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**Drug policy in the ex-Soviet states after the
introduction of new policies in the West:
Clandestine Drug Trade and State-Crime-Terror Nexus in
the former Soviet Union**

Master's Thesis

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Abstract

Ever since the fall of the Soviet Union, illicit drugs have begun flowing into the former Soviet states for local sale and consumption, as well as for further transit to Western European states. Though the former Soviet states claim to be dedicated to the global fight against drugs, their alleged connections to the criminal underworld and weak and underdeveloped state institutions raise doubts over the sincerity and capacity of their effort. In this diploma thesis the impact of illicit drugs and the depth of the state-crime nexus in the Former Soviet Union region is analyzed, also covering crime-terror nexus, crucial in understanding the crime-terror relationship for mutual profit. The study's results have shown that various FSU states have shown varying degrees of connection to the criminal world, posing an international security risk due to the criminal underworld's involvement with clandestine drug trade in connection with terrorist groups.

Keywords

Anti-drug policy, post-Soviet states, illicit drugs, drug smuggling, Former Soviet Union, relationships between the criminal world and state

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Abstrakt

Již od rozpadu Sovětského svazu se do bývalých sovětských států dostaly nelegální drogy pro místní prodej a spotřebu, stejně jako i pro další tranzit do západoevropských států. Ačkoli bývalé sovětské státy tvrdí, že se věnují globálnímu boji proti drogám, jejich údajné spojení s kriminálním podsvětím, a slabé a nedostatečně rozvinuté státní instituce vyvolávají pochybnosti o upřímnosti a schopnosti jejich úsilí. V této diplomové práci je analyzován vliv nelegálních drog a hloubka souvislostí mezi státem a zločinem v regionu bývalého Sovětského svazu, a také pokrývá vztah mezi kriminalitou a terorem, což je klíčové pro pochopení vztahu zločinu a teroru pro vzájemný zisk. Výsledky studie ukázaly, že státy bývalého Sovětského svazu prokázaly různé stupně spojení s kriminálním světem, což představuje mezinárodní bezpečnostní riziko kvůli zaplétání kriminálního podsvětí s tajným obchodem s drogami v souvislosti s teroristickými skupinami.

Klíčová slova

Protidrogová politika, postsovětské státy, nelegální drogy, pašování drog, Bývalý Sovětský svaz, vztahy mezi zločineckým světem a státem

Declaration of Authorship

1. The author hereby declares that he compiled his thesis independently, using only the listed resources and literature
2. The author hereby declares that all the sources and literature used have been properly cited.
3. The author hereby declares that the thesis has not been used to obtain a different or similar degree.

In Prague on May 11, 2018.

Ilyas Sharibzhanov

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Introduction

The problem of drug trafficking in the former Soviet Union (FSU) has been haunting the region ever since the USSR's collapse. While searching for ways and methods to fight the spreading epidemic of illicit drug abuse, many of these countries, particularly Russia, sought common grounds with the West in this particular issue. However, as Western countries began to change their attitudes and look for different approaches in their struggle against trafficking and drug abuse, the close paths of the West and the East started to diverge. Moreover, this trend is visible not only in the FSU, but also in many emerging economies throughout Asia.

The split in the war on drugs is more than just another stage in the relationship between the "First World" and the rest, but a crisis of a system that was being built throughout the span of a century. In this sense, drugs are no longer just a criminal, health or even international security issue *per se*, but an issue of relations between the states. As international relations (IR) and security are two closely interconnected spheres, the theoretical basis of this thesis is rooted deeper in the field of IR than in the critical security studies.

A crucial part of this work is based on the studies in organized crime and public health to determine the scale of drug trafficking in the FSU, its impact on the post-Soviet area, and its role in relations between the states, as well as between the state institutions, criminal organizations and terrorist groups. An in-depth investigation into possible state-crime connections and the *de facto* narco-state in Russia and Central Asia was undertaken. It is easy to get lost in details, yet it is necessary to understand the local realities of the FSU countries, which have become the West's partners in the war on drugs following the end of the Cold War.

The primary intention of the study is to use a *nexus* model of relationship between three different groups of actors – the state, the criminal underworld and terrorist groups – engaged in a triangular relationship with each other for mutual co-operation motivated by gaining profit from drugs, and to see how this model reflects the degree of convergence between these three groups. For this purpose, a large source of the empirical data will be used to provide the basis for scoring the degree of convergence of every nexus in each individual FSU country (excluding the Baltics) on a scale.

The results will show how convergence of the three groups is based on their engagement in drugs smuggling. These results need to be discussed critically to identify their implications, the reasons behind the assigned scores, as well as the limitations and flaws of the proposed model.

A heavy emphasis is given to the interactions between the criminal underworld and the state in the FSU region, which leaves less space for the discussion of possible links between terrorist groups and the state. However, I expect the possibility that the two groups will use criminal groups as middlepersons instead of confronting each other directly. The sources collected for this study are largely local and not available to readers in English, however, they do offer insight into the alleged and actual links between different actors.

The whole study is split into five chapters. In the first, the terms and limits of the study's scope are defined. Then, the second chapter outlines the theoretical basis and the conceptual framework of the study, where the triangular relationship model and the nexi are introduced. The third chapter is split into three sections and it deals with the impact of drugs on the FSU region, with each section representing a sub-region. The fourth chapter follows the same principle, but the topic changes to the state-crime nexus rather than drugs. Finally, in the fifth chapter, the scoring of each individual country will be provided and the results will be discussed, along with the proposals for further research and improvements.

I. Definitions

It is necessary to provide definitions of some of the terms and categories used in this research. The primary actors studied here are 1. State institutions, represented by state actors – individual politicians, bureaucrats, ministers and government agencies; 2. Organized criminal groups (OCGs), including trans-national organized criminal groups (TOCGs), represented by both confirmed and alleged functionaries in criminal networks, members of the local and Russian mafia, private citizens with suspected ties to organized criminal activities, which involve (among other things) drug trafficking in violation of local laws and international agreements; and 3. Terrorist groups (TOs), which are non-state organizations engaged in armed insurgency against governments in the region in scope. It should be noted that not all state institutions highlighted in this study are elements of internationally recognized governments, as unrecognized or partially recognized separatist governments are also represented. One other important point is the

inclusion of alleged (but not confirmed) private individuals, including those considered to be legitimate businessmen in the second category, due to the organized crime networks not being restricted merely to members of OCGs. With these categories in consideration, it is essential to look at the second layer of definitions – the commodity in question.

The drugs trafficked are defined here as heavy illicit and illegal narcotics controlled by local governments per local law and international agreements signed by governments in the FSU region. Most attention is given to heroin and other opiates originating from Afghanistan and former Soviet Central Asia, as those commodities have been most well documented cases of drug trafficking in the FSU region in the last two decades.

The region of study is limited to the FSU region excluding the Baltics. However, case studies include connections of the local criminal groups in the FSU region with those outside of it, as well as events and people relating to Europe, the U.S. and Afghanistan. In addition, the term “underworld” is employed to describe the socio-economic layer of interaction between OCGs, and it should be understood in both geographical and sociological aspects as a space inhabited by OCGs, often transcending the established national borders.

II. Theory and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is the triangular relation between the organized crime, state institutions and terrorist groups. In this case, a combination of the *state-crime nexus* and the *crime-terror nexus* are the models of interaction between three key actors: organized crime, the state and the terror groups. The two models of the state-crime interaction were described by Baily and Godson and were applied to explain the state-crime nexus in two Central Asian countries by Marat (The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, 2006). The *state-crime nexus* forms when the organized criminal groups are inherently interested in corrupting state officials, in order to secure their activities from the state prosecution. Once this corruption exceeds ranks of low-level state officials (law enforcement and its anti-drug branches in particular) and reaches the top echelons of the government, it leads to the criminalization of state institutions, with criminal activity becoming a domain of state activity (Cornell, 2006). In Makarenko’s *crime-terror continuum*, convergence of terrorism and organized crime adds political element to the criminal groups,

essentially threatening the state with further criminalization, where the “black hole” thesis (described further in the Methodology section) plays a crucial part in understanding the nature of converged crime-terror groups and their potentially crippling impact on the state (2004).

Crime-terror nexus is a conceptual model trying to describe the interaction between the non-state terrorist and criminal groups. The role of studying the existing crime-terror relations in such countries as Afghanistan (Cornell, 2006) and Turkey (Curtis & Karacan, 2002; Roth & Sever, 2007) is crucial in order to better conceptualize how terrorist organizations use links with the organized crime, and/or actually engaging in economic crime, to fund politically-motivated terrorist activities. At the same time, the existence of narco-states is an important issue in the fields of law enforcement, diplomacy and international relations, with such countries as North Korea (Perl, 2004) and Burma (Meehan, 2011) demonstrating various degrees of criminalization of the state institutions, and the implications they bring to international peace. Cornell (2006) made an important effort in examining the degrees of criminalization in the Central Asian states, providing a theoretical basis for this study, whereas Tamara Makarenko’s 2004 study on the *crime-terror nexus* provides a crucial methodological approach to the study of contemporary organized criminal groups’ links with terrorism.

The *crime-terror nexus* is a continuum, where two areas of profit-motivated criminal activity and ideologically motivated violent insurgency overlap, contrary to the traditional view that the two are separate (Makarenko, 2004). In the post-Cold War age and with the reduction of state sponsorship of terrorist groups and armed insurgency, criminal activity became vital for these groups to fund their struggle against legal state authorities (Cornell, 2006). According to this model, terrorist and criminal groups’ activities are placed not at the extremes of the continuum, but closer to the middle (Makarenko, 2004; Cornell, 2006), which makes economic profit-motivated organized crime also an international security issue (Williams, 1994).

For this study, however, I propose a triangular relational model of drugs as a common denominator of state-crime-terror interaction, where all three types of actors converge in order to gain economic benefits from the international drug control regime. The sale of internationally controlled substances is subject to economic laws that are independent of state laws and international treaties (Miron & Zwiebel, 1995; Miron, 2003; Miron, 2004, pp. 10-11). Thus, framework postulates that all three types of actors: state officials, terrorist groups, and organized

criminal groups are eager to procure the additional economic gain for their own goals by engaging in drug production or smuggling, leading to either direct or indirect co-operation between all three actors for the common goal of obtaining profit from the sale of drugs.

The triangular relationship model pre-supposes existence of cooperative business-like relationship between state officials, the criminal underworld and terrorist groups. The primary motivation is driven by profit obtained through operations related to drug smuggling. The state officials use the cover of protection offered by official institutions to engage in informal contacts and broker deals with the criminal underworld, disguised as private citizens doing legitimate business. In their turn, the criminals are often acting at the front of organizing smuggling and distribution, whereas the terrorist groups are typically involved in production or act as the gatekeepers between producers and smugglers. In this model, the primary logistical role is played by the criminal underworld, production is typically in the hands of terrorist organizations, and the state officials often use their own institutional advantage to extort their “share” from profits obtained by the criminal groups.

The nexi that emerge between the three different groups are the degrees of convergence/divergence of one group from another. Therefore, a divergent state-crime nexus shows a clear separation and often hostile interaction between the criminal underworld and the state institutions. In contrast, a convergent state-crime nexus shows a lack of clear distinction between the two groups. A nexus exists between all three groups, and its depth (i.e. how convergent or divergent the two selected groups are) varies from country to country. The key argument of this work is that such is the case in the FSU region.

The convergence/divergence criteria are four binary (YES/NO) conditions per every nexus:

1. Individual members of Group A normally can be found in the Group B, or they are indistinguishable from the members of the Group B.
2. Group A uses services or engages in activities of the group B.
3. Group A and Group B engage in mutual defense against external involvement in their relationship.
4. There is no visible hostility between Group A and Group B.

The convergence score is the following: 0 – highly divergent/non-existent; 1 – divergent; 2 – mildly convergent; 3 – convergent; 4 – highly convergent. One point is added per every YES answer to the above four criteria, and then the score is assigned to each country.

This work's conceptual framework involves examining the recent historical data on drug usage, drug smuggling and its impact on the post-Soviet countries, as well as the existing state-crime nexus in the region. The primary goal is to identify points of co-operative interaction between the state, the organized criminal groups and terrorist organizations in international drug smuggling.

The operational side of the framework is constituted on the analyses of the news articles, papers and reports on the confirmed and alleged ties between state and crime, as well as reports on the situation with social costs of the drug trade, the impact of AIDS and legal restrictions on drug use and other drug-related issues. These form an important base of empirical data that is analyzed in order to identify common points of convergence between the three groups.

The empirical part is split into two major sections. The first section (Chapter III) is a detailed overview of the way the drugs are smuggled and consumed in the FSU region, and the role they play in the region's criminal underworld. The second section (Chapter IV) goes beyond drugs as a central topic and into an empirical overview of the state-crime nexus in the region. Both sections are split regionally into three parts – Russia, the former Soviet Caucasus and Central Asia, and the former Soviet Eastern Europe.

Finally, the triangular relational model of state-crime-terror interaction is discussed in the context of the empirical part in Chapter V. The main goal of this final chapter is to critically examine the model and identify the next closer. The chapter is split in three sections, discussing the state-crime nexus, the crime-terror nexus, and the triangular relational model.

III. Drugs in the former Soviet Union

III.1 Drugs in Russia

The collapse of the Soviet regime, as well as Socialist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe, produced a common symptom of high crime rates (Åslund, 2007, pp. 242-5). During this period, Russia not only faced a sharp rise in violent crime (Kotz & Weir, 2007, p. 178) and the rise of organized criminal groups, but also a growing influx of heroin from Afghanistan, which replaced Burma as the primary producer and exporter of opium, producing 92% of the world's opium (Ceccarelli, 2007). The new drug not only brought addiction as a new health issue, but also led to the rise of HIV/AIDS epidemic in major cities and towns of Russia, especially its capital cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as its industrial heartland in the Urals. The two phenomena produced a deadly mix of inefficient law enforcement (which often victimizes drug users, making prevention more difficult and safe drug injection practices less likely (Rhodes, Platt, Sarang, Vlasov, Mikhailova, & Monaghan, 2006)), highly influential and strong organized criminal groups and a lucrative trade in highly addictive substances, which caused a serious health crisis.

