The Crystallization of State Security Institutions in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

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INTRODUCTION

Why do security apparatuses in weak states take on different capabilities? Some countries (such as Belarus, Tajikistan, Vietnam, Zimbabwe) have consolidated their coercive powers, both centrally and regionally, into coherent institutions yet they remain unable to establish norms that hold those security agencies accountable to the public. Other countries (such as Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, and Philippines) have inculcated norms of accountability within their security agencies, but that apparatus lacks coherent institutional capacities. Whereas the former group of weak states have security institutions exhibiting coherence but not accountability, the latter group manifests the opposite. What accounts for this institutional divergence in the security apparatuses of weak states?

This article proposes that the sequence of political development in weak states critically determines the trajectory of a weak state’s security apparatus. In countries where political liberalization precedes capacity building, norms of accountability will be incorporated into security agencies yet political divisions and recurrent elite turnovers emerge that stymie the development of coherent security infrastructures. In countries where political liberalization follows efforts to build security capabilities, security institutions consolidate and become cohesive but they are susceptible to utilization as instruments of repression and predation without accountability to the public.

This article inductively develops this argument through a comparison of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, two similar post-Soviet states whose security institutions have evolved in markedly different ways. In Kyrgyzstan, the security infrastructure is institutionally weak, chronically underfunded, and susceptible to internal divisions, yet it has remained less predatory on and more accountable to the public compared to its neighbors (with the notable exception of how it treats its Uzbek minority). In Tajikistan, the security apparatus has gained new technical and operational capabilities enhancing its reach and serving to sideline or integrate competing factions, yet this improved capacity has given rise to widening uses of repression and predation, dependence on foreign security assistance, and increasing concerns that it will serve as the president’s praetorian guard should a crisis occur.

These findings contribute to existing research on security apparatuses in several ways. First, understanding how security institutions evolve in weak states carries important implications for international security more broadly, since weak states are often directly

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1 Research for this paper was supported by Minerva Research Initiative grant ONR N00014-15-1-2788 (“Trafficking/Terrorism Nexus in Eurasia”) funded by Office of Naval Research.

2 Coherence and accountability are two of the four features of institutionalization identified by Huntington (1968), though I substitute accountability for autonomy.
confronting transnational challenges such as drug trafficking, organized criminal activity, and terrorism. Whether contemporary weak states mitigate or exacerbate these challenges depends in no small part on the emerging characteristics of their security institutions. Second, the analysis below provides insight into the studies of weak states and authoritarian regimes, which have tended to overlook how security institutions evolve. In particular, this study emphasizes how nondemocratic regimes face a crucial tradeoff between coherence and accountability within their security infrastructures – a tradeoff that defines these states for years to come. Third, this article speaks to questions of institutional change, highlighting a more dynamic role of institutions in sustaining political order than new institutionalism might suggest. Security apparatuses do not evolve to bind stakeholders in credible commitments; rather they are intersecting networks of power that concentrate in particular forms as political regimes advance priorities and provide resources.

Based on secondary literature, primary documents, and 35 expert interviews of journalists, academics, security and law enforcement officials, international organization staff, and members of civil society conducted in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2016 and 2017, this article explores the empirical implications of this argument in these two Central Asian countries. These experts were strategically selected (representing a range of backgrounds, professional interests, and areas of specialized knowledge) and the interviews were semi-structured and in-depth (averaging 90-120 minutes each). The remainder of the article consists of five sections. The first reviews how the comparative study of states and regimes has addressed the evolution of security institutions in weak states. The second puts elaborates the argument. The third and fourth sections apply the argument to the cases of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The final section concludes with a brief discussion of the findings.

II. CONCEPTUALIZING SECURITY INSTITUTIONS AND THE LIMITS OF EXISTING THEORY

Why, then, do some weak states’ security apparatuses develop into unaccountable, coherent institutions while others establish norms of accountability but remain characterized by disunity and incapacity? And why does Tajikistan exemplify the former whereas Kyrgyzstan the latter? That Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have similar historical, political, and geographical conditions makes their divergent security trajectories all the more puzzling. Both countries occupied similar positions within the Soviet Union, both experienced post-Soviet transitions that led to a weakening of central political authority (that contrasted with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), and both countries are transit points for drug trafficking, organized criminal activity, and insurgents based in Afghanistan. As a result, both countries’ past two decades have enabled greater interrelations and collusion between organized criminal actors and state officials, producing a “state-crime nexus” that has extended across the region.

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3 Heathersahaw 2009; Markowitz 2013; Driscoll 2015; Nourzhanov 2005; Engvall 2016.
4 Marat 2006.
5 Engvall 2006; Kupatadze 2008; Latypov 2009; Lewis 2010; Cornell and Jonsson 2014; De Danieli 2014.
Existing explanations, however, do not adequately account for this subtle yet central institutional divergence in security apparatuses. These fall into three groups. First, historical and macrosociological literature on state formation has highlighted macrostructural factors, such as the effects of war and state building, the institutionalization of violence in particular social and economic orders, or historical legacies of imperial rule. These compelling accounts of the origins and nature of security apparatuses are highly instructive, especially in how they conceptualize the timing, process, and nature of institutional change. The broad scope of their studies, however, lack the specification needed to explain variation across relatively similar countries. Indeed, a focus on such broad historical or structural conditions would lead us to expect no difference in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan’s security institutions, since the causal variables driving institutional change are shared by these two cases.

Second, the comparative study of authoritarianism seeks to address the nature of security institutions, especially their seemingly ubiquitous involvement in politics. Yet, these works tend to be predominated by leader-centered models of strategic choice that explain the structure and application of security apparatuses (i.e., as instruments of repression) as a consequence of what functions and responsibilities autocrats delegate to coercive agencies. Autocrats seeking to avert two existential threats – social mobilization against the regime and the seizure of power from within the elite – engage their security apparatuses in a variety of activities in order to rely on them to constrain mobilization while deterring them from seizing power themselves. Whether crafted as a principal-agent problem or a moral hazard dilemma, recent studies have identified the overarching imperative for weak state rulers to balance their dependence on coercion to put down social protest against their need to deter security apparatuses’ seizure of power. Indeed, these competing threats are deemed to fundamentally shape the organizational structure of security apparatuses.

