justified the exchange office robbery more than the house robbery, despite the fact that in the first story, there was a victim and the use of weapons.

Blood feud and besa

Respondents were asked to indicate on a seven-point scale how justifiable the behaviour of a person who has committed revenge killing was.

Story 3: A man was killed in broad daylight in Shkoder. The victim's brothers went immediately to search for the killer (E.H.). Fearing that he might be discovered, the killer E.H. knocked at the first door he found, asking for besa (protection). The head of the house, who was in fact the father of the victim (but did not recognise the killer of his son), welcomed the visitor. When the victim's brothers returned, they recognised the killer E.H. The oldest brother (V.K.) immediately shot their guest—the killer. After this incident V.K. was arrested. The second killer (V.K.) explained that he was just revenging the murder of his younger brother according to the customary laws of his country. None of the parties had any previous criminal record.

We presented a 'revenge story' in which a person commits a murder and runs away. Finally, the murderer is killed by the victim's brothers in their own house after he was

granted besa (protection) by the father of the victim. This is a story that includes three very important cultural elements: besa, hospitality and revenge. However, the murder in the story, culturally speaking, should not be justified. In Albanian culture, hospitality is highly valued and besa creates a situation of inviolable trust. Hence, if besa is given, revenge cannot be taken. The guest should be treated well under any condition, since the Kanun stipulates that the life of a guest comes before the life of a brother. According to the Kanun, the murder could only have been justified if it had happened outside the house, before the killer was granted besa.

Most of the respondents (82.1 per cent) [84 per cent] stated that besa has a very significant meaning for them. Only 9 per cent stated that besa was not important for them. However, we could not find any significant difference in the level of justification between people who said that besa was significant for them and those who said that it was not. Hence, the word of honour is emphasized as important but not always valued in practice; 16.6 per cent (out of 726) [17.8 per cent (out of 864)] justified the offender's behaviour and 14.9 per cent [14.1 per cent] remained undecided. These results also demonstrate that the knowledge of the Kanun is rather superficial.

Similar to the previous stories, we conducted linear regression analysis and we found evidence that richer people justified revenge killings less (see Table 1). We also found suggestive evidence regarding the relation between revenge and dissatisfaction with politics and corruption. People that justified more revenge killings were more frustrated with the political situation in their country and thought that the government was highly corrupt. However, we came across some unexpected results regarding the respondents' satisfaction with the economy in their country. The more respondents were satisfied with the economic situation, the more they justified the offender in this story. As in all other stories, there were significant differences between the three countries. The lowest justification came from the Kosovo Albanians and the highest from Albanians from Albania. Ethnicity appeared to have no overall relation with the degree of justification. However, when focusing on the effect of ethnicity in Albania, where the subcultures are comparable, Ghegs justified this crime more than Tosks, and the difference between Ghegs and Tosks was significant ($p < 0.001$). In the other two countries the subcultural groups were not comparable because of the small sample size of Tosks, so we were unable to bring any conclusions.

Interestingly, support for revenge killing was not related to the reading of the Kanun, but it was closely linked to the importance of cultural norms. Respondents who said that traditional norms were very important for them were more supportive of the offender than those who said that tradition was not important for them. Hence, although this story goes against some core traditional values such as breaking a besa and harming a guest, it simultaneously supports other values, such as avenging a murder and defending the family's honour. It is obvious that a significant part of the population believes in some 'traditional norms', but does not know these norms well. When asked what the main motivation for the offender to kill the murderer of his brother was, 35.5 per cent (out of 726) [38.2 per cent (out of 8,640)] stated that he had to respect the Kanun laws. Most of the other respondents (44 per cent in both studies) said that the act was based solely on personal emotional drive.

One further observation could be noted with respect to the question of how justifiable the behaviour of the offender would have been if the murder had happened outside the

house before besa was granted to the guest-killer. This revenge killing would have been done in accordance with the Kanun. The public support of the offender in this version rose for about 10 per cent: 185 respondents out of 726 (25.5 per cent) [26.3 per cent (out of 864)] stated that the offender behaviour was [totally] justifiable; and 155 (21.3 per cent) [20.5 per cent] remained undecided.

In conclusion, we can observe that male Ghegs with a somewhat lower economic status, particularly from Albania, were the most supportive of revenge killings. These respondents were unhappy with the political situation in their country, and they believed their government was highly corrupted. These people highly valued traditional norms; however, supporting the offender in this story shows that their knowledge of these norms is superficial.

Intimate partner violence

Respondents were finally asked to read a vignette in which a husband killed his wife because of infidelity and to rate the behaviour of the offender on a seven-point scale.