The data from 2006-7 shows that the lack of sterile drug injection instruments and unsafe sex were the primary causes of HIV/AIDS spread in Russia, affecting predominantly younger population in the age range of 15-30 years (Goliusov, et al., 2008). Furthermore, the spike in drug import from Central Asia, and significant opiate addiction have been followed by the emergence of domestic drugs, of which the most infamous is the "krokodil" ("crocodile") or home-made desomorphine, made out of commonly available materials (Pivovarchuk, 2015). Its manufacture involved easily accessible ingredients, found in over-the-counter codeine tablets, iodine and red phosphorus (commonly found on a matchbox's striking pad), which are then mixed together with a diluting agent like a paint thinner (Gahr, Freudenmann, Hiemke, Gunst, Connemann, & Schönfeldt-Lecuona, 2012). The result is a compound highly polluted with byproducts that can lead to irreversible damage to one's body, which shortens the mean survival rate to only two years after the first use (ibid.). This phenomenon is also evident in the city of Tolyatti, a home to Russia's car industry, where the number of drug users skyrocketed in 2000s, with many using homemade opiate substitutes (often from OTC ephedrine-based medicine) along with heroin, resulting in a spike of HIV-positive intravenous drug users in the city

(Rhodes, et al., 2002). As a result, when mixed with the prevalence of HIV/AIDS due to the lack of safe syringes, homemade drugs pose a serious threat to public health, especially considering the scale of desomorphine spreading – its volume confiscated in 2011 by Russian authorities estimated at 65 million doses (Pivovarchuk, 2015). This, however, is only a portion of supply for Russia’s 7 million drug addicts, of whom 1.5 million are heroin addicts (ibid.).

However, the rise of desomorphine addiction can be largely attributed to the initiative taken by addicts themselves, while the dominant way of distribution of drugs remains via organized crime networks. The collapse of the Soviet Union not only led to the sharp rise in organized crime activity, but also to its spillover into the West, thanks to the fall of the iron curtain (Carter, 1994). Such concerns were expressed as early as 1992, which was confirmed by investigators in the U.S. at the beginning of the decade (ibid.). The implications of the Russian organized crime’s ascension are such that the threat it poses can be felt throughout the world and on levels as serious as that of international relations.

The roots of the Russian organized crime can be found in the culture prevalent among deportees to Siberia and Far East, first practiced during the Russian Empire, continuing up to the post-Stalinist age, while reaching its epitome in the apogee of mass deportations after the WWII and repressive state system established by Stalin’s regime (Cheloukhine & Haberfeld, 2011, pp. 23-24). The infamous “vory-v-zakone” (lit. “thieves in the law” or criminals bound by a common structure and hierarchy) culture was bred in isolation of the Soviet labor camp system, established throughout the desolate and sparsely populated areas of Siberia, Far East, Kazakhstan and the Russian subarctic (ibid.).

Drug trafficking was an activity generally frowned upon by the ethnic Slavic “vory-v-zakone” (ibid. p. 31), which led to its spread among other ethnic groups, most notably North and South Caucasians, as well as Central Asian Tajiks (ibid. p. 97), and more curiously, Russian Gypsies (ibid. p. 99).

The scale of the Russian underworld is indeed impressive, estimated to number 3,000 individual groups by 1996, consisting of 600,000 members, excluding non-members (mostly businesses), who are nonetheless involved in criminal activity and may be used as either money laundering or drug distribution centers (ibid. p. 105). The focus of these criminal groups is predominantly

economic, which is reflected in their main bases being located in Russia's industrial heartland in the Volga, Urals, West Siberia and the Russian Far East (ibid. p. 106). Curiously, this corresponds to the main areas of HIV/AIDS spread in Russia, with some of the highest figures found in a "belt" ranging from the Volgograd oblast, going through heavily industrialized Volga-Ural region, and into the Irkutsk oblast, Buryatia and the Zabaykalsky krai in Siberia (Goliusov, et al., 2008). Furthermore, notorious gangs, such as the Tambov group, were engaged in international trafficking from their new base in Spain (Cheloukhine & Haberland, 2011, p. 112), while the local distribution of illicit drugs was organized via gang-controlled local markets and bazaars, as the Komarovskaya gang has done (ibid. p. 114).

Drug trafficking is only a small portion of criminal activity perpetrated by Russian mafia, much unlike the cartels in the Latin America. Most of the crimes are economic, particularly focusing on money laundering in Europe. The scale of Russian mafia's infiltration into European continent is revealed by the unprecedented case of the 2008 Operation "Troika", executed by the Spanish authorities, which uncovered extreme wealth in possession of Russian criminal leaders living in Spain (ibid. p. 171-2). Similarly, the 2010 Operation "Java" exposed Russian mafia's extensive network throughout Europe, which involved establishing and profiting from drug trafficking routes on the continent (ibid. p. 173)

Thus, Russia not only plays the role of a consumer, but also that of an important trafficking hub, where organized crime, whose members usually shun drug dealing, nonetheless profit from protection racket of local dealers in Russia itself, and from large-scale trafficking through the borders. Russia also serves as a competition ground for different organized criminal groups, which search for ways to dominate trafficking routes to and from Russia, and reap the rewards. Therefore, drugs become not only a serious health issue, tied with the spread of AIDS and injection of contaminated homemade drugs, but also a public security issue, since organized criminals manage both the trafficking routes and protection racket aimed at local drug dealers. Furthermore, Russia's drug problem becomes Europe's problem, as the Russian organized crime expands into Europe, bringing not only dirty money to launder, but also new international trafficking lanes, which stretch all the way from Afghanistan to Spain.

III.2 Drugs in the Central Asia and the Caucasus

The drug problems endemic to Russia are also similar to ones found in the former Soviet republics, particularly ones serving as key entry points from the producers in Afghanistan to consumers and further redistributors in Russia and Europe. The role of Central Asia to Russia has been described as that of Latin America to the United States in terms of drug production and trafficking (Lee & MacDonald, 1993). Difficult terrain, coupled with highly corrupt, inefficient and nontransparent state structure is a common characteristic of such countries, best exemplified by the states like Tajikistan and Armenia. However, drugs were an important part of culture in Central Asia for thousands of years. Long before opium was started to be cultivated as a money crop in Afghanistan, the Bronze Age steppe peoples of Kazakhstan used cannabis in shamanistic rituals (Francfort, 1988, pp. 190-1). Moreover, the first recorded use of cannabis was attributed to Scythians, natives of the Eurasian steppes, by Herodotus (Godley, 1928, pp. 273-5).

Cannabis grows naturally in the Chu valley, located in an area between Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic, while mountainous climate in the latter supports substantial domestic production of opium poppy, which helped the Kyrgyz Republic to surpass Burma in export of narcotics (Curtis, 2002). Moreover, if Afghan traffic is reduced, Kyrgyz production may increase as a substitute (*ibid.*). This remains a relatively new phenomenon, which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union and turned the entire region into a major trafficking hub (Jackson, 2005). A particularly disturbing angle of the Central Asian drug trade has to do with the role of Islamic extremist terrorist groups, especially the Afghan Taliban and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), in the profits reaped from production and trafficking.

The IMU was described as a “hybrid” terrorist-criminal organization, being both a group closely tied with Al-Qaeda and Taliban, and the one directly engaging in drug trafficking (Shanty, 2011, pp. 81-82, 124; Weitz, 2004). It is not limited to Uzbekistan alone and is known to have infiltrated the Kyrgyz Republic following its expulsion from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Curtis, 2002). The movement itself played a key role in regional politics from the first years of the region’s independence, being an active participant in the civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s, when the state collapse due to conflict opened up the mountain routes for traffickers to utilize (Cornell, 2006). By 2000, the IMU was a major trafficker in the Kyrgyz Republic, effectively making it not only a politico-religious militant organization but also an efficient organized

criminal group (ibid.). Such hybridization is not unique to Central Asia, since such groups as Hezbollah, for example, is known to have engaged in illicit drug production in the United States (Sanderson, 2004).

The Soviet-built highway M41 (the “Pamir tract”) stretching from Uzbek Termez to Kyrgyz Osh via the Tajik capital Dushanbe, the town of Khorog (right on the Afghan border) and the mountainous wasteland of Pamir became the main lane of regional drug trafficking in the 1990s (Cornell, 2005). The civil war in Tajikistan coincided in time with the anti-drug efforts by Afghanistan’s other neighbors, turning the long and desolate highways through Tajik Pamir and Kyrgyz Ala-Too mountains into safe and lucrative routes for IMU to utilize (ibid.). Additionally, the enclaves of Sokh (to Uzbekistan) and Vorukh (to Tajikistan) surrounded by Kyrgyz territory became resting grounds for radical militants, as well as traffickers, who could easily find there a safe haven, free from Kyrgyz law enforcement (Curtis, 2002; Cornell, 2005). From there, drugs flow further to Kazakhstan via Uzbekistan’s Ferghana valley (Ceccarelli, 2007).

The IMU also operated transit hubs in Uzbekistan (particularly in the West – in the Karakalpak autonomy and Khorezm) (Curtis, 2002) and in the beginning of 2000s its immediate aims were more focused on gaining control over regional drug trade and clearing paths for further trafficking than establishment of an Islamic state in Central Asia (Cornell, 2006). By 2000, an estimated 70% of all heroin entering the Kyrgyz Republic was under IMU’s control (Curtis, 2002; Cornell, 2005).

However, the invasion of Afghanistan following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States is assumed to have significantly diminished IMU’s manpower (Cornell, 2005) and the war in Afghanistan so far preoccupied them more than the fight for trafficking control in Central Asia, which, nonetheless, has not diminished the trafficking problem in the region.

A problematic case is presented by Turkmenistan, which does not provide freely accessible data to the public regarding either drug use or the scale of trafficking in the country (Cornell, 2006). However, Afghan heroin is known to enter Turkmenistan on a regular basis, with rumors that the state apparatus is directly involved in trafficking – a suspicion indirectly confirmed by the late President Niyazov’s gaffe that smoking opium is good for health (ibid.). This topic is covered further in this paper, highlighting the issue of narco-states in the region. However, health issues

rising from drug use are met with failed state in terms of healthcare provision in Turkmenistan, with the real scale of HIV/AIDS, rumored to reach 300 cases in Ashgabat (and probably more in the impoverished countryside) being an issue that remains absent in official reports, accessible only via unofficial accounts and leaks (Rechel & McKee, 2007).

Consequences of drug trafficking in other countries of the region are much more visible. A sharp increase of new HIV infections is visible throughout 2000s in most Central Asian countries, as the use of homemade opiates (“khanka”), as well as their recycling and repeated use (so-called “vtoryak”) increased (Thorne, Ferencic, Malyuta, Mimica, & Niemiec, 2010). Furthermore, HIV/AIDS typically spreads further from drug users through sex workers or via unprotected sex. Of all HIV-infected women in the Kyrgyz Republic, 66% reported acquiring it through sexual intercourse, while 39% of homosexual men in Uzbekistan (who still face persecution) do not use condoms with non-regular partners (ibid.). Intravenous drug users face abuse from police in most Central Asian countries, including sexual abuse, extortion and charges of drug possession, all of which prevent efficient treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS (Latypov, 2009) and police involvement further deteriorates the risky environment that prompts unsafe drug injection practices (Gilbert, et al., 2013). As to the geographical spread of HIV, it shows a similar dynamic to that of Russia, with HIV/AIDS remaining prevalent in areas most hit by drug trafficking, such as Osh in the Kyrgyz Republic and the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan, spreading further to the populous South Kazakhstan Oblast (ibid.).

After reaching Kazakhstan, 70% of smuggled drugs continue further to Russia, along the world’s longest and one of the hardest to control borders (Golunov, 2007), whence they may either reach their consumer in Russia or await their final destination in Europe. As Golunov further notes, drug addiction and drug-related crime is more frequent along Russia’s border with Kazakhstan, indicating the continuation of the Central Asian route. In Kazakhstan itself, some border areas have a relatively large drug addict population – a trend also visible in Ukraine and Belarus, but not in the EU; Golunov calls this phenomenon “transboundary narco-regions” (ibid.). Such description befits the entire Central Asian region, which remains a key transit point of Afghan heroin to Europe.

Central Asia remains an immediate frontline and an important gateway to drug trafficking that feeds not only Russian organized crime and local criminal interests but also fuels radical Islamic

terrorist activity, making the social costs in terms of diminishing public security and spread of HIV/AIDS tangential to national security threats, which can undermine regional stability and global security. Furthermore, one should consider the emergence of precursor trafficking from traditional drug-consuming countries with advanced industry to production bases in Afghanistan, in order to increase output and quality of heroin (Fenopetov, 2006). In this situation, new ways of inhibiting such profits must emerge in order to plug the Central Asian bottleneck, which allows Afghan opium to reach its consumers as far as Europe and Russia.

Another important region to consider is the Caucasus, which is closer to both Europe and Russia. Moreover, it is plagued by frozen conflicts and inter-state hostility. Countries of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia not only provide a visible gateway of drugs entering Europe from Central Asia, but also play an important role in the organized crime network in Russia and Eastern Europe. Furthermore, unrecognized states and contested territories, separated by barbed wire and trench lines provide havens for members of organized criminal gangs, not dissimilar to the enclaves of Ferghana Valley.

Armenia entered the 1990s much like her other neighbors – through war, lack or suspension of civil institutions and the rise of organized crime. Even though Armenia remains one of the politically freer former Soviet Republics (especially in contrast to Azerbaijan with its very Central Asian style of authoritarianism), its society is so heavily penetrated by informal patron-client networks (the “mafias”) that the interplay of corruption and organized crime is clearly visible in Armenian society (Dudwick, 1997).

The ongoing conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, currently under control of the ethnic Armenian Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR or “Artsakh”), played a significant role in shaping Armenia’s modern history, influencing its society and politics. As two countries fight, however, mutual accusations of harboring or aiding drug trafficking emerge (Curtis, 2002). In particular, Azerbaijani officials claim that the Armenian diaspora in the NKR is involved in drug trafficking via Iran to Armenia (ibid.). Regardless, an increase in drug use was detected in the country’s capital, Yerevan, in 2000, with the injecting drug users (IDUs) facing the same issue as in many Central Asian states, where the lack of adequate health care and access to patients allows illicit drug use to increase, along with HIV/AIDS (Grigoryan, Busel, & Papoyan, 2002). Additionally, drug trafficking has been

reported to be on the rise in the country at least since 2000 (Babikian, Freier, Hopkins, DiClemente, McBride, & Riggs, 2004).