While useful in explaining authoritarian durability, these explanations are less applicable to how security institutions change. By focusing on leader choice, they miss Joel Migdal’s key insight into weak states that much of the power and authority to effect change lies at the regional and local levels of the state where it interfaces with society. These accounts also assume only leaders initiate institutional change, that changes to security institutions do not divert from initial conditions once set into motion, and that leaders are rational decision-makers who strategically shape security institutions in response to available information and their relative bargaining power. Yet, when applied to the real world of weak states, such assumptions do not hold. Moreover, they lead to misleading conclusions in the cases of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. A focus on leader

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8 Young 1994; Cooley 2005.
9 Davenport 2007.
10 Policzer 2009.
11 Svolik 2012.
12 Greitens 2016.
bargaining would suggest that Kyrgyzstan’s rulers (who faced recurrent threats of social mobilization) would build a coherent, consolidated security apparatus to put down protests in the future. Likewise, it would suggest that Tajikistan’s rulers (who face threats from within the elite) would foster a fragmentation of security services to prevent internal power seizures. Yet, precisely the opposite trajectories have emerged.

Third, a wave of recent studies has identified important mid-level variables that shape security institutions in weak states, such as pressure from civil society, access to resources and rents, reliance on privatized security agencies, and political party polarization. Yet these works examine disparate features of state security, tend to speak past one another, and have not formed into a cumulative debate on the nature of security institutions. This article seeks to contribute to this emerging stream of studies by demonstrating the importance of the timing of political liberalization amid state building. When political liberalization precedes the consolidation of coherent security institutions, for instance, security offices will be more responsive to civil society, less susceptible to rent-seeking, though more vulnerable to party fractionalization.

III. HOW SECURITY INSTITUTIONS EVOLVE IN WEAK STATES

Drawing on Michael Mann’s concept of the state as “polymorphous” and crystallizing in different ways according to different political influences, I contend that weak states’ security apparatuses have been significantly shaped by their emergence in an era of new types of threats (such as terrorism, drug and human trafficking, and civil war). Specifically, the evolution of states’ security apparatuses since the end of the Cold War has centered on the perceived rise of intersecting threats, and newly available resources to address those threats. As Mann writes, states have “multiple institutions, charged with multiple tasks,” but they crystallize differently as the center of different networks of power. While in past eras, states have crystallized as “capitalist,” “dynastic,” “confederal,” or “militarist,” contemporary weak states have crystallized as “security-pursuing” in a context of internal challenges facing their regimes, diffuse transnational threats, and the strategic benefits acquiring foreign assistance to confront those threats. To explain how these broad domestic and international forces push security apparatuses in today’s weak states down divergent paths, however, we need a theory that identifies specific variables and causal mechanisms.

This article argues that the sequence of political development in weak states critically determines the trajectory of a weak state’s security apparatus. As Thomas Ertman has shown elsewhere, countries that consolidate their state apparatuses early emerge with very different state forms that their counterparts that consolidate later. Applied to

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14 Marat 2016; Arias 2006.
16 Avant 2005.
17 LeBas 2006.
18 Mann 1986, p. 75.
19 Ibid, p. 76.
security institution building, I argue that in early consolidators – in countries where political liberalization follows efforts to build security capabilities – security institutions rapidly become cohesive but they are susceptible to utilization as instruments of repression and predation without accountability to the public. By contrast, in late consolidators – in countries where political liberalization precedes capacity building – norms of accountability will be incorporated into security agencies yet political divisions and elite turnover undermine the development of coherent security infrastructures.

I conceptualize the coherence of security institutions by referring to studies of infrastructural capacity and focus on two areas: 1) the central state’s command of technical, financial, and human resources as well as the consolidation of formal policies, strategies and institutional structures designed to respond to transnational security threats (such as organized crime, drug trafficking, and terrorism); and 2) the territorial reach of the state and its ability to exercise surveillance and control down to the provincial and district levels as well as along the state’s borders.\(^{21}\) I conceptualize the accountability of security institutions ______________ [TO BE COMPLETED].

Table 1. A Sequential Model of Security Institutions in Weak States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical Variable</th>
<th>Causal Mechanisms</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political liberalization precedes capacity building</td>
<td>Frequent elite turnover, Ethnic divisions likely, Low dependence on repression</td>
<td>Late consolidators: High accountability, low coherence (Kyrgyzstan)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Early consolidators: Low accountability, high coherence (Tajikistan)</td>
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IV. THE CASE OF KYRGYZSTAN

Political liberalization before capacity building

Marked by intra-elite divisions, state paralysis, and twice overwhelmed by elite-led protests (2005 and 2010), Kyrgyzstan has emerged as an intersection of organized criminal organizations, drug trafficking, and limited terrorist activity. Having initiated political liberalization in the early 1990s, Kyrgyzstan’s parliamentary and regional elite remain influential actors whose division and frequent rotation in-and-out of political positions have undermined the state’s capacity to address transnational threats such as drug trafficking and organized criminal activity. Whereas Tajikistan has witnessed the consolidation and gradual incorporation of drug trafficking and organized crime within

\(^{21}\) Soifer, “State Infrastructural Power,” SCID 2008; Mann 1985
its state apparatus after civil war, Kyrgyzstan has experienced the erosion of its security capacities within Bishkek as well as its offices in the northern and southern parts of the country.

