

The State under Siege: The Drug Trade and Organised Crime in Tajikistan

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Abstract

This article explores the impact of the drug trade on security and stability in Tajikistan. In order to capture the multifaceted nature of this relationship, the effects on territory, population, state institutions, and the idea of the state are examined. The types of threats affecting these components of the state are discussed. These include societal security in the form of addiction and drug-related diseases; the military threat, most notably manifested by the merger of crime and terror; economic and political threats resulting from a criminalised economic and political system; and the relationship between the drug trade and the legitimacy of the state.

SINCE THE END OF THE COLD WAR, THE WORLD HAS WITNESSED radical economic and political changes. A common way of illustrating these changes is in terms of increasing processes of globalisation. Today, the movement of capital, commodities, ideas and persons transcends national boundaries and connects different parts of the world in an unprecedented manner. The benefits reaped from globalisation are evident: economic growth in China and some parts of North East Asia, for example, is driven by trade exchange with consumer markets in the West, and liberal democratic values have gained a foothold in parts of the world where such ideals would have been unimaginable merely 20 years ago.

While globalisation has facilitated transnational licit activity, the opening up of borders has also been advantageous to those with illicit interests. Organised crime groups are clearly among those actors who have adjusted most effectively to transnational conditions. According to the most conservative calculations, the annual global turnover of organised crime groups is estimated to be between \$500 and \$1,500 billion (Ehrenfeldt 2003). The leading branch in transnational crime is the drug trade, which is estimated to be the second largest business in the world (after the weapons trade).

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In recent years, Central Asia has emerged as a major international hub for drugs smuggled from supply areas in Asia to Russia and Europe. An important factor behind this development is that Afghanistan superseded Burma in the 1990s as the world's main producer of illicit opium. In 2005, approximately 87% of the world's opium production took place in Afghanistan [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) 2005, p. 1]. The country most severely affected by the escalating drug trade in the Central Asian region is Tajikistan, a country especially attractive as a transit zone for drugs due to a combination of factors. The first of these factors is geographical. The 1,206 kilometre long Tajik–Afghan border, with its mountainous terrain, has been the ideal entry point for smugglers, especially since neither of these two countries possesses the law enforcement capabilities necessary for effectively deterring illegal cross-border operations. Tajikistan is also the Central Asian country with the best connections to both the producer country, Afghanistan, and Russia, the principal destination of Central Asian smuggled heroin. Tajikistan's main link to Afghanistan is the large ethnic Tajik population, estimated at 20–25% of Afghanistan's population, the majority of whom are situated in the northern parts of the country near the border. The link to Russia draws on the fact that since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has maintained Tajikistan as its main military outpost in Central Asia.

This study investigates the threat of the transnational trade in illegal drugs to Tajikistan from a security perspective. The investigation involves three specific questions:

- (i) How can the drug trade pose a threat to the physical base of Tajikistan, i.e. the territory and population of the state?
- (ii) How does the drug trade affect the institutions underpinning the Tajik state?
- (iii) In what ways can drug trafficking threaten the idea of the state?

As the theoretical point of departure for examining the questions posed above, the present study draws on the wider security framework developed by the so-called Copenhagen school, mainly including the work of Buzan (1991), and Buzan, Waever and De Wilde (1998). By building on existing literature within the broader school of security studies, the present study has the aim to contribute to this wider security discourse by including the drug trade in the theoretical framework.

The drug trade and security: the need for a theoretical framework

Traditionally, organised crime and the drug trade have not been perceived as international security issues. Among scholars, as well as policymakers, the long-dominant realist approach to security studies provided a thematic focus on military competition among sovereign states. Issues concerning drugs and crime were reserved for criminology or sociological studies, not political science or security studies. However, since the end of the Cold War this has been gradually changing. There is an increased acceptance of studying the implications of the drug trade from a security perspective (Dziedzic 1989; Shelley 1995; Griffith 1997; Matthew & Shambaugh 1998; Thachuk 2001; Levitsky 2003).

The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the bipolar world order, in combination with globalisation, have all accentuated a new security paradigm. Non-military threats have been included alongside traditional threats of military character. In particular, transnational issues have been given increased analytical attention from academicians and policymakers alike. The crucial difference here is that security threats can no longer be identified as exclusively stemming from sovereign states. Terrorism, organised crime, environmental degradation and epidemics are examples of threats that only with difficulty can be identified with the international state system. These types of threats have fundamentally changed the way security is perceived (Cha 2000, pp. 391–403). Moreover, as James Rosenau notes, these new issues are also ‘distinguished from conventional issues by the fact that they span national boundaries and cannot be addressed, much less resolved, through actions undertaken only at the national or local level’ [quoted in Griffith (1997, p. 5)].

To understand the drug trade and its potential implications for Tajikistan’s national security, three particular aspects need to be discussed: (i) the nature of a weak state; (ii) the different sectors within which a state’s security can be threatened: the economic, environmental, military, political and societal domains; and (iii) a general discussion on the nature of national (state) security.

State weakness

A discussion of weak states needs to address the question of how a weak state is identified, and whether or not security calculations differ between weak and strong states. The term ‘weak state’ is somewhat ambiguous, and has a slightly different meaning in security studies, where the state conventionally is seen in more holistic terms, than in traditional political science, with its focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the central government. In the context of security studies, Thomas Ohlson and Mimmi Söderberg (2002, pp. 6–7) indicate four major conditions that one would expect to find in a weak state:

- (1) lack of societal cohesion and consensus on what organising principles should determine the contest for state power and how that power should be executed; (2) low capacity and/or low political will of state institutions to provide all citizens with minimum levels of security and well-being; (3) high vulnerability to external economic and political forces; and (4) low degree of popular legitimacy accorded to the holders of state power by portions of the citizenry.

Many of the above conditions exist in Tajikistan, including major political conflict over which ideology will be used to organise the state; a low state capacity to provide basic public goods to the citizens; an unhealthy vulnerability to outside interference; and as a result of the previous weaknesses, a deficit of legitimacy. Furthermore, during the period 1992–97 the country was torn apart by a complex civil war, officially proclaimed to be between the old communist nomenclature and an opposition of Islamists, democrats and nationalists. In reality, however, the conflict was not primarily about ideology, but had its roots in the country’s deep sub-national divisions, most notably defined along clan lines (see Akiner & Barnes 2001).

Regarding the second question, Buzan (1991, p. 100) emphasises that 'where the state is strong, national security can be viewed primarily in terms of protecting the components of the state from outside threat and interference'. In states displaying the weaknesses just mentioned, threats often come in the form of internal and non-state actors targeting the government, rather than from other states. Mohammed Ayoob (1995, p. 4) summarises this problem in the following terms: 'the Third World state elites' major concern—indeed, obsession—is with security at the level of both state structures and governing regimes'. This would indicate that weak states are as vulnerable to internal threats as they are to external ones. Transnational crime, led by the drug trade, must be viewed in light of this multifaceted package of domestic and external threats.

Threats by sector

After the collapse of the Soviet system, a world order appeared which was no longer identifiable in terms of bipolarity. In an international system where cleavages between the communist and capitalist world have been dissolved, it is possible to perceive security in broader terms. Threats that were neglected during the Cold War in favour of a state-centred and military-based attitude to security are increasingly important in today's globally interlinked world. The Central Asian region is an illustrative example of this. During Soviet times, threat perceptions in Central Asia were of a considerably more concrete nature, and followed the logic of realism. The security framework was connected to presumptive threats to the military sector, mainly associated with great powers like the USA and China. In post-Soviet Central Asia, this kind of calculation does not merit the same value. Instead, threats are more multifaceted, and stretch over numerous domains.

Buzan, Waeber and De Wilde (1998) presented five sectors—the economic, environmental, military, political and societal—in which the security of a state can be threatened. With the exception of the environmental sector, the drug trade in Tajikistan affects all of these sectors.

Within the political sector, transnational crime groups seek to undermine the state either by controlling state institutions or by destabilising these institutions in order to be able to carry out their operations. Stable political systems are not in the interest of organised crime. Hence, the crucial point is that fragile political systems stimulate corruption and, as a result, increase the potential for criminal interests to co-opt the state apparatus.

