Department of East European Studies
Uppsala University

STABILITY AND SECURITY IN TAJIKISTAN
Drug Trafficking as a Threat to National Security

Johan Engwall
Department of East European Studies
Uppsala University

arbetsrapporter
Working Papers
No. 86

ISSN 1103-3541
January 2005
Contents

1. Introduction 1
   1.1 Background 1
   1.2 Purpose 3
   1.3 Delimitations 4
   1.4 Disposition 4

2. Theory 6
   2.1 Security 6
   2.2 Compounding Drug Trafficking and National Security 7
      2.2.1 The Nature of a Weak State 8
      2.2.2 Threats Sector by Sector 10
      2.2.3 National Security and the Component Parts of the State 11

3. Method 15
   3.1 Methodological Baseline 15
   3.2 Single Case Study as a Research Strategy 16
   3.3 Material and Technique 17

4. Analysis 19
   4.1 The Physical Base of the State 19
      4.1.1 Territory 19
      4.1.2 Population 29
   4.2 The Institutions of the State 36
   4.3 The Idea of the State 43

5. Concluding Remarks 49

6. References 52
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has witnessed radical economic and political changes. The common way of illustrating these changes is in terms of increasing processes of globalization. Today, the movement of capital, commodities, ideas and persons is, in an unprecedented manner, transcending national boundaries and interconnecting different parts of the world. The benefits reaped from globalization are evident: market economic activity is now globally accepted and liberal democratic values have gained a foothold in parts of the world where such ideals, merely twenty years ago, would have been unimaginable.

However, concomitantly as globalization has facilitated transnational licit activity, the opening up of borders has, to an increased extent, also been an advantage for illicit interests. Organized criminal groups are clearly among those that have adjusted most effectively to transnational conditions. Their annual global turnover is today estimated to between $500 and- $1,500 billion.¹

There are two main factors behind the growing strength of organized crime as a phenomenon. The first factor is the increased gap between borderless criminal networks and the law enforcement agencies that still tend to stop at the national borders. The second important factor is the changing organization structure. Traditionally, organized crime groups have been characterized as hierarchical and highly centralized associations. This description no longer merits the same plausibility. Instead, they are organized along a decentralized two-tier network system with a hard core and a looser periphery. The core is protected by flexible cell structures at the periphery level. This looser structure makes it difficult for law enforcement agencies to neutralize the networks, since infiltrated nodes at the periphery can easily be detected, and detached. The core structure of transnational criminal organizations is, thus, very difficult to penetrate.²

For both practical and economic reasons, the most central branch in transnational crime is the trade in narcotics. Drugs are easy to smuggle and are the illegal commodity that generates

the highest profit margin. Drug trafficking is estimated to be the second largest business in the world (next to the weapons trade) with an approximate turnover of $200-400 billion per year.\(^3\)

The abuse of drugs causes individual and societal problems in the major consumption countries in the west. However, in the countries involved in the initial production and transit of the drugs to markets, the problems are even more devastating. In Third World states situated along the leading smuggling routes, narcotics have a negative impact on a wide array of the society’s domains. Particularly in the middle- to long-term it affects individuals’ health, with malignant diseases, including HIV/AIDS, as a result. It also feeds corruption and permits criminal segments within the societies to infiltrate the state’s economic and political structures. Hence making it possible for organized crime to increase its influence not only locally but also at the highest levels in the state. Finally, as a financing source for terrorist and separatist groups, as well as an object on its own for armed conflicts, drug trafficking also plays a vital part in the states’ military security. In sum, trade in illicit narcotics is a multifaceted and rising threat to Third World countries’ functional integrity and national security. Thus, any attempts to make out a clear picture of the security situation in these countries need to notice the relevance of studying drug trafficking through a security lens.

In recent years, Central Asia has emerged as a major international drug trafficking hub for opiates smuggled from supply areas in Asia to the major markets for demand in Russia and Europe. A strongly contributing factor is that since the beginning of the 1990s Afghanistan has superseded Burma as the world’s main producer of illicit opium, the raw material for the drug with the most devastating human and social consequences – heroin. This shift in production from South East to South West Asia has been increasingly evident as from the second half of the 1990s and onwards.\(^4\) Currently, approximately 87 percent of the world’s opium production takes place in Afghanistan.\(^5\)

The country most severely affected by the escalating trade in narcotics along the Central Asian region is presumably Tajikistan. As a transit zone, Tajikistan is especially attractive to drug traffickers due to a combination of factors. The first thing that needs to be mentioned is the geographical aspect. Tajikistan shares a 1206 kilometer long border with Afghanistan, including the Badakshan province, currently the third largest opium poppy cultivating

\(^3\) However many analysts believe that the figure is even higher. Representatives for United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimate that the narcotics industry’s turnover possibly even outweighs the weapons industry (Personal communication with Vladimir Fenopetov, Head of Analyst UNODC, September 2004).


province in Afghanistan, where the hectares estimated to be under opium poppy cultivation in 2003 were a dramatic 419 percent higher than in 2000. The porous and mountainous Tajik-Afghan border has been the ideal entry point for smugglers, since neither of these two countries possesses the law enforcement capabilities necessary for effectively deterring illegal cross-border operations.

Tajikistan also enjoys the doubtful pleasure of being the Central Asian country with the best connections to both the producer, Afghanistan, and the principal destination of Central Asian smuggled heroin, Russia. A plausible explanation for the Tajik-Afghan interconnection is the ethnic links between Tajikistan and the 20-25 percent share of ethnic Tajiks in the multicultural Afghanistan. The majority of those are situated in the northern parts, near the border. The links to Russia draw on the fact that since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia has maintained Tajikistan as its major outpost in Central Asia.

The dramatic increase in heroin smuggled through Tajik territory is evident from the drug seizure statistics in the country over the last decade. For 2003, the reports talk about a total confiscation of over 7 tons of drugs, which is over 1000 times more than in 1996, when the first seizures were made. Most experts agree that the increase is not primarily a result of more efficient law enforcement initiatives but is rather a by-product of an increased trade frequency. Besides, even if Tajik authorities claim that out of the whole amount of trafficked drugs 10-12 percent is intercepted, the UNODC put the figure as low as 3-6 percent.

1.2 Purpose

This study is concerned with the task of investigating, from a security policy perspective, the following:

How can transnational trade in illegal narcotics threaten Tajikistan’s national security?

To specify further, the research question can be divided into three subdivisions (coinciding with the component parts of the state that will be introduced in the coming section):

---


7 It is necessary to treat the seizures reported from Tajikistan cautiously as on good grounds experts believe the confiscations reported from Tajik agencies to be higher than the actual numbers.


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

Hence, the study aims to investigate to what extent these different aspects of Tajikistan’s national security are affected by the boundary-transcending narcotics trade.

### 1.3 Delimitations

The choice of Tajikistan as study object can best be ascribed to the need for in-depth scrutiny of the consequences international drug trade has for stability and security in an individual country. It should, however, be borne in mind that, because of its transnational character, the drug business’ impact on Tajikistan cannot be examined without taking into consideration regional dynamics and external actors, whether they be in the form of state or non-state actors, who exacerbate, or are affected by, this criminal enterprise.

In more pragmatic terms, a strongly contributing reason for singling out Tajikistan as the target of the study is the favorable supply of information. In comparison with Turkmenistan, the outlet for the second major northern transit route for Afghan-produced drugs and one of the most uncommunicative countries in the world with a policy of sharing as little information as possible with the surrounding world, the situation in Tajikistan is documented to a much larger extent. This is obviously an advantage in a research field where interpretations and estimations already tend to be of a guesstimated nature. In addition, Tajikistan is probably the weakest state in the entire Central Asian region; combined with its key role in the transportation of heroin to markets this makes it the state likely to be most severely affected by the drug trade in Eurasia.

Chronologically, the study extends from the beginning of the period after the dissolution of the Soviet Union with emphasis on the escalating development in recent years.

### 1.4 Disposition

The first three sections of this essay are intended to clarify the intentions of the study, develop a theoretical framework and define the concepts and methods critical for understanding the analysis of drug trafficking and Tajikistan’s national security following in section four.
Section two present the study’s theoretical approach. It will start out by giving a short review of the changed security policy climate brought forward at the end of the Cold War, including a discussion on why present security theories have only inadequately succeeded in capturing and incorporating transnational crime as a whole within the realm of security studies. After outlining various types of threats to a weak state’s national security, drugs are then explored in that context. In the concluding part, a model that combines transnational drug trade and national security is presented. Serving the purpose of a working hypothesis, this model will structure the analysis of the implication of drugs on Tajikistan’s national security.

In the third section, the methodological aspects of the study are described. Up for discussion first is how the theory relates to the analysis of data. In other words, how drug trafficking, as a factor of insecurity, affects the different parts of the state. Does it constitute a threat on its own, or is it in combination with other factors that the phenomenon impacts on the security situation in Tajikistan? Case study as a research strategy will then be discussed in an attempt to illustrate why a single country is assumed to be preferable in this study. Finally, an argumentation is presented in order to justify the selection of material. Alternative procedures and techniques that are relevant for answering this type of research problem are also discussed.

In the fourth section we come to the empirical part of the study. After giving a short summary of the development of drug trafficking in Central Asia, its consequences for Tajikistan’s national security is then filtered through the model outlined in the theory section.