Going back to the issue of crime, the organized criminal structure in Armenia is complex and it is inevitably tied with the NKR mafia and domestic politics, which serve as an arena of political battle between two major groups of the “hayastantsi” (local Armenians from Armenia) and “karabakhtsis” (Karabakh politicians in Armenia). The extent of the latter’s influence is visible, represented by ex-President Kocharyan and the currently acting President Sargsyan (Panossian, 2001), while a more pro-Western ex-President Ter-Petrosian (Koinova, 2011) can be identified as a leader of the former, at least due to his conflict with Kocharyan. Moreover, the period of Kocharyan’s ascension was witnessed by many as a form of political “takeover” by the Karabakh “mafia” of Armenia in the beginning of the millennium, fueled by nationalist sentiment and solidarity of Armenians with their brethren in the NKR (Panossian, 2001).

The rise of HIV/AIDS among Armenians, particularly the youth, in the beginning of 2000s is not enough to point at the implication of either Armenian or NKR authorities, as it may represent a trend common in Central Asia at the time as well (Cornell & Swanström, 2006). However, it is important to keep in mind Azerbaijan’s accusation of the NKR as a trafficking hub for drugs coming out of Iran, and do not exclude such possibility. The symbiosis between the organized crime and state in the post-Soviet world is too evident to deny the same happening in Armenia.

An interesting case is represented by the role of Kurds in the region, with the Kurdish Workers’ Party (PKK) known to have conducted drug trafficking activity in the region stretching all along the Turkish border, including Turkey’s border with Armenia (Roth & Sever, 2007). Drug trade and trafficking is one of the primary activities of the PKK in Turkey (ibid.), and it would be unsurprising if the PKK utilizes both the mountainous Zagros and Taurus mountain ranges, populated by Kurdish hillmen, as a major base of trafficking from Iran to Turkey.

Another angle to the Kurdish role in the region is the Kurdish and Yezidi diaspora in ex-USSR, best exemplified by the figure of Georgian-born Yezidi Kurd kingpin Aslan Usoyan (known as “Ded Khasan” or “Grandpa Khasan”), allegedly responsible for high-profile murders in brutal gang wars (“razborki”) in the Russian criminal underworld in the 1990s (McDonald, 2015). Moreover, until his death in 2013, he was assumed to be among the most powerful men in

Russia's criminal underworld, which was dominated by Georgian mafia at the end of the 2000s (Favarel-Garrigues, 2010, p. 164).

The role and significance of organized crime in Georgia (as well as among the Georgian diaspora in Russia) is a suitable entry point in describing the problem of drug trafficking in this South Caucasian state. However, the description of the problem of criminal underworld in Georgia is complicated by disruption of the country's underworld and its ties to the state and public security institutions, brought by the 2003 Revolution of Roses and radical reforms initiated by President Saakashvili.

The spread of HIV/AIDS in Georgia shows that intravenous drug use was a primary source of infection (Tkeshelashvili-Kessler, del Rio, Nelson, & Tsertsvadze, 2005). This points to the spread of Central Asian heroin in the South Caucasus, as this drug was named as the most commonly used illicit substance in Georgia (*ibid.*). Additionally, poppy straw that is used to make "koknar" (a kind of opium "tea"), along with the use of shared syringes ("frontloading" or sharing the same substance from one syringe to another) and consuming koknar from a shared bowl, may have also helped HIV/AIDS to spread in the country (de Jong, Tsagarelli, & Schouten, 1999; Tkeshelashvili-Kessler, del Rio, Nelson, & Tsertsvadze, 2005). Nonetheless, the HIV/AIDS levels are lower than those generally observed in Russia, while hepatitis C virus (HCV) is far more common among intravenous drug users (Kuniholm, et al., 2008).

Georgia's strategic location as a gateway to Russia and Europe via its Black Sea ports and border with Turkey, plus the presence of two separatist (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) states claiming independence from Tbilisi, facilitate drug trafficking through the country. In the 2000s a lawless valley of Pankisi was controlled by Chechen insurgents, which stimulated emergence of the Russian-Georgian trafficking lane, where Georgian border officials were easily tempted by shares from drug trade, and which allowed drugs to enter Turkey from Georgia, making it a crucial gateway of drugs flowing into Western countries (Curtis, 2002).

The proximity of Chechen refugees in Pankisi to the profitable trafficking lane fueled the interest of the Chechen mafia and Chechen guerillas, with a significant number of radical Islamists among the latter (*ibid.*). Therefore, the drug trade in Georgia becomes as complex an issue as its internal conflicts, with the dangerous element of Islamist terrorism from neighboring Chechen

Republic and Dagestan threatening to undermine regional political stability and reap the fruits of drug trade, much like the IMU activity along the Tajik-Kyrgyz border.

Georgian criminal underworld, however, being one of the most influential and infamous in the post-Soviet world, could be argued to be a far bigger issue. It is best exemplified by the figure of Tariel Oniani, whose deep and strong ties with the officials of Georgia's old regime (including the former warlord of then quasi-independent Adjara – Aslan Abashidze) could easily make him a shadow ruler of the entire country (Kupatadze, 2012, p. 124). Crime activity other than drug trade and trafficking flourished under the term of Kakha Targamadze as the Minister of Interior (1995-2001), ranging from an extensive network of protection racket (“krysha”) to a stake in kidnapping business of a Pankisi valley crime lord Shota Chichiashvili (ibid. p. 125).

The reforms initiated by President Saakashvili proved to be a significant blow to the Georgian criminal underworld, albeit with a cost. This is best exemplified by the prison riots in the post-revolutionary period, which emerged in response to brutal crackdown on the criminal underworld, organized by the new government, which raised the issue of excessive use of force and human rights violations by the new Georgian police force, and the rapid rise of prison population (ibid. p. 128). Kupatadze draws a parallel between the new regime's harsh anti-crime policy with the one initiated by former Thailand Prime Minister Shinawatra, which led to extra-judicial killings becoming a new norm in the war on crime in both countries (ibid. p. 131). A relevant case was the killing of Gia Telia, a former police officer and an alleged drug dealer, by Georgian MOI operatives in 2006, shortly after he told the media that he had information that the new Georgian police was involved in drug trafficking (ibid. p. 132).

The problem of separatist republics as a safe haven for smugglers and drug traffickers is saturated by the lack of either international or the central government's oversight in these regions, currently under Russia's protection. Sanctions imposed by Tbilisi on the breakaway region of Abkhazia made the region, along with South Ossetia, favorable to smugglers operating in both Russia and Georgia (Kukhianidze, 2004). The Abkhaz regime was already accused of protecting drug trafficking in its territory by the old regime in Georgia (Curtis, 2002), but the scale of the latter's infiltration by the criminal underworld was significant enough to allege that the same could be said about Georgian MOI.

Key trafficking chokepoints along the Russian-Georgian border – the Psou river crossing and the Roki tunnel – are out of Tbilisi's control, managed by the breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia respectively (Arasli, 2007). The Roki tunnel is of particular importance as a major source of revenue for the separatist government in Tskhinvali, with a yearly turnover estimated to be at \$60-70 million in the beginning of 2000s (King, 2001). The deterioration of the Russian-Georgian relations, which reached a boiling point during the 2008 Russian invasion of Georgia, and the subsequent recognition of the two separatist republic by Russia only made the situation more complicated, preventing Tbilisi from extending its post-revolutionary (and now post-Saakashvili) law enforcement regime from plugging the holes, through which drugs and contraband continue to flow.

Before drugs enter Georgia, however, they typically come from either Azerbaijan or Armenia, with the former playing a crucial part in the trafficking scheme. Azerbaijan borders Iran and has access to Central Asia via the sea port of Baku, which makes it another important checkpoint for traffickers (Kasumov et al., 2003 in Magerramov, Ismayilova, & Faradov, 2005; Fenopetov, 2006). Though its relations with Iran traditionally remained cold, which resulted in stricter border control, it may still have encountered an issue similar to that on Georgian-Turkish border, when border officials were complicit in the drug trade, particularly in the turbulent first decade of independence.

The HIV/AIDS prevalence in Azerbaijan has been connected with the spread of intravenous drug use among its citizens, with most HIV strains being typical to those identified in other former Soviet drug networks (Saad, et al., 2006). Another risk factor is sexually transmitted HIV/AIDS, which is a high risk due to high prevalence of contact with female sex workers, who may be infected either through unsafe drug use or unsafe sex (Botros, et al., 2009). Like in Georgia, the main route of HIV/AIDS infection is through unsafe drug use, albeit the spread of HIV/AIDS is relatively low (Magerramov, Ismayilova, & Faradov, 2005).

Not much is known about the organized crime in Azerbaijan, however, it is safe to assume that the local crime lords' involvement in organizing and managing drug trafficking is relatively low. It is much more likely that Azerbaijan is used by foreign traffickers with the aid of some locals in order to move drugs further to Georgia and Russia with the involvement of crime syndicates in those two. Therefore, Azerbaijan's strategic position as a gateway from Asia to Europe, both via

land routes from Iran and via a sea-lane from Turkmenbashi to Baku, is what makes Azerbaijan attractive to traffickers, inevitably resulting in illicit drugs' penetration into the country, which is reflected in growing epidemics of illicit drug use and HIV/AIDS (Fenopetov, 2006).

Overall, the South Caucasian nations form a complex network, which is not limited to their national borders, but includes areas that are free from central governments' control due to unresolved and frozen internal conflicts. The example of Georgia shows a 180-degree turn from a virtual mafia-state with failing or nonexistent institutions to a country with developed civil and state institutions, albeit at a cost of growing presidential authority and harsh prosecution of former crime lords during President Saakashvili's term. However, the key trafficking points in Shida Kartli and Abkhazia are still under separatists' and Russia's control. Armenia, on the other hand, is a country where "mafias" are not just criminal but important social networks, currently grouped around either the "Armenia-proper" or the Karabakh political clans, with the latter still holding power in Armenia. Therefore, the Nagorno-Karabakh's shadow economy remains free from Baku's gaze, with Yerevan currently more concerned with NKR's defense against Azerbaijan. As to Azerbaijan itself, its strategic position between Iran, Russia and Turkey makes it a crucial trafficking checkpoint for drug smugglers sending illicit drugs all the way from Afghanistan through Turkmenistan and Iran to Azerbaijan and further to Georgia and Russia.

III.3 Drugs in Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova

Drugs and the patterns of organized crime in the three ex-Soviet Eastern European states – Ukraine, Belarus and the Republic of Moldova – are similar to those found in Russia, but with their own regional features. This is not only due to their cultural similarities or differences, but also due to their geographical proximity to Europe, which makes these states important for stakeholders in drug trafficking flowing through them. Moreover, the Moldovan case shares a similarity with the South Caucasus, having a separatist republic cashing in on the shadow economy due to absence of the central government's control. Meanwhile, similar issues may arise in Ukraine, where the Russian-annexed Crimea with its seaport of Sevastopol can provide an important departure point for drugs brought there from Asia for further travel to Europe and other destinations around the world.

HIV/AIDS epidemic began to grow in Ukraine in the late 1990s, along with the increase in poverty and social vulnerability, with the drug use becoming a visible problem in Ukrainian society (Barnett, Whiteside, Khodakevich, Kruglov, & Steshenko, 2000). Like in Russia, the young population in Ukraine is much more likely to use drugs, with two countries having highest rates of HIV/AIDS among drug users, who may also suffer from hepatitis and tuberculosis (Poznyak, Pelipas, Vievski, & Miroshnichenko, 2002). Cities with large seaports like Odessa and Mykolaiv, as well as the industrial cities of Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk are some of the largest centers of HIV-positive drug addicts in the country (Rhodes, et al., 1999; Kelly & Amir Khanian, 2003). Moreover, the introduction of desomorphine as a substitute to traditional opiates aggravated the health risks associated with drug injection (Booth, Davis, Brewster, Lisovska, & Dvoryak, 2015). However, it is important to note that Ukraine is unique in its position, as it was among the first to adopt drug substitution in order to treat opioid drug addicts, which was not available in either Russia or Belarus at the time (ibid.). In this respect, Ukraine follows the example of the Post-Soviet Eastern Europe that generally presents a more successful case of implementation of harm reduction measures in the region (Sarang, Stuikyte, & Bykov, 2007).

The expansion of crime at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse and consequent years is not surprising, but again like Russia, Ukraine experienced a growing convergence between commercial sphere and organized crime (Solomon & Foglesong, 2000). The Ukrainian society is still largely dependent on extensive informal economic structures, which only supports the emergence and maintenance of unregulated shadow economy, making any efficient governance hard to implement (Round, Williams, & Rodgers, 2008).

The symbiosis of crime and state in Ukraine resembles Georgia and Russia to some extent, with one of the most notorious Ukrainian criminals – Pavlo Lazarenko – currently living in the U.S. following the end of his prison term in the U.S.. Typically, the most powerful politico-criminal clans are organized around major cities in Ukraine, of which the most ill-famed are Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk. The two clans were known to share a grudge against one another ever since the 1990s, with allegations that the Dnipropetrovsk clan led by Yulia Tymoshenko and Lazarenko could be behind the 1996 murder of a Donetsk politician Yevhen Shcherban (Kuzio, 2014).

Clan politics in Ukraine inevitably cover economic activities, including ones that have to do with the lucrative trade in drugs. Aside from heroin from Asia, synthetic drug use plays an important part of contemporary Ukrainian drug culture, as well as “light” drugs such as marijuana, while the growth of heroin’s price began to draw people to substitutes, such as poppy straw from domestically grown poppies in south Ukraine (Layne, Khruppa, & Muzyka, 2001). The route from Kazakhstan via Russia was instrumental in trafficking of Afghan heroin through Ukraine (ibid.), but it is difficult to say how viable that route is today, due to armed conflict in East Ukraine and strict Russian-Ukrainian border control, following the events of 2014. Other routes of drug trafficking include cargoes from Turkey transported through Ukraine via the Black Sea to Europe and Russia (ibid.). Overall, Ukraine serves as just another transportation hub for illicit drug trafficking, much like Azerbaijan, due to its location between Europe, the Caucasus, Asia and Russia. However, this problem is aggravated by symptoms of a failed state, such as chronic inefficiency of law enforcement, as well as corruption, which plagued Ukraine throughout its entire independence period.