The effects of drug trafficking on the economic sector are related to the functionality of the economic production system, i.e. to preserve the conditions for the economic viability of a society. In this context, public finances are important, as are companies and other economic actors. Although it can be argued that the narcotics industry in poor countries at least provides an income for the state and economic opportunities for some otherwise unemployed and poverty-stricken individuals, these positive effects are limited, since narcotics have negative consequences for the economy in the long-term. In producing countries like Afghanistan, increased opium production has simultaneously meant that production of provisions has decreased. This has made several provinces dependent on imports from other provinces and countries in order to

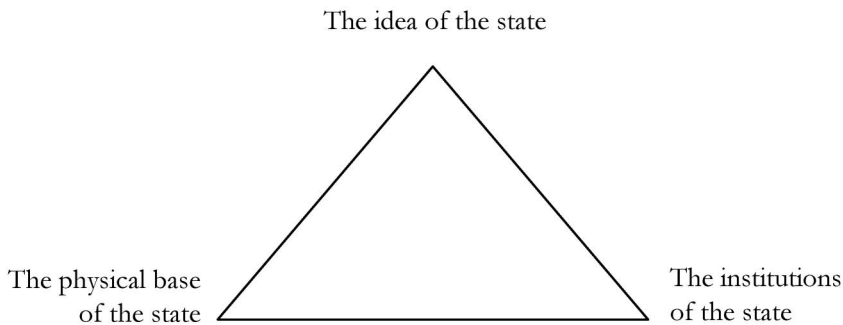
ensure basic needs. Moreover, escalating drug consumption and the spread of diseases have negative implications for public health, and, in turn, on increasing state expenditures which already impoverished economies will find increasingly difficult to handle. Societal security is affected by widespread drug abuse that, in addition to posing a potential threat in itself, also adds to societal insecurity by the spread of infections such as Hepatitis C and HIV.

Military security differs from the previous types, since here we are dealing with traditional or ‘hard’ security issues (in contrast to the non-military threats). The drug trade has had alarming effects on this sector. It is known that various armed warlords and terrorist movements in many parts of the world have financed substantial parts of their activities through involvement in the narcotics trade. One particularly worrisome tendency is the blending of criminal interests and politically motivated organisations in the shape of narco-terrorist groups (see Dishman 2001; Makarenko 2004).

National security and the component parts of the state

Before we take a closer look at the different components of the state, it is necessary to establish the prerequisites for a factor to be a threat to the security of a state and not just a social problem. This distinction is important for maintaining the precision of any security definition. What seems to be key here is the survival of crucial components of the state. For instance, a military or societal problem becomes a threat to national security if it threatens to break down the structure of the state. Buzan (1991, p. 65) suggests a simple model for exploring the nature of the state and its relation to national security (see Figure 1). The model is comprised of the three internal components that, taken together, constitute the state. This operationalisation will guide the subsequent analysis of the drug trade’s consequences for Tajikistan.

All three parts of the state can, in different ways, be threatened and are therefore components of national security. The vulnerabilities of the different parts are dependent on whether the state is strong or weak. The idea of the state is the most abstract component of the model, and the lack of a concrete definition makes it quite difficult to measure threats to it. The idea of the state mainly comprises national identity and



Source: Buzan, 1991, p. 65.

FIGURE 1. THE COMPONENT PARTS OF THE STATE

the ideology used to organise the economic and political system. To quote Buzan (1991, p. 70):

In a properly constituted state, one should expect to find a distinctive idea of some sort which lies at the heart of the state's political identity. What does the state exist to do? Why is it there? What is its relation to the society it contains?

It is necessary to discuss this aspect of the state at some length because it holds the key to understanding the weak nature of the Tajik state as well as why it is so vulnerable to drug trafficking. It is particularly important to explore the interrelated but distinct processes of nation-building and state-building. To begin with nation-building, the Tajik government has—like many other post-colonial states where the boundaries between state and nation do not often coincide—tried to construct a national identity from above. Tajikistan is without doubt the Central Asian state in which the nation-building project has been most problematic. Its nation-state identity is built on the trauma of the national delimitation of Central Asia in the 1920s when Tajikistan was created. The cultural, economic and historical centres of the Tajik people—Bukhara and Samarkand—were handed over to Uzbekistan. As compensation, the northern part of the present day state, the Khujand region, was given to Tajikistan. This region was known as Leninabad during Soviet rule and has a substantial Uzbek population, although it is not a region traditionally affiliated with the Tajik community.¹ Matters are not helped by the fact that the eastern part of the country—the Autonomous *Oblast* of Gorno-Badakshan (which is equivalent to 44% of the country's territory)—is linguistically and religiously distinguished from the rest of the country. The myriad of competing ethnical and national cleavages in the country is furthermore exaggerated by fierce clan rivalries.

The state–nation strategy is therefore an attempt to reconcile these differences and create a common Tajik identity. As in many states with no common national identity to build on, the main tool for this has been the use of history, and in particular references to the Persian-speaking Samanid dynasty (875–999) as the first Tajik state. In 1999, this new Tajik identity was manifested by a millennial celebration of the Samanid Empire. As in the other Central Asian republics, the purpose of this project has been to bypass subnational authorities and instead reach out directly to the public.

The second aspect—state-building—relates to the design and function of economic and political institutions. After the collapse of the Soviet system of economic autocracy, it is plausible to argue that three distinct types of successor systems have emerged in the post-Soviet space. In the first category—labelled here as systems based on the rule of law—we find the Baltic republics. Notwithstanding some difficulties, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have successfully carried out a transition to democracy, underpinned by market economic systems and an independent legal order. As an indication of approval, the European Union has recognised that they fulfil the administrative, political and economic criteria required for membership in the union. The second group is made up of states in which the political system is structured around a strong leader. In the absence of an institutionalised legal system, the leader

¹On Moscow's national delimitation of Central Asia, see Sabol (1995, pp. 225–241).

represents the ultimate source of authority. Examples hereof are Islam Karimov's Uzbekistan, Alexander Lukashenko's rule in Belarus and, to an increased extent, Russia under Vladimir Putin.

The third and final type of system is closer to the second variant, but in contrast to one strong authority which settles disputes at the central level of the state, this system illustrates a situation where no leadership candidate is strong enough to establish undisputed power within a given political territory. Instead, the political scene features various competing elite alliances. As no one can display the capacity required to destroy the competition and centralise power, this system, including the most fundamental dimensions of stateness such as control over extraction, territory and violence, has been decentralised and privatised to a substantial degree. We may call this system decentralised authoritarianism. Together with Kyrgyzstan after the revolution in 2005 (where a process of state infiltration from organised crime is unfolding), Tajikistan is the best example of this type of system. It is a decentralised system with a monopoly on the use of force and taxation which is dispersed and to a great extent privatised. In Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rulers do not have much power other than in their respective capitals. During the most extreme period of decentralisation in Tajikistan—the civil war—the political system approximated anarchical conditions. An important reason for the central government's inability to produce a system which is accepted within its territory partly relates to the fact that the system has, to a large extent, been captured by one regional faction—the southern Kulyabi-clan—while the rest of the regionally-based elite groupings have been marginalised and thus perceive the leadership as illegitimate.

In the light of this discussion it must be noted that independence in Tajikistan *de facto* meant the destruction rather than creation of the most basic attributes of statehood. This included the capacity of the government to collect taxes and in turn use them to pay civil servants who would deliver much needed services at the local and national levels. The combination of these deficits opened up an opportunity for organised crime to penetrate and criminalise this power vacuum. We can talk about the idea of obtaining profit through criminal activity as one of the most powerful driving forces within Tajikistan's political and economic system.

As distinct from the idea of the state, the institutions of the state are more concrete. They are associated with governmental structure, including its executive, legislative, administrative and judicial bodies, and the laws, procedures and norms they accord to (Buzan 1991, pp. 82–83). There is a close interconnection between the idea of the state and these institutions. In simplified terms, one can say that to a large extent the institutions express the organising principles of the state: 'the idea of democracy or communism is useless without the institutions to put it into operation, just as the institutions would be pointless, and maybe even impossible, without the idea to give them definition and purpose' (Buzan 1991, p. 86). This applies in the same way to organised crime. A criminal idea of the state is useless without the co-option of the institutions expressing it, and vice versa. Hence, the threat emanating from drug trafficking to this part of the state is linked to organised criminals infiltrating and destabilising or, in the worst case, co-opting the institutional structures, and as a result distorting the institutional machinery of the state in order to facilitate criminal activities.

The physical base comprises the population and territory of the state. This component of the state is also the area in which states share the most similarities in relation to security, because threats to physical objects are common to different states. As the state ultimately rests on its physical base, threats to it must count as a fundamental national security priority (Buzan 1991, pp. 90–95). Drug trafficking poses a potential threat to both the population and the territory in Tajikistan. In addition to the effects on the population following a distortion of the political institutions as discussed above, the people of the state might also be threatened by the impact drugs have on societal security in the form of severe drug abuse and the outbreak of drug-related HIV epidemics at levels that threaten to break down the socio-economic fabric of society. These two interrelated threats to human beings have the potential to turn into a real societal threat, as an increasing number of Tajiks are becoming addicted to drugs.