In the final section, summarized comments are given in order to ascertain the overall intensity of the threats posed by drug trafficking to stability and security in Tajikistan. Last of all, the relevance of drugs and security as an increasingly important issue for both policymakers and scholars is discussed.
2. Theory

2.1 Security

A study that adopts a security perspective on transnational crime and specifically drug trafficking inevitably has to confront the debate taking place within the field of security studies between, on the one hand, those who want to widen the concept of security and, on the other hand, those who want to maintain the concept in a more narrow sense. The background to this debate is to be found in the changed security policy agenda brought forward at the end of the Cold War. During the bipolar Cold War, Realism - first in the 1950-60s with Hans J. Morgenthau as pioneer and then during the 1980s with Kenneth Waltz as figurehead - was unquestionably the dominant way of trying to explain international security. From a state-centric perspective Waltz singled out three aspects of the international system as particularly important: (i) the lack of an international government makes the world order anarchic in character; (ii) under anarchic conditions the units (states) tend to be functionally the same, and; (iii) between the different units, power is unevenly distributed. In other words, the states with the largest resources are the most powerful, which means there are incentives for states to increase their power. This is specifically manifested by states strengthening their military capability.\textsuperscript{10} In sum, in the 1980s the idea that military and, to a lesser extent, political security is guiding states’ actions in an anarchic international system became the paradigm within security studies.

Out of the collapse of the Soviet system followed a world order no longer identifiable in terms of bipolarity. Nor could the models based on Realism explain the transformation, since the fall of the Soviet Union was hardly caused by military means.\textsuperscript{11} In an international system where the cleavages between the communist and capitalist world have been dissolved, there exists a possibility to incorporate, in a more sophisticated way, a wider perspective on security. Threats that, during the Cold War, were neglected or put aside in favor of a state-centered and military-based attitude to security are increasingly important in today’s globally interconnected world. The scholar who, more than anyone else, has initiated the development of a wider security perspective is probably Barry Buzan (representing the so-called Copenhagen


\textsuperscript{11} Some might claim that Soviet’s defeat in the Afghan War was a major step toward the break-up of the USSR. However, most would agree that ascribing the fall of the USSR to the Afghan mujaheddin’s is far too simplistic.
School). In his pioneering work “People, States & Fear” he introduced, in addition to the military and political sectors, three other domains, economic, societal and environmental, in which the security of a state can be threatened. In brief, the debate can be described in simplified terms as being between those who perceive security in the form of military threats and those who also stress non-military threats. Moreover, as James Rosenau notes, these new security issues are also “distinguished from conventional issues by the fact that they span national boundaries and thus cannot be addressed, much less resolved, through actions undertaken only at the national or local level”.

It is against this background that the need to develop a wider view of security in Central Asia emerges. During the Soviet period, the threats in Central Asia were of a considerably more concrete nature and they followed the logic of the realist paradigm. Security thinking focused on presumptive threats to the military sector and it was linked to great powers like the U.S. and China. In post-Soviet Central Asia this kind of calculation no longer merits the same value. Instead, threats have taken a more abstract and multifaceted turn, and they extend over numerous national domains.

Thus, in this study, security as a concept is used in a broader sense, including economic, military, political and societal security. The level these security sectors are applied to is the state, which is defined in terms of its three constitutive parts - the idea of the state, the institutional expression of the state and the physical foundation of the state (territory and population), elements to be explored later on.

To sum up, at the state level, security is about the state’s ability to secure the functionality of governance (the institutions and the ideas the state operate in accord to) and protecting the physical base of the state from external and/or internal threats to the territory and the population that the state is set to protect.

2.2 Compounding Drug Trafficking and National Security

If we move over to the specific connection between drugs and security, an insufficient understanding, on scholarly as well as on policy level, concerning how to deal with the consequences of transnational phenomena on the international, regional, national and human

level is immediately revealed. A logical explanation is that the above-mentioned combination of state-centrism and focus on military security has hampered the development of theories about unconventional threats, such as the boundary-spanning drug trade, that do not primarily affect the military sector. Another reason for this underdevelopment is that scholars traditionally have tended to view drugs and their implications as something reserved for sociological and criminological studies, not security studies.

From what has been stated above it should be evident that Realism does not provide us with the tools necessary for conducting a study of the “soft” or non-military kinds of threats that drug trafficking is posing. In trying to approach the drug trade and its potential impacts on security at the state level, Buzan and the Copenhagen School offer a discussion on three vital aspects: (i) the nature of a weak state; (ii) the different security sectors, and; (iii) national (state) security.

2.2.1 The Nature of a Weak State

A discussion of weak states inevitably has to confront two critical aspects. First, how can a weak state be identified? Generally speaking, the characteristic feature is a low degree of socio-political cohesion. This indicator is not easily quantified but Thomas Ohlson and Mimmi Söderberg point out four major conditions which characterize a weak state: “1) lack of societal cohesion and consensus on what organizing 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.”15 In the case of Tajikistan practically all of these are brought to the fore, for instance: major political conflict over what ideology will be used to organize the state; low state capability 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 1992-1997 the country was torn apart by a complex civil war, officially proclaimed to be between reformed communists and an opposition of Islamists, democrats and nationalists.

Another critical aspect of the weak state dilemma has been put forward by Joel Migdal. In his work on Third World states, he emphasizes the state’s ability to exercise social control over the individuals and the society it contains. “State social control involves the successful subordination of people’s own inclinations of social behavior or behavior sought by other social organizations in favor of the behavior prescribed by state rulers.”

The critical point in Migdal’s analysis is the interaction between state and society. The state lays claim to the authority to regulate all social relations within its border, which means that all other types of social organizations – such as families, clans or ethnic groups – that may resist this undertaking are in opposition to the state’s role as the determinant of how the society is organized. An important factor of the state’s social control is linked to state capabilities, meaning “the capacities to penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways. Strong states are those with high capabilities to complete these tasks, while weak states are on the low end of a spectrum of capabilities.” In weak states the major obstacles to the state as the determinant actor in society lie in its inability to establish a central system of symbols and values that transcends decentralized social units. Instead of being truly national in scope these societies are mostly made up of local organizations, headed by local strongmen (clan leaders etc.). The problem is thus related to the fact that a high level of group diversity hampers the state’s ability to be in charge of the society. (This point will be further elaborated on in the discussion on the idea of the state and the relationship between state and society.)

The second question is: What are the differences between the security calculations in a weak and a strong state respectively? Buzan emphasizes 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.” Failing to socio-politically consolidate the state, on the other hand, results in a security climate where threats often come in the form of internal and non-state actors targeting the government rather than from other states. Mohammed Ayoob summarizes this problem in 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 as external challenges.

---

17 Ibid: 4-5.
18 Ibid: 33.
threats, if not more so.\textsuperscript{21} Transnational crime, led by the trade in narcotics, must be viewed in the light of this multifaceted package of domestic and external threats.

2.2.2 Threats Sector by Sector

A state’s security can, as has been mentioned, be threatened in the military, political, economic, societal and environmental sectors. With the exception of the environmental sector,\textsuperscript{22} the drug trade in Tajikistan affects all of these sectors.

Within the political sector, transnational crime lives in symbiosis with, and thrives on, weak states. There is an interest in undermining the state apparatus. This usually takes two forms. One is where criminal interests seek to control the state institutions. If this is not possible, the second alternative is to destabilize these institutions in order to be able to keep their business going. Stable political systems are not in the interest of organized crime. Hence, the crucial point is that fragile political systems stimulate corruption and, as a result, the possibilities exist for criminal interests to co-opt the state apparatus.

The effects of drug trafficking on the economic sector are closely connected to political security. The reason for this is that corruption in the economic domain to a very high extent is a by-product of weak and vulnerable political systems. In the wake of drug trade follow corruption and money laundering which leads to a severe undermining of legal markets. Moreover, escalating drug consumption and the spread of diseases (see societal security) has negative consequences for the physical health of individuals, which in turn imply increased health costs; state expenditures that already impoverished economies will find exceedingly difficult to handle.

Societal security includes widespread drug abuse that, in addition to posing a potential threat in itself, also adds to the societal insecurity by causing infections, such as Hepatitis C and HIV, to spread among injecting drug users, as well as increasing the crime frequency in a society.

Military security differs from other types since here we are dealing with traditional or “hard” security (in contrast to the non-military threats). The drug trade has exceedingly alarming effects in this sector. It is no secret that various armed warlords and terrorist

\textsuperscript{21} Swanström, 2004.
\textsuperscript{22} Illicit narcotics can also have an impact on the environmental sector. But this is due to the degrading affects that cultivation and production have on the environment and specifically the soil. In Tajikistan cultivation is on such a small scale that this problem is not activated. In Afghanistan and some parts of Latin America the situation is different and there we can see a severe environmental degradation.
movements in many parts of the world have financed substantial parts of their activities through participation in and organization of the lucrative trade. Particularly worrisome is the blending of criminal interests and politically motivated organizations in the shape of narco-terrorist groups.

2.2.3 National Security and the Component Parts of the State

Before we take a closer look at the different components of the state it is convenient to establish the prerequisites for speaking about a threat to the security of a state and not just a problem in society. The distinction between these concepts is essential for maintaining the security definition at a restrictive level and not including all problems as a threat to national security. Ayoob means that a security threat arises when any of the sectors are affected to such an extent that “they threaten to have political outcomes that either affect the survivability of state boundaries, state institutions, or governing elites or weaken the capacity of states and regimes to act effectively in the realm of both domestic and international politics.” In other words, for instance, a military or societal problem becomes a threat to national security if it threatens to breakdown the structure of the state, as will now be discussed.

Buzan suggests a simple model as a guiding principle for exploring the nature of the state and its relation to national security. This model illustrates the three internal components that, taken together, constitute the state.

![Figure 1: The component parts of the state (Source: Buzan, 1991: 65).](image)

All three parts of the state can, in different ways, be threatened and are, thus, objects for national security. The vulnerabilities of the different parts are dependent on whether the state can be labeled as strong or weak.