To the south of Ukraine lies the Republic of Moldova, and squeezed between the two is Moldova’s separatist “Transnistrian Moldavian Republic” (Pridnestrovye or TMR), populated mostly by ethnic Russians and Ukrainians. Moldova is arguably the poorest country in Europe, plagued by economic and social issues, including high crime rates, which all helped to make it one of the key centers of criminal activity on the continent, a “Europe’s black hole” (Sanchez, 2009). Furthermore, around 40% of the country’s industrial base is located in TMR, out of Chisinau’s control and behind a line guarded by Russian troops (ibid.), which may have only contributed to this landlocked country’s economic stagnation and social ills.

In the middle of 2000s, the TMR’s economy was dominated by ex-Red Army officers through a firm called “Sheriff”, with many of Moldova’s major industrial companies still located there, yet this small strip of land manages to survive mainly thanks to support from Moscow (ibid.). The breakaway region was described as a crucial hub for drug trafficking, among other things, through the Tiraspol-Odessa line, estimating in total \$2 billion of yearly income for the separatist regime in Tiraspol (Peterka-Benton, 2012).

The frequencies of subtypes of HIV found among patients in Moldova indicate the source of infection originating in Ukraine and Russia, which is a signature of Moldova being used as a

route of drug trafficking (Pandrea, et al., 2004). Opium and artificial stimulant drugs are prevalent among Moldova's drug users, with syringe sharing and obtaining syringes from informal sources increasing the risk of infection (Busza, Douthwaite, Bani, Scutelnicuic, Preda, & Simic, 2013). The rise of drug use is also observed in the TMR, at least according to the Moldovan government, allowing the subsequent rise of local organized crime in both Moldova proper and the TMR (Galeotti, 2004). The country's mafia is led by men like Grigoriy Karamalak (nicknamed "Bolgar"), who has been on the Interpol's wanted list since 1998, but found a free haven in Russia, where he was given citizenship by President Medvedev (ibid.; Gazeta.Ru, 2008).

If Ukraine and Moldova are facing uncertain future due to territorial disputes and political transition, a different situation can be found in Belarus, albeit not in terms of drug use and trafficking. Unlike either Ukraine or Moldova, Belarus is a state tightly controlled by the central government, which itself held by a solid grip of President Lukashenka. Clan politics and territorial "black holes" of places like Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan or Ukraine, do not exist in Belarus, which allows Minsk to impose a strict control over the country's borders and internal economic activity.

Belarus lies between Russia and Europe, serving as a key transit point for Russia's exclave of Kaliningrad via EU-Schengen states of Lithuania and Poland. Though a detailed study of such routes is lacking, it is hard to deny that Belarus has a potential of an important trafficking lane. The penetration is evident in the case of Sviethorsk in the Gomel region, where the rise of HIV/AIDS infection was detected among the intravenous drug users (Rhodes, et al., 1999; Kelly & Amirhanian, 2003). Thus, the number of HIV-positive intravenous drug users in the city reached 75% of all IDUs by late 1990s (Kumaranayake, et al., 2004), demonstrating a significant spike in drug use.

The knowledge of Belarus' organized crime is much foggier than that of Russia, Georgia, Ukraine or Moldova. It is known, however, that Belarus rather plays a role of an open ground for Russian mafia, with local crime operations distinguished in economic and financial areas, such as sophisticated counterfeiting and money laundering (Adamoli, Di Nicola, Savona, & Zoffi, 1998, pp. 61-2, 67). However, it is hard to judge to what extent the Belarusian state apparatus is complicit in such crime or whether it is compromised by criminal groups, since the country's

nontransparent style of governance repeats the pattern already seen in places like Uzbekistan or Azerbaijan, albeit with even less visible accent on regional clans and wings in the government.

IV. State-crime Nexus in the Former Soviet Union

IV.1 State-crime Nexus in Russia

Narco-state, or a *de facto* collaboration of government officials with drug smugglers and distributors in the organized crime, is not a phenomenon specific to Latin America, as exemplified by Mexico before Calderon's presidency. As was already mentioned in the Chapter on drugs in the former Soviet Union, the extent of power of the organized crime can be best demonstrated by estimates of Russian mafia's wealth, immediately seen in the highly luxurious lifestyle of suspected and convicted criminals that have ties with Russia's underworld. Although illicit drugs take only a portion of the criminal activity Russian mafia engages in, it is still important to look at the whole picture, especially due to implications it introduces to the international sphere. The full nature of the Russian organized crime's relationship with the Russian state, moreover its influence in the top echelons of power in the Kremlin, cannot be fully uncovered at this moment, but there are many reasons to suggest that the state and the organized crime in Russia are deeply intertwined.

With the current President, Vladimir Putin, being a native to St. Petersburg, his term as both President and Prime Minister are associated with the prevalence of the "Piterskiye" or Saint Petersburg's political clan in the Kremlin. As a former KGB agent, Putin became visible firstly as a right hand of Anatoly Sobchak, who had been a mayor of St. Petersburg in the 1990s (Sakwa, 2008, p. 1). During his work for Sobchak, the current Prime Minister Medvedev and now ex-finance minister Kudrin both worked with Putin in the city (ibid. pp. 11, 29), as did the current head of Russia's Sberbank German Gref and the Russian State Duma's chairman Sergei Naryshkin (Goldman, 2008, p. 192). Furthermore, another of Putin's colleagues and a former FSKN chief, Viktor Cherkosov, was suspected by media of covering a drug trafficking scheme run by one of his subordinates (even though he might have been framed by the FSB) (Zapodinskaya & Maksimov, 2007). Other notable figures among the "Piterskiye" included Igor Sechin, a former deputy of Putin's and now a chief executive of Rossneft – a state oil giant,

Viktor Ivanov, the head of the FSKN (Federal Drug Control Service)¹ and Putin's KGB recruiter, and Sergei Pugachev², a banker and billionaire (ibid. pp. 78-79).

The "Piterskiye" are more of a group that shares common origins rather than a well-organized political clan (as the recent years have shown), but their advance in politics can be associated with Putin's presidency. Furthermore, the Russian ruling regime built ties with other influential interest groups in the country, such as the "Siloviki" (internal security forces), primarily represented by the FSB, and organized criminal groups, including the Solntsevo gang.

The Solntsevskaya or Solntsevo gang is the most powerful organized criminal syndicate in Russia, which spreads and controls extensive smuggling networks between the former Soviet Union and Europe (Williams & Woessner, 2000). Originating in a Moscow suburb of Solntsevo, the gang became infamous in the 1990s, quickly establishing its foothold over crucial commercial communications in the city, as well as controlling the most of the vehicle traffic there (Glenny, 2008). Moreover, Solntsevo gang – as well as the St. Petersburg's Tambov gang – engages in drug trafficking to Europe, while Putin's government shows little inclination in prosecuting suspects on the Interpol wanted list (ibid.).

Furthermore, Viktor Ivanov of FSKN was alleged to have had ties with a Colombian drug cartel (one of the largest in the world at that time (Williams, 1994)) and Putin personally complicit in drug money laundering (Owen, 2016), but these remain mere allegations for now. Such operations are improbable without connections with local organized criminal groups, both in Moscow and St. Petersburg. An important figure in the latter was Roman Tsepov, who represented Putin, Igor Sechin and Viktor Zolotov (Putin's personal security chief) in dealings with Yukos' shareholders (Gurin, 2004) and died in 2004 from radioactive poisoning (The Sunday Times, 2006). Previously, Tsepov was arrested in 1994 for possession of illegal firearms, but the case was dropped and he continued to offer bodyguard services for some of the most influential people in Russia, as well as providing funds to Aleksandr Nevzorov – a well-known journalist and director from St. Petersburg – in his Russian parliament election campaign (Maksimov G. , 2004). Furthermore, Zolotov, currently the head of a newly formed Russian National Guard – an internal security force put under Putin's direct control (Meurmishvili, 2016)

¹ FSKN was abolished in April 2016 and its duties were given to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Fishman, 2016).

² Pugachev is now a French national who fled Russia in fear for his life (Higgins, 2016).

– was seen on Tsepov’s funeral, along with people, who were with Tsepov, when he was poisoned (Volodarsky, 2009, p. 251). An ex-KGB officer Aleksandr Litvinenko, who presented the claim of Putin and Ivanov’s complicity in Colombian drug trade, was poisoned in a similar way in London in 2006 (Harding, 2016).

Tsepov’s figure is important in understanding the ties between the current regime in the Kremlin and organized crime in St. Petersburg. However, a far more important figure is the country’s President himself – Vladimir Putin. According to a German intelligence report, Putin was an advisor to St. Petersburg Immobilien und Beteiligungen Aktiengesellschaft (SPAG) until May 7, 2000 (the date of his presidential inauguration) (Ivanidze, 2000). One of SPAG’s owners was a Liechtensteiner lawyer Rudolf Ritter, who offered his services to the Ochoa cartel in Colombia (ibid.). Another connection was revealed in Monaco, where a company called Sotrama, was allegedly designed to syphon oil money from Russia and launder them through real estate purchases under the Tambov gang’s control, with ties to Putin personally (Anin, 2011). The role of the Tambov gang does not end here; a closed joint-stock company “Znamenskaya” in St. Petersburg elected to its board of directors in 1999 a certain Vladimir Barsukov, who is also known as Vladimir Kumarin – a former boss of the Tambov gang (Ivanidze, 2000). Furthermore, SPAG – where Putin played an advisory role – had purchased most of Znamenskaya’s property in the historical part of St. Peterburg in exchange for “dirty” money, allegedly obtained from SPAG’s activity in cocaine smuggling through an unlikely route to Europe through Russia (ibid.). Therefore, not only the Tambov gang, but Putin as well are all complicit in drug smuggling operations in the 1990s.

It is improbable that such operations could have ceased completely following Putin’s ascension to power. On the contrary, it is likely that the clandestine commercial activity was put to an entirely new level, yet as the examples of Tsepov³ and Kumarin-Barsukov⁴ show, Putin tried to cover his controversial past. This suspicion is also confirmed by Litvinenko’s poisoning in 2006 in London, that likely happened due to him spreading inconvenient information about Putin and the FSB.

³ Allegedly he was a member of the Tambov gang (Tsyganov, 2004)

⁴ Kumarin-Barsukov was sentenced in 2009 to 14 years in jail in Russia (Lee & Williams, 2016)

Another level of the Kremlin-Mafia connection can be found by analyzing the FSB's – and the Kremlin's – ties with the Solntsevo gang. The gang had already earned notoriety due to its blackmailing activities targeting Russian police officers and other law enforcement officials, as well as their families (Satter, 2003, p. 132), infiltrating into the system deeply enough to compromise any attempt of the state to prosecute them (Shelley, 2004). Furthermore, its connections are revealed in FSB's and Solntsevo's financial operations in Europe, particularly ones in Switzerland, a report on which was published in 2007, and translated and re-published by "Open Russia" (Kirilenko, 2016). One of the oldest of such operations are Nordex and Seabeco Group, founded by Grigori Luchansky and Boris Birshstein, respectively. The former was a KGB agent tasked with forming a network of companies outside the USSR, while the latter was a Russian-Israeli entrepreneur, whose company traded in a variety of luxurious and industrial materials (ibid.). Luchansky's Nordex was known to have established connections with the Solntsevo gang, while Seabeco Group conducted non-transparent operations through Nordex (ibid.). Both were suspected to work for FSB's interests.

Furthermore, a certain Russian bank, formerly owned by Semion Mogilevich, was known to have on its chief position a GRU (Chief Intelligence Command, or foreign military intelligence) operative, also with ties to the Solntsevo gang (ibid.). Such connections not only include the former Soviet Union, but also Israel, where many Russian expatriates live. Among them are Boris Birshstein and another Russian-Israeli man referred to as E.M. by the Swiss counter-intelligence, who was among the founders of Lipetskaya criminal group (included in the Solntsevo gang) and a suspected SVR (Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, FIS) operative doing business in Switzerland (ibid.). Overall, the Swiss security services indicated a deep penetration of the country's commercial sphere with Russian security and intelligence agents, who were engaged in commercial activity.

Mogilevich is believed to be one of the most powerful people in Russia, whose eminence is acknowledged even by the top echelons of power in Russia, who offer him protection from extradition and criminal prosecution both inside and outside of Russia (ibid.). Mogilevich, a Russian-Israeli himself and a holder of Hungarian citizenship, was suspected of participating in drug and arms smuggling in the 1990s (Popova, 2005). Moreover, the infamous raid on Mogilevich's restaurant in Prague in 1995 revealed the extent of the gang's penetration in former

Socialist countries in Eastern and Central Europe (Nožina, 2004). Among the men who were apprehended in the Czech raid was Sergei Mikhaylov, the boss of the Solntsevo gang (Paoli, *The Development of an Illegal Market: Drug Consumption and Trade in Post-Soviet Russia*, 2002) and a recipient of a Crimea annexation commemorative medal and a wristwatch from Putin (Scherbak, 2014). This only further demonstrates the existence of close ties between the Solntsevo gang and Putin personally. Regardless of any alleged criminal activity, the Solntsevo gang was known to have close relations with not only Russian local police and law enforcement agencies, but with intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies, effectively putting them and the “Siloviki” as two entities engaged in a mutually beneficial alliance (Maksimov A. , 1997).

With the allegations of Solntsevo’s gang drug trafficking, arms smuggling and prostitution rings operation in Europe comes the very visible influence of the gang among the key law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies in Russia, raising many questions of the nature of the contemporary Russian state and whether its commitments to combat drug trafficking are even plausible. Though Putin, being a native to St. Petersburg, is a newcomer to Moscow’s underworld, he is far from an alien in these circles. As a former intelligence operative, he is likely to have established connections with the Solntsevo gang early on. Moreover, as he brought the St. Petersburg’s political clan to power in Moscow, it is only natural to suspect that some of his men did or still do play a part in smuggling and money laundering operations dating back to the days of Tambov group’s grip over Russia’s northern capital.