Disunity and incapacities within security agencies

Kyrgyzstan has a long history of anti-drug trafficking policing, but that has not translated into effectiveness in dealing with the drug trade (which is by far the greatest challenge confronting the state at present). Since the 1980s, Kyrgyzstan has sought to establish interagency relationships to address the multifaceted nature of trafficking, crime and instability but there is ongoing competition (over credit and rents) rather than collaboration.22 As one informant noted, there are periods of time when agencies have a standing arrangement on how those payments are distributed. But when there is an external reshuffling of elites (i.e., after 2005 or 2010) or when one agency seeks to gain more of a share of the rents, indications of open competition can be seen in the charges of corruption or misuse of office that are brought by one or two agencies against another.23 While Tajikistan is deemed to be closer to a “narco-state,” in which large portions of the state apparatus are involved in the drug trade, there are only “key persons” within Kyrgyzstan’s state – mostly within its law enforcement and security agencies – that provide protection.24 Moreover, security agencies lack the necessary funds for salaries, equipment and infrastructure.

The Drug Control Agency in Kyrgyzstan, in contrast to its counterpart in Tajikistan, has long had internal problems and external pressures that undermined its institutional capacity. Created in 2003, then closed under Bakiev in 2009, it reopened in 2010 and has been disbanded in 2016 (absorbed primarily by the MIA). Its seizures were markedly smaller than the National Security Service and the MIA, and it eventually fell victim to a turf war with the latter.25 Border control and customs control agencies remain marginally involved in counter-narcotics efforts. Border control officers were reportedly instructed not to make drug trafficking a priority (and to focus on espionage instead), while customs agents claimed their primary role was to enforce tariffs on cross-border transited goods.26

There is also very limited strategic analysis (collection and use of statistics) especially on drug trade) and little interest by higher-ups to "modernize" in this regard. This varies from Tajikistan where there is much greater institutional capacity in strategic analysis (though not necessarily on operations). Compared to Tajikistan’s 50-person strategic analysis unit, Kyrgyzstan has only 10 persons (of whom only 2 individuals actually

22 Interview #9 with former senior law enforcement official, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
23 Interview #2 with political analyst and academic, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
24 These include well-known cases, such as MIA Minister Melis Turgenbaev and so-called “gray cardinal” Kurson Asanov. Interview #1 with political analyst, Bishkek, June-July 2016; Interview #9 with former senior law enforcement official, Bishkek, June-July 2016; Interview #5 with political analyst and former government official, Bishkek, June-July 2016. On the involvement of the customs service, see http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1071272.html.
25 Interview #6 with former senior law enforcement official, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
26 Interview #9 with former senior law enforcement official, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
collect and analyze statistical data). Moreover, there remains a quota system in place in terms of arrests, seizures and operations – as well as reported crimes in a province. As a result, there is a standard practice of having each month’s (or year’s) quota barely met, which stymies any effort to properly analyze patterns of crime and security threats. Likewise, there were only six officials in Kyrgyzstan devoted to human trafficking until 2016, when 300 MIA officers were assigned to focus on the problem, and there is no line item for human trafficking in the state budget. This lack of institutional capacity has been in part due to the government’s dependence on the NGO sector to address human trafficking in Kyrgyzstan.

Security incapacities were particularly acute in Kyrgyzstan’s southern regions. There were periods of time after the 2005 and 2010 uprisings when local security apparatuses manifested state failure – i.e., when law enforcement agencies lost their monopoly of violence enabling criminal groups and drug trafficking networks to fill this void – but these appear to have been very brief. In general, these uprisings did not bring about a reorganization of security institutions, which remained intact while ministers or deputy ministers were replaced depending on their political ties. Nevertheless, the largest decline in capacity in the regions occurred during the leadership of Kurmanbek Bakiev (2005-2010), and subsequent efforts to counter this downward trend have remained marginal. Under Bakiev, there were reportedly 31 different criminal groups (relatively small, between 5-15 members) in the country, many of which operating under the patronage and protection of their own regional and local elites. During and immediately after periods of upheaval in 2005 and 2010, moreover, these criminal groups were able to operate without seeking political protection from weakened law enforcement authorities. As one person with ties to the Bakiev regime admitted, “there was open approval for drug trafficking” at the highest levels at the time and that the government since 2010 had “on paper made a reversal of that policy.” During the Bakiev period, law enforcement’s role at the local level diminished, which empowered criminal groups

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27 Senior officials demand only aggregate data so lower level officials see little incentive to collect this data. Efforts by international organizations to change these practices are met by suspicion, with security officials believing such reforms are an attempt to access secret information (a mentality some ascribe to their age and their Soviet-era training). Interview #12 with UNODC expert, Bishkek, June-July 2016.

28 Interview #12 with UNODC expert, Bishkek, June-July 2016. This practice of barely meeting one’s quota traces back to Soviet institutions in the mid-1900s. See Berliner’s (1957) discussion of the “ratchet principle.”

29 Interview #14 with project analyst on human trafficking, OSCE, Bishkek, June-July 2016. This planned surge of police left OSCE officials distressed that the government poorly understood how to address the needs of victims of human trafficking. Interview #14 with project analyst on human trafficking, OSCE, Bishkek, June-July 2016.

30 Interview #15 with project analyst on human trafficking, OSCE, Bishkek, June-July 2016.

31 After 2005, international agencies decided to avoid working with the state and set up a network of 30 NGOs to address human trafficking. Interview #13 with project analyst on human trafficking, IOM, Bishkek, June-July 2016.

32 Interview #4 with political analyst and academic, Bishkek, June-July 2016. Indeed, the flow of rents to elites for oil delivered to Manas air base went uninterrupted during these uprisings so it stands to reason that rents from the drug trade were similarly unaffected. Interview #2 with political analyst and academic, Bishkek, June-July 2016.