---

1. The idea of the state is the most abstract component of the model and the lack of a concrete definition makes it difficult to measure threats concerning it. The idea of the state mainly comprises the national identity and the ideology used to organize the state. To quote Buzan: “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 enter more deeply into this aspect of the state because it holds the key for 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 link between nation and state. Like many other post-colonial states where the state and nation often do not coincide, Tajikistan has used the so-called state-nation model to legitimize its existence as a state. This implies a state-led procedure by which the nation is created from a top-down perspective. In Tajikistan, a country with a multitude of nationalities and complex ethnic, regional and tribal cleavages, the state-nation strategy is supposed to reconcile these differences and create a Tajik national identity. As usual in states with no common national identity to build on, the state has here actively tried to create such common identity by the use of history. An example, just to illustrate this point, is that in order to enhance the legitimacy of the present-day state, the government refers 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. Despite these efforts, Tajikistan has not succeeded in constructing an idea of the state that is widely accepted in the society; rather, it is the subject of a myriad of competing ideas. The ideological vacuum resulting from a lack of consensus on how the state should be organized opens up an opportunity for organized crime to penetrate and criminalize this vacuum. We can talk about a criminally motivated ideological state-capture, i.e. criminally obtained profit is one of the most powerful forces driving the state. Thus, the heart of the matter seems to be that the lack of an idea of the state widely held among the population or the political elite opens the way for the prevalence of criminal ideas.

2. The institutions of the state are more easily identifiable and are associated with the governmental structure, including its executive, legislative, administrative and judicial bodies,

---

26 Ibid: 73.
27 In this context, it can be fruitful to bear in mind Migdal’s theorizing on the weaknesses of states. This kind of top-down strategy faces considerable problems when the state does not have the capabilities necessary to encompass the entire society. In Tajikistan large parts of the territory is completely beyond state control.
and the laws, procedures and norms they accord to.\textsuperscript{28} There is a close interconnection between the idea of the state and the institutions. In simplified terms one can say that the institutions to a large extent express the organizing principles of the state. The inseparability of the ideas and the institutions is described by Buzan as follows: “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.”\textsuperscript{29} This applies in the same way to organized 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 organized criminals infiltrating and destabilizing 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.

3. The physical base comprises the population and territory of the state, including all natural resources and man-made wealth contained within its borders. This component of the state is also the area in which states share the most similarities in relation to security, because threats to the physical objects are common to different states.\textsuperscript{30} Since the state ultimately rests on its physical base, threats to it must count as fundamental national security priorities.\textsuperscript{31} Drug trafficking poses a potential threat to both the population and the territory in Tajikistan. The former might be threatened by the impacts drugs have on the societal security in the form of severe drug abuse and, as a result, the outbreak of HIV-epidemics that reach such levels that they threaten to breakdown the state’s human base and, in turn, the socio-economic fabric of society. The latter is mainly threatened by armed criminal/terrorist groups’ insurgencies into Tajik territory.

The case study of Tajikistan will investigate to what extent its national security is threatened by the effects drug trafficking has on the 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 summarized with the help of following model.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{28} Buzan, 1991: 82-83.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid: 86.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid: 90-91.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid: 95.
\end{flushright}
Figure 2: Framework for drug trafficking and Tajikistan’s national security

Criminal ideas and interests exploiting the vacuum arising from the lack of a coherent idea of the state (political threat)

The idea of the state

The physical base of the state

The institutional expression of the state

Territory

Population

Armed narco-terrorist groups (military threat)

Wide-spread drug abuse & infectious epidemics (societal threat)

Cooption of the state apparatus (political-economic threat)
3. Method

3.1 Methodological Baseline

For the purpose of this project, method as a concept simply refers to the procedure that helps the study to address the research question. Since the purpose of the whole essay is to understand, from a security perspective, drug trafficking through the triangle of the component parts of the state, the method inevitably has to tackle the relationship between theory and the empirical findings. In other words: how does the narcotics trade relate to Tajikistan’s national security?

The crucial point in this respect is to isolate drugs from other factors that might have implications for security. This must systematically guide the investigation on how drug trafficking affects the three parts of the state. This could, perhaps, be characterized as a specially adjusted method of triangulation. The physical base will be the first part investigated. This part comprises territory and population, two aspects of the state whose primary relation to the threat from drug trafficking is very much distinguished. The population is affected in a rather uncomplicated way, i.e. directly from the devastating consequences the illegal commodity have on the human plane. The threat to the territory, on the other hand, is of a more indirect nature. Drug trafficking as an individual phenomenon does not per se pose a threat to the territorial sovereignty of a state. It is in combination with violent, armed groups that drugs can threaten this aspect of the physical base. The narcotics trade is thus 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 drug trafficking and territorial security is most direct, since it is the primary source for unrest and not just a way of obtaining finance to allow groups to pursue other goals.

The second dimension of the state is its institutions. It is almost impossible to determine exactly how widely spread clandestine criminal interests are in the state structures. The complications are further exacerbated by the weak institutional system that prevailed in Tajikistan before the drug trade reached such dramatic proportions. Organized crime is thus not the phenomenon that has created the weak state in the first place. Rather, the study will examine how drug trafficking destabilizes and undermines the prospects for developing a functional state.
Finally, the analysis will approach the problem of organized crime as a source of undermining the idea of the state and more specifically what implications such a process has for the Tajik state’s domestic and external legitimacy. Put simply, this part of the study will deal with criminal ideas as a potentially illegitimating factor.

3.2 Single Case Study as Research Strategy

To follow the research question as closely as possible, the drug trade’s affects on national security will be studied within the scope of a single case study of Tajikistan. A case study is especially suitable when the researcher is trying to answer “how” and “why” questions; lacks the possibility of controlling the events (in contrast to experiments); and when the focal point is contemporary events.\(^\text{32}\) As we see, all three aspects have relevance for a study on how and why the transnational drug trade is a threat to security in present-day Tajikistan.

The opinion commonly held by opponents to case studies is that one cannot draw general conclusions on the basis of a single case. From a strictly statistical point of view this is true. But this study does not make any such statistical claims. Instead, this study hopes to make a contribution on a conceptual-analytical level of generalization.\(^\text{33}\) The theoretical framework outlined above fills the purpose of being the hypothesis structuring the whole analysis and it is intended to be on such a generalized level that it can be applied to other states with similar problems. Examples of other weak states vulnerable both to transnational and internal threats could be the other states in Central Asia as well as the Caucasian states.

To sum up, it must be borne in mind that the data collection for Tajikistan cannot be transferred to other states, although similarities may exist. This is due to a variety of factors, including, various internal and external factors; proximity to Afghanistan; how effectively the problem is counteracted, etc. However, the goal is still that the overall framework for drugs and national security shall be applicable to a context stretching beyond the Tajik.

As a result of the underdevelopment in the research field of drugs and security, this study aims to capture and explain the drug trade’s multidimensional impacts on Tajikistan’s national security. There is also an explorative element involved here and it lies in what is, to my knowledge, an unprecedented attempt to understand the drug trade through the model of the component parts of the state. The explanatory dimension is related to the fact that the


\(^{33}\) Ibid: 31-33. A related point is addressed by Richard Rose: ”it is the presence or absence of concepts applicable to a multiplicity of countries [which] is the test of whether a study can be considered comparative”, quoted from David Marsh. & Gerry Stoker, *Theory and Methods in Political Science*, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1995: 177.
combination of the component parts of national security, the different security sectors and drug trafficking aims at portraying why drug trafficking is posing such a potentially multifaceted threat to Tajikistan's national security.

Whether a case study has an explorative, descriptive or explanatory approach, a successful outcome is dependent on a clear and concise definition of the theoretical concepts that can guide both the study’s general design and the collection of data.\(^{34}\) An explicitly stated theoretical framework helps to delimit the study and in that way it also provides a structure that as specifically as possible allows an illumination of what is really meant to be illuminated.\(^{35}\) In the case of Tajikistan this means the multifaceted threat drug trafficking - with impacts on the military, political, economic and societal sectors - can pose to the component parts of a weak state.

Finally, here is also the place to make clear that the purpose of this survey is not to examine how, or if, the Tajik government perceives the illicit trade in drugs as a threat. Rather, focus is placed on the international drug trafficking phenomenon and the aim is to interpret its consequences in a single country.

3.3 Material and Technique

A case study can use a range of specific techniques. One of the most important determinants for the choice of technique is obviously the sources available. The inherently clandestine nature of drug trafficking makes it problematic to study the phenomenon with the tools conventional academic practice usually provides us with.

There is no point in pretending that research within this field is a precise science. Therefore, the actual scope of drug trafficking in a single country is virtually impossible to determine. However, it is evident that the problem is having increasingly alarming consequences for the functionality of the states it affects. It is therefore a problem of such a magnitude that these limitations cannot be allowed to stand in the way for attempts at conducting research on the subject.

There does exist a set of procedures for conducting research in this field. One is to rely on publicly available sources; another is that the researcher himself actively tries to track informants in an attempt to obtain information that is not overtly recorded. For the purpose of this project, using publicly available sources will be the strategy.


\(^{35}\) Builds on ibid: 6.
This study will be based on open sources from a wide range of actors, including media, scholars, international organizations and public institutions. Practically all the sources have been collected from Internet. On the web there exists an abundance of material from various sources dealing with drug trafficking. In particular, we have primary material from various organizations and institutions monitoring drug trends of which the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is probably the most authoritative. There is also a rich supply of secondary sources. There are articles in which several scholars belonging to various disciplines have tracked the production, smuggling and consumption patterns in the Central Asian region. A major source of inspiration is the specific research conducted at the Silk Road Studies Program, Uppsala University. Another useful source is media. Both western and local journalists continuously report on the drug situation in Central Asia. Since the author is not familiar with the native languages, only western medial sources have been used. Finally, governments, think-tanks, in addition to internationally and regionally sponsored seminars, have also published contributions.

