



## **Introduction:**

### **Inaugurating the *Contemporary Challenges Journal***

---

**Andy Aydin-Aitchison**

*Senior Lecturer in Criminology, University of Edinburgh*

**Andrea Birdsall**

*Senior Lecturer in International Relations, University of Edinburgh*

**Milena Tripkovic**

*Lecturer in Criminology, University of Edinburgh*

This marks the inaugural issue of the *Contemporary Challenges Journal*, an independent initiative of postgraduate students on the MSc Global Crime, Justice and Security and associated MSc and LLM programmes at the University of Edinburgh. The journal is oriented around the core concerns of the degree programme, tackling problems of crime and (in)security that are international or transnational, and examining legal and political responses to these. It makes its way into the world at a time of challenges that are, if not unprecedented, certainly novel for contemporary generations in the particular combination of global reach, health impacts and impact on social and economic activity.

In future issues we might expect to see papers trying to make sense of COVID19 from the perspective of global crime, justice and security studies. For now, we might speculate, but it is too early to draw firm conclusions. State crime and zemiological frames could help address the questions of short term state negligence and the longer term failures to address social need underpinning the heavy costs borne by medical and care workers, members of the poorest sectors in society, and consistently marginalised and disadvantaged social groups. Implicit assumptions on patterns of policy learning and measures of state strength need revisiting in the wake of failures in states presiding over advanced economies to protect the lives and health of their citizenry and early signs of more successful strategies for containment and community

support in states often classed as weak. Meanwhile, national and international law enforcement agencies have responded to the pandemic by identifying and publicising related criminal activity, including the spread of misinformation, bogus investment opportunities and the use of COVID-19 to disguise money-laundering activity. Yet, when the call for papers for the current issue was finalised in mid-February, nearly a full month was still to pass before WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic. It is a great credit to the editorial board, headed by Frederik Florenz and June Shuler, that they have managed the submission, peer review, and publication process while facing significant disruption: the physical closure of the University; sudden and unplanned international moves as border closures loomed; and shifts to remote patterns of working and meeting. In common with the authors of the papers in this issue, they faced all of this while managing the ‘day job’ of working on their own term papers.

The papers here reflect a diverse range of interests and approaches in line with the aspiration to be a broad church in terms of topics and disciplinary approaches that has characterised the MSc in Global Crime, Justice and Security since its launch in September 2009. Now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, the programme has seen 160 students graduate. They arrived at Old College with groundings in various disciplines and professional experience; an eye to different aspects of what we try to cover with the catch all term ‘global’ – the transnational, the international, comparisons, and overlooked spaces; and interests in all stages, from the definition of problems in terms of crime, justice and security, through explanatory frameworks, to exploring legal, social and political problems. Favouring a lively pluralism over the quest for coherence, the MSc programme, in conversation with other programmes in the Schools of Law and Social and Political Science, draws strength from this diversity. We see them leave with a renewed, if critical, appreciation of what they brought; an extended awareness of the field of study; and an openness to the productive disruptions of encounters in a multi-disciplinary space. The editorial board called for papers under six broad headings:

- Comparative, International or Transnational Criminology, Security or Justice studies
- International Crime and its implications for international security
- Genocide, human rights violations and atrocity crimes
- Reconciliatory politics
- Interaction between Criminology, Law and Security
- Global Crime and Security

In this first issue 3 commentaries and 6 longer articles are presented. Three of these handle issues of weaponry as a threat to security at different levels. Putseys argues that while

state maintained nuclear weaponry may represent a threat to global security, the jinn is out of the box and the impossibility of ‘uninvention’ means that a nuclear free world is an unrealistic goal. Le Moal explores the less formal sources of threats from nuclear weaponry in the form of nuclear trafficking, using Social Network Analysis and the concept of Human Capital to locate state and non-state actors in a directed network. Piccini focuses on small arms and light weapons, perhaps less impactful on an individual level, but massively harmful in total given their prevalence. His paper highlights the need to focus attention at upstream actors more than the far more diffuse downstream distribution networks. Two of the papers handle questions of terrorism and counter terrorism. Baumer-Schuppli argues that the proliferation of legal definitions of terrorism in international law relativises violence and erodes the principle of *nullum crimen sine lege certa* (principle of criminal foreseeability). In tackling terrorism, Summers argues for the importance of the local, and with it a form of community policing focused on building community intelligence through relationships based on openness and transparency on the part of police. Two contributions draw particular insights from comparative frames. Bartels’ commentary on David Garland’s account of American exceptionalism extends the analysis beyond ideology, political economy to juxtapose prison officer training regimes in Norway and the United States. Using examples from Bahrain and Lebanon, Al-Hindi is able to draw inferences on the role of law in creating and sustaining lethal vulnerabilities among significant populations of migrant domestic workers, and in doing so adds to the growing understanding of femicide and its diverse manifestations. Lazzarotto revisits some of criminology’s sociological origins in looking to place Durkheim in the current century, while in one further commentary Fiennes draws on more recent challenges to the domain of criminology, showing how the harms-based lens of Zemiology enriches our understanding of the diversion of oil supplies through ‘bunkering’ and illicit trade. In a short commentary she manages to address both outcomes and explanatory frames overlooked by a narrower focus on crime.

Each of these papers stems from the individual scholar’s work as they master the field of global crime, justice and security. Students on the MSc and LLM programmes come from across the globe and come together in an environment, which allows and encourages open reflection on their prior knowledge and experiences. Sharing ideas with a global peer group enriches their perspectives and tests the ideas that have been shaped into the papers you see here. In a sense, the peer review process did not start with the editorial board, rather it kicked in the moment the authors opened their mouths to say something in the first seminar of the

year. In many instances, the papers rise to the challenge identified by Ian Loader and Sarah Percy of bringing the ‘outside’ in and the ‘inside’ out that characterises the field of studies (2012). The cautionary ‘bracketing off’ of those terms recognises that while there may be a spatial separation between the domestic and the international, that is rendered decreasingly pertinent by interpersonal, community, economic and other ties that bind each locality into the wider global frame. How best to capture the complexity of that set of ties? The answers inevitably emerge from a plurality of voices and perspectives – the inaugural issue the *Contemporary Challenges Journal* adds some more voices to the conversation, and we look forward to hearing from more emerging scholars in the years to come.

### References

- Loader, Ian and Percy, Sarah 2012 ‘Bringing the “outside” in and the “inside” out: Crossing the criminology/IR divide’. *Global Crime* 13(4) pp. 213-218. DOI 10/1080/17440572.2012.715402