Threat to a state's territory is another dimension to take into consideration. The drug trade as an individual phenomenon does not have to pose a threat to the territorial sovereignty of a state *per se*. Indeed, drug trafficking groups exist all over the world, including Western states, without posing a threat to their territorial integrity. It is primarily in combination with violent, armed groups that drugs can threaten this aspect of the physical base. The drug trade is therefore a threat due to its function as a source of finance and/or as the main purpose of violent groups. It is in the latter case that the correlation between the drug trade and territorial security is most direct, since it is the primary source of unrest, and not just a way of obtaining finance to pursue other goals.

The case study of Tajikistan will investigate to what extent its security is threatened by the effects of the drug trade on different security sectors. In other words, military, political, economic and societal threats represent the different security dimensions, while Tajikistan's national security, comprised of threats to the idea of the state, institutions and physical base, is the level of analysis. This is summarised in Figure 2.

The interrelationship between different parts of the state

As the purpose of this article is to understand, from a security perspective, the drug trade through the triangle of the component parts of the state, the method inevitably has to tackle the relationship between theory and empirical findings. In other words: how does the drug trade relate to Tajikistan's national security? As different parts of the state have been discussed separately, we need to elaborate upon the nature of the interrelationship between the three parts of the state, i.e. between (i) the idea of the state and the institutions of the state; (ii) the idea of the state and the physical base of the state; and (iii) the institutions of the state and the physical base of the state.

As the idea of the state and the institutions of the state are so closely interlinked, and the dynamics between them have been discussed in the previous section, the focus here is on the other two interrelationships: between the idea of the state and its physical base in territory and population, and between state institutions and physical base. In the context of a discussion of organised crime the links between the idea of the state and the physical base refer to the implications of crime for both the domestic and external legitimacy of the Tajik state and how criminal ideas have the potential to

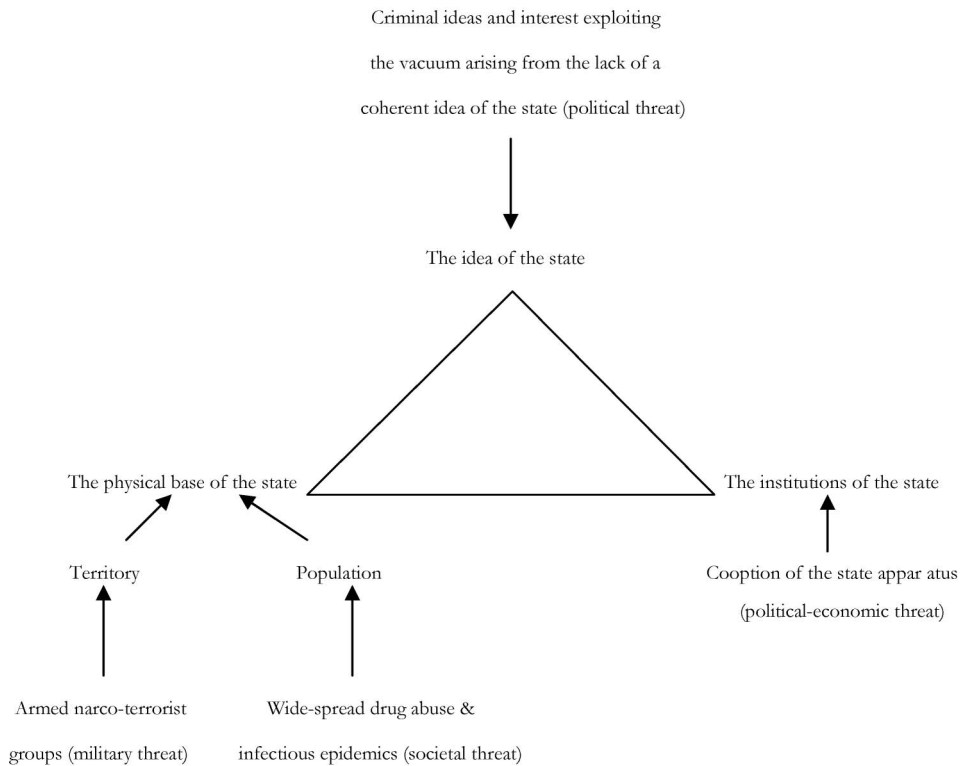


FIGURE 2. FRAMEWORK FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING AND TAJIKISTAN'S NATIONAL SECURITY

undermine the legitimacy of the state. On the one hand, the external dimension concerns the question of how outside interests infiltrate a state with the idea of obtaining profit through crime. Potential responses may include sovereignty violating sanctions of various sorts on other states. The domestic dimension, on the other hand, relates to the danger stemming from elites seeking personal enrichment at the expense of delivering goods to the public. This distortion has the potential to undermine the system that the political elite tries to impose on society. Yet, the reverse also exists. Take the example of Afghanistan—where the illegal drug industry has the strongest leverage over both state and society. If the Afghan government began a crack down on the drug trade—which is by far the largest sector of the country's economy—without providing any alternative income sources, the potential risk of a popular uprising could not be ruled out.

Finally, the question of the relationship between institutions and the physical base in the context of organised crime concerns the question of how different sections of the population have access to state institutions. A parallel can be made with the term 'state capture'. A recent ground-breaking investigation has shown how strong economic interests in some transition countries have managed to capture parts of the state apparatus. As a result, in the states hijacked by economic forces, administrative decision-making, legislative procedures, court verdicts or state policy in general

primarily served special interests, instead of serving the population as a whole (Hellman *et al.* 2000). By invoking the additional element of criminal syndicates, it is possible to build upon the notion of state capture and assess the impact of organised crime on state functioning, and how this affects the relationship between rulers and ruled. When groups that derive their revenues from plain organised criminality such as the drug trade, interact with the state in a manner similar to firms, we may speak of a criminalisation of the state rather than just ‘regular’ state capture.

Territorial issues and the crime–terror nexus

Traditionally, organised crime and terrorism have been regarded as unrelated. As Svante Cornell (2005, p. 581) notes: ‘the ideal type of . . . terrorist groups that challenge state authority with violent means is that of a group striving for a higher cause, and therefore disinterested in or even opposed on principle to the drug trade and other criminal activities’. In the words of Clausewitz, terrorism can in this sense, just like war, be characterised as the continuation of politics by violent means. At the core of transnational organised crime, on the other hand, lies what Phil Williams (2002, p. 78) has labelled ‘the idea of profit through crime’. Hence, in a parallel to Clausewitzian thought, he adds ‘that organised crime can best be understood as the continuation of business by criminal means’ (Williams 2002, p. 79). Because of this conventional distinction between politics and terror on the one hand and economics and crime on the other, transnational criminal networks are not seen to pose the same kind of threat to state authority as terrorist groups do. Instead, crime is considered to be a domestic problem that falls under the responsibilities of law enforcement bodies that have a philosophy, organisational structure and legal framework very much at odds with the national security institutions. As a result, transnational criminal networks have not been associated with international security (Cornell 2005, p. 581).

However, in many parts of the world the distinction between organised crime and terrorism is not clear. On the contrary, many ideologically motivated groups have gradually shifted their focus towards a more criminally motivated agenda. Groups officially claiming to be political are thus, under the surface, equally motivated by criminal profit. The reasons behind such motivational shifts are varied. However, an aspect that has intensified this trend seems to be the opening up of boundaries and the interconnectedness between different spheres following the increasing processes of globalisation. These processes have increased the flow of information and the exchange between licit as well as illicit spheres. Moreover, during the Cold War armed rebellious groups were often used by both capitalist and communist camps in their rallying for influence all over the world. To undermine each other’s positions in various armed conflicts in the Third World, the Soviet Union and the US viewed sponsoring local resistance groups as an effective strategy. As terrorism—with increased intensity after 9/11—has emerged as the major international security threat, radical groups can no longer count on financial backing from states. Instead, one of the most lucrative sources of income is from participation in international crime (see Sanderson 2004).

Tamara Makarenko (2002, 2004) has conceptualised the convergence of crime and terror in the post-Cold War era by using a security continuum with traditional

organised crime at one end of the spectrum and terrorism at the other. As indicated above, most groups, whether criminal or ideological, do not in reality fit into these stereotypes. Rather, transnational criminal groups, in order to acquire the financial gains from drug trafficking, simultaneously have an interest in asserting political influence as a way of securing the continuation of business. Accordingly, between these extreme points (which are rare in reality) we can have groups with different degrees of both criminal and ideological/political motives. At one point in the spectrum there appears to be a situation that can be characterised in terms of a 'grey area', where organised crime and political violence cannot be separated from one another.