33 Interview #5 with political analyst and former government official, Bishkek, June-July 2016.

34 UNODC 2007.

35 Interview #1 with political analyst and academic, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
willing to fill this vacuum. In rural areas where police were not present, people would seek out criminal groups to solve their problems. This became common enough that some groups even advertised on television openly claiming that they could collect a debt or settle a dispute – something to which many companies and everyday people resorted. It was the post-2010 government’s concern with the political clout of these groups – reaching into parliament and the presidency – that spurred it to crack down on them. 36

**Accountability, transparency, and attempts at reform**

Despite these challenges, the police and other security offices have generally remained open to collaboration with with civil society groups and international organizations in instituting reform, limiting corruption and predation, and making security agencies more responsive to society. 37 There is, in short, a willingness to engage in reform, though these efforts have rarely been fully implemented (and, as discussed below, do not extend to ethnic minorities in southern Kyrgyzstan).

International organizations have promoted joint or inter-agency roundtables and trainings, and security offices do participate in these efforts (and point to the need for these linkages). But these inter-office trainings are solely sectoral in nature – focusing on how drug trafficking should be addressed or how to incorporate protections of human rights in prisons. 38 Moreover, each security ministry conducts its own training and these are generally not coordinated. Likewise, there is little information sharing across agencies and each one produces its own reports. There is no effective top-down mechanism to coordinate them. 39

Following the 2010 violence, for example, it became evident that a coordinating mechanism would be needed should another mass violence episode or other crisis arise. 40 Several European governments supported establishing a “situation room” that would bring together different agencies during a crisis, but the donors pulled out after it became clear the government was not committed. 41 Another example, proposed in the wake of the 2010 violence, was an agency called the Agency for Local Government and Ethnic Diversity that was established to serve as an early warning system. While this agency has begun to work well with civil society and local community leaders, most security agencies are not involved in conflict resolution but focus on the investigation and prosecution of crimes. 42

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36 Interview #3 with political and security analyst, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
37 Marat 2016.
38 Interview #12 with UNODC expert, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
39 Interview #3 with political and security analyst, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
40 It was known that at least one top level law enforcement official could not be reached during the 2010 violence for lack of a satellite phone. Interview #2 with political analyst and academic, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
41 Similarly, a proposal put forward by Interim President Roza Otunbaeva to carry out reforms of the MIA was not carried out. Interview #3 with political and security analyst, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
42 Interview #3 with political and security analyst, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
One attempt at interagency cooperation that has been formed is the Defense Council, which advises the President. As such it touches on every aspect of the trafficking/terrorism nexus and there are even working groups established for each area or field in which there might be relevant security threats.\(^\text{43}\) A recent Defense Council session, including the different branches of security services, was convened with senior religious authorities and put forward a joint plan to have the state more involved with madrassas and mosques (to ensure that the “right” form of Islam is practiced).\(^\text{44}\) However, this is mainly a venue for actors to meet and it does not gather or analyze information, nor does it have the capability to implement policies formulated.\(^\text{45}\) Major policy formulations must first be approved by Parliament (which has several factions) before being translated into law.\(^\text{46}\)

There is wide variation in informants' assessments of how corrupt security/law enforcement is -- though specific agencies are clearly more involved in particular aspects of the trafficking/terrorism nexus (i.e., border control involvement in human trafficking). But the corruption in Kyrgyzstan’s agencies is generally seen as linked to key persons and their staff/underlings that extends widely but is not as systemic as in Tajikistan. In short, Kyrgyzstan compared to Tajikistan may be less permeated by corruption and more open to influence from free media and civil society watchdogs, but it may be far weaker in institutional (strategic and operational) capacity.

**An exception: Targeting ethnic Uzbeks**

This also highlights a strong ethnic component to security dynamics (especially in the south before and after the 2010 violence). There is pressure put from society on security agencies to be more responsive in order to prevent another clash. One result of this is that security agencies have exceeded their power; for instance, they reportedly discriminate against Uzbeks by targeting them for searches, as well as entering their homes without justification. It is claimed that these policing strategies are carried out in order to preserve security, but they are often a means by which security offices extort payments of bribes. Since these searches and abuses tend to target ethnic Uzbeks, there has arisen considerable anger and distrust between the latter and these provinces’ security and law enforcement offices.\(^\text{47}\)

This situation is reinforced by the makeup of these offices. There are few Uzbeks in security agencies and police in Osh city, which are largely Kyrgyz. This does not reflect the 45 percent of the population that are constituted by Uzbeks in the city. Uzbeks are not recruited even though they want to join; they are not recruited because it is feared they will serve the interests of Uzbekistan and not Kyrgyzstan (i.e., that they will somehow

\(^{43}\) Albeit most of these working groups consisted of academics. Interview #4 with political analyst and academic, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
\(^{44}\) Interview #5 with political analyst and former government official, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
\(^{45}\) Interview #3 with political and security analyst, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
\(^{46}\) Interview #7 with academic, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
\(^{47}\) Interview #3 with political and security analyst, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
share information with Uzbekistan and spy for it). This also reflects a broader sentiment in society that sees Uzbeks as aliens and not as equal citizens in Kyrgyzstan. This is also true of political offices Osh city, which are 95 percent Kyrgyz.\textsuperscript{48}

This ethnic component to security in these southern regions has impacted the patterns of religious extremism. Since the 2010 violence, and in more recent years, extremist groups have been “self-isolating,” or going underground, in order to avoid the repressive tactics of state security agencies that are targeting them due to their Uzbek ethnicity. This trend has intensified in recent years due to triggering events, such as the arrest of the prominent cleric Imam Kamolov (which generated fear of arrest in other groups) and news from Syria that a suicide bomber had come from Jalalabad Province (which led many to fear an intensified crackdown in the region).\textsuperscript{49} As a 2016 survey by the NGO Search for Common Ground found, the state and Uzbek minority are increasingly pulled into a cycle of perceived extremism, repression, marginalization, and extremism. It states:

Law enforcement agencies are actively engaged in arresting radical members and extremists. However, there is an increased fear of arbitrary arrests, especially among members of non-Kyrgyz ethnicities… In this environment, there is a high level of distrust in law enforcement and government authorities regarding matters of the fight against extremism by the population… which is seen as unfair by families of arrestees, thus lead[ing] them to join extremist organizations. The extremist organizations, in turn, can take advantage of this situation and start recruiting the relatives of those who were innocently arrested, offering support to their families.\textsuperscript{50}

The long-term conditions of state-minority relations in the south had primed religious groups in the south to react to these events by “self-isolating.” As the Search for Common Ground report noted, its “survey revealed that the marginalized ethnic groups are also subject to radicalization. Those who have become isolated in their communities and not involved in social life and processes are especially vulnerable.”\textsuperscript{51} More broadly, this trend demonstrates how ethnic tensions, weak state apparatuses, and the misuse of law enforcement, security, and court institutions can interact to inadvertently lead religious activists to become further marginalized. While most religious activists have assumed more extremist interpretations of Islam, very few have taken up violence. Nonetheless, there are a number of “pull and push factors that could very quickly lead to violence” given the volatile situation in Osh and Jalalabad Provinces.\textsuperscript{52} Moreover, electoral rules and party structures within Kyrgyzstan’s post-2010 parliamentary system tend to reward rather than penalize those political elites who reinforce nationalist sentiment, marginalize minorities, and overlook issues in the south.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{48} Interview #3 with political and security analyst, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
\textsuperscript{49} Interview #10 with NGO head and expert on religious extremism, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., pp. 18-19.
\textsuperscript{52} Interview #10 with NGO head and expert on religious extremism, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
\textsuperscript{53} Interview #11 with political analyst and academic, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
Diminished security capacities have inadvertently exacerbated the intersection of drug/human trafficking, organized crime, and terrorism, but the state’s involvement in these problems has been mediated through specific, often indirect mechanisms: a) organized criminal groups' members can adopt religious ideologies when they occupy the same prison cell as religious extremists (and this continues after the former are released); b) organized criminal groups' lower level members have peeled off from main groups and attached themselves to influential local religious leaders (often through involvement in sports clubs and associations); c) after 2010 violence law enforcement and local administrations in the south have targeted Uzbeks who now face exclusion, persecution, and are susceptible to recruitment to religious groups as well as being more likely to go underground when they suspect government repression. In sum, organized criminal groups are more decentralized than in Tajikistan as is the drug trade, but it remains extensive. Moreover, rising religious radicalization in recent years has remained nonviolent, but there are triggers that can lead to violence, and the government's nationalistic orientation and policies toward ethnic Uzbeks constitutes a complicating factor that makes the possibility of ethnic and religious violence a very serious concern in southern Kyrgyzstan.

V. THE CASE OF TAJIKISTAN

Capacity building before political liberalization

Following its civil war, Tajikistan’s central government has struggled to reestablish control over many parts of the country. One regime strategy for stabilizing postwar Tajikistan was to cede control over key institutions (including parts of the security apparatus) to former commanders and prominent politicians and allowed them to establish ties to organized criminal groups and the drug trade. Concurrent with rising drug trafficking in the late 1990s, a weak central government left Tajikistan with degraded security capacities to address the rise of drug trafficking and organized criminal activity in the country (much of it protected by local elites).

Over the past 20 years, however, Tajikistan’s security apparatus has markedly changed, shaped by an increasingly closed political environment in which the authoritarian state has become less willing to address corruption (and in fact envelopes it into its state operations) and substantial domestic and foreign investment in Tajikistan's security apparatus generally and on its border with Afghanistan. Stark advancements in security capabilities emerged in specific areas, resulting in extensive CCTV monitoring throughout parts of Dushanbe, forensic resources, border infrastructure, and technical resources of special forces. These increased technical and human capabilities have improved Tajikistan’s overall security, providing more professionalized policing,
reducing crime rates, and creating a greater sense of security among the public. They have also enabled more extensive monitoring and surveillance of religious activity as well as extensive crackdowns that proponents claim have reduced insurgent/terrorist attacks in the country. In fact, there has been a significant decline in the number of terrorist attacks and episodes of instability. While several prominent ones are well known in 2010, 2012, and 2014 – indicative of weak state capacity in certain security areas – the number of these events has reduced and no longer appears to many experts interviewed as a significant issue.

Advancing Tajikistan’s security capabilities, however, have enabled the government to consolidate drug trafficking under its control and fostered a highly repressive state (that targets regime opponents and civil society groups). Moreover, these advancements have not led to coordination among security agencies or anti-corruption efforts needed to effectively address the terrorism-trafficking nexus. In addition, significant advancements in the development of security forces (such as training, technical equipment, and so on) are impressive, but no matter how much international assistance flows in, there is still a deficit in the “human resources” of these institutions because the people being trained lack basic education. This is because the educational sector in Tajikistan is underfunded, corrupt and has been allowed to languish for years. According to one experienced security officer, any in Tajikistan’s current security apparatus lack basic knowledge, skills and abilities – especially compared to security officials during the Soviet period. This has produced tactical and technical skills useful in ensuring the regime’s longevity, but a heavy dependence on security sector assistance has not led it to inculcate norms of accountability to the public nor enact important anti-corruption reforms – both critical to addressing ongoing and future intersections of trafficking, terrorism, and organized crime.

**Emerging capacity and coherence within security agencies**

Building on domestic and international investment in the technical resources, training and infrastructure of its security apparatus, Tajikistan has witnessed gradual improvements in the capacity and coordination among its various agencies. Despite a number of drawbacks, international organization staff have found that capacity building in Tajikistan has been greatly aided by the long-term presence of senior officials, limited elite turnover, and continued support from the central leadership. The Security Council and other security ministries are reportedly engaged in more robust and substantive efforts to impose coherence across Tajikistan’s security institutions.

