

Property Crime in the Countries of the Former Yugoslavia – A Longitudinal Study¹

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The first longitudinal study of this type in the countries of the former Yugoslavia addresses economic and social causes of property crime. We also want to determine their significance in criminal behaviour through the development of an empirical model that analyses crimes against property in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, namely Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia, by using time series data for the period from 1973 to 2014. The theoretical framework from the fields of criminology, economics and law implies that in addition to institutional environment and social structure, the level of crime in a society is strongly determined by the economic situation. Econometric analysis uses variables that represent theoretically identified determinants of property crime: economic conditions, probability of conviction, share of young males in the population, and dummy variables that capture some of the peculiarities in the transition period in the former Yugoslavia.

Keywords: economic analysis of law, economic theory of crime, property crime, criminology, countries of former Yugoslavia

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1 Introduction

The causes of crime can be found in many different and interdependent social, economic, cultural, and family conditions. Each of these conditions is explored, researched and explained in its own scientific field, either in sociology, economics, law, or criminology. Economics developed its own theory of crime, which has microeconomic foundations as (Allen, 1996: 293): *a micro-theory which, postulating that a welfare maximizing individual optimally allocates resources according to relative returns, links socioeconomic conditions to the individual's relative returns to legal and illegal activity*. Since the 18th century, the economic situation has been perceived as one of the key factors for explaining criminal behaviour. The most important economist dealing with the impact of economic

situations on crime and building the link between them was Garry Becker (1968). Becker (1968) explains criminal acts as a result of a maximization problem in which potential offenders compare the costs and the benefits of legal and illegal activities, taking into account the probability of being arrested and punished, and the expected return from crime. Building upon Becker, economic factors can have a strong influence on crime, especially on property crime. In this paper, we explore the influence of economic and social factors on property crime in the six republics that once formed Yugoslavia. This is the first study of this kind undertaken for this region as a whole.

2 Theoretical Overview

The simplest definition of crime would be any unlawful act punishable by the state (Horvatić, Derenčinović, & Cvitanović, 2016). The question why usually law abiding individuals were driven to commit criminal offences is the one that has puzzled philosophers, political scientists, criminologists, lawyers, sociologists, economists, and numerous other professional for centuries. Criminal behaviour is a behaviour in violation of the criminal law, and as criminologists Edwin Sutherland and Donald Cressey (in Siegel, 2012: 12) define it: *It is not a crime unless it is prohibited by the criminal law [which] is defined conventionally as a body of specific rules regarding human conduct which have been promulgated by political authority, which apply uniformly to all members of the classes to which the rules refer, and which are enforced by pun-*

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ishment administered by the state. Siegel (2012: 12), for example, links crime to social harm: *Though people generally enjoy a great deal of latitude in their behaviour, it is agreed that behaviours that are harmful to other people and society in general must be controlled. Social harm is what sets strange, unusual, or deviant behaviour – or any other action that departs from social norms – apart from criminal behaviours.* Friedman (2000: 223) points out that: *Someone commits a crime. He is arrested and punished. That is a cost to him, hence a reason not to commit the crime. Seen from this perspective, the explanation of criminal law is simple: It is a way of enforcing property rules.* Crime is a social phenomenon and must be viewed from the perspective of society as a whole. Social relations and conditions largely determine the number of criminal offences, types of offenders, their social status, education, as well as methods of committing crimes (Bavcon & Šelih, 1999). As Becker (1974: 2) pointed out: *obedience to law is not taken for granted, and public and private resources are generally spent in order both to prevent offenses and to apprehend offenders. In the second place, conviction is not generally considered sufficient punishment in itself; additional and sometimes severe punishments are meted out to those convicted.*

Social Control Theory emphasises the importance of the socialization process and social learning in building self-control and avoiding behaviour that can be considered criminal.

This theory assumes that individuals are capable of committing criminal acts in accordance with Hobbesian assumptions (Hobbes, 1964). Values, norms, and beliefs formed during socialization contribute to conforming behaviour, while, according to Hirschi (1969), delinquents fail to form, or maintain a bond to society consisting of attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (Wiatrowski, Griswold, & Roberts, 1981).

Social Structure Theory places the environment in which an individual lives as a factor which has a decisive impact on his/her behaviour (Siegel, 2012). This theory sees crime as a form of social dysfunction. The idea is associated with Durkheim's (1951) notion of *Anomie* – feelings of alienation among individuals arising from the discrepancy between culturally learned economic ambitions and the prospects of realizing those ambitions in a population that can even lead to (the act of) suicide (Durkheim, 1951). Merton (1938) modified the theory in order to explain variations in criminal and deviant behaviour. If wealth and economic abundance are used as symbols of success in a society while its social structure restricts legal and lawful ways in which individuals can attain them, individuals will turn to crime and other anti-social behaviours in order to gain them. The countries where income is distributed unevenly are more likely to have more property related crime (Albertson & Fox, 2012).

According to Siegel (2012: 269) critical theory is: *the interdisciplinary project announced by Max Horkheimer and practiced by members of the Frankfurt school and their successors, whereby the Enlightenment ideal of a civil society might be achieved by bringing scientific research to bear on Marx's theory of social change. In a looser sense, critical theory is now a more general term, under which research projects in the social sciences and/or humanities attempt to bring truth and political engagement into alignment. In both senses, critical theory is an offspring of the Kantian tradition of thought that prizes self-knowledge (see Kant and NeoKantianism). This theory is the basis for critical criminology which roots can be traced to Marx and his close collaborator Engels who influenced the development of the view of crime that rested on the concept of social conflict.* Siegel (2012: 270) further points out: *Today, critical criminologists devote their attention to a number of important themes and concepts. One is the use and misuse of power, or the ability of persons and groups to determine and control the behaviour of others and to shape public opinion to meet their personal interests. Because those in power shape the content of the law, it comes as no surprise that their behaviour is often exempt from legal sanctions.*⁵

On the other hand, there is another economic theory which is based on utility. As Becker (1974: 9) pointed out: *a person commits an offense if the expected utility to him exceeds the utility he could get by using his time and other resources at other activities. Some persons become "criminals," therefore, not because their basic motivation differs from that of other persons, but because their benefits and costs differ.* Moreover, Anderson and Becker (1976: 9) claim that: *A key feature of illicit activity is the uncertainty of its outcome: the rewards of offending and getting away with it are different to those of offending and being caught. The rewards of legitimate activity, on the other hand, are assumed to be certain.*

This has to do with how people behave in certain situations. Clark (1995: 98), for example, emphasises that: *decision processes involved in commission of a particular crime (i.e. criminal event) are dependent on their own special categories of information.* Economic theories assume that people will act rationally in order to improve their well-being. As Cooter and Ulen (2012: 13) point out: *conception of rationality holds that a rational actor can rank alternatives according to the extent that they give her what she wants.* In order to be considered rational, ranking of different deeds must be complete, transitive, and reflexive. Also, much depends on what a person's views on risks are: is (s)he risk-averse, risk neutral, or a risk seeker? (Cooter

⁵ It also deals with the problems of globalization and how workers react to the distribution of surplus value which is not distributed evenly and fairly (Siegel, 2012).