As Figure 3 illustrates, the crime–terror spectrum of the drug trade in Central Asia can be represented by four main groups. First, in Afghanistan and all Central Asian republics there are drug mafias operating at the micro-level. Domestic in nature and with a membership base that normally does not stretch beyond the specific clan or ethnic group, their political interest and influence is limited (Makarenko 2002).

The second category includes transnational criminal groups and networks that bring Afghan-produced opiates to the market in Russia and Europe. Makarenko (2002) argues that these groups pose a great threat to the region, 'in part because they are composed of a chain of regional and international players including officials in several governments and their security services'.² For these groups, money is the primary goal and they infiltrate state institutions and establish political connections to protect their business.

Tajik (as well as Afghan) warlords who participate in the drug trade make up another category. For these warlords, participation in criminal activities is an important method of obtaining political influence. The main reason for this is that it gives access to the two most important sources for political power in the country: money and control over violence. These two factors are inseparable in Tajikistan as money makes it possible for warlords to build up and maintain a military entourage. In this sense participation in the drug trade can be instrumental in creating a political platform.

Finally, insurgent groups also take part in the illegal enterprise. Here, a distinction must be drawn between those who merely take advantage of the existing trade and those who organise it. In this context motivation is crucial, since the nature of the group depends on whether drugs are merely a source of finance, or whether greed has become the primary driving force. For example, while criminal capital is a financial source for terrorist networks like Al-Qaeda, for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) the idea of acquiring profit through crime appears to be a driving force as important as the religious goal it claims to be advocating.

The position of different groups along the continuum is by no means static. Changes in the behaviour of different actors lead them to move from one position to another. For example, it is possible for a group to change from being purely ideological in nature to becoming a purely criminally motivated organisation.

²Also available at: <http://www.asiaquarterly.com/content/view/121/40/>, accessed 19 May 2006.

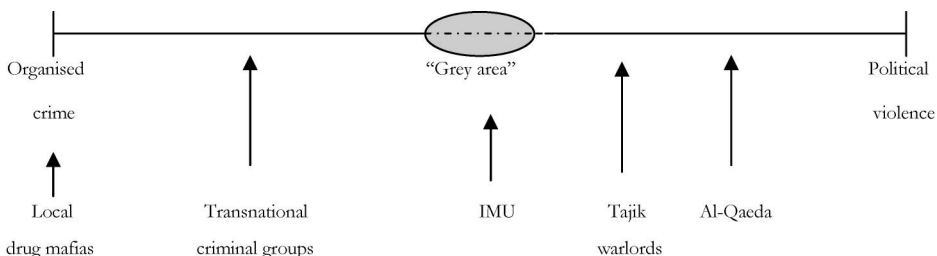


FIGURE 3. THE CRIME–TERROR NEXUS IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN DRUG TRADE

The IMU and the drug trade

In March 1992, the Uzbek government banned the movement *Adolat* (Justice), which called for an Islamic revolution in Uzbekistan. The leaders of the group, Tohir Yoldash and Juma Namangani, were forced into exile in Tajikistan, where they joined forces with the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) during the civil war. During the Tajik civil war, the duo physically split up and their different roles became clear. Yoldash toured the Muslim world, visiting Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Chechnya and Turkey in search of both ideological and financial input. Namangani, on the other hand, fought alongside radical Islamic oppositional forces in Tajikistan, and struck up a close friendship with the IRP's army chief of staff Mirzo Zioev—currently Tajikistan's minister of emergencies (Rashid 2002, pp. 142–143). Clearly, Yoldash was the ideological leader, while Namangani was the guerrilla commander.

In the summer of 1998, Yoldash formally announced the creation of the IMU, which then declared a holy war against the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan. The ideal staging point for its operations was Tajikistan, where a peace treaty had been negotiated in 1997 (the treaty was opposed by the IMU) and a coalition government with limited territorial control was established. At least two bases were set up in central Tajikistan (Rashid 2002). In August 1999, the IMU staged its first incursion into the Ferghana Valley—the territory where Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan converge. From its bases in central Tajikistan, Namangani sent small but well-armed guerrilla groups into south-western Kyrgyzstan. As a first step the militants took a mayor and three officials hostage in the Osh district. The Kyrgyz government was caught completely off guard and its inability to militarily protect its territory was exposed. In exchange for a \$50,000 ransom and transportation by helicopter to Afghanistan, the IMU agreed to release the hostages. Two weeks after the incursion in Osh, on 23 August, further hostages, including four Japanese geologists, were seized, this time in the Batken region. The geologists were finally released to the Japanese government on 25 October, apparently at a price of \$2 million (Cornell 2005, p. 585). A year later, in summer 2000, the IMU was back at the forefront, and once again Tajik territory was used as a stepping-stone. This time the operations were more sophisticated, and included incursions into Uzbekistan's southern province of Surkhan-Darya, the mountains just to the east of the capital Tashkent, and attacks near Uzbek enclaves in southern Kyrgyzstan, Sokh and Vorukh.

At first, the incursions were interpreted as a step in the IMU's proclaimed struggle to topple the Karimov regime by the use of armed force. From that perspective, some analysts have labelled the moves as failures. However, several commentators have pointed out the unrealistic features in that type of explanation. Rather, the nature of the insurgencies, including the geographical areas targeted, the timing of the operations and the tactics mentioned, seem to indicate that the driving motivation was to destabilise border areas in order to maintain and secure narcotics transportation routes (Cornell 2005; Makarenko 2002).

First, the incursions of 1999 and 2000 were carried out near to major transit areas. Instability in these areas would create ideal conditions for shipping large quantities of drugs via the well-used Khorog–Osh route, as well as providing coverage for exploring alternative routes; mainly through the Batken region where the Kyrgyz military and law enforcement have always had limited control. Second, all operations happened to occur in the late summer just after the annual June opium harvest had taken place in Afghanistan. In between, traffickers would have had time to refine the opium into heroin and smuggle it through the mountain passages in Central Asia before the winter when, due to snow, mountain passages are inaccessible (Makarenko 2002). The criminal nature of the IMU has also been identified by international agencies. For instance, Interpol has monitored the links between drug trafficking and terrorism in Central Asia, and estimated that during its heyday, the IMU may have been responsible for 70% of the heroin entering Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan.³ To summarise, certain circumstances link the IMU to criminal activities and, specifically, a strong complicity in the Central Asian drug trade. The group appears to fit into the grey area where terrorism and organised crime fuse in the form of narco-terrorism.

Consequences for Tajikistan's security

The IMU attacks in the Ferghana Valley were not primarily an attempt to militarily challenge Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Instead, they were an attempt to create political and military unrest in the region in order to pursue criminal interests. The activities posed a serious threat to Tajikistan's territorial sovereignty and functional integrity. First, the events showed that Tajikistan was continuously used as a springboard for narco-terror incursions into the heart of Central Asia, and the actions conducted by the IMU clearly manifested the lack of central control over the territory. In addition, evidence also pointed in the direction of links between the IMU and the Islamic faction of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), which was integrated into the country's post-civil war coalition government. These contacts (including membership exchange) were cultivated during the civil war and sustained after the ceasefire in 1997.⁴

³Interpol (2000) *Testimony on International Crime*, 13 December, available at: http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/congress/2000_h/001213-mutschke.htm, accessed 29 April 2006.

⁴Rashid, A. (2000) 'IMU Insurgency Threatens Tajikistani Political Reconciliation', *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 27 September, available at: http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=127, accessed 29 April 2006.

Secondly, narco-terrorism has also undermined the external legitimacy of Tajikistan. Uzbekistan—the principal power in Central Asia—in particular, has aggressively accused Tajikistan of providing militant Islamic groups and criminals with a safe haven, and has demanded that the Tajik government expel the rebels. In October 1999 after the IMU incursions, Uzbekistan unilaterally retaliated by bombing villages in eastern Tajikistan. Other moves by Tashkent in relation to the presence of IMU militants on Tajik soil included cutting off gas supplies to the capital Dushanbe, as well as mining the Tajik border and expelling Tajik refugees. The whole idea of national security in an international context to a great degree concerns the pursuit of freedom from territorial interference. External actors could perceive Tajikistan to be a lawless narco-terror area that affects stability and security in their own countries, and earlier responses have shown that at least Uzbekistan does not hesitate to intervene.