In order to minimize the aforementioned problems concerning studying the trade in narcotics, controlling the reliability of the sources used is of critical importance. This is especially so since the bulk of the information is collected from Internet sources. The reliability of such sources can often be difficult to estimate. Therefore it is necessary to select news agencies, analytical reports, etc with caution. Furthermore, statistical data on for example drug abuse have a tendency to vary quite a lot and must therefore be compared in order to be able to interpret them in the most reliable fashion possible.

The Internet-based references that have been used in this thesis have been controlled against their websites on 2004-12-20. The date for control will not be included in the footnotes.
4. Analysis

4.1 The Physical Base of the State

As explained in the theoretical section, the physical base of the state is comprised of territory and population. Regarding drug trafficking those two parts are exposed to two major types of threats. The territory is most directly affected by different forms of military threats, in relation to drug trafficking this takes the specific form of armed groups receiving their funds or even orchestrating the illegal trade in order to pursue their violent goals. The direct impacts on the population, or the human base of the state, come in the form of health threats. Widespread addiction and infections could in the worst-case scenario assume such proportions that it cannot any longer be labeled merely as a health problem in society but rather as a societal threat with implications for the structure of the entire society. The purpose of this first part of the analysis is to examine how valid these two potential threats are in Tajikistan and what the prognosis for the future looks like.

4.1.1 Territory

Control over its territory and maintaining its functional integrity is a major security priority for any state. Threats to the territorial sovereignty usually come in the form of armed units, either domestic or external, with the primary goal of creating military insecurity.

After independence, Tajikistan has suffered from the civil war between 1992 and 1997, as well as being a staging area for the terrorist attacks launched by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an organization that from the late 1990s until the U.S. led anti-Taliban campaign in Afghanistan was regarded as the primary indigenously generated storm cloud in Central Asia. In spite of the seemingly divergent nature of these two phenomena, one common denominator seems to have been to establish control over transit routes as a means of securing financial gains from the illegal drug trade. Only the IMU will be investigated here, while the drug trafficking component in the civil war is so closely connected to the present-day institutional expression of the Tajik state and therefore will fall under the section dealing with threats to the institutions.
**IMU and the Crime-Terror Nexus**

Traditionally, organized crime and terrorism have been regarded as unrelated. As Svante Cornell 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 characterized as the continuation of politics by violent means. At the core of transnational organized crime, on the other hand, lies what Phil Williams has labeled “the idea of profit through crime.” Hence, in a parallel to Clausewitzian thought, he adds “that organized crime can best be understood as the continuation of business by criminal means”.

Because of this political/terror-economic/criminal dividing line, transnational criminal networks are not seen as posing 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, organization 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.

However, in many parts of the world circumstances increasingly show that it is misleading to believe that the distinction between organized crime and terrorism is waterproof. On the contrary, many groups originally founded and organized on the basis of ideological beliefs have in time shifted their focus towards a more criminally motivated agenda. Groups officially claiming to be political are thus, under the surface, directed as much in accordance with obtaining criminal profits. The reasons behind this rising trend of groups to re-orientate their activities can be varied. However, a precondition seems to be the opening up of boundaries and the interconnectedness between different spheres following the increasing process of globalization that, since the end of the Cold War, has increased the flow of information and exchange between licit as well as illicit spheres.

Moreover, during the Cold War armed rebellious groups were often used in the competition between the capitalist and communist armed camps in their rallying for influence all over the world.

---

38 Ibid: 79.
40 To name a few such groups we have the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) in Turkey and the FARC guerrilla in Colombia.
To undermine each other’s stances in various armed conflicts in the Third World, the Soviet Union and the U.S. saw sponsoring local resistance groups as an effective strategy in fighting the enemy. Today, as terrorism has emerged as the major international security threat, radical groups can no longer count on financial backing from states. Instead, the most lucrative source of income is from participation in international crime.

Tamara Makarenko has conceptualized the convergence of crime and terror in the post-Cold War era by using a security continuum with pure traditional organized 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 ideal 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, in between these, in reality, rare extreme points 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 characterized in terms of a “gray area” where organized crime and terrorism cannot be separated from one another.

---

41 This kind of criminal infiltration of politics will not be discussed here but in the section dealing with threats to the state institutions in Tajikistan.


43 This model owes all its content to analysis conducted by Svante Cornell and Tamara Makarenko.
As the figure illustrates, regarding the drug trade in Central Asia, the entire crime-terror spectrum is represented in the form of three main groups. First, in Afghanistan and all Central Asian republics we have drug mafias operating at the micro-level. They function as middlemen between farmers and buyers and they are the first link in the drug trafficking chain. Domestic in their 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.44

The second category is the transnational criminal groups/networks that bring the Afghan produced opiates to the market in Russia and Europe. As Makarenko argues: “These groups pose the single greatest 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.”45 For these groups money is the primary goal and they infiltrate state institutions and establish political connections to protect their business.

Tajik warlords (as well as Afghan warlords) who participate in the narcotics trade make up another category. For those warlords, participation in criminal activities is an important source for 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 since money makes it possible for warlords to build-up and maintain a military entourage. Because the state in many parts of the country is perceived as distant and indifferent, local warlords can also use their criminally-obtained profits to provide for the public and exploit the vacuum arising from the vacancy left by an extremely weak state. In this sense participation in the narcotics trade can be instrumental for creating a political platform.46

Finally, insurgent groups are also taking part in the illegal enterprise. Here, a distinction must be drawn between those who merely take advantage of the existing trade and those who organize it. In this context motivation is crucial since the nature of the group depends on whether narcotics merely are a source of finance, or greed has become the primary driving force? The IMU’s involvement in the drug trade has been qualitatively different from that of Al-Qaeda. Whereas some Al-Qaeda members profited from the trade in what appears to be on a non-coordinated and small-scale basis, much of the circumstances about the activities of the IMU as well as information given by initiated persons seem to indicate that the IMU was

44 Makarenko, 2002.
45 Ibid.
46 Examples on this will be explored most extensively dealt with in the sections dealing with the institutions and the idea of the state.
heavily involved in organizing the smuggling of drugs through Central Asian territory.\footnote{\textcite{Makarenko2002;Cornell2004;INTERPOL2000,TestimonyonInternationalCrime,http://usembassy.state.gov/islamabad/wwwh00122302.html}.} Furthermore, while criminal capital is a financial source, no more no less, for terrorist networks like Al-Qaeda, for the 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.

It is important to understand that the position of different groups along the continuum by no means is static. As a consequence of changes in their behavior different actors can 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 organization.

**IMU – Origins and Development**

The origins of the IMU are to be found in the city of Namangan in the Uzbek part of the Ferghana Valley. In December 1991, some young men seized the Communist Party headquarter in the city after the mayor had refused to give them land to build a mosque. The men were led by Tohir Yoldash and Jumaboi Khojaev, who later adopted the alias Juma Namangani after his hometown. Both men were initially members of the Uzbek branch of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). Dissatisfied with the commitment of the IRP, they set up their own movement, Adolat (Justice), which called for an Islamic revolution in Uzbekistan. In March 1992, the Uzbek government banned the group forcing Yoldash and Namangani into exile in Tajikistan were they joined forces with the IRP there in the civil war. The acquaintance with Tajikistan and the connections established there later turned out to be a vital part in securing a stronghold for the IMU. 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 for 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 IRP’s army chief of staff Mirzo Zioev – currently Tajikistan’s minister of emergencies – he even referred to Zioev as his older brother.\footnote{AhmedRashid2002,Jihad:therisemilitantIslaminCentralAsia,NewHaven:YaleUniversityPress,2002:142-143.} Thus, Yoldash was clearly the ideological leader, while Namangani was the guerrilla commander.

In the summer of 1998 Yoldash, now provided with a place of sanctuary in Kabul by the Taliban regime together with Namangani formally announced the creation of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which declared a holy war against the Karimov regime. The ideal
staging point for its operations was Tajikistan, where a peace treaty had been negotiated in 1997 (a treaty opposed by IMU) and a coalition government with limited territorial control established. At least two bases were set up in the mountainous Karategin area, one in Tavildara, and the other in Sangvor (see page 29).

In August 1999, the IMU staged its first incursion into the Ferghana Valley – the territory where Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan converge. From the base in Tavildara Namangani, representing the bandit wing within the IMU that at the time seemed to dictate the course of the group at the expense of Yoldash’s ideological branch, sent small but well-armed guerrilla groups into southwestern Kyrgyzstan. As a first step the militants took a mayor and three official’s 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 August 23, further hostages, including four Japanese geologists, were seized, this time in the Batken region. Finally, on October 25, the geologists were released to the Japanese government, apparently at a price of $2-5 million.49

A year later, the IMU was back at the forefront, and once again Tajik territory was used as stepping-stone. This time the scale as well as the coordination of the operations was more sophisticated, and included incursions into Uzbekistan’s southern province of Surkhan-Darya; the Uzbekistani mountains just to the east of the capital Tashkent; and attacks near the Uzbek enclaves, Sokh and Vorukh, in southern Kyrgyzstan.

The IMU and the Drug Trade
At first, the incursions were interpreted as a step in IMU’s proclaimed struggle to topple the Karimov regime by the use of armed force. From that perspective some analysts have labeled the moves as fiascos.50 However, several commentators have pointed out the unrealistic features in that type of explanation. As Cornell states: “As the militants hardly could have expected to take control over the Ferghana valley with their numeric strength, nor tried to do so, makes the argument that the IMU sought to force the Uzbek government into negotiations implausible ... had the IMU desired to either destabilize Central Asia and/or establish itself in southwestern Kyrgyzstan, why would it have agreed so easily to accept a ransom for the

50 For such description see for example the International Crisis Group, Radical Islam in Central Asia: Responding to Hizb ut-Tahrir, Asia Report No 58, 30 June 2003.
hostages it had taken, and be flown back to Afghanistan to bide its time to once again come back to the area, with a much higher alert and readiness by local military forces?“

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 destabilize border areas in order to maintain and secure narcotics transportation routes.