& Ulen, 2012: 46). If (s)he is a risk taker, (s)he will commit a criminal offence even if the odds are not highly in her/his favour to be successful. Rational Choice Theory, also known as rational action theory, has its roots in the analysis of human behaviour developed by Cesare Beccaria in 1764 (Beccaria, 2005) in his work *On Crimes and Punishment*, argued that fair and certain punishment is the best way to deter crime and spoke (where he argues) in favour of Hobbesian bargaining in order to bring peace and tranquillity to individuals and society, and by Jeremy Bentham in 1789, a British utilitarian philosopher, jurist and social reformer (Bentham, 1996).

Drawing on Becker (1974: 5–6), we could say that some individuals will become criminals if financial and other rewards from crime exceed the rewards coming from legal activities, taking into account the likelihood of apprehension and conviction, and the severity of punishment. Siegel (2012: 105) clarifies: *According to the contemporary rational choice approach, law-violating behaviour occurs when an offender decides to risk breaking the law after considering both personal factors (i.e., the need for money, revenge, thrills, and entertainment) and situational factors (i.e., how well a target is protected and the efficiency of the local police force). People who believe that the risks of crime outweigh the rewards may decide to go straight. If they think they are likely to be arrested and punished, they are more likely to seek treatment and turn their lives around than risk criminal activities.*

In our model, we tried to take into account all of these theories and to use them to build an econometric model of economic and social determinants of property crime.⁶ Šelih (2013: 316) also pointed out that it is impossible to explain changes in criminal behaviour that occurred in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism by using only one theoretical model.

3 Property and Criminal Legislation in Ex-Yugoslavia Countries

In order for property crime to exist, there must be a category of property as a legal set of rules granting the ownership of same to a specific person. Let us start with the Roman law definition and understanding of property, since all of the countries covered by our research base their legal systems on Civil Law, which itself has roots in Roman law. Romans understood property as absolute ownership (*dominium*) of a

thing with the owner having the rights of *ius utendi, fruendi et abutendi* (Romac, 2002)⁷. Civil law continued that tradition but also imposed certain constraints on property rights (Gavella, Josipović, Gliha, Belaj, & Stipković, 2007). In order for the right of property to exist, one of the following two conditions must be fulfilled: either there should exist a state which will define, recognize, protect and enforce property rights, or a stateless society has to sign a sort of Hobbesian social contract (Hobbes, 1964) by which all of these rights will be recognized, protected, and enforced⁸ by all the members of a particular society. If either of these two criteria is not met, we cannot speak about property but about possession⁹. Much of European and world history could be seen as a fight to recognize, enforce and protect property rights of the citizens by laws and by constitutions.¹⁰ Secure property rights have been recognized by economists as one of the key ingredients of economic development (Olson, 2000). All of the countries of former Yugoslavia based their Laws of property on the Austrian General Civil Code of 1811.¹¹ Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia were part of the Austria-Hungary Empire, while Serbia introduced its own Civil Law Code in 1844, which was based on the Austrian Civil Code, and which was subsequently introduced in Macedonia after being conquered by Serbia in 1913. On the other hand, Montenegro introduced its own Civil Code in 1888.¹² All of these legal codes were in force in the territory of Yugoslavia until 1946. Socialist Yugoslavia existed from 1946 to 1991. Private property was regulated in the “socialist utopia” manner by keeping most of the existing legislature in force in some way or the other, and by adding so-called “social property” in order to foster socialist development. The main difference between private and social property is that people generally take better care of and safeguard their own private property than social or pub-

⁶ Our research has been limited to classical property crime and does not focus on white collar crime. For more on white collar crime in Slovenia, see for example: Viraj, Tičar, Florjančič and Eman (2015) and Kolar and Zdolšek (2013).

⁷ On the other hand, the Anglo-Saxon legal system views property as a more relative sort of right and defines it as a better right of possession of a thing (Cooter & Ulen, 2012)

⁸ Possession, on the other hand, is a factual ownership of a thing.

⁹ Possession without property would significantly hinder commerce since no one would have certain title to the thing which is the object of property (Gavella et al., 2007).

¹⁰ Constitutions protected property rights of the citizens not from the other citizens but from the state itself. The state has a right to a part of its citizens' and non-citizens' property but only through legal based taxation.

¹¹ The Austrian General Civil Code or Allgemeines Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch für die deutschen Erbländer in German is usually abbreviated as ABGB. De Winiwarter (1866) provides English translations of the paragraphs of the ABGB.

¹² Which was written by Baltazar Bogišić and combined customs with civil law (Bogišić, 2004). For historical context and legal influences of the 1844 Serbian Civil Code (Srpski građanski zakonik) see Horvat, Bastaić and Sirotković (1968).

lic property. When the state and society created, recognized and protected private property, they gave incentive to people to take better care of their private resources and to look after them more closely. Aristotle (in Mankiw, 2015: 225) described nicely this issue in the 4th century B.C.: *What is common to many is taken least care of, for all men have greater regard for what is their own than for what they possess in common with others.* Consequently, no amount of legislation during the communist times aimed at creation and protection of “social” property could change the nature of man in dealing with “social property”.

Currently, every country of the former Yugoslavia has its own laws on property, which have been passed during the transition and post-transition periods,¹³ and which are adjusted to the capitalist economic system. Every society determines what it considers to be criminal behaviour, and in these countries it is determined by constitutions and criminal codes passed by the parliaments of these countries.

In the period between 1971 and 2014, many basic “sets” of criminal legislation were valid in the territory of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. Initially, all of these countries followed the Criminal Code of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) (Krivični zakonik, 1951), which was valid between 1951, i.e. from the beginning of the period analysed, and 1977. Chapter XX (Krivični zakonik SFRJ, 1951), which dealt with crimes against social and private property, included larceny, grand larceny, larceny in the form of robbery, robbery, embezzlement, joy riding¹⁴, unlawful appropriation of other people’s goods, malicious mischief, imprudent keeping of social property, fraud, breach of trust, extortion and blackmail, usury, violation of another person’s rights, damage or destruction of archival material, and concealment.