Story 4: One man (R.R.) was detained by police after allegedly murdering his wife (S.R.) because of infidelity. The offender found his wife together with her lover in the house. He immediately killed her. Police described the attack as an act of jealousy. The offender explained that according to the Albanian customary laws (Kanun) a man has the right to kill his wife for two reasons: infidelity and betrayal of hospitality. Therefore, according to him it was his duty to kill his wife in order to defend his honour. The offender had no previous criminal record.

The Kanun provides that, under certain conditions, a man may kill his wife for adultery without incurring a blood feud (UNICEF 2000). However, even if the killing of the wife was permitted, there are certain rules that have to be followed. For example, according to the Kanun, the husband should kill the woman during the act itself from behind, with one bullet. Although these elements were not mentioned, generally speaking, this story could be considered in accordance with the Kanun.

One-hundred-and-fifty-three respondents out of 726 (21.1 per cent) [21.6 per cent (out of 864)] stated that the behaviour of the offender was [totally] justifiable, 8.7 per cent remained undecided, and 68.6 per cent did not justify the killing. Of the respondents that justified the offender, most of them stated that his behaviour was totally justifiable. When asked if they think his behaviour was honourable, 27.3 per cent (out of 726) [27.3 per cent] stated that it was very honourable and 14.7 per cent were undecided. From our further analysis, we could observe some suggestive evidence pointing out that older people were more supportive of the offender (see Table 1). There was also evidence that the more a respondent agreed with the statement that the government is highly corruptive, the more he/she supported this crime. However, in this gender crime, the main predictors were education, gender, country and respect for traditional norms. Significantly, people who had had a higher education justified the crime less, as did females.

Again, there were significant differences between countries (see Table 1). The highest support for the offender came from Macedonian Albanians and the lowest from Kosovars. As in the blood feud story, ethnicity appeared to have no overall relation with the degree of justification. However, when we focused on the effect of ethnicity in Albania, where the subcultures are comparable, we could observe that Ghegs were more supportive of this crime, though the difference was only marginally significant

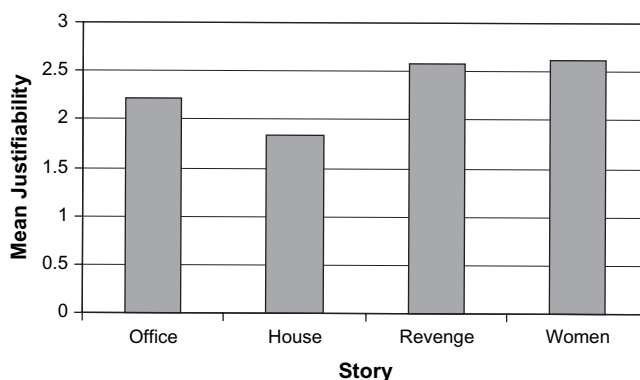


FIG. 3 A visual comparison of the four stories ('Justifiability').

($p=0.12$). Moreover, there was a significant difference between people who valued tradition and those who did not. The more important traditional norms were for a respondent, the more he/she justified the offender's behaviour (see Figure 3). Finally, people were asked what the main motivation for the husband to kill his wife was; 33.7 per cent (out of 726) stated that he had to respect the Kanun laws and defend his honour and 60.2 per cent argued that it was an act based solely on emotional drive and jealousy. When compared to the combined dataset, 35.3 per cent (out of 864) stated that it was because of the Kanun.

Hence, people who supported honour crimes mostly were the older, less educated ethnic Albanian males, primarily from Macedonia, but also Albania. These respondents were, to some extent, dissatisfied with the political situation in their country and claimed that culture was very important for them.

General overview

The overall analysis of the respondents' perceptions of the four stories showed that, in general, people still remember some cultural elements, but do not know the particularities

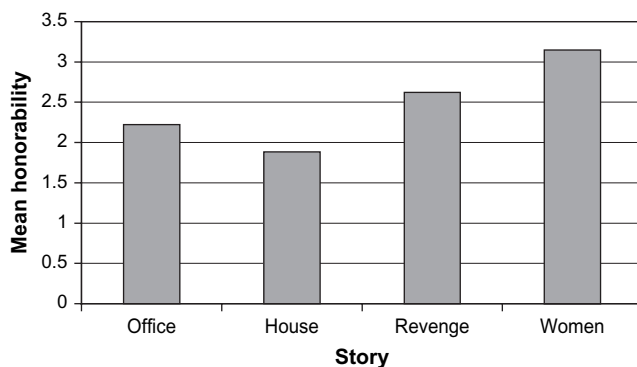


FIG. 4 A visual comparison of the four stories ('Honorability').