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 through large quantities of drugs via both the well tried Khorog-Osh route as well as providing coverage for exploring alternative routes; mainly the Batken conduit that from Jirgatal and Garm in Tajikistan take drugs into the Batken district in southern Kyrgyzstan, an area 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 opium harvest in Afghanistan in June had taken place. In between, traffickers would have had time to refine the opium into heroin and then smuggle it through the mountain passages in Central Asia before the winter when, due to the snow coverage, they are inaccessible.

The criminal nature of the IMU has also been identified by international agencies. Interpol, for instance, 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 percent of the heroin entering Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan.

To sum up, 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 gray area, or black hole, in the crime-terror nexus where terrorism and organized crime fuse in the form of narco-terrorism.

---

51 Cornell, 2004: 15-16.
52 Ibid: 16; Makarenko, 2002.
Map 1: The activities of the IMU and the major trafficking routes 1999-2000

The Consequences for Tajikistan’s National Security

After this rather thorough examination, albeit necessary for understanding the connection between the drug trade and armed groups in Central Asia, of the origins and nature of the IMU we come to the heart of the matter: the consequences such a narco-terrorist group has for Tajikistan’s national security.

The IMU attacks in the Ferghana Valley, whose primary objective was not to militarily challenge Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan but to create political and military unrest in the region.

---

55 The localization of IMU bases and attacks is derived from Ahmed Rashid, Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia. The Khorog-Osh and Batken drug trafficking routes are roughly outlined. The map is produced by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and collected from The University of Texas at Austin General Libraries, UT Library Online, www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/tajikistan_pol_95.jpg.
in order to pursue criminal interests, posed a serious threat to Tajikistan’s territorial sovereignty and functional integrity. These events showed that Tajikistan was continuously used as springboard for narco-terror incursions into the heart of Central Asia. Thus, the actions conducted by the IMU clearly manifested the Rakhmonov government’s inability to control Tajikistan’s territory. In addition, weighty evidence also pointed in the direction of disturbing links between the IMU and the Islamic fraction of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), integrated in the country’s post-civil war coalition government. These contacts were cultivated during the civil war and sustained after the ceasefire in 1997. Besides the links with the present-day Minister of Emergencies, Zioev, another example is Abdulla Mullo, a former influential UTO militant who joined the IMU.\footnote{Ahmed Rashid, “IMU Insurgency Threatens Tajikistani Political Reconciliation”, \textit{Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst}, 27 September 2000, \texttt{www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=127}.}

Undoubtedly, narco-terrorism has challenged the Tajik state’s ability to control its territory and as a result it has undermined the external legitimacy of Tajikistan. In particular, Uzbekistan, being the principal power in Central Asia today, has aggressively accused Tajikistan of providing militant Islamic groups and criminals with a safe haven and demanded that the Tajik government expel the rebels. After the IMU incursions in 1999, the words were put into practice when Uzbekistan unilaterally retaliated in October 1999 by bombing villages in Eastern Tajikistan. Other moves conducted by Tashkent in relation to the presence of IMU militants on Tajik soil included cutting gas supplies to the capital Dushanbe as well as mining its Tajik-border and throwing out Tajik refugees. Since the whole idea of national security in an international context is to a high degree about the pursuit of freedom from territorial interference, if external actors’ perceive Tajikistan to be a lawless narco-terror area that may affect the stability and security in their own countries, earlier responses have shown that at least Uzbekistan does not hesitate to intervene under such conditions. Tajikistan’s inability to sustain law and order on its own is also illustrated by the fact that Russia’s 201\textsuperscript{st} Motorized Rifle Division is guarding the Afghan border and that their major responsibility is to curb the inflow of illicit heroin. The long-standing Russian presence (the 201\textsuperscript{st} Motorized Rifle Division has in principle remained there since independence in 1991) has impelled many commentators to label the country a Russian satellite. This begs the question as to whether Tajikistan can really be termed as an independent state. That, however, is something that will be discussed in the part of the analysis dealing with threats to the idea of the state.

Needless to say, the existence of roving bands within its territory also poses a threat to stability and security in Tajikistan per se. Since Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country
allowing Islamic forces to work within the political system, the IMU was able to establish contacts within parts of the state ministry. This has also put president Rakhmonov in an awkward position since too aggressive a crackdown on Islamic groups would alienate the radical Islamic forces, which have sympathizes with groups like the IMU, within the coalition government.

As a result of the U.S. campaign in Afghanistan in late 2001 much of the IMU’s military infrastructure was wiped out, and its charismatic military commander Namangani in all likelihood killed. This has led some to cease to 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 in one form or other will re-emerge on the Central Asian political scene. As the journalist Ahmed Rashid, expert on militant Islam, notes: “the real threat has always been the IMU’s underground network inside Central Asia. And that really has not been broken.”

David Lewis, head of the International Crisis Group’s Central Asia project in Osh, says that for the moment “it is hard to tell whether the IMU represents a proper organized 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.” This argument appears plausible, not least since reports in March this year indicated that the U.S. and Pakistan in joint efforts in South Waziristan in Pakistan near the Afghan border were fighting Uzbeks that seemed to be protecting Tohir Yoldash, who is widely believed to have sought shelter in that area. Such a split further indicates the network character of the group to which, in a rather loose way, both ideological and criminal motives have been attached. Another recent event, the bombings in Uzbekistan around the end of March, commonly believed in one form or another to be linked to radical Islamic groups, also seem to indicate that militant Islamists still are active in Central Asia. Thus, it appears to be rather hasty to write off the combination of drug trafficking and armed violence from the future security map in Central Asia and specifically in Tajikistan.

58 Ibid.
4.1.2 Population

Apart from the territory, the populace foundation the state rests on can be threatened by the drug trade’s consequences on another level, the human level. These threats come in two very closely related forms. Firstly, the number of individuals abusing drugs can become so high that it qualitatively becomes a severe threat to the socio-economic fabric of society and may, in the worst case, affect the functioning of the state. Secondly, and even more alarming, as a result of the wide-spread heroin consumption, infectious epidemics may occur, especially HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C, initially transmitted among intravenous drug users and then in the second phase via sexual intercourse. It is important to remember that the key factor here is when quantity turns into quality. In other words, 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 favored transit route for narcotics an alarming escalation in the numbers of drug users has been identified, which raises the threat of a public health crisis. The country probably most severely affected by this trend is Tajikistan. One strong contributory factor is that the greater part of all entry points go through its territory. Over the seven-year period 1995-2001, the number of registered heroin addicts in Tajikistan has increased more than seven-fold, or from 823 in 1995 to 6,243 in 2001.59 These official figures, however, are regarded by a unanimous expertise as misleading.

---

According to official figures, Tajikistan is the country in Central Asia with the lowest rate of drug addicts. However, for a number of reasons the statistics reported by Tajikistan are not reliable. The main reason, of course, is that only those who seek treatment are registered. The shortcomings in locating addicts are also, as Maral Madi notes, a product of the civil war and the debilitating impacts it had on the health service system. There is a total lack of resources and capacity in Tajikistan, both from state and civil society to control the development. Tajikistan’s National Agency for Narcotics Control was, for example, only established in 1999. That the situation behind the official numbers is another has been revealed in a field

60 The figures from 1995-2000 are collected from UNODC, *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*, 2003: 186, while the number for 2001 are from Ponce, “Rising Heroin Abuse in Central Asia Raises Threat of Public Health Crisis”.

61 For comparison, Kazakhstan in 2000 reported 41,400 persons under treatment for substance abuse, 14,300 were reported from Uzbekistan, 5,200 in Kyrgyzstan, while Tajikistan in 2000 reported 4,200 cases. Although lowest on the list, the figures still show that Tajikistan is the Central Asian country where addiction is growing fastest. Between 1992 and 2000 the country displayed a seven-fold increase that can be compared to the tripling in the numbers of registered drug abusers reported from the other Central Asian countries during the same period of time (Source: UNODCCP, *Illicit Drugs Situation in the Regions Neighbouring Afghanistan and the Response of ODCCP*, 2002: 24-25, [www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afg_drug-situation_2002-10-01_1.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afg_drug-situation_2002-10-01_1.pdf).

62 Maral Madi, *Drug Trafficking in Weak States: The Case of Central Asia*, Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Uppsala University, 2003: 42.
investigation conducted by the UNODC. On the basis of sampling interviews in Dushanbe and Kurgantubeh, the UNODC has estimated that the actual number of drug addicts in the country is at least twelve times higher than the official figures. This indicates that in 2001 the real number of addicts would have been approximately 75,000. Today, popular opinion holds the real number to exceed 100,000.63

Particularly worrisome for Tajikistan is the qualitative aspect of the abuse. According to the statistics from the year 2000, opiates (opium and particularly heroin) were the primary drug of abuse in a dramatic 91 percent of the officially registered drug treatment cases.64 Since opiates, or more specifically heroin, are the drug with the most devastating consequences on the human and social level, the addiction rates in Tajikistan reveal a particularly sinister picture.

On the basis of the estimate that currently at least 100,000 people in Tajikistan are addicted to drugs, of which approximately 90 percent use opiates as the primary drug, the following table can illustrate the situation in the country.

Table 1. Estimated actual number of drug addicts in Tajikistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Drug abuse Estimate</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Percentage of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>100 000</td>
<td>6,300,000</td>
<td>1,59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To put into perspective, these figures can be compared to the abuse of opiates in West Europe that on average corresponds to 0.42 percent of the adult population (aged 15 and above).65 Taking into consideration the weak health infrastructure and the subsequent lack of tools for monitoring drug addiction, the field work conducted by the UNODC and the fact that Tajikistan is the major entry point for Afghan produced opiates smuggled northwards, it does not seem too speculative to expect that the country has one of the highest prevalence rates of

---


opiate abusers in the world. In this context, we should also pay attention to what Cornell has noted: namely that the consequences of smuggling in Tajikistan is considerably greater than in other major trafficking hubs like Iran and Pakistan, since the amount of drugs in proportion to the population is considerably greater than in other major trafficking hubs such as Iran and Pakistan with 70 and 150 million inhabitants respectively.