In 1977, each of the Republics was allowed to introduce their own Criminal Codes, and Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia passed their own penal codes in that same year. The Criminal Code of

Socialist Republic (SR) of Slovenia (Kazenski zakon Republike Slovenije, 1977) included and dealt with specific offences only, while most of the general provisions were contained in the newly passed Criminal Code of the SFRY (Krivični zakon SFRJ, 1976). Some new crimes were included in this penal code, while some of the existing ones were eliminated. Damage or destruction of archival material was replaced and broadened to include illegal export and import of goods of special cultural or historical significance, outstanding natural features, or endangered species of animals and plants contrary to the principles of international law, as well as unlawful damaging or destruction of goods of special cultural significance, outstanding natural features, other protected natural resources or a public resource. Arson, damage to dwellings, business buildings and premises, and unlawful occupation of dwellings belonging to another were introduced while special (stricter) treatment of some crimes (if they were committed against social property) was eliminated. As illustrated for the case of Slovenia, some similar changes were also introduced in other republics, including Macedonia (Krivični zakonik SR Makedonije, 1977), Serbia (Krivični zakon Republike Srbije, 1977), Croatia (Krivični zakon SR Hrvatske, 1977), Montenegro (Krivični zakon SR Crne Gore, 1977), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (Krivični zakon SR Bosne i Hercegovine, 1977). Currently, every country of the former Yugoslavia has passed its own modernized Criminal Code. The challenge for potential researchers of property crime lies in the difference between types of property crimes in each of these countries, as illustrated in Table 1. Bosnia and Herzegovina is the best example of this as it has a general criminal code, considered to be the common criminal code of the country, but does not deal with property crime. Definition of what is considered-property crime in Bosnia and Herzegovina is left to its two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, resulting in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina differentiating between 16 types of crimes against property, and Republika Srpska between 22 types of crimes against property. The differences in the number of types of criminal offences against property can probably be attributed to different cultural and historical development of these countries. We should not forget that they were a part of the same state only from 1918–1991, the equivalent of only one human lifespan.

¹³ In Croatia, property is regulated in the Ownership and Other Property Rights Act (Zakon o vlasništvu i drugim stvarnim pravima, 1996), in Serbia in the Basic Property Law Relations Act (Zakon o osnovama svojinsko-pravnih odnosa, 2005), in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Property Law Relations Act (Zakon o vlasničko-pravnim odnosima, 1998), in Montenegro in the Property Law Relations Act (Zakon o svojinsko-pravnim odnosima, 2009), in Macedonia in the Ownership and Other Property Rights Act (Zakon za sopstvenost i drugi stvarni prava, 2001) and in Slovenia in the Law of Property Code (Stvarnopravni zakonik, 2002).

¹⁴ Unlawful taking of another’s motor vehicle with the intention of use and not appropriation (Krivični zakon SFRJ, 1951).

Table 1: Number of criminal offences against property as defined in countries' Criminal codes¹⁵

Country	Number of criminal offences against property as defined in Criminal codes	
	1977	2014
Slovenia	19	21
Croatia	21	17
Bosnia and Herzegovina (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina)		16
Bosnia and Herzegovina (Republika Srpska)	23	22
Serbia	20	24
Montenegro	22	22
Macedonia	20	33

4 Methodology of Data Collection

The collection of data for the countries included in this research was rather complicated. Data collected primarily from statistical offices of the countries included in our study (their yearbooks for the period in question),¹⁶ Statistical yearbook of Yugoslavia (Savezni zavod za statistiku, 1992–2002), Eurostat (2017a, 2017b), and World Bank (2017), so there is heterogeneity in the analyses. In general, initial years covered by the research exhibited poorer data coverage than subsequent years. On the other hand, later methodologies became more divergent due to the break-up of the SFRY. Consequently, data comparability for more recent years is much lower than during the initial years. The problem is that there was a more or less unified methodology concerning data on crime dur-

ing the SFRY period with Slovenia being the outlier.¹⁷ In the meantime, it was hard to gather data and establish which area they were valid for. We had to treat Kosovo as part of Serbia until 1999, when Serbia finally lost control of its southern province, so this was no easy thing to do since Kosovo roughly accounted for a third of crimes against property in Serbia as a whole, prior to its independence, which meant fewer criminal offences in Serbia proper after 1999. Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have any useful data for the war period 1992–1995, which does not come as a surprise since keeping adequate statistics is not a priority in situations such as that. The problem arose after the war as there were two statistical offices, one in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the other in Republika Srpska, which used pretty much the same methodology with slight differences,¹⁸ and we had to compound these sources in order to get the unified data for the country. In fact, there exists a Statistical agency of B&H, which combines selected statistics from these two offices but unfortunately, not the ones we needed for our study. Today, all of these countries are either EU member states or are trying to join the EU, and in order to do this, they need to harmonise their methodology (on a voluntary basis) with that

¹⁵ Kazenski zakonik RS (Criminal code of Slovenia), 2012; Kazneni zakon (Criminal code of Croatia), 2011; Krivični zakonik (Criminal code of Serbia), 2005; Krivični zakonik (Criminal code of Montenegro), 2003; Krivični zakon Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine (Criminal code of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), 2003; Krivični zakon Republike Srpske (The criminal code of the Republika Srpska), 2003; Krivičen zakonik (Criminal code of Macedonia), 1996.

¹⁶ Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske (1991–2015), Federalni zavod za statistiku Federacije Bosne i Hercegovine (2000–2015), Republički zavod za statistiku Socijalističke Republike Srbije (1974–1990), Republički zavod za statistiku SR Bosne i Hercegovine (1974–1990), Republički zavod za statistiku SR Crne Gore (1974–1990), Republički zavod za statistiku SR Hrvatske (1974–1989), Statistični urad Republike Slovenije (1990–2012, 2014), Zavod SR Slovenije za statistiko (1974–1989), Zavod za statistiku Crne Gore (2006–2015), Republic of Macedonia, Republic Statistical Office (1993–2015), Republic Statistical Office of the Republic of Srpska (2009–2015), Socialist Republic of Macedonia, Republic Institute for Statistics (1974–1989).

¹⁷ In a sense that it had more criminal acts against property in its Criminal Law Code compared with the acts against property in criminal codes of other republics (Kazenski zakon Republike Slovenije (Criminal Code of SR Slovenia), 1977; Krivični zakon SR Hrvatske (Criminal code of SR Croatia), 1978; Krivični zakon SR Crne Gore (Criminal code of SR Montenegro), 1977; Krivični zakonik SR Makedonije (Criminal code of SR Macedonia), 1977; Krivični zakon Republike Srbije (Criminal code of SR Serbia), 1977; Krivični zakon SR Bosne i Hercegovine (Criminal code of SR B&H), 1977).

¹⁸ The 2011 census results are still not fully disclosed and have been challenged by the statistical office of Republika Srpska (Agencija za statistiku B&H, 2017).

of the European statistical system¹⁹ which will make it easier for future researchers to do a comparative analysis. The result was strong heterogeneity in the data with which we had to deal in our research. Another problem which arose was that crimes against property differed somewhat in these countries even during the communist periods (and especially since the break-up of former Yugoslavia), as could be seen in the previous sections of this paper.

5 Descriptions and Descriptive Statistics of Variables Used in the Model

5.1 Number of Crimes Committed against Property per Thousand Inhabitants (*cpt*)²⁰

The amount of crime per thousand inhabitants is the most appropriate and commonly used measure of crime, since it enables intertemporal and comparisons between countries.

cause a large part of crimes remains unregistered or unexplored (Bavcon & Šelih, 1999). Also, statistical registration of criminal offences and the relation towards so called petty crime, changes over time (Scorcu & Cellini, 1998). This analysis uses the number of crimes detected by the police as a proxy for the number of committed crimes, which is in accordance with the literature (Denny, Harmon, Lydon, & Walker, 2004). This choice is appropriate because it shows the number of committed crimes best, while the number of trials is better at revealing the number of perpetrators captured. There are large differences between the countries included in this research. Slovenia is a country with the highest rate of crime per thousand inhabitants, while Bosnia and Herzegovina has the lowest. Large crime numbers for Slovenia could be explained by a higher detection rate and better performance of the police, rather than by significantly higher criminal activity in the country, especially because this difference existed even in the Yugoslav era as well as in the period when the countries shared the same penal code (before 1977). After that, it could also be a consequence of differences in legislation.

