



BOOK REVIEW: THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS (2018)

By E. NARMINIO

Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) is a distinctive piece of “euro-jargon” referring to questions pertaining to internal security and justice matters in the European Union (EU). JHA covers a particularly sensitive area, as it is at the heart of States’ sovereignty. Furthermore, as a policy field, JHA has recently come under increasing stress as it is rocked by ever more acrimonious debates over the management of migration flows, border controls and terrorist threats. This handbook brings together key concepts, debates and central questions by leading European Studies scholars on the umbrella concept of justice and home affairs in the European Union – not to be confused with the EU’s Area of freedom, security and justice, which “refers rather to a goal set by the [European] treaties designing the ideal shape that European integration should take” (4), or with the Justice and Home Affairs Council. Unprecedented in its scope and focus, it is a necessary contribution to a field of research and study bereft of overarching reference materials.

The Routledge Handbook of Justice and Home Affairs

Editors: Ariadna Ripoll Servent and Florian Trauner

Publication: Routledge 2018

The handbook compellingly outlines the central evolutions and challenges currently faced by justice and home affairs in the European Union’s internal and external dimensions, providing many sharp, concurrently broad-based and in-depth analyses of the key areas of research in the field. Interestingly, it articulates theory-oriented and policy-orientated papers, features findings grounded in different fields, disciplines – criminal law, human rights, migration studies, political science, international relations, ... – and various theoretical positivist and post-positivist traditions. This in turn allows informed readers to uncover hitherto little explored connections between the various issues raised by the handbook’s numerous chapters. The discussion would however have benefitted from a greater critical stance on the possible biases introduced by the prevalence of security-related issues in the European Union’s agenda on Justice and Home Affairs, to the detriment of a more justice and human rights focused approach.

Published just one year before the 2019 European elections, the explicit project underpinning the handbook is to be a “referent for scholars, practitioners and students interested in the area

of justice, home affairs and European politics” (iii) to provide an analytical counter-balance to the politicization of EU integration through discourses on JHA (3). The 493 pages and 39 chapters of the book are organised in five parts. Part One introduces “the state of the art and avenues for further research”, thus clearly placing the following chapters within the framework of existing knowledge and remaining gaps. Part Two, “Theories of Justice and Home Affairs», contains three chapters concerned with some organising concepts in EU studies on JHA: governance, securitization and public policy approaches. There is an undoubted merit in frontlining those concepts in the handbook, given the bridging they provide between national and regional levels of analysis. The integration of research paradigms these concepts allow for provide the key theoretical and practical debates in JHA with wholly new dimensions. However, a clear understanding of the intricacies of the debates mentioned in those chapters requires of the reader previous solid knowledge of legal and political science theories, and, despite the implicit promise the section’s title might seemingly contain, it hardly provides a deep insight into the theories-proper affecting JHA. Part Three, “Analyzing justice and home affairs policies (the sectoral dimension)” includes thirteen chapters of thematic policy areas developed under the umbrella of JHA. Part Four, “Justice and Home Affairs inside and outside

Europe (the horizontal dimension)", engages with the internal and external dimensions of EU JHA, in particular security policies, through the examination of interstate relations. The section's thirteen chapters highlight the relation between these two inextricably linked dimensions of security policies, which nevertheless remain problematically aligned in practice. To complement the very interesting chapters exploring different dimensions, it would have been compelling to be given more context on the potentially problematic relationship between the external/internal dimensions for EU institutions and Member States. Preventive and defensive measures have increasingly overlapped since the inception of a European Security Strategy in 2003, yet the relationship between the operational linkages that are operated and the deepening of the integration it could presuppose is not interrogated clearly. Finally, Part Five, "EU institutions and decision-making dynamics (the vertical dimension)" (eight chapters), examines the actorship of the different formal – and less formal (chapter 38) – institutions involved in JHA dynamics at EU level and their role in the policy-making and policy-implementation process.

The handbook presents one main caveat: it closely aligns with EU jargon and perspectives on "home affairs" as being mainly a question of security, preventing a deeper examination of the current foundations of JHA. The fact that security seems to

have become an organising principle of EU JHA, as can be read for instance in the European Agenda on Security (2015-2020) replacing the previous Internal Security Strategy (2010-2014), is not discussed. Issues of protection of vulnerable groups are almost absent from the remit of this collective work. As a result, the structure and content of the book are built around a similar perspective, putting a heavy focus on organised crime and migration seen from a security perspective. As such, it concurs with the institutional decoupage and discursive, legal and political focus of the EU on security, thus stifling somewhat the more critical approaches within the collected chapters.

In all, The Routledge Handbook of Justice and Home Affairs should be welcomed for its evident merits: its comprehensive scope, the breadth and depth of its analyses, and its complementary theoretic and disciplinary perspectives bring a significant contribution to debates on the expanding research area of justice and home affairs in European Studies. It is a testament to how far the EU has travelled on the road to cooperation and integration in some of the most sensitive sovereign prerogatives of its Member States. It also brings out how far the EU and Member States yet have to go to fully engage with the challenges facing the region in such areas. It is a must read for practitioners, journalists, academics and students interested in deepening their knowledge of EU justice and home affairs.

Elisa Narminio (GEM-STONES) is writing her doctoral thesis on 'Vulnerabilisation of the trafficked child: The structural violence of anti-trafficking governance practices in the European Union and in Southeast Asia', within the framework of an MSCA-funded European Joint Doctorate between the Université libre de Bruxelles (BE) and Waseda University (JP).



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No [722826].