As long as drugs from Afghanistan continue to flood Tajikistan it is difficult to see the present trend being broken. In production countries and key transit countries, drugs penetrate every level of society. A country that initially only served as a transit area for smuggling drugs to the really lucrative markets in Europe has in time developed its own drug demand. For deprived people, drugs do not just represent a possibility to get high and for the moment forget about their miserable daily lives; drugs also play the role of second currency as petty dealers are often paid for their services not in cash but in drugs. In that way they are both provided with an impetus for personal consumption and an incentive to find markets for a small-scale domestic distribution of the commodity. As a result, drugs originally produced for demand in the West has rapidly created a vicious cycle of deteriorating health for the individuals in Tajikistan where there is no social safety net, nor do they have the financial means necessary for building up the health institutions necessary for breaking this cycle.

It is difficult to determine when the addiction problem exceeds that of a social health problem and pose a threat to societal security. In the case of Tajikistan, this is further complicated by the imperfect registration and uncertainties of how severe abuse is among the large number of non-registered drug consumers. Therefore, on the basis of the low known levels of ascertained drug abuse, it is clearly not possible to declare addiction as a threat to security in the country. However, it is beyond doubt that as long as the factors that have permitted the severe addiction remain in place, and unless the international assistance programs efficiency is enhanced, the problem will continue to grow. It is therefore necessary to counteract the problem before it reaches such proportions that it is beyond control. If the drug trade’s consequences on the societal security are not vigorously counteracted the trend shows that it is not only possible but probable that drugs, in combination with diseases, in the future will pose a threat to the entire socio-economic fabric of the Tajik society.

66 In *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2003*, UNODC shows that the highest prevalence rates are reported from Iran, the Lao PDR and Kyrgyzstan. But in reality little speaks against including Tajikistan among those countries.
67 Cornell, "Crime without Borders".
68 In this context the continued increase in opium production in Afghanistan is obviously of great concern for the prospects of breaking the vicious drug cycle in neighboring countries.
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 heroin trafficking has on the societal security level. There is evidence to suggest that drug trafficking, injecting 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 uptake of heroin use, leading to injecting drug use outbreaks, followed by explosive HIV outbreaks”.\(^{69}\) Again, and this goes for Tajikistan as well as the whole Central Asia, while it is a fact that the numbers of people infected with HIV are rapidly growing, the true prevalence of HIV in the region has yet to be determined. But the World Bank has estimated that, of the total number of injecting drug users in Central Asia, 70 to 80 percent are likely to become HIV infected.\(^{70}\) For Tajikistan, with its approximately 100,000, and continually growing, intravenous addicts, drug-related diseases will sooner or later, probably sooner, affect the functionality of the Tajik society, and as a result the stability of the physical base of the state.

Except for Kazakhstan, the diagnosed number of HIV cases in Central Asia is still at a relatively low level. But in a comparative perspective it must be noted that the Kazakh state’s capacity to monitor the society is much bigger 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, and in 2003 the country reported 42 newly registered cases.\(^{71}\) Thus, addiction is on the rise, and that rapidly.

---


As of February 2004 Azamdjon Mirzoev, the director of Tajikistan’s republican center for AIDS prevention, reported that of the total 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 sharp increase recently is partly due to a previous lack of testing equipment, including inoperative laboratories from January 2002 until the middle of 2003. The correlation between drug trafficking and HIV becomes obvious if one considers that 91 percent of the cases booked during the period 1997-2001 were related to intravenous drug use. 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 devastating societal consequences of the infectious disease are revealed in totality, and the costs for fighting HIV become too high. But there is undoubtedly a treacherous feature involved here. As long as the spread is restricted to the drug user part of a society there is a tendency to believe it is controllable. However, as seen recently for example in India, Russia and not least Pakistan, when HIV has taken root beyond this group, the transmission can be explosive in countries lacking the funds necessary to prevent such shock development. Time is unquestionably running out for Tajikistan: the massive inflow of heroin in combination with the unawareness of the problem among the population makes a looming catastrophe extremely difficult to counteract.

The magnitude of a looming AIDS crisis in the country can be illustrated in economic terms. Since the average cost of life-sustaining treatment for one AIDS patient is around $10,000 annually, and Tajikistan in 1999 had a health budget of $13 per capita, one commentator has pointed out that for the majority of the people, a diagnosis of AIDS would therefore mean a death sentence.

---

72 Irinnews, “Tajikistan: Drug use, Migration and Ignorance Fuel Rise in HIV Infections”. That the official HIV cases only are the tip of the iceberg is also put forward by Zukhra Khalimova, executive director of the Soros Foundation in Tajikistan, believing the real figure is over 2000, and International Health Organization (IHO), putting the number at between 1500 and 4000 (Nargis Zakirova, “Tajikistan: AIDS Timebomb Ticking”, Eurasianet 29 October 2002, www.eurasianet.org/health.security/iwpr.shtml).


74 Among teenage girls in Tajikistan only 10 percent have ever heard about HIV or AIDS (Jonas Johansson och Per Shapiro, “Hiv-epidemin i Östeuropa och forna Sovjetunionen”, Inblick Östeuropa, nr 2-3/2003: 11.


To summarize the above, the crucial point for HIV/AIDS, as well as for drug addiction, from a security policy perspective is when it can no longer be referred to as a problem affecting only individuals in Tajikistan, but as a threat to a large strata of the population and therefore affecting the functioning of the human aspect of the state’s physical base. One possible criterion for determining this shift in status might be when it takes true epidemic proportions, which is defined as infection of one percent of a population.\(^{77}\) As we can see, Tajikistan’s figures are at present nowhere near such a proportion but following the improved monitoring of the problem since mid 2003, manifested by the explosion of newly registered cases in January 2004, indicates that there are many more cases waiting to be officially exposed. If HIV reaches such proportions in Tajikistan, the capacity to reverse the trend would be limited.

Apart from the rising threat of HIV/AIDS, a complete picture of the drug-related health situation in Tajikistan must also include hepatitis C and tuberculosis. Officially not noticed as much as HIV, these contagious diseases are also beyond the health system’s capacity and have deadly consequences for the affected.

A combination of factors thus makes Tajikistan extremely vulnerable to diseases. In Central Asia, the country has the longest border with Afghanistan and the weakest economy in the region, a fact that, given the strong correlation between poverty and deadly diseases, bodes no good. 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 especially brought in from neighboring countries by labor migrants have also been reported. This flow of labor, mainly from poor rural areas, is obviously another factor building up the health threat. In fact, as Swanström and Madi notes, the combined problem of young addicts, increased levels of usage, prostitution and uncontrollable movement of seasonal labor between Central Asia and Russia mean that there is a strong possibility that the disease will reach epidemic levels.\(^{78}\)

---


The Gender Dimension of Human Security

To an increased extent, reports suggest an escalation of women involvement in drug trafficking, as well as a growing number of female drug users. The proportion of women traffickers in Tajikistan is estimated to be higher than in Kyrgyzstan, where they are estimated to constitute 30 percent, and steadily on the rise.\textsuperscript{79} Official statistics also indicates this increase. In 1993 women constituted 10 percent of those prosecuted for trafficking; in 2000 their proportion had doubled to 20 percent.\textsuperscript{80} A sociological study on the subject of women and drugs in 2000 investigated why women more and more are used as drug couriers. Among women inmates, almost two thirds said the main reason for their involvement was dire economic straits.\textsuperscript{81} The survey also revealed the methods of transport. Drug dealers reportedly use women as “cover-up”; transporting small amount of drugs (often inside their body – in their stomach and inside their bodies) while the big smugglers pay off custom officials and pass through undetected.\textsuperscript{82}

Concomitantly, addiction among women is on the rise. Apparently the reasons why people test drugs differ between men and women. For men, curiosity and unemployment seem to be the leading reasons, while for women a desire to forget their problems and a wish to be like everyone else are important motivators.\textsuperscript{83} The high-risk drug consumption among women in Tajikistan has a couple of especially alarming consequences for human security. The negative impact on reproductive organs, on pregnancy and the development of offspring are beyond doubt. In other words, the correlation between drug abuse among women and the health situation for the future generation is extremely negative.

4.2 The Institutions of the State

Since the institutional component of the state comprises the entire machinery of government, including its executive, legislative, administrative and judicial bodies, and the laws, procedures and norms by which they operate, security within this sphere does not mean security of the government alone; it is wider in scope and includes threats to the political structure and the political process. In Tajikistan, drug trafficking networks have ramifications

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation – Tajikistan, “Women and Drugs in Tajikistan”, \textit{Eurasia Policy Forum}, \url{www.eurasianet.org/policy_forum/osi022001_print.html}.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
throughout the society. Since it is a major source of income in the country, drug money is inevitably present at the highest state level. The mechanism driving the criminalization and destabilization of institutions appears to be the symbiosis between weak states and organized transnational crime. The combination of weak political structures and the lack of proper economic resources constitute a domestic political-economic climate that permits organized crime to be a cornerstone for the economic and political elite in Tajikistan.

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 institutional design of the present-day Tajik state. Any attempts to illustrate the criminal elements in the state structures, therefore, have to consider this landmark in Tajikistan’s political history. Although it is important to emphasize that the war was by no means initiated on criminal grounds, it still resembled other domestic armed conflicts in the sense that securing control over illicit enterprises in time became an important component in the struggle. When a cease-fire and a coalition government arrangement were negotiated in 1997, warlords with influence over the increasingly lucrative trade in narcotics were integrated into the new political system.