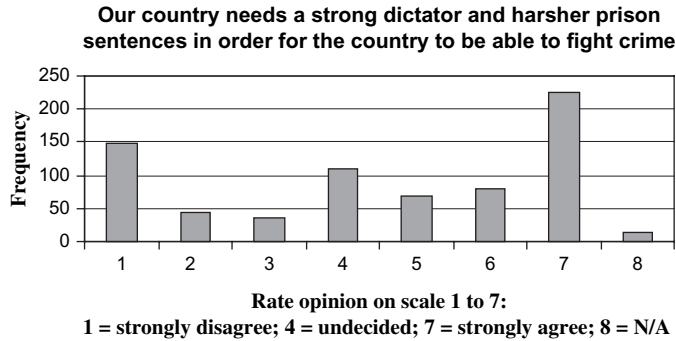


FIG. 5 Need of a dictator and harsh prison sentences.

of their cultural norms. The figure below shows that although story 2 (house robbery with no victims) had no serious consequences, it received the lowest level of support from the respondents. In stories 3 and 4, in which we presented murders, the offenders received the highest justification and story 1, in which there was a seriously wounded person, remained in the middle. Significance tests (contrasts with a Tukey-Kramer correction) showed that all differences between the stories are significant ($p < 0.0001$), except between story 3 (Revenge) and story 4 (Woman) ($p = 0.9666$).

When we conducted the same test for honourability—‘Is the behaviour of the offender honourable’—the results were similar, but the differences were even more significant (see Figure 4). When testing for honourability, we found significant differences between all four stories, including the last two ($p < 0.0001$). People considered the husband who killed his wife to be the most honourable, and then the offender who avenged the death of his brother.

Socio-cultural confusion

The socio-cultural confusion can be further observed in questions related to ideologies and values. Interestingly, 51.5 per cent of the respondents (374 out of 726) [strongly] agreed that their country needs a strong dictator and harsher prison sentences in order to fight criminality and 15.2 per cent remained undecided (see Figure 5).

The democratic legal system of the 'Western world' can not be a model for our country since it is incompatible with our culture/traditions

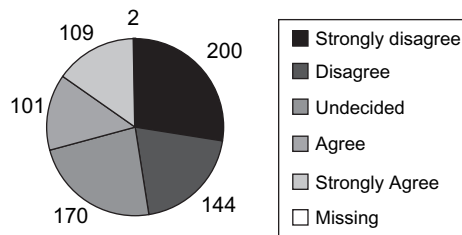


FIG. 6 Incompatibility with Western values.

We found that country, politics, economy, corruption, area of living, and subcultures played a significant role in shaping these attitudes (see Table 1). In general, the more dissatisfied people were with the political and economic situation in their country, the more they supported the idea of having a dictator and harsher prison sentences. Albanians from Albania and Macedonia were the least satisfied with the situation in their country; 275 out of 352 Albanians from Albania, 135 out of 193 Macedonian Albanians and 81 out of 173 Kosovars stated that the political situation in their country has been very bad in the last five years. Similar numbers could also be observed regarding economy and corruption. However, when controlling for different variables, we could observe that the Macedonian Albanians were mostly in favour of a dictator. Furthermore, people who came from villages were more in favour of a dictator and harsh prison sentences than people from urban areas. Ghegs were also much more in favour of a dictator than Tosks, which is consistent with the public perception of Ghegs as more rigid people within the Albanian society.

A comparable division in opinions could be observed in the question asking the respondents whether they agree or disagree with the following statement: The democratic legal system of the 'Western world' cannot be a model for our country, since it is incompatible with our culture/traditions; 28.9 per cent (out of 726) [strongly] agreed with the statement and 23.4 per cent remained undecided (see Figure 6). The highest level of agreement with the statement came again from Macedonian Albanians (97 out of 197).

When asked whether, in order to achieve development in their country, it was important that everyday citizens express their opinions and influence government's policies via different channels (e.g. elections, the media, etc.), 25.3 per cent (out of 726) of the respondents [strongly] disagreed. Surprisingly, 28.7 per cent remained undecided. Respondents were also asked if it would be useful to build the Kanun laws into the legal structure of their country. Although the majority disagreed (58 per cent), there was a large percentage of people that remained undecided (27 per cent). Regarding religion—although most respondents selected one religion—only 39.5 per cent practised their religion.

Conclusion

Albanian society is undergoing a period of rapid change. The findings of the research reported here suggest that while the traditional values have been severely weakened, new ones have not yet taken their place. Thus, while an Albanian 'culture of violence' and interpretations of customary Kanun laws may be factors in ethnic Albanian violent crime, on the basis of our research findings, we suggest that 'conflict of conduct norms' rather than any traditional 'culture of violence' per se might better explain recent increases in crime.

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