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59 Interview # 17 with Academic, Dushanbe, December 2016; Interview #23 with NGO staff, Dushanbe, January 2017.
60 Multiple interviews, Dushanbe, December 2016, January 2017, and April 2017.
61 Interview #29 with NGO staff, Dushanbe, April 2017.
62 Interview #34 with former security services official, Dushanbe, April 2017.
63 Interview #33 with UNODC staff, Dushanbe, April 2017.
The Security Council serves as the main coordinating agency of security issues and it has generally been more active than its counterpart in Kyrgyzstan, which served primarily as a discussion venue. Unrestrained by parliamentary checks on its activity, and serving as part of the presidential administration, the Security Council in Tajikistan holds monthly meetings involving educational institutions, Prosecutor’s office, Border Control Committee, Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), Drug Control Agency (DCA), National Security Service (NSS), and Anti-Corruption Agency addressing a range of issues. There remained a sectoral approach to security in which some agencies focus solely on drug trafficking and organized crime (DCA, Ministry of Defense), while others solely on religious extremism and instability (Parliament’s subcommittee on religion). As one law enforcement official noted, “each respective [security] agency functions as an individual silo that only protects its interests,” eschewing information sharing and joint actions. Indeed, security agencies’ self-reporting shows that trends in their rates of drug seizures vary greatly, suggesting little inter-agency cooperation (see Figure 1). And interviews also indicated that the Security Council tends to focus more on topical issues – such as extremists in Afghanistan or tracking Tajikistani migrants traveling to Syria as ISIS recruits – and less on long-term strategies in dealing with the nexus.

In addition to the Security Council, the DCA has made a concerted effort to increase its presence both as an anti-narcotics agency and in fighting corruption. Under Director Rustam Nazarov, it was widely viewed as effective by criminologists and drug trafficking experts in the region, with its work culminating in a two-year investigation of corruption and drug trafficking led to 30-40 arrests (of whom some were leading figures and senior officials) in 2015. Over the past several years, the DCA had built up its strategic analysis section, staffed with approximately 50 analysts, to collect, analyze and use statistics on criminal activity and security threats – an institutional capability that far exceeded its counterparts in the government.

There are other indicators of enhanced capability. For example, the government has designed some quick alert response systems – ways of responding to criminal behavior and to natural disasters (via the Min of Emergency Situations). The government has also aggressively tried to extend more control over GBAO – which has been a center of drug trafficking / warlords and a region that has been outside the control of the government in the past. In recent years, the government has brought some order to the region, and imposed greater control over much of it. Security officials in GBAO’s capital city (Khorog) and major villages are typically drawn from Hatlon Province – a strategy by which the center can reliably monitor local populations there. However, this has created potential conflict between these officials and local leaders in the province, which appear to have contributed to open clashes among state security actors. But the government

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64 Multiple interviews, Dushanbe, December 2016 and January 2017.
65 Interview #19 with Senior Law Enforcement Official, Dushanbe, December 2016.
67 Some view his subsequent promotion to Minister of Emergency Situations as an effort to halt his efforts. Interview #9 with former senior law enforcement official, Bishkek, June-July 2016. Others saw it as a genuine move upward with a larger portfolio. Interview #35 with senior official from US Embassy, Dushanbe, April 2017.
68 Interview #12 with UNODC expert, Bishkek, June-July 2016.
cannot trust local security agencies in the region so they send in officers from other regions. But these officers in turn are not trusted by local security agency staff and it is unclear how they actually coordinate on the ground. 69

There are limits to Tajikistan’s emerging security capabilities. Some voiced concern that the DCA’s prominent role in combating crime and the drug trade would not last. Indeed, since Nazarov’s anti-corruption operation, for instance, there have only been a couple of officials arrested for corruption and drug trafficking in 2016. 70 And although the US State Department’s program of paying the extra salaries of DCA staff – in order to reduce the appeal for them to take bribes and misuse their office – had been a success, US officials involved in the program were skeptical of its long-term institutional impact. There was neither the political will nor fiscal basis for Tajikistan’s government to take it over. 71

Beyond DCA, moreover, most law enforcement (especially police) and security staff have seen a drop in their pay and benefits over the past 2-3 years. This was due to financial constraints since the sanctions and economic slowdown in Russia that has greatly affected Tajikistan’s economy. Specifically, these staff lost hazard pay and benefits (credit or money to pay lower gas, electric, other utility bills and to pay for school supplies for their kids, clothes/uniforms for their kids going back to school each fall, and for sport activities for their kids). In addition, many receive their pay 1-2 months late and have to buy their groceries and other goods on credit as they wait to get paid. As the informant concluded “this raises questions about their loyalty – I can see this being a problem.” 72

Operating without accountability: Predation and repression

The investment in Tajikistan’s security capabilities have not institutionalized norms of accountability, giving rise to increased abuses of authority, widening repression, and more systemic predation. While Tajikistan’s enhanced capabilities have enabled creeping authoritarianism for several years, the discovery of a reputed coup attempt in 2015 has led to a significant intensification of repression leading to the arrest of over 150 IRP members, harassment of opposition figures, and targeting many in the public for suspicious religious activity. Indeed, anyone who speaks against the government is fired from their job and faces likely lawsuits. 73

Among the most significant consequences of Tajikistan’s improved security capacities has been the regime’s ability to consolidate and exploit its control over the drug trade. Overall, the drug trade has become less visible, yet most interviewees were convinced this was because it had been effectively centralized under the control of the ruling elite