Table 2: Number of committed crimes against property per thousand inhabitants (CPT), descriptive statistics

CPT	N	M	SD	Min.	Max.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	2.4	0.8	0.7	3.4
Montenegro	42	4.0	1.2	2.2	6.5
Croatia	42	7.0	1.6	4.6	10.3
Macedonia	42	5.3	2.8	1.8	12.5
Slovenia	42	20.2	7.6	10.7	33.2
Serbia	42	6.7	1.1	4.4	9.6
All countries combined	244	7.8	6.8	0.7	33.2

Source: authors' calculations.

Note: No consistent data are available for B&H in the period 1991–1998.

The number of crimes committed can be estimated either from the number of crimes detected by the police, from the number of indictments filed, or from the number of trials. However, none of these sources provides accurate data be-

¹⁹ The European Statistical System (ESS) functions as a network in which Eurostat's role is to lead the way in the harmonization of statistics in close cooperation with the national statistical authorities. ESS work concentrates mainly on EU policy areas – but, with the extension of EU policies, harmonization has been extended to nearly all statistical fields (Eurostat, 2017a, 2017b).

²⁰ For study focusing on the theft of vehicles in Serbia and some other countries see: Mijalković, Bošković, Vuković & Vučković (2016).

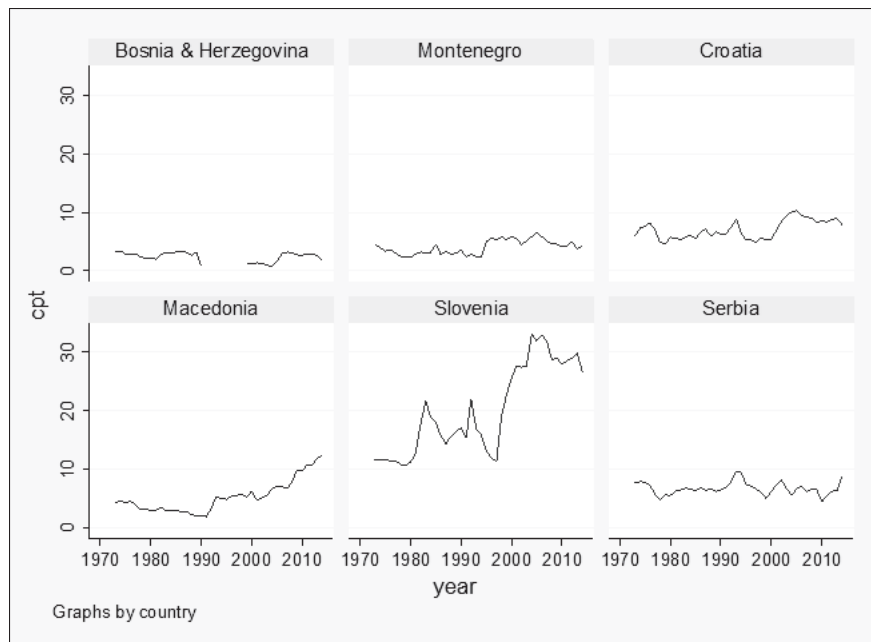


Figure 1: Number of committed crimes against property per thousand inhabitants (as recorded by police)
 (Source: Čelik, 1978–1982, 1987; Guček, 1983–1986; Kebe & Ferme, 2012; Kolar, & Zdolšek, 2013; Kolenc, Kebe, & Bukovnik, 2011, 2013, 2014; Lukan, 2007, 2008, 2009; Lukan & Kolenc, 2010; Posega, 1988; Posega, Miložič, Ivanović, & Šetar, 1989, 1990; Pukart, 1974–1977; Svetek, 1992–2006)

This variable also enters the equation as a lagged dependent variable.

5.2 Probability of Conviction – Number of Convictions per Thousand Crimes Committed (*conv*)

Trumbull (1989) notes that previous studies have shown that offenders respond more to a given proportional increase in the probability of punishment than (they do) to the same proportionate increase in the severity of punishment. Consequently, we tried to include the variable that measures the probability of conviction. The number of convictions divided by the number of recorded crimes is one of the most commonly used proxies in the literature. Perceptions of criminals are created when they get familiar with the number of convict(ion)s (for example, through the media or through their fellow criminals), and compare them with the number of crimes reported in the media or observed in the criminal society.

B&H is the country with the highest rate of convictions per thousand crimes committed, while, on the other hand, Slovenia has the lowest. This variable is derived from information on the number of crimes committed, which is relatively high for Slovenia, indicating some differences in the statistical collection of data or a higher detection rate in Slovenia.

Table 3: Number of convicts per thousand crimes committed (CONV), descriptive statistics

CONV	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	34	389.9	196.4	149.8	834.3
Montenegro	42	174.4	53.6	27.8	270.0
Croatia	42	199.6	43.2	125.1	300.2
Macedonia	42	96.0	57.4	10.4	238.9
Slovenia	42	111.9	57.1	48.1	205.8
Serbia	42	172.5	34.0	83.4	229.2
All countries combined	244	184.2	124.9	10.4	834.3

Source: authors' calculations.

Note: No consistent data are available for B&H in the period 1991–1998.

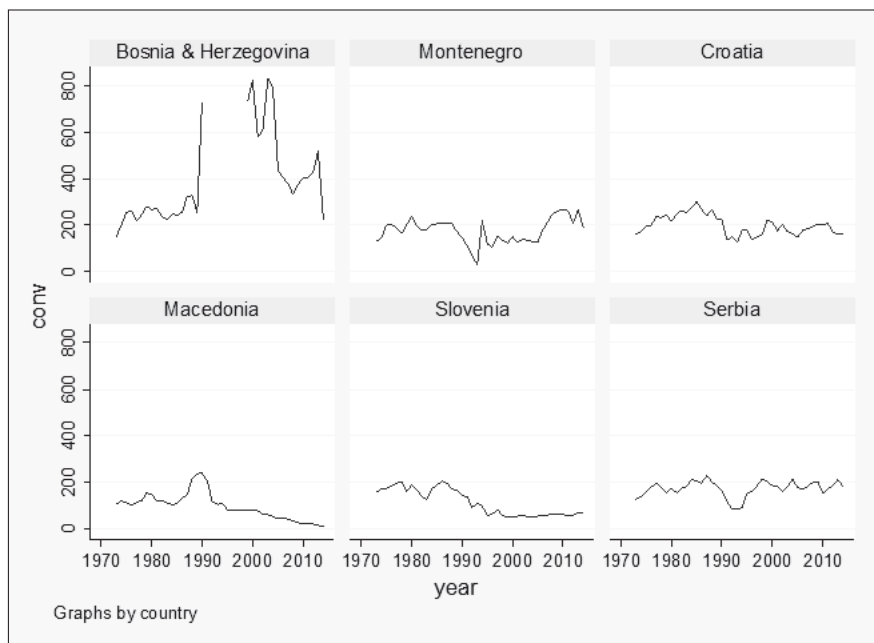


Figure 2: Number of convicts per thousand committed crimes

5.3 Economic Conditions: GDP Growth (*rgdp*) and Unemployment Rate (*un*)

Criminals respond to the opportunity costs of crime. An increase in the possibilities to earn an income in a legally acceptable way should normally cause a decrease in criminal activity. Consequently, ameliorating economic and social conditions has been both theoretically and empirically verified as one of the best policies for reducing the amount of

crime in a society (Ahtik, Rančić, & Pilipović, 2010; Cooter & Ulen, 2012).