As a result of the US campaign in Afghanistan in late 2001, much of the IMU's military infrastructure was wiped out, and its charismatic military commander Namangani was reportedly killed. This has led some to no longer regard the IMU as a future force in Central Asia. However, since all the factors that permitted the group to be such an influential force—repressive governments, poverty, the drug trade, an identity vacuum, areas outside governmental control (mainly in Tajikistan but also in Kyrgyzstan and the Uzbek enclaves in southern Kyrgyzstan) etc. are still in place—it is quite possible that the group will re-emerge on the Central Asian political scene in one form or other. As the journalist and expert on militant Islam Ahmed Rashid notes, the real threat has always been the group's underground network in Central Asia. He claims that there are no good reasons to believe that particular network has been broken.⁵ Another analyst claims that for the moment:

it is hard to tell whether the IMU represents a proper organised force or an alliance of small groups... some members seem to have been recruited by drug traffickers and other criminal groups, while others have moved on to part of the global Islamic movement in Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁶

Such a split further indicates the network character of the group to which both ideological and criminal motives have been loosely attached.

Population issues: addiction and diseases

As well as its territory, the physical base the state rests on can be threatened by the consequences of the drug trade on another level—the human level. These threats come in two closely related forms. First, the number of individuals abusing drugs can become so high that it becomes a severe threat to the socio-economic fabric of society

⁵Comments by Ahmed Rashid cited in Blua, A. (2004) 'Central Asia: Is the IMU Still a Threat to Regional Security?', *RFE/RL*, 23 January 2004, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/01/22ec254f-13c5-4b38-beb0-4c94a6164a08.html>, accessed 29 April 2006.

⁶Quote by David Lewis as cited in Blua, A. (2004) 'Central Asia: Is the IMU Still a Threat to Regional Security?', *RFE/RL*, 23 January 2004, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/01/22ec254f-13c5-4b38-beb0-4c94a6164a08.html>, accessed 29 April 2006.

and may, in the worst case, affect the functioning of the state. Secondly, and even more alarming, as a result of widespread heroin abuse, infectious disease may spread, especially HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C, which in the first phase is initially transmitted among intravenous drug users and, in the second phase, via sexual intercourse. It is important to remember that addiction and HIV/AIDS are primarily threats to individuals; only if they assume such proportions that they threaten the breakdown of society do they become a societal security issue.

Drug abuse in Tajikistan

In tandem with Central Asia's emergence as a favoured transit route for drug smuggling, an alarming escalation in the numbers of drug users has been identified. This raises the threat of a public health crisis. The country probably most severely affected by this trend is Tajikistan. A strong reason behind this is that the greater part of all entry points go through its territory. Over the seven-year period from 1995 to 2001, the number of registered heroin addicts in Tajikistan (see Figure 4) has increased more than seven-fold, or from 823 in 1995 to 6,243 in 2001.⁷ However, these official figures are regarded by many experts as misleading.

Statistics reported by Tajikistan are for a number of reasons not reliable. The main reason, of course, is that only those who seek treatment are registered. The shortcomings in locating addicts are also a product of the civil war and the debilitating impact it had on the health service system (Madi 2003, p. 42). There is a lack of resources and capacity in Tajikistan, both from state and civil society, to be able to control this development; for example, Tajikistan's National Agency for Narcotics Control was only established in 1999. That the situation behind the official numbers is different than it appears has been revealed in a field investigation conducted by the UNODC. On the basis of sampling interviews in Dushanbe and Kurgantube, the UNODC has estimated that the actual number of drug addicts in the country is at least 12 times higher than the official figures. This indicates that in 2001 the real number of addicts would have been approximately 75,000.⁸ In 2005, popular opinion held the real number to exceed 100,000.⁹ Particularly worrisome are the types of drugs which are abused. According to statistics from 2000, opiates (opium and particularly heroin) were the primary drug of abuse in a dramatic 91% of the officially registered drug treatment cases (UNODC 2003a).

⁷Ponce, R. (2002) 'Rising Heroin Abuse in Asia Raises Threat of Public Health Crisis', *Eurasia Insight*, 29 March, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav032902a.shtml>, accessed 29 April 2006.

⁸United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODCCP) (2002) *Illicit Drugs Situation in the Regions Neighbouring Afghanistan and the Response of ODCCP*, available at: http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afg_drug-situation_2002-10-01_1.pdf, accessed 29 April 2006.

⁹Ponce, R. (2002) 'Rising Heroin Abuse in Asia Raises Threat of Public Health Crisis', *Eurasia Insight*, 29 March, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav032902a.shtml>, accessed 29 April 2006.; F. Najibullah (2003) 'Tajikistan: En Route to West, Trafficked Drugs Leave Social Crisis in their Wake', *RFE/RL*, 18 June, available at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/security/library/news/2003/06/sec-030618-rfel-154021.htm>, accessed 29 April 2006.

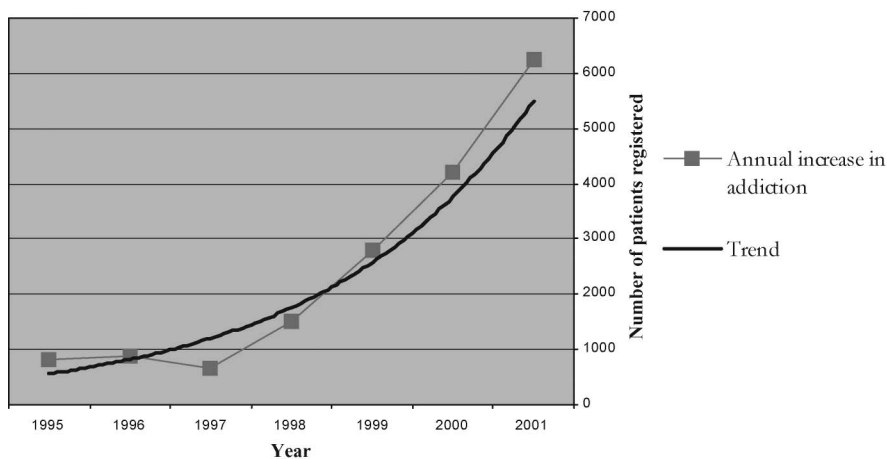


FIGURE 4. TAJIKISTAN: NUMBER OF PATIENTS REGISTERED FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT

Taking into consideration the weak health infrastructure and the subsequent lack of tools for monitoring drug addiction in combination with the field work conducted by the UNODC, as well as the fact that Tajikistan is the major entry point for Afghan produced opiates smuggled northwards, it does not seem too speculative to assume that the country has one of the highest prevalence rates of opiate abusers in the world (for estimations, see UNODC 2003b). In this context, we should also pay attention to the fact that the consequences of smuggling in Tajikistan, with its six million inhabitants, are considerably greater than in other major trafficking hubs like Iran and Pakistan, with 70 and 150 million inhabitants, respectively, since the amount of drugs in proportion to the population is considerably greater in Tajikistan (Cornell 2004).

HIV/AIDS—a ticking time-bomb

Without underestimating the addiction issue, it is in combination with the transmission of HIV/AIDS that we can see the whole range of implications the drug trade has on societal security. There is evidence to suggest that heroin trafficking, injected heroin use and HIV infection are closely intertwined, and that HIV follows drug trafficking routes. The mechanism of HIV spreading along heroin trafficking routes 'begins with [the] uptake of heroin use, leading to injecting drug use outbreaks, followed by explosive HIV outbreaks'.¹⁰ As before, this is also the case for Tajikistan as well as the whole of Central Asia, and while it is a fact that the number of people

¹⁰Stachowiak, J. & Beyrer, C. (2003) 'HIV Follows Heroin Trafficking Routes, Presented at the Conference on Health Security in Central Asia: Drug Use, HIV and AIDS', *Eurasianet*, 9 July, available at: http://www.eurasianet.org/health.security/presentations/hiv_trafficking.shtml, accessed 29 April 2006.

infected with HIV is rapidly growing, the true prevalence of HIV in the region has yet to be determined. The World Bank has estimated that, of the total number of injecting drug users in Central Asia, 70–80% are likely to become HIV infected (ICG 2003). Except for Kazakhstan, the diagnosed number of HIV cases in Central Asia is still at a relatively low level. But in this context it must be noted that the Kazakh government's capacity to monitor society is much stronger than that of its Tajik counterpart. One should bear in mind that in Tajikistan only seven HIV cases were detected prior to 2000; since then the rates have increased dramatically (see Figure 5), and in 2003 the country reported 42 newly registered cases.¹¹