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69 Interview #26 with IO staff, Dushanbe, January 2017.
70 Interview #33 with UNODC staff, Dushanbe, April 2017.
71 Interview #35 with senior official from US Embassy, Dushanbe, April 2017.
72 Interview #29 with NGO staff, Dushanbe, April 2017.
73 Interview #28 with NGO staff, Dushanbe, April 2017; on the threat of firing workers as an instrument of repression in the region see McMann 2006.
(with many believing those ties extended to the presidential administration). All NGO and most law enforcement interviewees felt that drug trafficking is supported and protected by a range of officials, including border officers, customs officials, and those in the DCA and MIA. Advance payments for senior government and military (border patrol) positions lead officials to engage in the drug trade to recoup costs. As one NSS official noted, there are many “hidden hands” aiding the drug trade that serve as intermediaries enabling former warlords and others in this illegal activity. A NGO team leader reflected a common view in stating that many areas in the country have dealers and sellers are protected (and in return smaller dealers and traffickers are turned over to keep up an image of regular seizures and arrests. One indication of continued drug trafficking is the construction boom in Dushanbe over the past decade, which several interviewees viewed as a means of laundering money from narcotics sales.

Figure 1. Drug Seizures by State Agency (in kilograms), Tajikistan, 1998-2009

Source: Data compiled from estimates in Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan, Report on the drug situation in the republic of Tajikistan for 2009 (Dushanbe: DCA, 2009).

Numerous reports find that small-scale traders and local traffickers were targeted in counter-trafficking efforts while larger organized syndicates remained untouched, allowing the latter to consolidate their control over the drug trade. Rather than centralized cartels or mafia organizations, these regions contain several competing medium-sized groups that were residual formations of warlord militias the civil war. These groups have been absorbed into and controlled by regional and national political elites, who have at

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74 Interview #21 with senior law enforcement official, Dushanbe, December 2016.
75 Interview #25 with NGO staff, Dushanbe, January 2017.
most utilized, at least influenced counter-trafficking efforts to eliminate rivals and force many of these groups to support the regime. The arrests of senior government officials (or their relatives) for involvement in drug trafficking – such as the son of the head of Tajikistan Railways and the brother of a deputy head of the national security service – support this analysis.\(^1\) As a result of these collaborative arrangements, these regions experience high-levels of drug trafficking and drug seizures, but remarkably little drug-related violence.

There have been conflicting analyses on the trends in Hojand Province and border areas in Khatlon Province. On one hand, state statistics demonstrate increasing and high levels of drug seizures and interdiction efforts in these regions, suggesting an increasing capacity. As Table 3 shows, in 2008-09 (the peak of Tajikistan’s drug seizures), Khatlon Province and Hojand Province witnessed the highest levels of drug seizures. In Khatlon, most of these were seized in Hamadoni District and Shurabad District (which are slightly more accessible from the provincial capital than Pyanj and Farkhar Districts).\(^76\) On the other hand, in-depth field research by specialists on politics and security in Central Asia have concluded that this increased seizure rate indicates an initiative by senior Tajikistan government officials to consolidate their power vis-à-vis opponents within the state following conclusion of the country’s divisive civil war. This contention holds that state elites have gained control over the drug trade and used it to maintain elite support; that organized crime remains embedded within state structures (especially within the country’s security apparatus); and that insurgency and terrorism is more likely to emerge as insiders defect as they lose their protection and patronage from the Tajikistani leadership.\(^77\)

Many law enforcement officials viewed Lower Panj (Nizhni Pyanj) District in Hatlon Province as an area of specific concern where intersections of drug trafficking, organized crime, religious extremism, and broader cross-border security concerns were more pronounced. Likewise, corruption within state security offices in Hatlon Province has been a particular concern – as shown by a corruption scandal when high ranking officials within the provincial and district police forces were implicated in drug trafficking and ties to organized crime groups. In contrast to Khatlon and Hojand Provinces, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (or GBAO) has experienced far less drug trafficking and organized criminal activity. GBAO has the lowest level of drug seizures in Tajikistan by 2008-09, a marked contrast to its role as an important hub of trafficking in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Table 2).\(^8\) Most interviewees, though, attribute this decline to the consolidation of drug trafficking under regional officials with ties to the central government.\(^78\)

The removal of Russian troops from manning Tajikistan’s 900-mile border with Afghanistan in the mid-2000s has led to intensive effort to improve the equipment, staffing, and training of these border patrols. As an official working with UN programs

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\(^76\) Author’s field notes, 2002.

\(^77\) See, for instance, Bleuer and Kazemi 2014; Lewis 2010.

\(^78\) Interview # 17 with Academic, Dushanbe, December 2016; Interview #20 with senior law enforcement official, Dushanbe, December 2016; Interview #23 with NGO staff, Dushanbe, January 2017.
on border management noted, on one hand Border Control, Customs Control and NSS are active at six major border-crossing points and four cross-border markets (where trade occurs) between Tajikistan and Afghanistan – activity that includes checking documents for forgeries, checking persons against records of those wanted by law enforcement, and inspecting goods and cargo passing through). On the other hand, these agencies – especially Border Control – continue to lack advanced vehicles and equipment (boats to patrol Pyanj River, new helicopters, drones, etc.).

At the same time, border areas remain an ongoing point of conflict. Deterioration of security situation in the neighboring provinces in Northern Afghanistan is the main security challenge and concern for Tajikistan. Although no major security incident has occurred on the border during the last few years, frequent armed clashes happen in different border regions between the Tajik border force and armed groups from Afghanistan, who are usually drug traffickers rather than insurgents from any known militant groups. There have been cases when traffickers took people from the bordering Tajik villages, or even Tajik soldiers as hostages and took them back to Afghanistan. In other cases people from either side were killed, or wounded as a result of the gunfire. Such incidents mostly happen in the Khatlon region in Shurabad and Hamadoni districts.79

Table 2. Drug Seizures by Region (in kilograms), Tajikistan, 2008-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province / City</th>
<th>Amount of Drugs Seized</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khatlon Province</td>
<td>Over 630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hojand Province</td>
<td>617-630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dushanbe city</td>
<td>561-617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent districts</td>
<td>289-561</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBAO</td>
<td>Under 288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data compiled from estimates in Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan, Report on the drug situation in the republic of Tajikistan for 2009 (Dushanbe: DCA, 2009).