The relationship between crime and the labour market and education was the main issue in several studies. Chisholm and Choe (2005) provided a very good literature review of possible variables that can be used as a proxy for costs and benefits of criminal activity, such as median income, median family income, mean family income, and labour income to

manufacturing workers. According to Tompa (2008), lower inequality is associated with lower criminal activity in Slovenia. Additionally, the unemployment rate, employment, workforce size, earnings, consumption and poverty have been among the proxies used. Perhaps unemployed workers start committing crimes to earn gain income or to deal with their inactive idle time and frustration. Poorer employment conditions consequently lead to an increase in the amount of property crimes (Cooter & Ulen, 2012). Imrohroglu, Merlo and Rupert (2006) showed that approximately 16% of the unemployed and only 5% of employees in the United States are engaged in criminal activity. Also, Raphael and Winter-Ebmer (1998) found huge positive effects of unemployment on crime, but on the other hand, some studies also explored the reverse impact of involvement in criminal activity on unemployment. A reduced network of personal contacts (outside of crime related activities) and lower accessibility

Two variables are taken into account in this study, mainly due to unavailability of other potential variables (such as measures of inequality, which is often considered to be an important trigger of criminal activity). GDP growth and unemployment rate are two of the most frequently used proxies of economic conditions in the literature investigating determinants of criminal activity. All countries of the former Yugoslavia exhibited a sharp decline of the GDP in the early Nineties, after the break-up of Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Another (common) event that affected them all was the global financial and economic crisis that started in 2008, but those countries were affected at a different pace and to a different degree. The war in the early Nineties hit several countries, while Serbia (and Montenegro) were also struck by the Kosovo War in the late Nineties. Some specific events, e.g. transition and war, which had economic consequences as well, were thus captured through dummy variables.

Table 4: Real GDP growth (rGDP), descriptive statistics

rGDP	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	30	0.048	0.049	-0.028	0.189
Montenegro	42	0.023	0.104	-0.365	0.276
Croatia	42	0.010	0.054	-0.209	0.087
Macedonia	42	0.018	0.044	-0.101	0.097
Slovenia	42	0.020	0.044	-0.088	0.124
Serbia	42	0.004	0.087	-0.304	0.088
All countries combined	240	0.019	0.069	-0.365	0.276

Source: authors' calculations.

of job opportunities for those involved in criminal activities increases unemployment among them. However, if demand for labour is high, involvement in criminal activity represents only a minor obstacle for employers (Calvó-Armengol & Zenou, 2003).

Deadman and Pyle (1997) used the real GDP and real consumers' expenditures and discovered that there is an inverse relationship between recorded crime and both of these economic indicators. In his report, Whittaker (Whittaker Report, 1985) also confirmed the strong link between crime and unfavourable economic conditions. Other researches show the opposite effect of changes in economic conditions, where deteriorating economic conditions also exacerbates the opportunities for crime and lowers its returns yields (Cooter & Ulen, 2012).

On average, GDP growth was the highest in B&H (unfortunately a large part of data for the war period that was associated with depleted growth rates is missing for B&H), while it was the lowest in Serbia (close to 0). Macedonia and Slovenia also exhibited the lowest variability of GDP growth indicating higher stability of the GDP, which might had a deterrent impact on criminal activity.

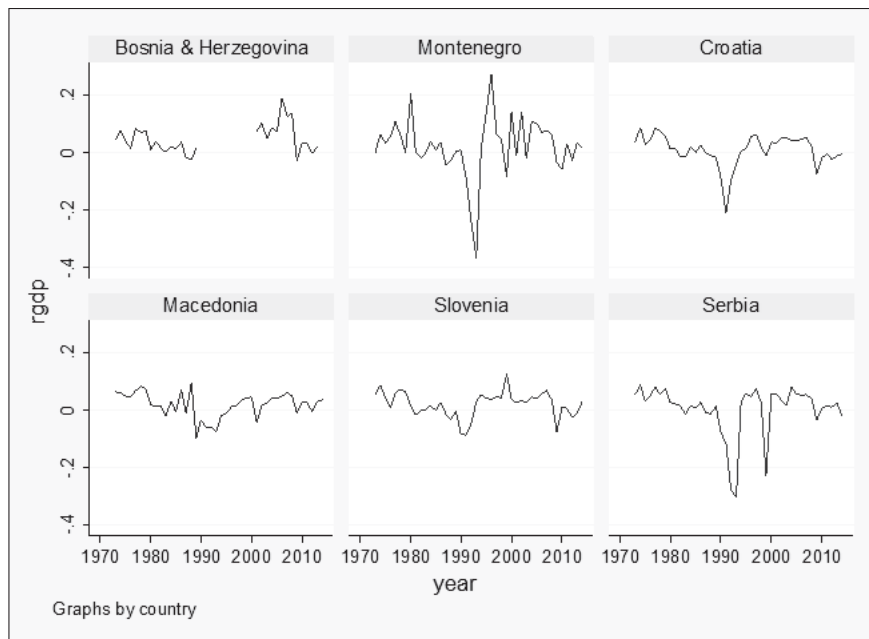


Figure 3: Real GDP growth

The unemployment rate is affected more by economic and social conditions than by GDP growth. It also reflects the social dimensions of a country's economic situation; people with a lot of free time who also feel frustrated about their conditions are more prone to committing crime than people who spend a significant part of the day at work.

Similarly, as in the case of the GDP, Slovenia and Croatia exhibited (the best and) the most stable employment situation,

while Macedonia and Serbia, on the other hand, performed the worst. Due to the lack of data referring to the labour force, unemployment is presented as a share of the unemployed in the entire population. The positive change in unemployment in all the countries was linked to severe economic conditions, such as a transition crisis and a global economic crisis, while some countries faced other events that led to the increase of unemployment.

Table 5: Unemployment rate (UN), descriptive statistics

UN	N	M	SD	Min.	Max.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	35	0.070	0.038	0.013	0.126
Montenegro	42	0.070	0.032	0.019	0.135
Croatia	42	0.048	0.024	0.012	0.091
Macedonia	42	0.102	0.040	0.040	0.159
Slovenia	42	0.034	0.024	0.005	0.069
Serbia	42	0.077	0.034	0.022	0.136
All countries combined	245	0.067	0.039	0.005	0.159

Source: authors' calculations.