The International Crisis Group (ICG), a Brussels-based think-tank, points out that the problem of drug money corrupting the political system in Tajikistan exceeds those in other Central Asian states just 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 have now taken over government positions, which mean that in practice they enjoy immunity from prosecution. In this sense, organized 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 organized 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. Perhaps this is to express it both harshly and cynically, especially against the background of the alternative (continued warfare) but from a drug trafficking perspective it is evident that the

---

84 It is estimated that the value of drug smuggling is equivalent to somewhere between 30-75 percent of the country’s GDP.
illicit business has most likely become more organized and wide-scaled in its nature since the war than the other way around.

Karen Ballentine and Heiko Nitzschke have studied the gradual shift from grievance to greed in some 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, the access to loottable resources, for example narcotics, “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”.\(^86\) The Tajik civil war was in fact drawn out. While the fighting was at its most intense in the first year, an analysis of the conflict dynamics thereafter seems to reveal a more complex and not only ideologically motivated conflict. 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 were enjoying much stronger external support since both Russia and Uzbekistan considered the UTO to be a bunch of radical Islamists and drug dealers with an agenda more threatening than the old Soviet loyal government.\(^87\)

Since drug trafficking 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 corruption is present at the very highest official level. Several significant authorities during the civil war have unequivocally been linked to drugs and crime. One of them is allegedly the infamous Mahmud Khudoberdiev, who, amongst other moves, launched an attack towards Khujand in northern Tajikistan accompanied by his men in November 1998. The reason behind the Khujand-episode has been subject to different interpretations. Local accounts, however, agree that the motive was to protect the local drug trafficking monopoly he had developed since the civil war, when he was heading one of the most brutal paramilitary forces attached to the


government he later turned against. Another person subject to similar allegations is the previously mentioned Minister of Emergency Situations, Mirzo Zioev.

To conclude, in the wake of the post-civil war institutional build-up followed the installation of warlords and their side interest, drug trafficking, in the state structures.

**Criminalization of State Structures**

A study on security issues in Central Asia in the middle of the 1990s illustrated how security is perceived among the “security elite” in the region. The elite in Tajikistan, like those in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, defined national security in terms of stability. This perception can be worth bearing in mind as we proceed to scrutinize the impacts drug trafficking has on stability and security at the institutional level.

The drug business in Tajikistan has a corruptive effect on all levels of government and organized crime syndicates are commonly linked to all institutional bodies. Drug trafficking networks thus have destabilizing consequences for the entire state machinery and they have sustained and increased the Tajik state’s weakness and at the same time hindered political and economic reforms. Corruption has been stated to be most widely spread in law enforcement institutions, i.e. police, customs, militia and Russian border troops. 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 in reality are supposed to protect the state from it is virtually impossible to successfully counteract the criminalization of the society. It is important, though, to emphasize that corruption in the lower official ranks simply reflect the gloomy reality in the country. It is the low salaries of law enforcement officials that make them prone to corruption, not some moral inferiority.

The drug influence of drug business at the highest political level also creates a political environment surrounded by intimidation and violence. One such example was the gang-land style murder of the Deputy Interior Minister Khabib Sanginov in Dushanbe in the spring of 2001. He had been in charge of a government crackdown on organized crime. As a former member of the UTO and as 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

---

89 Like in many other cases no direct evidence connects Zioev to organized crime. But local informants linked him to the drug trade during the civil war. His close ties to the IMU further underscore his criminal engagements.
91 Ibid.
Civil war and where the government forces still have limited control.\textsuperscript{92} In a fragile country with a non-consolidated and vulnerable political system, these kinds of violent acts can have seriously destabilizing effects. In the worst-case scenario such criminal acts can even be the spark that brings the antagonism between different political fractions back to the surface. The Islamic Renaissance Party also stated that the killing posed a threat to stability.\textsuperscript{93} The Sanginov case further demonstrates that individuals who make moves to fight drug trafficking expose themselves to great danger. The tactics used by criminal groups undoubtedly have deterring effects on officials’ willingness to challenge the interests of organized crime.

One example showing that criminal interests have roots at the highest level of the Tajik state bureaucracy was exposed when the country’s ambassador to Kazakhstan was caught twice transporting drugs, “the second time in Kazakhstan with 62 kilograms of heroin and U.S. $1 million in cash”.\textsuperscript{94} Soon after the incident with the ambassador, Tajikistan’s trade representative in Kazakhstan was also caught with 24 kilograms of heroin. As the ICG comments: “Such large quantities of narcotics most likely involved the complicity of various law enforcement officials.”\textsuperscript{95}

Although those two cases represent the highest-ranking officials explicitly caught with complicity in the smuggling of narcotics it seems utopian to believe they are isolated cases with persons acting on their own. More likely, the fact that they transported the drugs themselves is what seems to single them out. Among high state representatives one does not expect active participation in the smuggling chain, but an involvement that is covert and on an above-courier level.

In a report at the beginning of 2001, the secretary for Tajikistan’s Security Council acknowledged that many drug merchants and couriers are representatives of Tajik state agencies. In particular, the law enforcement bodies and security services were pointed out as being the ones most severely affected. The blame for the failure of realizing the programs and decisions taken against the narcotics trade was generally put on the law enforcement officers, accusing them of involvement in the trade and making it possible for dealers to evade the

\textsuperscript{92} Gregory Gleason, “Tajikistan Minister’s Murder Points to Drug-Route Conflict”, \textit{Eurasia Insight}, 16 March 2001, \url{www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav041601.shtml}.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{94} ICG, \textit{Central Asia: Drugs and Conflict}, 2001: 15.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid: 15-16.
The report also stated that the drug business had reached such significant proportions that it posed a direct threat to national security. However, there seem to be a tendency in official statements to choose the easy way out and put the blame mainly on law enforcement agencies and neglecting the widely held suspicion 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.” The significance of narcotics smuggling through Kulyobi region (part of the Khatlon province) is illustrated by following graphic.

---

97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 The map is produced by Jacob Townsend, a research fellow at the Silk Road Studies Program, Uppsala University.
As the multifaceted implications the drug trade has for Tajikistan’s security have by no means worn off since 2001 but increased its devastating consequences, particularly on the political, economic and societal levels, there is little evidence to suggest a development in a positive direction. On the contrary, it is in the middle- to long-term that drugs have the most deteriorating impact. One reason behind this is that some small profits are made immediately in a country where the drug business provides at least an income for the state and economic opportunities for some otherwise unemployed and poverty-stricken individuals. However, even in the short-term and especially in a longer perspective, the many devastating aspects of this criminal enterprise are brought to the fore, and by far outweigh the immediate benefits. As shown earlier, the cost for human beings in a weak country where drugs penetrate every level of society do in time inevitably become higher and higher. The destabilization of state structures due to criminal segments having control not just over some parts of the institutional system but also influence over the entire political process, gives organized 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 destabilize the political system and to ensure the continuation of their business, i.e. flooding the country with drugs, which in turn means a catastrophe for individuals’ physical security and then, as pointed out above, quite likely for the security of the whole society. In brief, drug trafficking undeniably means profit for the few, hardship for the many.

If we turn back to how the Tajik elite defined security in terms of stability drug trafficking clearly represents an opposite to such a view of security. The presence of organized crime at the level of state authority distorts the system. 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, in a slightly longer perspective, is a state with severely reduced functionality on several levels.

Russia’s Role

In recent years, plenty of hints have indicated that the Russian military is increasingly involved in shipping Afghan-produced drugs to Russia. Some analysts are convinced “that part of the Russian military has been a corrupting influence in Central Asia from the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union”. Others stress the fact that we cannot see the Russian border troops as ethnically Russians since the majority of the troops are made up of locally recruited Tajiks. Nevertheless, this does not change the fact that the commanders are Russian and that the soldiers hardly do large trafficking without orders.

Accusations have also been put forward within Russia’s own ranks. A former military intelligence officer charged that substantial quantities of drugs from Afghanistan were loaded on board Russian military aircraft in the Tajik capital Dushanbe and flown to Russia. The insight into the military planes is limited and arrangements with custom officials usually keep the inspections on a purely formal level. Thus, it is probably safe to say that the transport and communication infrastructure to homeland Russia have provided the drug smuggling industry in Central Asia with an important additional distribution channel.

Also from the Tajik side, dissatisfied voices have occasionally been raised regarding the Russian troops’ inefficiency and corrupt nature. Until recently, however, no direct evidences could truly back those allegations. But in April 2004 a piece of evidence that elements of the Russian army are participating in the smuggling of narcotics was collected when a Russian border guard was arrested in the outskirts of Dushanbe carrying 8 kilograms of heroin.

4.3 The Idea of the State

Since the idea of the state does not refer directly to a physical component but to ideological and organizing principles, the threats to this part of the state are hard 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 concretizing is by attaching this abstract part of the state to a discussion on legitimacy. In spite of this, the section will inevitably have to approach the problem of drug trafficking and its implications for security in the weak Tajik state-building project in a more abstract and discussing way.

102 Maral Madi, 2003: 34. Roger McDermott has also pinpointed the special composition of the 201st Motorized Rifle Division with 7 percent of the officers, almost 50 percent of the warrant officers, 69 percent of contact servicemen and 99 percent of conscripts being Tajik citizens (McDermott, 2002: 7).
103 Peuch.
To start with the interdependence between ideas and institutions, it is a logical consequence that the idea of profit through crime can never reach such proportions as it has in Tajikistan without somehow affecting the institutional structures. In Tajikistan it is not simply a matter of drug trafficking networks having corruptive and destabilizing effects on the political system, but rather that they have managed to control significant aspects of the political development.

It is by no means revolutionary that if organized criminals want to put their ideas into such a large-scale practice that presently characterize the drug money based criminalization of the political and economic foundation of the Tajik state (revenues obtained from drug trafficking are estimated at a very minimum to constitute 30 percent of the GDP in the country) a considerable influence on the institutional machinery is unavoidable. Much of this, however, has been dealt with in the previous section and it is therefore more interesting to move over to a discussion on legitimacy.