As of February 2004 Azamdjon Mirzoev, the director of Tajikistan's republican centre for AIDS prevention, reported that of the 152 officially registered cases, a staggering 33 were recorded in January 2004 alone. He also put the real number at about 20 times the official figure, and explained that the recent sharp increase was partly due to a previous lack of testing equipment, including inoperative laboratories from January 2002 until the middle of 2003.¹² The correlation between drug trafficking and HIV becomes obvious if one considers that 91% of the cases booked during the period 1997–2001 were related to intravenous drug use (UNODC 2003a, p. 198). This would indicate that the spread of HIV in Tajikistan is still largely limited to the intravenous drug user community. Hence, it would seem that the disease has not yet stepped into phase two, in which it is sexually transmitted and affects all layers of society. In this respect, Tajikistan still has a chance to successfully fight HIV before it reaches epidemic proportions and the costs for fighting HIV hence become too high. There is, however, a treacherous factor baked into this. As long as the spread of HIV is restricted to the drug user community there is a tendency to believe it is controllable. Still, as seen recently in India, Russia and not least Pakistan, where HIV has taken root beyond this group, the transmission can have explosive consequences in countries lacking the funds necessary to take effective preventative measures. The magnitude of a looming AIDS crisis in Tajikistan can be illustrated in economic terms. The average cost of life-sustaining treatment for one AIDS patient is around \$10,000 annually, however, in 1999 Tajikistan had a health budget of \$13 per capita, and one commentator has pointed out that for the majority of the people, a diagnosis of AIDS would therefore mean a death sentence.¹³

¹¹*Irinnews* (2004) 'Tajikistan: Drug Use, Migration and Ignorance Fuel Rise in HIV Infections', 24 February, available at: http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=39661&SelectRegion=Central_Asia&SelectCountry=TAJIKISTAN, accessed 29 April 2006.

¹²See *Irinnews* 'Tajikistan: Drug use, migration . . .', for full details see footnote 11 (2004). That the official HIV cases are only the tip of the iceberg is also put forward by Zukhra Khalimova, executive director of the Soros Foundation in Tajikistan, who believes that the real figure is over 2,000, and the International Health Organization (IHO), which places the number at between 1,500 and 4,000. See Zakirova, N. (2002) 'Tajikistan: AIDS Timebomb Ticking', *Eurasianet*, 29 October, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/health.security/iwpr.shtml>, accessed 29 April 2006).

¹³Buzurukov, A. (2002) 'HIV/AIDS Epidemic: Time is Running out for Central Asia', *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 10 April, available at: http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=29, accessed 29 April 2006.

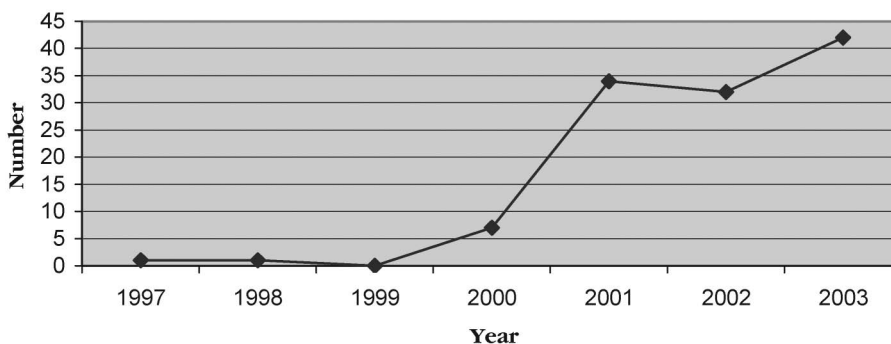


FIGURE 5. TAJIKISTAN: NEWLY DIAGNOSED HIV CASES, 1997–2003

An additional problem is that well over half a million Tajik citizens head to CIS countries for temporary work, both legally and illegally (prostitution is becoming more and more common among Tajik women). The main dwelling place is Russia, the country with one of the fastest growing AIDS epidemics in the world. Cases of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases brought in from neighbouring countries by labour migrants have also been reported. This flow of labour, mainly from poor rural areas, is obviously another factor contributing to the health threat. In fact, the combined problem of young addicts, increased levels of drug use, prostitution, and the movement of seasonal labour between Central Asia and Russia is indeed problematic, and increases the risk that the disease will reach epidemic levels.

State institutions

As the institutional component of the state comprises the entire machinery of government, security within this sphere does not mean security of the government alone; it is wider in scope and also includes threats to the political structure and the political process, as well as to the security of the population. In Tajikistan, drug trafficking networks have ramifications throughout society. Drug money is inevitably present at the highest state level as it is a major source of income in the country. A World Bank report on Tajikistan estimates that between 30 and 50% of the country's economic activity is linked to narcotics trafficking.¹⁴

The civil war—the foundation of a narco-political system

More than anything else, the civil war that broke out after independence has shaped the politico-institutional design of present-day Tajikistan. Any attempts to analyse criminal elements in the state structures, therefore, have to consider this landmark in Tajikistan's political history. Although it is important to emphasise that the war was

¹⁴See the World Bank on HIV/AIDS in Tajikistan, available at: <http://lnweb18.worldbank.org/ECA/ECSHD.nsf/0/814FDCE14FDAF46585256C83006D9373?Opendocument>, accessed 29 April 2006.

not initiated on criminal grounds, it still resembled some other domestic armed conflicts in the sense that securing control over illicit enterprises became an important component in the struggle. When a ceasefire and a coalition government arrangement were negotiated in 1997, warlords with influence over the increasingly lucrative drug trade were integrated into the new political system.

The International Crisis Group (2001, p. 15), a Brussels-based think-tank, points out that the problem of drug money corrupting the political system in Tajikistan exceeds that seen in other Central Asian states because both the government and the opposition forces participated in the drug trade during the civil war. As a result of the peace treaty, many of those individuals took over government positions, which means that in practice they enjoy immunity from prosecution (a similar point is made by Akiner 2001, pp. 72–76). In this sense, organised crime has not even needed to fight its way into the system. Rather, it has followed as an integral part in the wake of the institutional reconstruction evoked by the war. Hence, the peace agreement has simply changed organised crime's role in Tajikistan from being a natural component under anarchic conditions to becoming a legitimate part of what is, at least formally, a settled system. This is not to devalue the peace agreement, but from a drug trafficking perspective it is evident that the illicit business is likely to have become more organised and wide-scale since the war than the other way around. This is also indicated by the increased scale of trafficking.

Karen Ballentine and Heiko Nitzschke (2003) have studied the gradual shift from grievance to greed in several domestic conflicts. Although the war in Tajikistan is not among the conflicts mapped, it appears to fit rather well into this description. According to that study, access to lootable resources, for example drugs, 'appears to prolong non-separatist conflicts by disproportionately benefiting insurgents—typically the weaker side of the conflict—and thereby averting their military defeat... these resources can render wartime exploitation so profitable that combatants prefer protracted war to peace' (Ballentine & Nitzschke 2003, p. 5). The Tajik civil war was in fact drawn out. While the fighting was at its most intense during the first year, an analysis of the conflict dynamics thereafter seems to reveal a more complex, and not purely ideologically motivated conflict (Roy 2000, pp. 139–142). Furthermore, it is possible that the opposition's heavy involvement in the drug trade provided the means that enabled them to resist the government forces, who had much stronger external support. In fact, both Russia and Uzbekistan considered the UTO to be a group of radical Islamists and drug dealers with an agenda more threatening than the old Soviet loyalist government (Atkin 1997, pp. 336–340; Slim & Hodizoda 2002, p. 518).

As the drug trade is a clandestine activity, it is quite naturally difficult to prove that in reality several field commanders functioned as drug lords. For strategic purposes, political rivals have also frequently accused one another of compliance in criminal activities. Despite this, there is little doubt among local and Western experts that criminal interests are influencing the political system at the very highest level. Several significant authorities during the civil war have unequivocally been linked to drugs and crime (Akiner 2001, pp. 73–74; Cornell 2006; Marat 2006). To conclude, in the wake of the post-civil war institutional build-up, the installation of warlords and their side interest, the drug trade, in the state structures followed.

Criminalisation of state structures

Since the mid-1990s, it has been said that corruption is most widely spread in law enforcement institutions, i.e. police, customs, militia and Russian border troops (Seger 1996). As the mandate of law enforcement bodies is to combat criminal activities, it is quite natural that if they are co-opted by the groups they are supposed to protect the state from, it is virtually impossible to successfully counteract the criminalisation of society. It is important, however, to emphasise that corruption in the lower ranks simply reflects the gloomy reality in the country; it is the low salaries of law enforcement officials that make them prone to corruption, not moral inferiority.

Drug syndicates also create a political environment surrounded by intimidation and violence. One such example was the gangland style murder of the Deputy Interior Minister Khabib Sanginov in Dushanbe in the spring of 2001. Sanginov was in charge of a government crackdown on organised crime, and as a former member of the UTO and a representative of the opposition, Sanginov was put under pressure to deal with the drug lords in the areas where UTO had its strongholds during the civil war, and where the government forces had limited control.¹⁵ The Sanginov case demonstrates that individuals who try to fight the drug trade expose themselves to great danger. The tactics used by criminal groups undoubtedly have deterrent effects on officials' willingness to challenge the interests of organised crime.