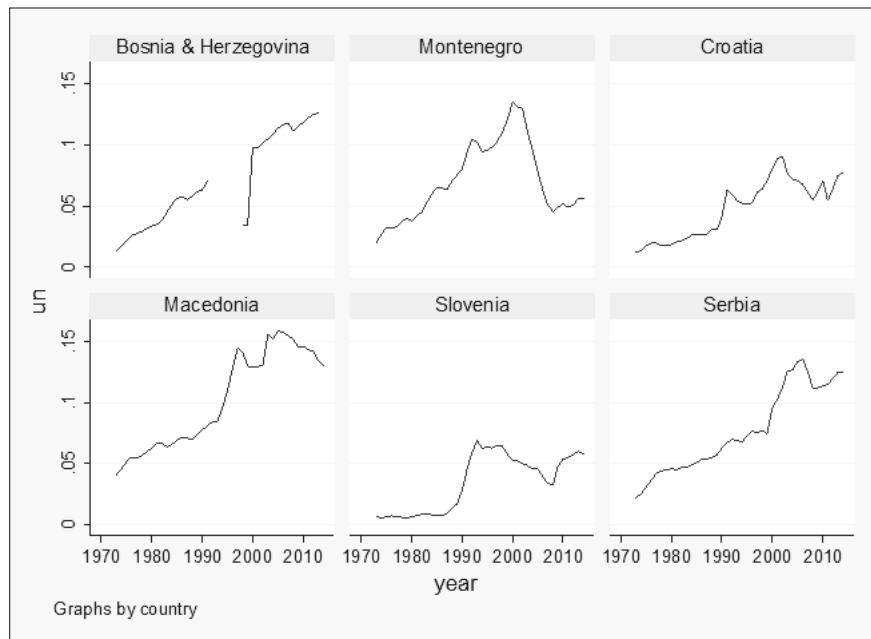


Figure 4: Unemployment rate

Both economic variables were used in parallel as they capture different dimensions that can all be relevant for criminal activity.

5.4 Share of Young Males

Several studies have shown that a larger proportion of young males in society corresponds to higher (property-related) criminal activity (Denny et al., 2004; Grogger, 1998). Young males (men aged 20 to 24) has been used as the data for the variable “share of young males in the population”. This age group has been selected due to similar age groupings used in some other analyses (Denny et al., 2004; Wilson & Daly, 1985), and since minor and young adult perpetrators are normally treated differently, those under 20 years of age was not included in the study.

The variable “share of young males in the population” exhibits the lowest variability of all variables, which is obviously expected, as changes in the population structure are not very common. Possible exceptions in the history of Yugoslavia are war events which resulted in an especially high death toll among young males (which is particularly noticeable

in B&H). In addition to this, declining birth rates represent a major cause of the decreasing share of young males in the population.

This variable is of the lowest quality, so its results should be interpreted with caution. In certain or (for some countries) even all periods under observation, data on population are available only every four years, causing lower variability of this series and consequently limiting its usefulness in the analysis.

Table 6: Share of young males in the population (YM), descriptive statistics

YM	N	M	SD	Min.	Max.
Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	0.046	0.003	0.041	0.052
Montenegro	42	0.042	0.004	0.036	0.049
Croatia	42	0.036	0.004	0.030	0.043
Macedonia	42	0.042	0.003	0.038	0.050
Slovenia	42	0.038	0.004	0.028	0.045
Serbia	42	0.036	.003	0.031	0.043
All countries combined	252	0.040	0.005	0.028	0.052

Source: authors' calculations.

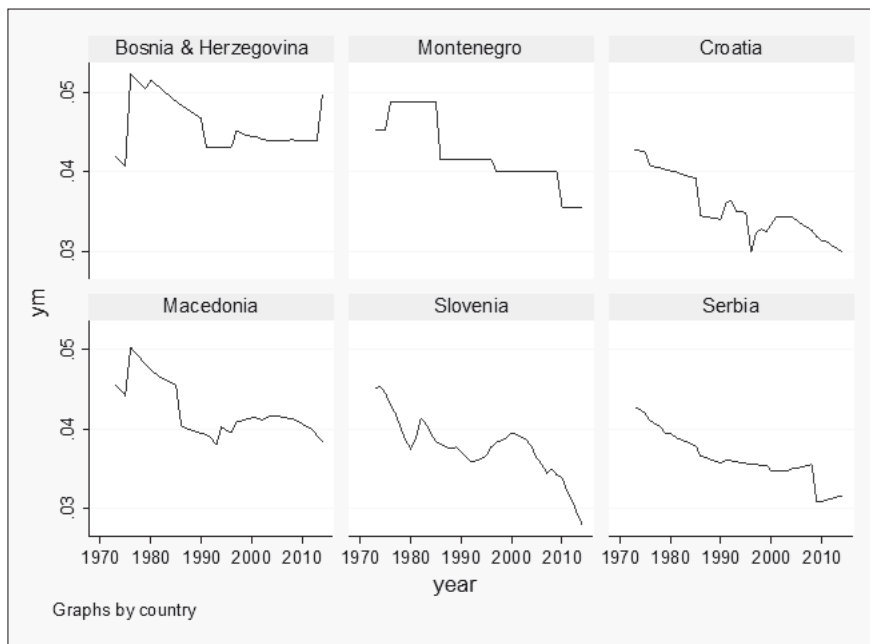


Figure 5: Share of young males in the population

5.5 Dummy Variables: War and Transition

Two dummy variables, one country and time specific (war), and the other one (transition – trans) time specific, have been used in the model.

The “war” variable is specific to each individual country. Slovenia, for example, was not involved in any armed conflict during the period explored (with an exception of a 10-day war

for independence, which is not considered here), while all the other countries of the former Yugoslavia experienced war episodes. Firstly during this period, it is possible to assume that the functioning of society itself alters significantly as people tend to focus on their own survival and, secondly, the police and judiciary cannot function normally (as police forces are usually engaged in war operations), so it could be expected that the results could be significantly different for this period. It is difficult to predict the sign of the coefficient as crime lev-

els could be higher during the war, while at the same time the police and judiciary might be less efficient, causing crime and conviction levels to drop.

lished) connected with a (temporarily) lower efficiency of the police and judiciary. If this prevailed, also levels of crime could be lower in this period. Some of the countries such as Slovenia and Croatia are already more advanced, and joined

Table 7: Dummy variable for war (war), descriptive statistics

War	N	Observation war=1	Observation war=0	M	SD
Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	4	38	0.095	0.297
Montenegro	42	2	40	0.048	0.216
Croatia	42	5	37	0.119	0.328
Macedonia	42	1	41	0.024	0.154
Slovenia	42	0	42	0.000	0.000
Serbia	42	9	33	0.214	0.451
All countries combined	252	22	230	0.087	0.283

Source: UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2017.