Finally, an initially paradoxical behavior of a narco-state battling drugs has a due explanation. However, criminalization of the Russian state is only a symptom of a process that began long before Putin’s ascent to power, back in the days of first market reforms (Kagarlitsky, 2002, pp. 36, 191). Thus, illicit drugs, along with arms smuggling around the world, offer too much in shadow revenues to top Russian officials, many of whom either are members of organized criminal groups or have deep ties with them. This is especially obvious in a country all but completely run by the “Siloviki” (a legacy of an oversized state security staff in the last days of the USSR (Holmes, 2012)), whose status as new Russian elite – the guardians of the Russian cult of state security – is self-evident (Fedor, 2011, p. 137). Infiltration of the “Siloviki” into the country’s leading oil and gas monopolists, such as the Rosneft, Transneft, Gazprom, as well as important state companies, such as Aeroflot, Almaz-Antey, Rosoboronekспорт and others

(Goldman, 2008, pp. 192-3) demonstrates their tight grip on the nation's economic power. Added with the common perception of the Russian law enforcement as an institution compromised by the organized crime, it presents a dire picture of a mafia-run (the "Siloviki"-run, or better yet, Solntsevo-run) country (Krüßmann, 2004). Meanwhile, the penetration of the state security organs by mafia offers an organized structure that illegal markets are incapable of producing (Paoli, The paradoxes of organized crime, 2002), thus allowing them to utilize it for illegal trafficking.

In this case, such a state would be interested in preserving a monopoly created by harsh drug legislation, but it may feel threatened by legalization of drug market where the richest customers live – Western Europe. Although countries like China and Indonesia may be sincere in their opposition to drug trade, similar sentiments expressed by Russian officials are unconvincing. A state compromised by organized crime in a manner similar to Russia is hardly as persuasive on this front.

IV.2 State-crime Nexus in Post-Soviet Central Asia

The mutually connected nature of the state and drug mafia in Russia is not unique to that country alone. Indeed, Solntsevo's operations extend as far as Russia's intelligence and state security can reach, which is most visible in the ex-Soviet republics. However, local interests play a significant role in ex-Soviet narco-states, even if they become tangential to Russia's interests. A symbiosis of states', mafia's and even terrorists' interests constructs a system of mutual benefit that transcends nominal political opposition. This is not that different from the international drug control regime itself, whose prohibitory policy recommendations give a moral boost to the powers that are driven to wipe out drugs as a social evil. However, a side effect is such that corrupt and non-transparent states may use it to enact tolls and protection money on drug smugglers, effectively turning the state into a criminal organization nominally dedicated to drug prohibition, but in fact using it to cash in on the lucrative business. Such phenomenon is especially visible in the former Soviet Central Asia.

Kazakhstan is the region's largest and most economically prosperous nation, but its degree of centralization of power is visibly tighter than in Russia, being run by the same regime for nearly three decades. The vast country serves as the primary transit hub for Central Asian narcotics

coming to Russia and beyond, even though the Nazarbayev regime demonstrated surprising resilience to possible infiltration of the criminal underworld and emergence of a narco-state in the higher echelons of state power. On the other hand, the situation is such that the organized criminal groups (mostly local gangs) act independently and pay protection racket either to the police or low-level government officials (Karimova, 2001).

One of the more intriguing state-crime connections in Kazakhstan has to do with the figure of Mehti “Borman” Mamedov, an Uzbek-born ethnic Azerbaijani, who is alleged to have had personal connections to President Nazarbayev’s relatives (Khudyakov, 2011). “Borman” allegedly organized and controlled drug trafficking through Tajikistan, made easy by his personal contacts with Tajik President’s nephew and son-in-law, and with the aid from the “Dzhambul’skiye” criminal gang, which is headed by Serik “Golova” Dzhamanayev (ibid.). Dzhamanayev was “crowned” (i.e. initiated as a “vor-v-zakone”) in the city of Sochi, Russia in 1995 (ibid.), showing complicity of Russian mafia in the Kazakh criminal underworld. Mamedov’s most powerful ally in Kazakhstan is President Nazarbayev’s youngest daughter Aliya, who is said to be a close friend of Mamedov and a drug user herself (Moldaliyeva, 2015). Aliya’s other acquaintance of note is Anatoliy Pobiyakho, a Kazakh-born entrepreneur, and one of Kazakhstan’s richest people, who was arrested for drug possession in 2014 (Tribuna.ru, 2014; Moldaliyeva, 2015). However, personal connections to the President are likely to keep smugglers safe from criminal prosecution.

Kazakh criminal world has seen local criminal groups emerge soon after the fall of the Soviet Union, however most of them have either disbanded themselves or were eliminated. Furthermore, the situation is complicated by political implications of state prosecution in Kazakhstan. The case of the Khrapunov family is good example of that. Almaty’s ex-mayor Viktor Khrapunov, his wife Leyla and son Ilyas are wanted criminals in Kazakhstan, being accused of organizing a criminal gang, assassination and corrupt practices during Khrapunov’s term (Aimbetova, 2013). However, the Khrapunovs escaped to Switzerland and they are unlikely to be extradited to Kazakhstan, whose reputation as an authoritarian state lends credibility to a counter-claim that the accusation is motivated by political reasons.

Two different types of narco-state can be found in Central Asia, best exemplified by the Kyrgyz Republic on one hand and Turkmenistan on the other. In the first case, organized criminal gangs

are maintaining a balance-of-power kind of relationship with the state and government officials, whereas in the second case, the state itself engages in criminal activity effectively substituting mafia (Kupatadze, 2014).

In the Kyrgyz Republic, a drug kingpin and a racketeer Bayman Erkinbaev became a powerful politician and entrepreneur in the 2000s; he controlled a network of real estate and businesses through which he laundered money, ultimately becoming a popular leader of the southern political “clan” during the 2005 revolution, shortly before his murder later that year (ibid.). The ascension of Kurmanbek Bakiev to Kyrgyz presidency following the revolution and the emergence of Erkinbaev’s *de facto* heir Sanjar Kadiraliev established the Southern Kyrgyz organized crime’s grip in the country, making it a domain of drug smugglers, with people like the President’s brother – Janysh Bakiev – personally implicated in drug trade (ibid.).

Since the violent deposition of Bakiev and the Southern “clan” after a popular revolution of 2010, the narco-state disintegrated, but the central government in Bishkek remained incapable of efficiently fighting drug crime, especially due to local police’s involvement in drug smuggling (ibid.). Representatives of the Kyrgyz criminal underworld sit in the country’s parliament and can influence balance of power in the legislative branch, with MPs such as Ulan Cholponbaev and Altynbek Sulaymanov allegedly having ties with the criminal underworld. One of that underworld’s top bosses, Kamchybek Kolbaev, has been declared a drug kingpin by the U.S. government (Fergana News, 2014), while a photo of him with MP Cholponbaev surfaced earlier (Babakulov, 2013).

The post-revolutionary Kyrgyzstan is still a country, where the central government is far less imposing its rules upon different regions, and where the parliament remains the dominant institution, with drug lords’ interests allegedly represented by certain MPs. As the 2004 revolution showed, the drug lords are more than eager to use legitimate political mechanisms to reach their goals, but the 2010 revolution perhaps told them to maintain a balance of power with the government, instead of fusing the drug mafia and the state, as was the case during Bakiev’s years. Although the Kyrgyz Republic was among the first to introduce fully UN-compliant anti-drug legislation (Madi, 2010), the balance of power between politicians of the North and South can be disturbed way too easily for Bishkek to impose its will upon the South’s capital and the regional trafficking hub of Osh.

At any rate, the Kyrgyz example is slightly different from that of the neighboring Tajikistan, where drug smuggling continues under a *de facto* protection of government officials, whose relatives get a free pass for smuggling Afghan heroin further north. This is evident from the 2011 case of the “hostage exchange” between Russia and Tajikistan after Rustam Hukumov, son of a relative to President Rahmon, was sentenced to 9 years in jail in Russia, prompting arrest of Russian pilots in Tajikistan on smuggling charges (Dubnov, 2011). Moreover, earlier, in 2003, Rahmon’s nephew was caught engaging in drug smuggling activities, while Tajikistan’s ex-ambassador was arrested in Kazakhstan in 2000 on similar suspicions (Marat, Impact of Drug Trade and Organized Crime on State Functioning in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, 2006; De Danieli, 2011). Meanwhile, in Tajikistan itself, the head of the country’s counter-narcotics agency was arrested on the same charges in 2004, while numerous smuggling gangs operated by former civil war warlords and city mayors were caught by Russians and Uzbeks (Marat, 2006). High corruption, allowing maintenance of trafficking lanes through bribes, accompanies the entire picture, making Tajikistan a narco-state with many parties involved (Paoli, Rabkov, Greenfield, & Reuter, 2007). Consequently, in Tajikistan, drug smuggling activities remain a lucrative hobby of those in power, especially the people with ties to President Emomali Rahmon; whereas their scale reaches such levels that drug smuggling becomes a full-time job (Townsend, 2006).

The two least free and most authoritarian states in Central Asia – Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – largely remain enigmas in the nature of their narco-state, but the former is the most infamous, described as a North Korea-like in many things, including in the nature of its drug smuggling industry (Lewis, 2010 in Kupatadze, 2014). During the rule of Saparmurat Niyazov, the eccentric dictator of Turkmenistan, his regime made a fortune, selling both natural gas and – reportedly – Afghan heroin (Lewis, 2010). Many of such allegations remain unverified and come from the (predominantly *émigré*) opposition or local rumors, but revelations of ex-foreign minister Boris Shikhmuradov confirm them (*ibid.*). So does the story of Major Usachev – a border guard executed for trafficking, after reporting a large heroin shipment – apparently operated by top officials – to his officials (*ibid.*). Similarly, in 1998 an air force helicopter killed Turkmen border guards who opened fire at Afghan heroin traffickers, with the border guards declared to be the actual traffickers according to official sources (*ibid.*). Thus, the totalitarian regime in Turkmenistan stands in a striking contrast even to other Central Asian states and Russia, where

drug trade is done through criminal elements with complex and indirect ties to the ruling elites. Instead, the Turkmen government substitutes organized crime and engages in trafficking directly. This was the case at least until Niyazov died in 2006. The current situation is less clear, since - even though President Berdimuhamedow was more open to implementing international anti-drug standards (ibid.) – it is hard to tell if state-sanctioned drug trafficking ceased altogether.

The populous Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan, however, is a far more prominent example of a complex state-crime nexus not only in the Central Asian region but also in the former USSR. Some of the most notorious criminal bosses of Uzbek mafia have deep ties with the Russian state. Three most notable examples are Alimzhan Tokhtakhunov (known as “Tayvanchik” (the Taiwanese) or “Alik”), Gafur Rakhimov and Salim Abduvaliev, with the latter two having connections to Uzbekistan’s late President Karimov (1938-2016).

Tokhtakhunov has been accused by the U.S. government of a whole range of crimes, including fraud, bribery and – more peculiarly – assigning gold medals to the Russian athletes during the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City (Dobrovinskiy, 2003). He was suspected to be involved in international drug trade by Interpol as early as 2001 (Nikitina, 2002), and his alleged pressure on a French judge during the Olympics is believed to have resulted in awarding gold medals to Russian figure skaters (Kozlovskiy & Dzhusoyti, 2002). Tokhtakhunov’s impunity despite an international arrest warrant is due to his residence in Russia, where local authorities have refused to arrest and hand him over to the United States, though he himself admitted that he travelled to Ukraine during Yanukovych’s last term as Ukraine’s President (Sokolova & Sobchak, 2011). Tayvanchik represents a spillover of combined Central Asian and Russian organized crime on a Western economy (the United States), evident from the scale of his illegal gambling ring in the U.S., which was dismantled in 2013, and which was involved in money laundering of funds originating in Russia and Ukraine (Gutkin, 2013). Tokhtakhunov’s role as a meeting point of Uzbek and Russian mafias is also notable. Even though his figure has larger prominence in today’s state-criminal networks in Russia, rather than Uzbekistan, due to the fact that the rule of a strongman dictator, late President Islam Karimov, has resulted in some “avtoritety” (criminal bosses) fleeing the country, and others emerging from the inside of Karimov’s inner circle and state apparatus.

Shavkat Mirziyayev's promotion to the position of the Uzbek President's deputy coincided with revoking an international arrest warrant by Uzbekistan against Gafur Rakhimov, even though Rakhimov has been suspected by the U.S. Treasury Department to organize international drug production and trade ever since 2012 (Pannier & Klevtsova, 2016). However, as of 2014 Rakhimov was still wanted by the Uzbek authorities (Kanev, *Dlya kogo olimpiada i zoloto i svoboda* [For whom there is the Olympics, the gold and freedom], 2014), while Mirziyayev became Karimov's successor after the latter's death in 2016. Rakhimov's connections with Russian mafia was laid bare in a leaked photo, where Ded Khasan, one of the most notorious Russian-Georgian criminals, was seen together with Rakhimov in a mansion owned by Zakhariy Kalashov, better known by his criminal alias as "Shakro-Molodoy" (Shakro the Young) (ibid.). Since 2010, Rakhimov stayed in Dubai, and in 2012 he was accused to be involved in illicit drug production by the U.S. Treasury Department, along with an alleged Kyrgyz drug lord Kamchibek Kolbayev (Uznews.net, 2012). Moreover, he has received Russian citizenship around the same time, joining a whole array of alleged Uzbek crime lords, who obtained Russian passports (ibid.). Rakhimov's troubles with the Karimov family (especially the late President's older daughter Gulnara) (ibid.) and Mirziyayev's rise to prominence may have paved a way to his exile from Uzbekistan to Russia, where he found a safe haven – perhaps due to his likely ties with the Russian organized crime.

Salim Abduvaliyev is believed to have been participating in trafficking of illicit drugs from Central Asia to Europe ever since 1990s, and has familial ties to the late President Karimov's familial clan via his nephew Hakim Tillyayev, whose son Timur is married to Lola Karimova (Karimov's younger daughter) (Uznews.net, 2008). Other than that, little else is known or can be alleged from Abduvaliyev's activities. Abduvaliyev is believed to have been close to Batyr Rakhimov (no relation to Gafur Rakhimov), Uzbekistan's richest man and the owner of the Pakhtakor Football Club, who was arrested in 2010 by Uzbek authorities (Avesta.tj, 2010). This was on the eve of what some deemed to be an anti-oligarch campaign in 2010, and it explains that many of the "avtoritety" and businesspeople, even those who are not suspected to have participated in illicit drug trade, have left the country (Buriboev, 2010). However, Abduvaliyev has proven to be luckier than a few others. He was seen wearing a pro-Mirziyayev t-shirt during the latter's succession as the President of the Republic (Ozodlik.org, 2016) and was appointed as the deputy chief of the country's National Olympic Committee in 2017 (Ozodlik.org, 2017).