Unlike Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan has devoted significant resources to monitoring religious activity, including the Committee on Religion and Regulation of National Traditions that cooperates with law enforcement agencies to detect and prevent illegal religious activity and extremist groups in Tajikistan. This has dramatically increased since 2015. According to one NGO official, detections (and incarcerations) of such actors by his Committee are countrywide but have been particularly active in Hojand Province. Some law enforcement interviewees viewed the government’s stricter regime towards religious freedom as a sign of increased security capacity, but many respondents viewed this trend as a source of instability and disillusionment among poorer and younger members of society. Moreover, respondents also confirmed that greater institutionalization of security offices has extended their control over and extortion of local businesses and members of the public.

79 Interview #24 with IO staff, Dushanbe, January 2017.
Many observers felt that repression—such as banning boys under 18 years of age from attending mosques—tends to push religious activity underground.\textsuperscript{80} Others opposed the blanket “sweeps” of anyone practicing religion because it undermined effective intelligence collection on the problem and it would be better to identify such potential extremist groups and monitor them closely before arresting them.\textsuperscript{81} Government officials, however, saw little reason to scale back its more repressive approach to monitoring and policing religious activists as there have been numerous cases of its successful prevention of attacks. The only way they might change course would be if there were several attacks that clearly demonstrated the negative consequences of the current harsh approach.\textsuperscript{82}

CONCLUSION

The crystallizations of state security apparatuses in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have taken different forms in post-Soviet period.

In Kyrgyzstan, international linkages and assistance initially led to plans for improved security institutions despite chronic underfunding and infrastructural deficiencies. This institution building, however, was thwarted by two uprisings, and long-term inter-ethnic tensions in its southern regions, which have crystallized security apparatuses as institutionally weak and underfunded at the national and local levels (in part because they are more open to and dependent on collaboration and support from civil society and international organizations). Long-standing Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic tensions, however, have led to the crystallization of Kyrgyzstan’s law enforcement and security agencies in its southern regions as more predatory and repressive toward the Uzbek minority. Coupled with infrastructural weaknesses, this has exacerbated the terrorism/trafficking nexus by fostering distrust between the state and minorities and pushing those religious members of the latter to isolate themselves (i.e., go underground for fear of arrest). The crystallization of Kyrgyzstan’s security apparatus reflects weak institutional capacity at the center and in the regions, with focused predatory behavior in the south further weakening it capabilities while inadvertently strengthening its threats.

In Tajikistan, civil war and existential threat to the regime has led to the initial institutionalization of security apparatuses as mechanisms of cooptation and coercion of competing, regional interests.\textsuperscript{83} Over time, however, the global war on terrorism, Tajikistan’s long border with Afghanistan, and the infusion of international assistance has also led to the crystallization of slightly enhanced institutional capacity in strategic and operational counter-narcotics efforts at the center. However, this enhanced capacity is limited to this sector (and does not extend to addressing the terrorism-trafficking nexus) and security agencies remain captured by regional and local interests below the national level. The crystallization of Tajikistan’s security apparatus reflects a highly uneven concentration of institutional capacity at the center that does not extend into the regions.

\textsuperscript{80} Multiple interviews with NGO and IO staff, Dushanbe, December 2016, January and April 2017.
\textsuperscript{81} Interview #34 with former security services official, Dushanbe, April 2017.
\textsuperscript{82} Interview #35 with senior official from US Embassy, Dushanbe, April 2017
\textsuperscript{83} Markowitz 2013.
As Tajikistan demonstrates, enhanced security has made inroads into addressing the nexus in the short term. However, captured state capacity generates specific risk factors—eroded governance and accountability, arms/weapon diffusion, widespread abuses of authority, and moral hazard problems—pose important long-term vulnerabilities to the terrorism-trafficking nexus. In the short term, enhanced technical resources and training have helped the regime address particular areas of the terrorism-trafficking nexus: professionalized policing has reduced crime, advanced surveillance tracks religious activity, and technical capabilities have thwarted insurgent/terrorist attacks. These improvements have also enhanced the center’s control across its territory, reducing regional tensions. While rumors and conspiracies abound in Tajikistan, most regional clashes have been absorbed within security institutions—occurring in part due to conflicts over influence between security personnel—and residual tensions from its civil war only indirectly undercut state security.

Several risks, however, threaten to undermine Tajikistan’s ability to address the nexus over the long run. First, enhanced security sector capabilities appear to have significantly undermined governance in Tajikistan by reinforcing the regime’s dependence on “praetorian guards,” by increasing rent-seeking behavior within law enforcement, and by fostering a general lack of accountability to the public. These emerging trends have made it more difficult for the regime to engage the public, especially religious communities in the north and east that have been targeted by repression. Likewise, several visible episodes of defection from and clashes within security institutions—including one to ISIS—suggest that the diffusion of arms, persons and expertise to nonstate actors remains an ongoing concern. Often spurred by corruption and conflict over the drug trade, defections and clashes indicate deep fissures within security institutions that substantially and directly affect Tajikistan’s security capacity to deal with the nexus. Enhanced security has lead to a number of abuses of authority, including unlawful applications of force extortion, and targeting of religious groups. This poses a prevalent risk to addressing the nexus as it potentially drives those estranged by the state into criminal activity (especially drug trafficking) or toward religious communities. Lastly, moral hazard problems—in which security actors forgo actions against particular threats in order to encourage continued investment in their agencies—are a concern given security offices’ simultaneous dependence on profits from drug trafficking and external security sector assistance specifically designed to combat this problem.
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3 These are adapted from Stephen Watts, Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa’s Fragile States (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 2015).