The transition dummy variable captures not only changes in the economic system that occurred after 1990, but also the breakdown of Yugoslavia that began in 1991. Similarly, with regards to other dummy variables, the results are ambiguous. The transition period was related to the initial decline in economic welfare, increase in unemployment, and social inequality, which are all factors contributing to higher criminal activity. On the other hand, the transition was the institutions building period (during which old communist institutions had to be reformed and new democratic insitutions estab-

the EU in the meantime and their institutions are considered to be at a higher level. Apart from that, they have already overcome some of the specific transition problems. The year of joining the EU is the year when a country is considered to have completed the transition period.

The data for B&H does not reach the requested quality, and that is why we have excluded B&H from further analysis and continued our research with the data for Montenegro, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia.

Table 8: Dummy variable for transition (trans), descriptive statistics

trans	N	Observation trans=1	Observation trans=0	M	SD
Bosnia and Herzegovina	42	24	18	0.571	0.496
Montenegro	42	24	18	0.571	0.496
Croatia	42	22	20	0.524	0.505
Macedonia	42	24	18	0.571	0.496
Slovenia	42	13	29	0.310	0.468
Serbia	42	24	18	0.571	0.496
All countries combined	252	131	121	0.571	0.496

Source: authors' calculations.

Note: Obs trans=1/0 – number of years in (before/after) transition.

6 Correlations

Pairwise correlations (see table 7) indicate that the number of convictions and crimes are negatively correlated. However, this could also be caused by the endogeneity of contemporaneously used variables. Negative sign of the coefficient, as well as negative and statistically significant correlations of lags of number of convictions and contemporaneous number of crimes,²¹ indicate that endogeneity is not the case here, pointing to the possibility that convictions actually have a deterrent effect on criminal activity.

GDP growth is not correlated with the number of crimes, but a negative statistically significant correlation with unemployment rate is present, indicating that (unexpectedly) a higher unemployment rate is related to lower criminal activity. The correlation is, however, not very high. A higher share of young males in the population is, surprisingly, negatively correlated with criminal activity. This outcome could be explained by a rather small variation of this variable, partially caused by the lack of annual data (as explained mainly in the first part of the sample, the data for some of the countries are updated only every four years).

7 The Model

In order to test for determinants of property crime in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, Equation 1 has been estimated. Since unit root²² has been detected in some of the series (CPT, CONV, UN), these series have been used in first differences. In order to take into account time invariant country specificities,²³ the fixed effects model has been estimated. Results of Equation 1 are presented in Table 10. We conducted additional analyses for developments over time. However, we did not obtain significantly different results for any of the explanatory variables, neither for individual countries nor for the panel after dividing the sample into two subsamples using the break-up of Yugoslavia in 1991 as a limit.

Equation 1:

$$dCPT_{i,t} = Cons + dCPT_{i,t-1} + dCONV_{i,t} + gGDP_{i,t} + dUN_{i,t} + YM_{i,t} + war_{i,t} + trans_{i,t} + e_{i,t}$$

Table 9: Pairwise correlations of continuous variables, all countries, except Bosnia and Herzegovina.

	CPT	CONV	rGDP	UN	YM
CPT	1				
CONV	-0.5725*	1			
rGDP	0.0242	0.0683	1		
UN	-0.2224*	0.0279	-0.0508	1	
YM	-0.3322*	0.2071*	0.2140*	-0.1834*	1

Source: authors' calculations.

Note: Star (*) indicates significance at 0.01 level.

CPT – Number of committed crimes against property per thousand inhabitants; CONV – Probability of conviction – number of convicts per thousand crimes committed; rGDP – real GDP growth rate; UN – unemployment rate; YM – share of young males

²¹ cpt and $conv_{(t-1)}$ have a correlation of -0.5666 that is significant at 0.01 .

²² Unit root implies that a series is not stationary, meaning that its mean and variance are not constant over time and the value of the covariance between two time periods does not depend only on the distance between the two. Regression analysis involving series containing unit root might lead to spurious regressions (Gujarati, 2011).

²³ Country characteristics that do not change over time.

²⁴ i – country, t – time, $Cons$ – constant, e – error term of the regression model.

Table 10: Results of the model.

VARIABLES	PANEL	Montenegro	Croatia	Macedonia	Slovenia	Serbia
	D.CPT	D.CPT	D.CPT	D.CPT	D.CPT	D.CPT
LD.CPT	0.07	-0.23*	0.27*	-0.09	0.18	0.077
Standardized		-0.23	0.27	-0.09	0.18	0.072
Standard errors	(0.07)	(0.13)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.13)	(0.17)
D.CONV	-0.02***	-0.01**	-0.02***	-0.004	-0.07**	-0.01
Standardized		-0.51	-0.59	-0.12	-0.49	-0.31
Standard errors	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.01)	(0.005)	(0.03)	(0.01)
war	-0.68*	-1.02**	-0.91	-2.15***		-0.078
Standardized		-0.29	-0.33	-0.47		-0.034
Standard errors	(0.41)	(0.47)	(0.62)	(0.41)		(0.51)
trans	0.59**	0.69*	0.62*	0.58**	0.39	-0.05
Standardized		0.44	0.34	0.39	0.069	-0.02
Standard errors	(0.25)	(0.39)	(0.32)	(0.26)	(0.81)	(0.4)
rGDP	-0.93	1.52	-2.03	-3.14	-24.67*	-1.79
Standardized		0.21	-0.12	-0.19	-0.40	-0.161
Standard errors	(1.53)	(1.02)	(3.94)	(3.45)	(13.36)	(2.63)
D.UN	-14.08	0.52	-13.22	-19.24	-206.1*	12.25
Standardized		0.005	-0.01	-0.18	-0.42	0.07
Standard errors	(15.11)	(11.14)	(20.14)	(15.65)	(111.6)	(34.64)
YM	74.66**	69.98*	74.50	-7.50	184.1**	-41.37
Standardized		0.39	0.29	-0.035	0.23	-0.12
Standard errors	(33.72)	(38.93)	(44.18)	(32.38)	(90.07)	(99.37)
Constant	-3.01**	-3.33*	-2.83*	0.32	-6.18*	1.54
Standard errors	(1.37)	(1.83)	(1.61)	(1.36)	(3.38)	(3.82)
Observations	200	40	40	40	40	40
R-squared	0.14	0.38	0.39	0.44	0.34	0.19

Standard errors in parenthesis
 *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Source: authors' calculations.

Note: "D." denotes the use of first differences, "LD." denotes the use of lagged first differences.

The results presented in Table 10 indicate that the theory that efficient crime deterrence represents an important factor for decreasing criminal activity is largely confirmed. (The result is only not statistically significant for Macedonia and Serbia). Generally, it is possible to claim that the higher the level of convictions, the lower the criminal activity, with the exception of Macedonia and Serbia, where the result is insignificant. The most pronounced results were obtained for

Croatia, followed by Montenegro and Slovenia. Similarly, a higher share of young males in the population indicates higher criminal activity for the panel as well as for Montenegro and Slovenia.