Other notable figures in Uzbekistan's underworld include Alisher Usmanov, however there is little evidence to tie him to any criminal activities, and his reputation as one of Russia's richest men and an acquaintance of the current Russian "nomenklatura" may play a larger role in his shady reputation, than actual involvement in any crime. Usmanov is believed to know people from the Solntsevo gang, such as Andrey Skoch, who also happens to be a member of the Russian State Duma from the ruling "United Russia" party, and one of the richest men in the country (Goodley, Harding, & Elder, 2012). Skoch was seen on a 1994 photo with Sergei Mikhaylov, the head of the Moscow's Solntsevo gang (ibid.). Usmanov's connections with the Russian government is not limited merely by the members of the State Duma, but also with the Prime Minister Medvedev, whose opponents are believed to have been exposed and attacked by Usmanov's "Kommersant" newspaper (Rostovskiy, 2008).

However, perhaps the most powerful figures in the Uzbek underworld, not surprisingly, were (at least until Islam Karimov's death) the members of the Karimov clan. The elder daughter, Gulnara, has been married to an Afghan-American entrepreneur Mansur Maksudi, who was accused of tax evasion in the U.S., premised on information that was shared with the U.S. authorities by the Uzbek counterparts at the time of his divorce with Gulnara (Bay, 2003). Lola Karimova, another daughter of the late dictator, has a more direct connection with drug trafficking via the figure of Rustam Inoyatov, the head of the Uzbekistan's national security service (Rus. SNB) (Berzinis, 2014). Inoyatov allegedly participated in illicit drug trafficking directly with the involvement of Kyrgyz mafia, and he is believed to have the entire drug trafficking in Uzbekistan under his personal control (ibid.). The point where Lola Karimova's and Inoyatov's interests meet has to do with Sharifkhodzhayev brothers, whose business partners – prior to their arrest in 2014 – included Inoyatov's son Sharif and Lola's husband Timur Tillyaev (ibid.). Both Khayot and Dzhavdat Sharifkodzhayev were important figures in the SNB (the Uzbek national security service), with the latter heading the SNB's personal security administration (Rus. USB) (Khaknazarov, 2014). Tillyaev, Lola's husband, is known to be a key player in Uzbek cotton and gas exports, which also overlaps with activities in clandestine drug trade, in which Tillyaev uses his ties to Gafur Rakhimov and Salim Abduvaliyev (ibid.). Thus, the Karimov clan is known to have ties with the criminal underworld of Uzbekistan through familial connections and friendship with Uzbek criminal bosses. Even though Mirziyayev has succeeded Karimov in 2016, bringing hope of political and social changes to some, such changes

are unlikely, lest the alienation of the Uzbek criminal underworld brings the ire of its friends and partners in the Kremlin.

Uzbek mafia, as seen from this section, is deeply connected not only with the Uzbek state, but with the Russian state as well. The drug trafficking route from Afghanistan to Europe inevitably passes through Russia, and the once heavyweight Uzbek SSR, squeezed between other landlocked republics and isolated from Moscow, still maintains its connection with the former Soviet center, shaped by the two countries' criminal underworlds' mutual interest in drug trafficking. Uzbekistan's transition to a more open and democratic state and society may have been hindered by state-crime connections, not dissimilar to pre-2003 Georgia. However, the probability of a dramatic shift in the current political status quo in the Central Asian republic remains unlikely, because President Mirziyayev has shown himself to be an active member in the state-crime nexus, and not an outsider keen on dismantling it.

Drugs, being one of the major clandestine revenue sources in the region, remain both a headache and an opportunity for the national governments. Therefore, it is difficult at times to discern whether drug trafficking is conducted by the sanction of the highest degree or merely individual initiative; although, nominally it is combatted by all countries of the region to preserve an image favorable to the international drug control regime. Indeed, the constructed Janus-like paradigm is remarkable – on one hand state functionaries engage in drug trafficking to enrich themselves, while on the other they participate in international drug control regime, reaping possible financial benefits from it.

IV.3 State-crime Nexus in the Southern Caucasus

South Caucasian republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are the second land route that Central Asian narcotics reach Europe, with some being smuggled northwards to Russia, and other reaching Europe via Turkey. An extensive overview of some crucial elements of state-crime nexus has already been provided in Chapter III of this study. A more in-depth look is given in this section, focusing more on the state officials' ties with the criminal world in the three republics.

Georgian mafia represents one of the foundational pillars of the criminal world in the former Soviet Union. However, Georgia has shown a remarkable change in turning the most notorious

failed state in the Caucasus into an efficient country, capable of decimating its criminal underworld and effectively purging itself of the organized crime. President Saakashvili's hostile relations with the criminal underworld is exemplified in his intense rivalry with the Georgian mafia's notorious criminal leader Taniel "Taro" Oniani, who was accused by the Georgian government of financing pro-Russian opposition during his exile in Russia (Dzhemal, 2009). In 2007 Taro met with another exiled Georgian Badri Patarkatsishvili in London to discuss a possibility of ousting Mikheil Saakashvili (ibid.). Late Badri Patarkatsishvili was an important figure in the Russian mass media in the 1990s and early 2000s, starting off as an acquaintance of Otari Kvantrishvili (a legendary Georgian crime lord) and – allegedly – a personal advisor to President Shevardnadze (Newsru.com, 2008). Kvantrishvili's ties to the Russian state and narco-mafia, primarily through the figure of Iosif Kobzon (famed Soviet-era musician and a current MP in the Russian State Duma) has been a topic of a complex investigation, as well as Kvantrishvili's and Kobzon's complicity in one of the earliest money laundering operations in the former USSR – the "XXI century association" (OVG.ru, 1999). Thus, inevitably, the Georgian state-crime nexus shows a unique feature of being "transplanted" into a foreign nation – Russia – with little being left in the homeland, where civilian politics have replaced criminal clan relationships.

Bidzina Ivanishvili's emergence as the country's Prime Minister and the subsequent institutional reform of the republic – from presidential to parliamentary – resulted in Mikheil Saakashvili effectively disappearing from the country's political life. Ivanishvili's connection to the Georgian criminal world is perhaps only tangential, though it may not be surprising that he left Russia with his family to the U.S. in 1994, when Georgian and "Slav" criminal gangs began fighting with each other over the remnants of the late Kvantrishvili's criminal empire (FLB.ru, 1998).

The separatist regions in Georgia pose particular interest in terms of their respective state institutions' relationship with local and Russian criminal underworld. At the time of the "Rose Revolution" of 2003, Georgia consisted of three autonomous entities, two of which have engaged in armed struggle against Georgian armed forces after the fall of the Soviet Union. These were Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Adjara.

Adjara's former strongman, Aslan Abashidze, who fled the autonomous republic during the Georgian troops' intervention in 2004, had ties with Grigoriy Luchansky, with whom Abashidze discussed oil transit via Batumi (Prime News, 1999). Abashidze's former functionaries have met premature death during their exile in Russia – his former Minister of Interior Djemal Gogitidze fell from a staircase in a restaurant in Moscow in 2009, and Gogitidze's deputy Elgudja Djincharadze was murdered in 2010 in Russia's capital city (MK.ru, 2010). After 2004 Adjara fell under Saakashvili's influence, leading to the spread of Tbilisi's ruthless anti-crime efforts.

The separatist republic of South Ossetia, cut off from Georgia by heavy Russian military presence, has also become a point of contest between politico-criminal clans. Two figures stand out – former President Eduard Kokoity and a wrestler Dzhabolat Tedeyev. Kokoity reached notoriety in 2001 when he was elected as the breakaway region's President with the support of Tedeyev brothers (Roldugin, 2008). Tedeyev's brother Ibragim was shot in a restaurant in Vladikavkaz (North Ossetia, Russia) in 2006 (Kochiyeva, 2006), and Dzhabolat Tedeyev claimed Kokoity's clan is responsible (Roldugin, 2008). The primary motivation for the murder may lie in a dispute over ownership of vodka distilleries – Ossetin vodka sales was an important source of Kokoity's income even before his ascent to power (ibid.).

Another example of possible criminal ties of South Ossetian government with the criminal world was a conflict between the republic's KGB and its State Guard, with the latter being backed by Kokoity. The conflict emerged after Kokoity issued a decree to form a new regiment made of ex-convicts, whereas the head of the KGB Robert Tabuyev declared it to be illegal and dismissed the regiment (NEWSru.com, 2011). Soon after that Kokoity signed another decree, delegating the KGB's authority to the State Guard service, and assigned a new regiment to them instead (ibid.). Tabuyev had to run for his life after an assassination attempt at the hands of the State Guard chief Elbrus Gabayev, and the KGB's assets were seized soon after (ibid.). In 2011, Tabuyev was arrested in North Ossetia for smuggling heroin, wanted for several other crimes, including the assassination of Vladikavkaz's mayor Vitaly Karayev in 2008 (ibid.).

Meanwhile, the other breakaway republic of Abkhazia also witnessed a rise in crime, including organized criminal activities, but their ties with the Abkhaz political circles remain unclear. Many of Georgian-Russian criminal "avtoritety" were born in Sukhumi, the breakaway republic's capital, but since moved to other parts of the former Soviet Union. The former resort

region, now heavily militarized and dependent on Russia's military presence, has witnessed the rise of crime – especially in the years of Raul Khadzhimba's presidency – including murder, rape, drug abuse and fraud, particularly targeting Russian nationals visiting the region (Nikolayev, 2017). Cases of criminal groups – the Georgian Civil War veterans in particular – targeting ethnic Russians are not new, however. Indeed, late President Bagapsh was accused of issuing decrees that allowed seizure of real estate properties of ethnic Russians in order to give them to ethnic Abkhaz (Glebov, 2009). Fraudulent sale and re-sale of such properties to clueless Russian nationals interested in cheap real estate in an unrecognized separatist republic has become a norm (Latynina, 2014).

The situation in Abkhazia is more reminiscent of that of Georgia in the Shevardnadze's era. The state's inability to combat crime may be a result of its patronage of organized groups of Abkhaz war veterans and its unwillingness to alienate these armed groups, leading to crimes against Russians visiting the breakaway region unpunished. It is difficult to assess the exact level of infiltration of the Abkhaz government by local criminal groups, but it is clear that these groups can act with impunity, as Russia is unwilling to alienate Khadzhimba's pro-Russian government, whereas Khadzhimba is unwilling to sacrifice the ethnic majority's support.

In Armenia, the tiny landlocked post-Soviet republic, crime and politics are tied by personal connections between the country's leading politicians and organized criminal groups both inside and outside Armenia. Starting from the top, the Kocharyan-Sargsyan alliance⁵ has been accused of receiving support from Armen Kazarian in their competition with Levon Ter-Petrosyan in 2008 (Armenia Today, 2010). Kazarian ("Pzo") is an Armenian mobster, who was arrested in the U.S. in 2010 in a raid on a Medicare fraud operation organized by Armenian mafia (FBI, 2013). Pzo's connections included Serzh Sargsyan's brother, Sashik (Pzo's business partner) and the infamous "Ded Khasan" in Russia (CrimeRussia.ru, 2017). Pzo has been "crowned" as a "vor-v-zakone" in 1991 in Rostov-on-Don, and is suspected in organizing assassinations of several Armenian "vory" (thieves) in Russia in early 1990s (ibid).

In addition, it is alleged that Kocharyan may have controlled trafficking of illicit drugs, as well as gold and diamonds in the Republic – all in addition to having a share in most lucrative

⁵ Robert Kocharyan is the former president of Armenia and Sargsyan is his incumbent successor on the post.

economic activities and important real estate properties (Petrov, 2010). Sargsyan, in his part, is an alleged owner or co-owner of several real estate properties around the country and in Nagorno-Karabakh (ibid.). These allegations lead the opposition to the current political regime to admit that the ruling political clan effectively controls the country's essential infrastructure and a significant portion of its commercial activity (ibid.).

The breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-majority separatist state in Azerbaijan, has existed in a politico-economic symbiosis with Armenia, even though Armenia has never recognized its independence. Serzh Sargsyan was personally responsible for organizing armed groups to participate in the Karabakh war in the region, and was considered to be Karabakh's de-facto ruler during his tenure as Armenia's Minister of Defense (Kaldor, 2007). Moreover, the Karabakh war has become a point where the line between armed criminal groups, national armies and volunteers – both foreign and domestic – became blurred (ibid.). The Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) has effectively dominated political agenda in Armenia, perhaps resulting in the domination of the “Karabakh” clan (or “mafiya”), as seen by the presidency of NKR's first President Kocharyan in Armenia.

On the other side of the frontline in the conflict over Karabakh, in Azerbaijan, a form of a repressive authoritarian regime, like those seen in Central Asia, was established, soon in the aftermath of the ceasefire with Armenia. The Aliyev regime's connection to the criminal world is unknown, despite numerous accusations of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. Even though the Azerbaijani mafia is undeniably one of the more prominent players in the criminal underworld in the FSU region, Russia is its primary zone of operations.