**Legitimacy at the National Level**

Transnational crime has the potential to severely damage the Tajik state’s legitimacy on both the domestic arena and in the eyes of other states. To start with the impacts organized crime have on the national level, Buzan emphasizes that: “Since [the organizing] ideologies address the bases of relations between government and society they define the conditions for both harmony and conflict in domestic politics.”\(^{105}\) When the principles that govern the behavior 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 protection for its citizens. Against the background of the previously stated criminalization of the state machinery, Tajikistan is not surprisingly a country where this process has gone further than in most cases.

However, the issue of how organized crime relates to legitimacy is a very complex one. Since it is clear that it distorts the proper/formal political system; the simultaneous development of a criminally motivated political elite can, if they use the revenues obtained from crime to provide public goods, generate legitimacy that is indifferent to the formal laws and, therefore, subverts the formal political system. This is obviously a matter of great concern as criminals that use proceeds from drug trafficking to initiate projects that will

\(^{105}\) Buzan, 1991: 79.
benefit the public can build-up strong political support on a criminal foundation. One such example in Tajikistan appears to be Makhmadsa id Ubaidulloev, Chairman of the Parliament and Mayor of Dushanbe, a person whose liberal attitude towards drug trafficking has been charged in various media reports.\textsuperscript{106} Ubaidulloev’s formal as well as 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 narcotics trade. Some even go as far as claiming that his remarkable accumulation of power de facto outweighs that of president Rakhmonov.\textsuperscript{107} It is also believed in Dushanbe that if he would decide to run against Rakhmonov in the presidential election of 2005 he possesses the means necessary to stand as the main challenger.\textsuperscript{108}

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 emphasized by the fact that such a person holds key official positions and has a mandate to serve the national interest.

To further illustrate, there is the case of Ghafor Mirzoev, a person who until the summer of 2004 had been one of the most influential persons in Tajik politics. As a warlord during the civil war he was an ally of the president and 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 an 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 UN-funded Drug Control Agency in the country. But in August the same year, the next move was made when he was arrested and charged of about a dozen crimes, including murder.\textsuperscript{109} 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. Cornell has noted that a free press, a vital civil society and an active political opposition have the potential to display the


\textsuperscript{107} Akiner, 2001: 71.


criminalization 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. The common suspicion that drug trafficking interests are behind the killings of several journalists and politicians in Tajikistan confirms this point.

The inexperienced and turbulent nature of the Tajik state has contributed to a lack of national identity and organizing values that are widely held in society. It is therefore not possible to speak of a criminalization of the idea of the state, because there is no idea to criminalize. Rather, an idea vacuum has arisen out of the chaotic identity situation. Criminal interests and their ideas on how to run the state have infiltrated the highest level of the state and are not only one among a myriad of competing influences, but thanks 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. However, this is not to say that all officials are motivated by a criminal agenda, but the funds available for those who are make their influence so significant.

It is, though, important to stress that, among the people in the country, there is a very limited understanding for criminal activities. A field study indicates that the public in Tajikistan condemns involvement in drug trafficking. 66 percent of those polled categorically condemn people for distributing and transporting drugs. Meanwhile, more than 15 percent justified participation in drug trafficking as a way out if someone is unable to feed his or her children or if someone is in economic difficulties. In this sense, widespread poverty and the government’s inability to redress the problem is what justifies the engagement in criminal activities. On the grassroots level the support for a state that yields its revenues from illegal business is clearly not there. But, the lack of tools available for the citizens to check the state institutions (media reporting, civil society, education, financial resources etc) makes a domestic reaction to the problem extremely difficult to initiate.

**Criminalization of a State and its Consequences for Legitimacy in the International Arena**

Tajikistan’s legitimacy in the eyes of the outside world is a security dimension touched upon several times throughout this work. It is, however, such a crucial point that it deserves a short separate discussion. The perception of Tajikistan as a lawless narco-terror area among major regional powers like Russia, Uzbekistan and, potentially, China is today one of the major

---

110 Cornell, "Crime without Borders".
112 Open Society Institute Assistance Foundation – Tajikistan, “Women and Drugs in Tajikistan”.
threats to Tajikistan’s security in an international context, where the aim must be to pursue freedom from external intervention and maintaining its independent identity and its functional integrity. The strong leverage Russia has maintained over Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan’s, on a regular basis, aggressive big-brother attitude towards Tajikistan are clear examples of the country’s vulnerabilities to outside pressure. In particular, the dependence on Russia has led commentators to label Tajikistan a vassal state.

Buzan argues 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 for Tajikistan, and the region in its entirety, the country will remain extremely vulnerable to external players’ actions in the security policy field.

Direct evidence, such as the exposure of two of the country’s foreign representatives caught busy smuggling drugs, suggests the links between the idea of profit through crime among top state officials, and the external legitimacy of the Tajik state.

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. But 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 manage to 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 narcotics-based economy are visible. Corruption emanating from criminally motivated special interests prevalence in the society are a major obstacle for developing a proper state underpinned by regular economic activity and where the output of public goods are a natural part of the relationship between the state and the public.

To explicitly pick up where we left the discussion on the idea of the state in the theoretical section, it is obvious that in strong states in which the idea of the state, for instance democracy, is commonly held throughout the society and the degree of socio-political

cohesion is high, this locks the ideological element of the state within certain parameters and makes it very unlikely that criminal ideas take root at this level. In a country like Tajikistan, with attributes as described in the theoretical section, such kinds of checks and balances do not exist, and this allows criminal parties to capture the most sacred and abstract part of the state, its idea.

This argument can also be viewed in the light of Migdal’s theory: a state, underpinned by criminal structures, that does not provide goods for the people severely undermines its capacity to become the dominating organizational force in the society.
5. Concluding Remarks

Summarizing the Analysis

This study has targeted the way international drug trafficking is threatening Tajikistan’s national security. It is therefore convenient to give a short review of the insights the previous analysis has given as regards how the drug trade relates to the different parts of the country’s national security.

The physical base of the state was the first object analyzed. It is evident that trade in illicit narcotics has affected both Tajikistan’s territory and its population. The territorial sovereignty was in the late 1990s and early 2000 disturbed by the presence of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, an armed terrorist/criminal group whose violent incursions into the Fergana Valley was launched from Tajik territory. The nature of the operations, in combination with IMU’s record as, at the time, 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 neighbors, 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 infectious epidemics, especially HIV/AIDS, have yet not reached such levels that they are posing a threat to the state’s entire population base and not just to individuals’ security, 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 drug trafficking and Tajikistan’s national security is the issue of the criminalization of the state machinery. It is hardly surprising that low-paid officials in the police and custom 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 organized 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 its real purpose, and, as a result, the functionality of the state is undermined. Unsurprisingly, this works as a drag on the prospects of creating a serviceable 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 criminalization has undermining consequences for legitimacy on both the national and the international arena. 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.

Relevance for Policy-Making

The exploding drug trafficking in Central Asia is a major problem for the entire region and specifically for Tajikistan. It has direct and indirect consequences for stability and security and span over many of the Tajik state’s domains. In some fields it has directly contributed to insecurity and destabilized the society, while its effects on other areas can be illustrated in terms of a perpetuation, or rather aggravation, of Tajikistan’s weakness and vulnerability to internal as well as external threats. The negative consequences for security appear to be most alarming in the middle- to long term, since drugs have then penetrated every level of the state. Therefore, if Afghanistan continues to supply the world drug demand and effective international assistance measurements targeting Tajikistan are lacking, the prospects for breaking the vicious cycle appear slim.

Drug trafficking and its negative implications for the functionality of weak states and the security for their inhabitants is a problem that is here to stay. It is thus vital that the international community attach importance to the problem. In Tajikistan, a country, in which criminal segments have superior access to financial assets and, in addition, have violent means at their disposal, it is difficult to be optimistic about the possibilities for a domestic opposition to grow up and challenge the criminal structures. Thus, it seems inevitable that international pressure and engagement are important ingredients in initial attempts to break these structures.
Of the utmost importance is that the fight against international crime must assume a more flexible nature. The bodies with a mandate to counteract the phenomenon must, in this respect, learn from transnational crime and become more borderless and take advantage of the opportunities provided in today’s globally connected world regarding rapid information-sharing and cooperation in the intelligence security field. Time-consuming and national-based bureaucracy permits organized crime networks to constantly be one step ahead of law enforcement initiatives. Since Third World countries on principle represent the crucial first chain in international crime, Western countries cannot afford to neglect this fact and only believe that closer cooperation between members of their own political associations will be enough.

**Academic relevance**

International drug trafficking is also a problem that deserves greater attention from the academic world. In my opinion, a guiding star for scholars dealing with political issues must be to seek to make a contribution that is of relevance on a policy-level, and use their expertise in a way that can be of some help beyond the intra-academic discourse. Of course this should not be interpreted as a support for ordered research. Such a procedure risks to interfere with the indispensable research integrity, reduce the researcher to an instrument, and encourage populism. But a certain amount of a non-academic consciousness would be nothing but healthy. In this sense, it is difficult to imagine a field where there is such a need of scholarly contribution as regards the devastating consequences drug trafficking can have for the functionality of ill-equipped states.

Research within the “drugs and security” field is still a young occurrence. Initiatives in this field therefore tend to be of an explorative nature. Hence, for those who are prepared to set about research on the subject their contributions are urgently needed.

From a strictly academic perspective, the development of theoretical and methodological models is important for the possibilities to conduct rigorous research within this field. Such a development would concomitantly contribute to enhance the scientific status of this particular research field.
6. References

Literature


Internet


**Journals and Reports**


Seger, Alexander, Drugs and Development in the Central Asian Republics, Report for Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), Bonn 1996.