On the other hand, economic determinants do not significantly affect criminal activity in the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the only exception with a significant result

for GDP growth and unemployment variables is Slovenia. However, while a negative correlation of GDP growth and criminal activity represents an expected outcome, it is not possible to explain why higher unemployment rates would have a negative impact on criminal activity. This result is also not in line with the authors' previous study (Ahtik, et al., 2010) covering the period up to 2007. However, if a dummy for the crisis period starting in 2009 is added to the equation for Slovenia, the result indicates that criminal activity was statistically significantly higher during the crisis, confirming the significance of the economic situation on criminal activity. Contrary to that result, a recent study of Slovenia by Eman and Franca (2013) focusing on environmental crime, indicated that the crisis did not contribute to higher criminal activity. Similar to our study, they emphasize the importance of deterrence.

The transition dummy variable is significant for the whole panel and for Montenegro, Macedonia and Croatia, indicating that criminal activity, on average, was higher after the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the transition began. Such an outcome is expected and, as explained before, it was mainly caused by the inefficiency of the police and judiciary, which were undergoing reorganisation during that period. On the other hand, this impact was only transitory and an efficient police organisation was established by 2014. Observed criminal activity, on average, was lower during the war, with the exception of Croatia and Serbia. The later was involved in armed conflicts for a large part of the nineties but its result is not statistically different from the other period. Lower levels of criminal activity during war episodes could be explained either by lower criminal activity (related also to reduced opportunities for property related crime in countries hit by the war) or with lower efficiency of police in the countries struck by war. The impact of the war was most pronounced in Macedonia (which was only briefly involved in an armed conflict in 2001), followed by Montenegro.

8 Conclusion

In this paper, we tried to establish a link between property crime and economic (unemployment, GDP growth rate) and social (war, conviction rate, share of young males, transition) factors and explain how these factors influence property crime.

Legal and criminological variables (social factors) such as conviction rate were found to have a strong negative impact on the number of crimes against property, similar to numerous other studies. Levitt (1996) for example, confirmed the negative effect of prison population size, measuring the influence

of severity of punishment on crime rate for the USA, which is similar to the findings in this study. Han, Bandyopadhyay and Bhattacharya (2013) used prison population as measure of the impact of severity of punishment on violent and property crime in England and Wales for the period 1992–2008, and found out it had negative effects on the crime of burglary. Citing another example, Buonanno and Montolio (2005) in their study of socio-economic determinants of crime in Spain, found that the clear-up rate variable, which captures deterrence and law enforcement is negatively and significantly correlated to crime.

The theoretical framework (Becker, 1968) suggests that economic causes can significantly contribute to the explanation of property crimes perpetrated in a society. Unfortunately, this has not been strongly proven in our study. We hoped that by using data for a relatively long period of time, from 1973 to 2014, we could capture this effect both during the communist period, which lasted until 1991, and in the capitalist economic system, the implementation of which started after 1991. Buonanno and Montolio (2005) found that economic variables had a strong impact on property crime rates in Spain. Konyakhin and Petrovskiy (2016: 341–342), in addition to emphasizing the deterrent effect of police presence in the tourist region of Krasnodar Krai, mention the positive impact of the Russian economic crisis on levels of criminal activity in the area. Similar findings appear in the studies of Deadman and Pyle (1997), and Whittaker (Whittaker Report, 1985). All of these studies established correlations between variables representing the economic situation and the number of property crimes committed, and have proven that strong economic conditions generally lead to less crime against property, as was the case in our previous study of socioeconomic determinants of property crime in Slovenia (Ahtik, et al., 2010). These results for Slovenia, unlike for other countries of the former Yugoslavia, were confirmed in this study as well. On the other hand, some other studies show quite the opposite effect of changes in economic conditions, as worsening economic conditions also decreases the opportunities for crime and lowers its yields (Cooter & Ulen, 2012).

Other socio-economic factors that are captured by dummy variables such as "transition" and "war" in our study also contributed to levels of crime. We can conclude that the transition period ended only in Slovenia and Croatia, since they joined the EU in 2004 and 2013, respectively. However, we are aware that the economic situation was different in the periods before 1991 and after 1991 in all countries of the former Yugoslavia. Being unemployed did not mean the same thing during the communist period, with a relatively good social security net, and during the capitalist period in which there was far more uncertainty among unemployed members of so-

ciety. The break-up of SFRY and the chaos that came in the wars during the 1990s, caused a break with traditional values in war-torn and weary countries such as Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, while at the same time the values were lost in Serbia due to economic sanctions imposed by the UN. Transition, on the other hand, put an emphasis on wealth as a measure of an individual's success in life and society and created a sort of *anomie* (Durkheim, 1951), because there were few opportunities for legal enrichment and unemployment soared during this period (Pilipović, 2011). So many turned to property crime as illegal and dangerous, but an economically profitable activity. Consequently, it is not surprising that crime levels on average were higher during the transition period in several countries analysed in this paper. Kanduč (2015) further warns about the consequences of neoliberal capitalism and globalization, both of which intensified in the 2000s on feelings of human alienation and criminal activity. The younger population is especially vulnerable to these trends, as proven by levels of property crime being positively connected with the share of young males in the population in some of the analysed countries. The results are similar to the findings of Denny, et al. (2004), and Grogger (1998).

All in all, this is the first analysis of its kind for this period and for these countries, and it should bring some quality guidelines for anti-criminal policies in them. If the saying (that) "opportunity makes the thief" is the common proverbial wisdom of the countries we studied in this paper, then the best remedy against it would be an efficient justice system which would serve as a strong deterrent to potential criminals and make their opportunity choice of criminal activity as high as possible. Also, even if we did not establish a strong link between the number of property crimes and the economic situation, it does not mean that there is no correlation, as we were able to see from the impact of the transition dummy variable. Working people are generally happier, their time is occupied with job-related activities and, consequently, they commit fewer offences against property in general.

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Premoženjska kriminaliteta v državah nekdanje Jugoslavije – longitudinalna študija

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Prva longitudinalna študija te vrste, izvedena v državah nekdanje Jugoslavije, obravnava gospodarske in družbene vzroke premoženjske kriminalitete ter poskuša določiti njihov vpliv na odklonsko vedenje z izpeljavo empiričnega modela, ki z uporabo podatkov za obdobje od leta 1973 do leta 2014 analizira premoženjsko kriminaliteto v državah nekdanje Jugoslavije – Sloveniji, Hrvaški, Bosni in Hercegovini, Srbiji, Črni gori in Makedoniji. Teoretični okvir s področja kriminologije, ekonomije in prava nakazuje, da je poleg institucionalnega okolja in družbene strukture stopnja kriminalitete v družbi močno odvisna tudi od gospodarskih razmer. Ekonometrična analiza uporablja spremenljivke, ki ilustrirajo teoretično opredeljene dejavnike premoženjske kriminalitete: gospodarske razmere, verjetnost obsodbe, delež mladih moških v populaciji in spremenljivke, ki zajemajo nekatere posebnosti tranzicijskega obdobja v državah nekdanje Jugoslavije.

Ključne besede: ekonomska analiza prava, ekonomska teorija kriminalitete, premoženjska kriminaliteta, kriminologija, države nekdanje Jugoslavije

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