The 2016 assassination of Rovshan Djaniyev (“Rovshan Lenkoranskiy”), an Istanbul-based Azeri “vor-v-zakone”, in Istanbul was a revenge for his alleged role in the assassination of Ded Khasan in Russia (Vershov, 2016). Rovshan became infamous for taking over other ethnic Azeri mobsters' “turfs” in 2000s, including one Cingiz “Sedoy” (“the Gray”) Axundov, one of many alleged Azeri mobsters, who moved from Azerbaijan to Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Yeremeyev, 2016). Axundov's relative, Emin Axundov serves as a first deputy CEO of an engineering company called “Peton”, co-owned an Azeri ex-con Eduard Gasanov (Trushkov, 2017). Gasanov, in his part allegedly became a police informant after serving time in jail in Bashkortostan in early 2000s, soon after becoming one of “Peton”'s CEOs and dodging several

allegations of fraud (Sedunov, 2017). In 2017 “Petron”, despite its small profile, managed to overcome several other sub-contractor engineering firms as Gazprom’s leading sub-contractor, raising suspicions of fraud (ibid). An important figure that connects Azeri criminal world to the Aliyev’s clan in Azerbaijan may be Araz Agalarov, one of Moscow’s most prominent real estate moguls. Agalarov owns one of Moscow’s biggest malls – Crocus City – located just outside Moscow’s city border in the town of Krasnogorsk. Moreover, Agalarov is considered one of Russia’s richest men and an important stakeholder in Moscow’s real estate development, and Agalarov’s son Emin and Ilham Aliyev’s eldest daughter Leyla have been married for nine years (from 2006 to 2015). Agalarov may have had dealings with Hikmet “Lotu” Muxtarov, who was assassinated in 2006 as he was getting into a car owned by Rail Zeynalov, one of Crocus Group’s co-founders (Zheglov & Sal'nikov, 2006). These facts, however, do not show connections of Azeri mafia with the ruling regime in Azerbaijan, but they are important examples that show the scale of Azeri ethnic organized crime’s activity in Russia, ranging from “primitive” violent crime to sophisticated legal or semi-legal commercial activities.

Despite its lavish lifestyle and reputed authoritarian and corrupt tendencies, the Aliyev clan is unlikely to maintain any strong connections to Azeri criminal underworld. The country’s dominance by the Aliyev family perhaps leaves little space for Azerbaijan’s organized criminal groups to operate. Indeed, Azerbaijan’s entire government resembles more of a “front” for Ilham Aliyev’s hidden commercial empire, with important figures in government serving as managers in the Aliyev clan’s offshore companies (Fitzgibbon, Patrucic, & Rey, 2016). Therefore, the state-crime nexus in Azerbaijan, unlike those in most other post-Soviet republics, most likely involves only low-level corrupt officials, with the leading figures in power unwilling to associate themselves with the country’s criminal underworld.

The state-crime nexus in the South Caucasus region has witnessed much change in the past two decades, especially in Georgia, but the criminal underworld of the three South Caucasian republics has managed to remain heavily integrated with the Russian networks of organized criminal groups. Georgian, Armenian and Azeri organized criminal groups are the TOC (transnational organized crime) per excellence, and their survival would probably be unlikely without their spread to Russia, Europe and even as far as the United States. Though the state institutions may not be directly involved in drug trafficking, the corrupt and inefficient

government practices hardly contributes to anti-trafficking efforts in a region that serves as a chokepoint of drug trafficking lanes from Asia to Europe.

IV.4 State-crime Nexus in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus

The strategic position of the three former Soviet republics as *de facto* buffer states between Russia and the EU not only played a crucial role in facilitating drug trafficking, but also became vulnerable targets of the state-crime dynamics emanating from Moscow. A very good example of this is the figure of Mogilevich, a Ukraine-born “avtoritet” of immense influence in both Russia and Ukraine. The emergence of inter-ethnic conflicts and separatism in Moldova and Ukraine played an important role in complicating and changing the nature of state officials’ alleged involvement with criminal gangs and drug trade. If the dramatic events have led to a chaotic transformation of socio-political environment (as well local underworld structures) in these two republics, in Belarus, engulfed in the centralized authoritarian power of President Lukashenka, a generally strong grip over a small and economically centralized nation has led to an entirely different nature of the state-crime nexus.

Ukraine is the second most populous country among the remnants of the Soviet Empire. In nearly 30 decades of its independence the country has gone through a series of turbulent revolutions and has seen significant regime changes, all of which continues to influence the existing relations between the state and the criminal underworld, which can be characterized as chaotic and competitive. It is very likely that some elements of the lower ranks of the law enforcement in Ukraine have been engaged in drug production and trafficking. An example of this is the 2003 fentanyl lab bust, when two internal revenue officers were arrested and accused of running an illegal drug production operation, which was then used by an opposition politician Yuliya Tymoshenko to publicly accuse then general prosecutor Svyatoslav Piskun of knowing about the illegal activities of his subordinates (Sinelnikov, 2003). The generally weak central control of the regions, highly competitive and populist parliamentary politics, and (since 2014) an armed conflict created a situation where the boundaries between criminal underworld, legitimate business and state bureaucracy have been substantially blurred.

Ukraine’s current President Petro Poroshenko, being a native of Bender, Moldova (currently controlled by the Transnistrian separatists) is known to have had ties to the criminal world in

both Moldova, having engaged in organization of smuggling routes from Ukraine to Moldova's breakaway Transnistria (TMR) region and his contacts with TMR's President Smirnov and his ex-state security chief Antyufeev (Asarov, 2005). However, Poroshenko's position is hardly as controversial as that of the ex-President Yanukovich or an opposition leader Tymoshenko. The latter has personally met with the crime lord Mogilevich during Pavlo Lazarenko's premiership, when Tymoshenko played a role of Lazarenko's right hand woman (Kommersant, 2008). The ex-President, however, is known to have had criminal past during his youth, and his ascent to power in 2010 was followed by the infiltration of both local and central branches of state power by the "Donetsk clan" elements, with many top positions in the government being filled up by the people from the Donetsk oblast (Musafirova, 2014). Among people close to Yanukovich was Ukraine's richest man, Rinat Akhmetov, whose alleged criminal past became a subject of a defamation case in an English court (ibid.).

During Kuchma administration, the head of the SBU (Ukraine's national security service) Leonid Derkach was alleged to be affiliated with Mogilevich, and the two have met each other together with Mogilevich's childhood friend Igor Fisherman in 2000 in Kyiv at a meeting of local businessmen and gangsters to discuss common interests (Yeltsov, 2001). A year prior to that the FBI warned that the figures of Derkach and his son Andrey pose a threat to international efforts in combatting organized crime (ibid.). Meanwhile, Mogilevich's financial interests in Ukraine were represented by the Segal twins (ibid.), who left Ukraine in 2008 after the collapse of the "Nadra" bank, which was managed by them (Varis, 2017). Two other twins – Aleksandr and Vyacheslav Konstantinovsky – provided security services for the said bank, and both were closely connected to the Solntsevo gang (Yeltsov, 2001). Vyacheslav Konstantinovsky is currently the richest member of the Ukrainian parliament, a self-proclaimed "Ukrainian patriot", and a member of the "Narodniy front" party, headed by the country's ex-Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk (Varis, 2016). This is, however, just the tip of the iceberg, and the state-criminal connections do not end here.

Konstantinovsky brothers became *de facto* owners of the "Kiev-Donbass" business holding, after the 1999 assassination of its owner and a notorious gangster Oleg Asmakov ("Alik Magadan"), when he was supposedly invited to a meeting with President Kuchma in order to discuss a fundraiser to re-elect Kuchma (ibid.). One of the brothers sat at the driver's seat of Asmakov's

car, while the other allegedly shot him in the head from the backseat (ibid.). Asmakov's murder was rumored to be particularly gruesome, and the body was never found (Kozlovskiy, 2015). The two brothers are known to be in close contacts with former President Viktor Yushchenko, funding his 2003 presidential campaign and offering their security services to the opposition during the "Orange Revolution" of 2004 (Varis, 2016). A common denominator in the ex-President's relationship with the brothers was Viktor Topolov, a co-founder of the "Kiev-Donbass" holding, and a former president of the controversial "Ukraina" bank, which filed for bankruptcy in 2000 (Antikor, 2014; Varis, 2016). Leonid Roytman, Mogilevich's former associate revealed that the orders to eliminate Asmakov came from Mogilevich because of Asmakov's insubordination; soon after he had his salary cut by Asmakov, "Slavik" (Vyacheslav Konstantinovsky) saw an opportunity to take over his boss's business with Mogilevich's approval (Antikor, 2014).

Roytman revealed that two officials – Vitaly Yarema and Valeriy Heletey – were planning to kill him during his arrival in Odesa in 2004 (ibid.). Yarema served as Ukraine's General Prosecutor (2014-2015) and Heletey as minister of defense (for only four months in 2014), and both are connected to "Slavik" and Mogilevich (ibid.). In 2006 Roytman and another of Mogilevich's associates, Monya Elson (Asmakov's former boss) were arrested in the U.S. for allegedly plotting an attempt on Slavik's life, after the U.S. authorities were informed about it by the Ukrainian criminal police (Grant, 2014). Elson had a personal interest in killing Slavik and his brother, as the two were responsible for a failed assassination attempt on Elson and his wife in 1993 in Brooklyn, even though Elson and Mogilevich were close childhood friends (Antikor, 2014). Moreover, Elson planned a hit on Slavik with Dima Pinya – Elson's personal bodyguard in Hungary and the other of Mogilevich's childhood friends (ibid.).

Roytman revealed that soon after his ascension to presidency in 1994, Kuchma was informed by the Donetsk clan, represented by the Alik the Greek (Akhat' Bragin, assassinated by an explosion in 1995) and his right-hand man Rinat Akhmetov, to pay tribute to the gang (ibid.). In the 1990s the Donetsk clan went rogue and Kuchma had to resort to contacts with Russian singer and oligarch Iosif Kobzon and Moscow's Mayor Luzhkov, and invite Russian gangster Ivan'kov ("Yaponchik") as a mediator (ibid.). The Donetsk clan grew particularly notorious during

Yanukovich's presidency, and it became vilified in Ukraine, following his flight to Russia in 2014 and the events that lead to the armed conflict in East Ukraine.

The events of 2014 resulted in dramatic changes in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, but this did not remove the Donetsk clan as an important stakeholder in eastern Ukraine. Akhmetov, the *de facto* leader of the Donetsk clan, visited Donetsk in late 2014 and ensured that his men would be appointed to crucial positions in the separatist government, and that the control of the coal industry will be given up to the Donetsk-Yenakiyev gang, controlled by Yuriy Ivanyushchenko ("Yura of Yenakiyev") (The Insider, 2015). It is without doubt that Yanukovich's loss of the presidential seat was a blow to the pro-Russian Donetsk clan. However, the revolutionary changes that Ukraine has gone through since did not show a substantial change in the state-crime nexus. On the contrary, it is quite possible that the criminal groups opposed to the Donetsk clan supported Maidan (as the Konstantinovsky twins did) as a way to defend their criminal and commercial interests, perhaps feeling threatened by a possible infiltration of a new generation of Russian criminal gangs in Ukraine.

Ukraine is often the first option as a hideout for Russian gangsters fleeing from Russia. A dramatic case was the attempted assassination of Omar Bekayev in 2011. Bekayev was convicted of extortion by a court in Moscow in 2008, just a year after his release on a heroin smuggling case, but he managed to flee to Ukraine using fake documents shortly before the sentence was read in the court (Vershov, 2013). Though he was arrested in Odesa in 2009, Bekayev was released shortly after under a court order without informing the ministry of interior (ibid.). His second arrest in 2011, now in the Crimea, led to a strange case, when his victim – back in Moscow – rescinded her accusation in court, but the Russian court refused her application (ibid.). A Chechen assassination squad was sent from Russia, which led to two shoot-outs – one on the Odesa-Melitopol highway, and the other in a hotel in Odesa (ibid.).

An important element of the Ukrainian criminal underworld can be found in the Crimea. The latter perhaps is one of the most visible examples of a state-crime nexus in a traditionally highly autonomous region currently under the Russian occupation. The Crimea is a criminal state within a state par excellence, with some of the top posts in local government headed by people with criminal past, which was the case both before and after the dramatic 2014 events (Khlopko, 2017). An important criminal group in the peninsula is the "Seylem" gang, named after a

restaurant where its members used to meet in the 1990s, represented by its former chief accountant Igor Lukashev (now an MP of Russia's ruling United Russia party in the peninsula's state council), and a leader Sergey Voronkov (current president of the Crimea's boxing federation) (ibid.). It is alleged that the current head of the occupied Crimea, Sergey Aksyonov (nicknamed "Goblin") was also a member of the gang (Kanev, Kryminal. Novyye russkiye: kto kontroliruyet Krym [Crimea-nality. New Russians: who controls Crimea], 2014). The Seylem gang's ascent to power was signified by the elimination of the leaders of another – once all-powerful – gang in Crimea – "Bashmaki". Leaders of the gang – Nikolay Kozhukhar' and Aleksandr Danil'chenko were both arrested in 2016 by the FSB on the peninsula, being accused of committing a series of assassinations of local politicians long before the annexation (Ayvazovskiy, 2016).

Meanwhile, the Crimean anti-trafficking officials have long been known to engage in the protection racket of drug smugglers, but it was reported by Ukrainian secret services that following the Russian annexation, locals' share in the business has been visibly cut in favor of the "mainlanders" from Russia (UNIAN, 2014). The post-annexation situation in the Crimea shows a local state-crime nexus, fuelled by drug trafficking as well as other illegal activities, going through slow integration with the state-crime nexus in Russia. This happens after decades of relative isolation from and *de facto* abandonment of the region by the Ukrainian central government, which preferred to keep the peninsula fully autonomous in order not to alienate Russia.

Squeezed in between Ukraine and Romania, Moldova is the poorest ex-Soviet state in Europe, and one that has gone through a dramatic armed conflict and reforms aimed at bringing the small nation on par with other European countries. The small countries did not only become an important meeting point of international drug smugglers, money launderers and human traffickers, but through its tighter integration with Europe, and the "black hole" in Transnistria, became a strategic zone of control for local and Russian criminal groups.

Indeed, Moldova has been used as an important spot for money laundering operations in Russia. One of the most visible examples is the Moldovan "Laundromat", a sophisticated operation to launder funds from Russia using Moldovan citizens' involvement as a justification to remain in Moldova's legal jurisdiction (Anin, 2014). Moldovan judges were eager to participate in this

scheme, which resulted in a sum of laundered cash surpassing the total GDP of the little republic (ibid.). The primary suspect is the Russkiy Zemelnyi Bank (RZB), which gathered funds from different banks in Russia to push them through the scheme (ibid.). Furthermore, there was possible involvement of the Russian President's cousin, Igor Putin (then a board member of the RZB), who once was a board member of Russia's Master Bank – a bank whose license was revoked due to money laundering allegations (ibid.).