Some spectacular examples of high-level political involvement in trafficking have been exposed. The country's ambassador to Kazakhstan was, for instance, caught transporting drugs twice. The second time, he was apprehended in Kazakhstan with 62 kilograms of heroin and \$1 million in cash (International Crisis Group 2001, p. 15). Soon after the incident with the ambassador, Tajikistan's trade representative in Kazakhstan was also caught with 24 kilograms of heroin. As the ICG (2001, pp. 15–16) comments: 'such large quantities of narcotics most likely involved the complicity of various law enforcement officials'. In August 2004, another high-level case was revealed when a former deputy defence minister was imprisoned for using a military helicopter to smuggle drugs (McDermott 2002). A third top-level case was displayed after an aggressive confrontation between the Tajik President and former Tajik Minister of Interior, and the powerful military commander Yakub Salimov. In 2003, Salimov was detained and charged with organised crime, including drug trade; he was sentenced to 15 years in prison (Marat 2006, p. 108).

In a report in early 2001, the secretary of Tajikistan's Security Council acknowledged that many drug merchants and couriers are also representatives of Tajik state agencies. Law enforcement bodies and security services were identified as the institutional structures most severely affected. The blame for the failure of realising the programmes and for decisions taken against the drug trade was generally placed on the law enforcement officers, who were accused of having involvement in the trade and

¹⁵Gleason, G. (2001) 'Tajikistan Minister's Murder Points to Drug-Route Conflict', *Eurasia Insight*, 16 March, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041601.shtml>, accessed 29 April 2006.

of making it possible for dealers to evade the law.¹⁶ The report also stated that the drug business had reached such significant proportions that it posed a direct threat to national security.¹⁷ The general tendency in official statements is to place the blame mainly on law enforcement agencies. As a consequence, it is not acknowledged that personnel in the Tajik State Security Ministry are:

complicit in the interrelated trades with drugs and arms. The president's Kulob clan is over-represented in that ministry, and the Kulob area near the Afghan border is known as a major transit point for Afghan-made drugs. Kulob, moreover, is one of the country's few areas to which the writ of Dushanbe does extend.¹⁸

The multifaceted implications of the drug trade on Tajikistan's security have by no means disappeared since 2001, and there is little evidence to suggest a development in a positive direction. A destabilisation of state structures has occurred due to criminal segments having control over some parts of the institutional system, and also influence over substantial parts of the political process. This control gives organised crime the opportunity to maintain leverage over the state and to protect itself from the initiation of a process that truly threatens its position. A criminal overlay of the state simply enables them to destabilise the political system and to ensure the continuation of their business. The drug trade therefore undeniably means profit for the few, and hardship for the many.

To connect to the term state capture, it is evident that organised crime state infiltration exhibits a similar logic. When organised criminal elements capture parts of the institutional structures, the political system is seriously distorted. The institutions of the state are not operating according to their supposed functions, resources are relocated and subsequently, the output of public goods is adventured. The result is a state with severely reduced functionality on several levels, in particular with respect to the government's ability to protect its citizens.

Organised crime, the idea of the state and legitimacy

The idea of the state does not refer directly to a physical component but to ideological and organising principles, i.e. state–nation cohesion and the legitimacy of the economic and political system, therefore threats to this part of the state are more difficult to grasp. However, there are two main ways of circumventing this problem. The first is to bear in mind the point made by Buzan: ideas and institutions are inseparably intertwined. The second way of concretising is by attaching this abstract

¹⁶*Jamestown Foundation Monitor* (2001) 'Drug Trade Engulfs Tajikistan, Spills into Russia', 31 January, available at: http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=24&issue_id=1950&article_id=17995, accessed 29 April 2006.

¹⁷*Jamestown Foundation Monitor* (2001) 'Drug Trade Engulfs Tajikistan, Spills into Russia', 31 January, available at: http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=24&issue_id=1950&article_id=17995, accessed 29 April 2006.

¹⁸*Jamestown Foundation Monitor* (2001) 'Drug Trade Engulfs Tajikistan, Spills into Russia', 31 January, available at: http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=24&issue_id=1950&article_id=17995, accessed 29 April 2006.

part of the state to a discussion on legitimacy. These two aspects are what this section is about.

Legitimacy

Organised crime has the potential to severely damage the Tajik state's legitimacy, both domestically and in the international arena. To begin with the impact on the national level, Buzan (1991, p. 79) emphasises that: 'since [the organising] ideologies address the bases of relations between government and society they define the conditions for both harmony and conflict in domestic politics'. When the principles that govern the behaviour of the state are penetrated by criminal ideas, the functionality of the entire state is reduced. Resources are diverted from the domains in the society they are supposed to support. As a result, this perversion of politics significantly reduces the state's capacity to deliver basic services and protect its citizens. Against the background of the previously stated criminalisation of the state machinery, Tajikistan is, not surprisingly, a country where this process has occurred. The relation of organised crime to legitimacy is complex, however. While it is clear that it distorts the proper/formal political system, a criminally motivated political elite can, if they use the revenues obtained to provide public goods, generate legitimacy that is indifferent to formal laws and, therefore, a subversion of the official political system. This is obviously a matter of great concern, as criminals that use proceeds from drug trafficking to initiate projects that benefit the public can build up strong political support upon this criminal foundation.

Perhaps the most prominent case of high-level involvement in organised crime in Tajikistan appears to be Makhmadsaid Ubaidulloev, Speaker of the Parliament and Mayor of Dushanbe. His liberal attitude towards drug trafficking has been charged in various media reports.¹⁹ Ubaidulloev's formal and informal powers are tangible, and he is reputedly one of the wealthiest men in Tajikistan. He controls the cotton monopoly and major aluminium factories and it is alleged that he is a major player in the drug trade. Some even go so far as to claim that his remarkable accumulation of at times *de facto* power has outweighed that of President Emomali Rakhmonov (Akiner 2001, p. 71). It is also believed that if he decides to run against Rakhmonov in the presidential election of 2006, he possesses the means necessary to stand as a serious challenger. Rumours of an ongoing power struggle between the two have also been reported. The combination of formal/legal and, in all likelihood, informal/illegal power structures makes Ubaidulloev an illustrative example of how criminal interests are allowed to set up parallel power structures and economies that operate quite independently of official directions. The hollowness of the official state machinery is emphasised by the fact that such a person holds key official positions and has a mandate to serve the national interest.

¹⁹Madi, M. (2004) 'Who is the New Director of the Tajik Drug Control Agency?', *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 24 March, available at: http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2230, accessed 29 April 2006; *Pravda* (2001) 'Tajikistan Capital's Mayor Involved in Drug Business', *Pravda*, 30 July, available at: <http://english.pravda.ru/main/2001/07/30/11317.html>, accessed 29 April 2006.

To further illustrate, there is the case of Ghafor Mirzoev, who belongs to the Parkhar grouping led by Ubaidulloev within the ruling Kulyabi-clan as opposed to President Rakhmonov's Danghara group. Until the summer of 2004, Mirzoev had been one of the most influential persons in Tajik politics. As a warlord during the civil war, it is strongly believed that his great personal wealth was accumulated from involvement in the drug trade in the mid-1990s. After the war, he was made head of the powerful presidential guard, with his own personal militia at his disposal. In the winter of 2004, however, Rakhmonov removed him from that position and put him in charge of the country's UN-funded Drug Control Agency (DCA). However, in August the same year he was arrested and charged with about a dozen crimes, including murder.²⁰ At the very least, the appointment of Mirzoev as head of the DCA shows that internationally funded drug control is used as a tool in the domestic politics of the country.

There is also a correlation between criminal interests exerting political influence to the extent that is apparent in Tajikistan and a repressive state: a free press, a vital civil society and an active political opposition have the potential to display the criminalisation of the state and the position of corrupt officials. In order to avoid such exposition, less openness and more repression are the reflex effects of a criminal state (Cornell 2004). The common suspicion that criminal interests are responsible for the killings of several journalists and politicians in Tajikistan supports this point.

The inexperienced and turbulent nature of the Tajik state has contributed to a lack of national identity and organising values that are widely held in society. It is therefore not possible to speak of a criminalisation of the idea of the state, because there is no idea to criminalise. Rather, an idea vacuum has arisen out of the government's inability to produce a national identity and to develop a legitimate political and economic system. Criminal interests and their ideas on how to run the state have infiltrated the highest level of the state. These interests are not one among several competing interests, but due to their enormous financial resources, intimidating means and the weak political and economic system in the country, the most forceful influence on the political arena in Tajikistan. This is not to say that all officials are motivated by a criminal agenda. However, the funds available for those who are make their influence in this manner significant. In addition, the lack of tools available for the citizens to check the behaviour of the political elite—such as media reporting, civil society, education, financial resources etc.—makes a domestic reaction to the problem extremely difficult to initiate.

Buzan (1991, p. 78) claims that: 'unless the idea of the state is firmly planted in the "minds" of other states, the state has no secure environment'. It is evident that as long as the drug trade continues to have such multifaceted implications both for Tajikistan and the region as a whole, the country will remain extremely vulnerable to external players' actions. Direct evidence, such as the exposure of two of the country's foreign representatives caught busily smuggling drugs, suggests a link between the idea

²⁰*Eurasia Insight* (2004) 'Arrest of Tajikistan's Drug Czar Stirs Political Tension in Dushanbe', 9 August, available at: <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav080904.shtml>, accessed 29 April 2006.

of profit through crime among top state officials and the external legitimacy of the Tajik state. The potential costs are not only linked to aggressive behaviour from other states; an additional concern is that it may have negative consequences for the willingness of external actors to provide much needed investment in the country.

Tajikistan as a state

The previous discussions have gradually brought us closer to the question of whether Tajikistan corresponds to a true state at all. The drug trade has contributed to undermining Tajikistan's legitimacy in many senses, however it is too simplistic to explain Tajikistan's weakness as a result of the drug trade. Rather, it is obvious that at the time of independence the state was even weaker, something that was manifested by the inability to establish a central rule that could keep the escalating divisions within the country from causing a civil war. The post-war efforts to build a functional state entity out of the ruins of the war draw on the peace agreement from 1997. It is in this context that the negative consequences of the drug-based economy are visible. Corruption emanating from criminally motivated special interests prevalent in the society are a major obstacle for developing a proper state underpinned by regular economic activity, where the output of public goods is a natural part of the relationship between the government and the public.

To explicitly pick up where we left the discussion on the idea of the state in the theoretical section; in strong states where the idea of the state, for instance democracy, is commonly held throughout the society, the degree of socio-political cohesion is high. These factors lock the ideological element of the state within certain parameters and make it very unlikely that criminal ideas will take root at this level. In a country like Tajikistan, with attributes as described earlier, such checks and balances do not exist, and this allows criminal parties to capture the most sacred and abstract part of the state, the idea of how it should behave.

The reduced functionality of a criminalised political system is especially evident in the interaction between the population and its government. If we dissolve the government into the most basic components of political authority, i.e. state organs with the responsibility to uphold sovereignty over a geographical territory, like border protection structures, coercive establishment and tax collection apparatus, it is possible to examine the actual functioning of a political entity that in a juridical sense is recognised as a sovereign state (i.e. by the international community).²¹ In other words, how much of a state is it with regards to exercising authority—in the basic coercive and fiscal sense—over the population residing within its territory?

First, control over the protection of the Tajik–Afghan border has been the responsibility of the Russian 201st Motorised Rifle Division since independence. In April 2004, the Tajik border guard services announced that they were prepared to take over the task and the Russian withdrawal is to be fully completed in 2006. However, the Russian military has a reputation for being a deeply corrupt institution,

²¹These are the four elements commonly derived from Max Weber's classical definition of the state. See Weber (1964, p. 156).

which has been linked to shipping drugs from Tajikistan to Russia.²² There are also doubts about the ability of the Tajik government to guard the country's borders.²³

Secondly, law enforcement agencies falling within the Ministry of Internal Affairs are the most unreformed institutional bodies in the ex-Soviet republics. A leading specialist has estimated that roughly 70% of law enforcement officials in Central Asia are corrupt.²⁴ Within these structures, which are supposed to combat organised crime and drug trafficking, criminalisation is endemic. For example, in early 2004, the Head of the Drug Control Agency in the Zarafshan valley was arrested in possession of 30 kilograms of heroin. It was speculated that this arrest was related to an ongoing war between law enforcement agencies over control of the drug trade in the country (Osmonaliev 2005, p. 22). In brief, this represents a situation when the activities of law enforcement are not directed towards protecting and maintaining the proper functioning of the state, but towards involvement in the very activities it is supposed to combat. This indicates the need to dissolve the state into concrete coercive and institutional functions in order to see how bodies that in theory should counter the problem adhere to a different logic in practice. Border protection and law enforcement do not primarily protect the population from external or internal threats stemming from the drug trade, but are part of the very problem.

Thirdly, if the tax collection efforts of the government are directed towards controlling external economic flows, such as illegal trade along the Silk Road rather than the population, we never get a population and a government that are tied together by exchanging taxation in return for public goods. In a country like Tajikistan, with a severely restricted capacity to collect taxes, the rulers' efforts to tax are restricted to the areas where profitable businesses are located. In the rural areas where the majority of the population is living, the state does not fulfil its role, giving it little meaning whatsoever.

To summarise, disaggregating the ruling apparatus into its most basic elements of stateness allows us to believe that ties to drug trafficking are endemic in the state structures of Tajikistan. In light of the absence of proper border protection, law enforcement and taxation structures, which make up the first criterion for a functioning state, the subsequent aspect of the quality of bureaucratic performance—in other words, implementation capacity—is automatically absent.

Concluding remarks

This study has examined the way international drug trafficking is threatening Tajikistan's national security. The physical base of the state was the first object analysed. It is evident that trade in illicit narcotics has affected both Tajikistan's

²²Peuch, J.-C. (2001) 'Central Asia: Charges Link Russian Military to Drug Trade', *RFE/RL*, 8 June, available at: <http://www.rferl.org/features/2001/06/08062001111711.asp>, accessed 29 April 2006.

²³Such fears have been expressed from Kyrgyz experts, who see it as a possibility that the Kyrgyz–Tajik frontier rather than the Tajik–Afghan border will become the first frontline in the fight against the drug trade from Afghanistan (Kairat Osmonaliev, formerly Deputy Director Kyrgyzstan Drug Control Agency, personal communication, Bishkek, February 2006).

²⁴Kairat Osmonaliev, personal communication, Uppsala, July 2004.

territory and its population. The territorial sovereignty in the late 1990s and early 2000s was disturbed by the presence of the IMU, an armed terrorist/criminal group whose violent incursions into the Ferghana Valley were launched from Tajik territory. The nature of the operations, in combination with IMU's record as the major smuggler of drugs from Afghanistan to Kyrgyzstan via Tajikistan, seems to indicate strong criminal motives behind the activities. The combination of armed violence and drugs had negative consequences for Tajikistan's relations with its neighbours, mainly Uzbekistan, who perceived Tajikistan's inability to control its territory as a major source of instability in the region, and their security calculations were adjusted accordingly.

The escalating drug trafficking in Tajikistan has direct and exceedingly alarming consequences for the health security in the country. Although the dramatic increase in drug addiction and epidemic disease, such as HIV/AIDS, have yet not reached such levels that they are posing a threat to the state's entire population base, the trend and lessons learned from other countries indicates that the country will soon have to confront a health security threat of a very frightening magnitude.

At the core of the relationship between the drug trade and Tajikistan's national security is the issue of the criminalisation of the state machinery. It is hardly surprising that low paid officials in the police and customs authorities are prone to corruption. More alarming is the involvement of authorities at the highest level of the state. This obviously gives the problem qualitatively more severe implications. Firstly, it provides organised crime with a protection that makes it increasingly difficult to combat. It also initiates a dangerous distortion of the political system. Resources are re-orientated from their real purpose, and, as a result, the functionality of the state is undermined. Unsurprisingly, this hinders the creation of a functioning Tajik state out of the ruins that followed the civil war. When criminal interests have infiltrated high enough, and are widely spread in the state apparatus the consequence is that ideas of profit through crime are among the principles and values guiding the orientation of the state. In the case of Tajikistan, the far-reaching process of criminalisation has undermining consequences for legitimacy in both the domestic and the international arenas. The perception of Tajikistan as a narco-political system means that the state has to live under a security environment that is plagued by insecurity and vulnerability to outside interference.

It should be evident from the analysis that there is an interconnected dynamic between the different threats generated by drug trafficking and the different parts of the state they affect. The division of threats and referent objects for national security in Tajikistan has served the purpose of allowing an illustration of the multifaceted consequences the illicit trade in narcotics have for stability and security in the country. However, it is obviously when these multidimensional aspects are noticed in their entirety that the full-scale threat emanating from the drug trade is revealed. This is made evident in light of how the criminalisation of the institutional and ideological components of the state, i.e. the fundamentals of the political system, is serving the interests of crime rather than working for the benefit of the people.

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