Corrupt and criminal practices are not exclusive to the country's judiciary. Moldova's ex-President Mircea Snegur is a personal friend of Boris Birshtein, whose Seabeco Group had close ties with the FSB (Kirilenko, 2016). Snegur's daughter Natalia Gherman is a wife of Artur Gherman, who became Birshtein's partner in Moldova in the 1990s, whereas Natalia herself served as an ambassador in several European countries under Presidents Snegur and Voronin (NRS, 2007), Deputy Prime Minister from 2013 to 2016, and currently works in the UN (IPI, 2016).

Vladimir Plahotniuc, Moldovan oligarch and a former member of the Moldovan parliament, was named as the man behind a failed assassination attempt on a Russian banker German Gorbuntsov in London in 2012 (Soloviev, Killer ukazal na lidera [The hitman pointed at the leader], 2017). The accusation came from the hitman himself – Vitalie Proca – who called Plahotniuc a “serial killer” and accused him of contacting criminal groups, including one of the assassination's planners, a criminal Vanya “Pisatel” (real name Ion Druta) (ibid.). Furthermore, after his arrest and conviction – says Proca – Moldovan officials came to him personally to persuade him that Renato Usatii was behind the assassination, which is the version Moldovan investigators stick to (ibid.). The possible animosity between the oligarch Plahotniuc and the businessman-turned-opposition politician Usatii became painted in political colors, as the Moldovan authorities sided with the pro-EU Plahotniuc, while Usatii, a pro-Russian mayor of the town of Balti, has fled to Russia (ibid.).

Still, even though Moldova (like Ukraine in some ways) shows a state system compromised by organized crime connections, it pales in comparison with the unrecognized republic of Transnistria (PMR) – a Russian-speaking breakaway state, whose independence from the government Chisinau is guaranteed by a heavy presence of the Russian military in the small, yet heavily armed enclave on the Dniester River.

PMR was ruled for several decades by its first President Igor Smirnov, who preserved Communist-era symbols and Russian cultural dominance in the enclave. Despite sticking to Soviet antics, the unrecognized state has become all but private property of the “Sheriff” LLC, currently owned by Viktor Gushan, whose conflict with the now former President Shevchuk led the latter to flee to Chisinau (Soloviev, Eks-prezident Pridnestrovya uplyl v bega [Transnistria's ex-president swam into hiding], 2017). The powerful firm is believed to be behind illegal arms manufacturing in PMR (Gurdin, 2008), and PMR is infamous as a global arms smuggling hub (Sanchez, 2009). The current President Vadim Krasnosel’skiy, is considered to be Gushan’s man (Soloviev, Eks-prezident Pridnestrovya uplyl v bega [Transnistria's ex-president swam into hiding], 2017). This is not surprising, given that Krasnosel’skiy was working as a chief security officer in the company just a year prior to his presidency (Matyukhina, 2016). Whether the company is connected to the criminal underworld in Moldova, Ukraine or Russia is difficult to tell (but it is not unlikely), however its politico-economic grip over the breakaway enclave is strong enough to guarantee that its politics will remain subordinate to “Sheriff’s” will (Sanchez, 2009).

Studying the politico-social conditions in the separatist republic only confirms that “Sheriff’s” influence can perhaps only be compared to that of the Russian military stationed there. Russian 14th army’s presence became a guarantee of the enclave’s political independence ever since the bloody events of 1992, when pro-Separatist sentiment in the Russian government and military untied the 14th army’s hands in the support of Transnistrian separatism (Kaufman & Bowers, 1998). Even in the earliest days of the Transnistrian “independence” from Moldova, separatist government officials (in particular, the chief of state security Vladimir Antyufeyev, also known as Vadim Shevtsov), were engaged in protection racket and highway robbery (ibid.). Current President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko was accused of lobbying Antyufeyev’s interests as a chief of Ukraine’s security council in 2005 (Asarov, 2005). In a twist of fate, Antyufeyev briefly emerged as one of the “officials” of the Russian-backed separatist government in Donetsk in 2014 (Shibalov, 2014), just a year after he fell out of President Shevchuk’s favor and was declared a criminal wanted for abuse of power in the PMR (BBC, 2014). The disbandment of the 14th army, however, did not result in the reduction of Russian military presence in the region, and it appears that Russian military remains the main link connecting the enclave with Russia, even

rending its President powerless against any opponents backed by the former Red Army or KGB elements with powerful allies in the Russian government and military.

However, as the above demonstrates, PMR is a political entity where the lines between crime, state and commerce have been blurred, making politics a façade, behind which powerful repressive state institutions are able to engage in criminal activities in alliance with the powerful oligarch monopoly controlling both “legal” and illegal economic activities in the unrecognized state.

Little is known about the state’s involvement in drug trade in Belarus (if there is any), and even though the power dynamics behind façade of the Belarusian state demonstrate high competition between state agencies with each other, there is little space for independent economic (and criminal) activity in a tightly-controlled republic. In 1997 Lukashenka declared “war” on the criminal underworld in Belarus, leading to a dramatic change in the structure of the nation’s organized crime. This measure followed murder of Evgeniy Mikolutsky, a local official in the Mahilyow oblast (Fedorovich, *Orgprestupnost' v Belarusi. Voyna do posledney vorovskoy krovi* [Org. crime in Belarus. War to the last thief's blood], 2012). Before that, Belarus followed a similar trend as the one happening in Russia and Ukraine, showing a growth of organized criminal groups and the carving up of the Republic among the largest criminal clans (ibid.). However, after the emergency anti-criminal measures by Lukashenka in 1997, the situation radically changed. Two notable crime lords – Vladimir Klesch (“Schavlik”) and Aleksandr Tratsvskiy (“Tratsa”) – disappeared without trace in 1997 and 1999 respectively (ibid.), and another – Gennadiy Lukashov (“Lukash”) – was killed in 2000 (ibid.). These are only a few examples of mysterious attacks on Belarusian crime lords, believed by some to have been committed by the national security agents (ibid.). One of the notable members of the Belarusian criminal underworld was Aleksandr Timoshenko, nicknamed “Timokha Gomel’skiy”, a native of Homel, Belarus. Timokha was a close acquaintance and an ally of Ded Khasan and Yaponchik (Vyacheslav Ivan’kov, a notorious “vor v zakone” murdered in 2009) of the Russian criminal underworld (Vershov, 2014). Furthermore, Timokha was active in syphoning money from Russia and laundering them in the U.S. in the 1990s, which was facilitated by his connections to Russian officials (Fittz, 2003). However, he has been integrated so closely within the Russian mafia, that it is impossible to connect his persona to the criminal world in Belarus.

Russian mafia has shown interest in Belarus, in particular, the late crime boss “Ded Khasan” has assigned Aleksandr Kushnerov (“Sasha Kushner”) as his primary representative in Belarus in 2011 (Fedorovich, *Orgprestupnost' v Belarusi. Tretya vorovskaya voyna* [Org. crime in Belarus. The Third Thieves' War], 2012). Kushnerov participated in smuggling “bubki” or high potency substance made from mixing acetone and poppy, which replaced heroin as the primary cause of drug addiction in the country (Fedorovich, *Orgprestupnost' v Belarusi. Poslednyaya Vorovskaya Tayna* [Org. crime in Belarus. The last thieves' secret], 2012). This happened after Kushnerov illegally left to Russia in 2010 after spending 15 years in jail and violating his parole conditions; and even though he was arrested in Russia and ordered to leave the country in 2012, the court order was never implemented, and the Russian side refused to give Kushnerov up to the Belarusian side (Fedorovich, *Orgprestupnost' v Belarusi. Tretya vorovskaya voyna* [Org. crime in Belarus. The Third Thieves' War], 2012). Timokha, meanwhile, ended up getting killed in 2014 at the gates of a church in the Moscow oblast, allegedly as a vengeance of the “Slavic” gangs for siding with the Caucasian organized crime (Vershov, 2014). All of this shows a dramatically different approach to the organized crime in two countries, making Belarus stand out as a state that sees organized crime as a threat, and not as a potential stakeholder in the country’s politics and economy.

Therefore, Belarus presents an unusual case, where the criminal underworld failed to infiltrate the country’s political system and the state-crime nexus hardly exists in the Republic, whose leadership sees the economically independent criminal groups as a threat to its hegemony. This is not to say that the rigidity and consistency of its approach in targeting the criminal underworld shows a sign of the rule of law in the former Soviet Republic. On the contrary, the conflict between the Ministry of Interior and the KGB of the late 2000s (Sheremet, 2010) is a sign of a potentially chaotic inter-agency relationship in a highly centralized and brutal authoritarian regime, characterized more by systematically stamping out any dissent, rather than exemplifying a case of the rule of law. Furthermore, as early as of 2001, Lukashenka’s regime has been alleged by Western intelligence agencies to engage in illegal sale of arms to terrorist groups across the globe (Nesterova, 2001). The scale of “nationalization” of whole spheres of Belarusian economy, or – rather – their acquisition by Lukashenka and his family and friends is so massive for the small republic (Vian, 2004), that it could only be compared to the Trujillo-era Dominican Republic, when the country’s economy was effectively in the dictator’s personal hands.

However, Belarus presents a case where the typical post-Soviet narco-state structure is non-existent, and the political hierarchy is strongly subordinated to a dictatorial regime that sees criminal world as a threat. In such environment a state-crime nexus is unlikely to form. Still, Belarusian criminal underworld has managed to find a benefactor in Russia, where the state-crime nexus shows an unprecedented levels of sophistication and where the infiltration of the government by criminal elements is too strong even for Lukashenka to ignore.

The state-crime nexus in the former Soviet Eastern European states shows unusually complex network of relationships between the local and Russian organized crime. Only Belarus demonstrates marked resilience, but at the same time its inability to withstand the regional hegemon's influence. The dramatic events in Ukraine and Moldova's slow drift towards the West caused a split in the nations' state-crime nexus, which is hardly distinguishable from political groups and clans. Therefore, even though Ukraine is still gripped by the elements of the criminal world with close links to Mogilevich and Russian mafia, they have shown strong anti-Russian and pro-Western tendency, perhaps unwilling to sacrifice their wealth for political loyalty to a foreign state. Mogilevich's thoughts on the recent political events in the former Soviet Union are likely to remain a mystery, but if pro-Western elements in the state-crime nexus in Ukraine remain loyal to the man who is protected by the Russian "siloviki", then the whole situation will seem even foggier.

V. Scoring and Discussion

Several key FSU regions have been analyzed in this work and the empirical part demonstrate a variety of nexi in every country. One thing that is definitely certain in any of the countries observed is that the state and the criminal underworld have engaged with each other informally to different degrees. However, less can be said about the existing nexi in relations to terrorism, as – even though terrorist groups have been documented to engage in drug smuggling activities – there is little evidence to suggest deep connection between terror and crime from the examined empirical data.

The scoring, based on the empirical part, is the following:

State-crime nexus: 4 (highly convergent) are Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

3 (convergent) are Ukraine, Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic

2 (mildly convergent) are Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan

1 (divergent) is Moldova

0 (highly divergent) are Georgia and Belarus

Crime-terror nexus: 4 (highly convergent) are none.

3 (convergent) is Tajikistan and Ukraine

2 (mildly convergent) are Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic

1 (divergent) are none

0 (highly divergent) is the rest of the FSU region

State-terror nexus: 4 (highly convergent) are none.

3 (convergent) are none

2 (mildly convergent) are none

1 (divergent) are none

0 (highly divergent) is the whole of the FSU region

From the results, as well as the empirical part it is visible that the criminal underworld has deep ties to the key drug transit states in the whole region. However, the nexus model in this study is simplified for the purpose of reflecting regional specifics. It is necessary first to address the last two nexi presented above to clarify why little visible state-terror interaction exists and why crime-terror nexus is not as visible in individual countries as could have been expected, especially due to post-Soviet Central Asian drug trafficking situation.

The first limitation is the locality, as the states tend to see terrorist groups as competitors, though they may engage in some relations with terrorist groups in other countries, e.g. Afghanistan. The crime-terror nexus is rather divergent, though, as the empirical data shows, the cooperation between criminal groups and terrorists existed in the past for the sake of easier smuggling operations on the border. Ukraine's position may seem odd, but it has to do with the recent events, where criminal groups have engaged with the pro-Russian separatist forces (defined as "terrorist" in this case) in the Eastern Ukraine for mutual benefits. In case of both Ukraine and Tajikistan the only NO answer to the four criteria is that in neither countries criminal groups engage in opposition to external involvement. On the contrary, criminal groups together with terrorist groups in both Ukraine and Tajikistan have shown eagerness to seek external support from similar forces in Russia and Afghanistan, respectfully. In Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic, on the other hand, the criteria that are met are #2 and #4 – both groups have history of engaging in similar activities and neither of them shows hostility towards each other. Though not as attractive as the Kyrgyz Republic in terms of being a transit country, Uzbekistan's (mostly Afghan-based) terrorist networks extract profit in cooperation with the drug smuggling business run by the criminal underworld.

The state-crime nexus is better represented in the empirical data, and it shows that the key transit countries for illicit drug trafficking are facing the issue of deep convergence between the criminal world and the state. Russia is the most important transit country, lying between Europe and Central Asia, and also the key hub for the criminal underworld, uniting local criminal groups from all over the FSU region. Russia possesses a strong ruling elite backed by powerful security force reserves with connection to Moscow's powerful criminal circles. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are two countries where the criminal underworld has established deep ties with the state, mostly through the individuals tied to the ruling families of both states, and where the personal informal authority of individual family members is indistinguishable from the formal institutional authority of their powerful relatives. In Turkmenistan, the state has replaced the criminal underworld by engaging in criminal activities on its own.

Ukraine, Armenia and the Kyrgyz Republic scored as convergent. In Ukraine the state and crime do not engage in mutual defense against external involvement, as the criminal world heavily depends on relations with its Russian counterparts, and the Ukrainian state's institutions are

generally too weak to shield itself from foreign-influenced criminal activities. Similar situation persists in the Kyrgyz Republic. However, in Armenia, though the local criminal clans may maintain good relations with the ruling elites, they are still not as integrated into the state system as in the former two countries, despite that they do appear to be defensive against foreign attempts to influence local state-crime dynamics. However, it is quite probable that such attempts never took place at all.

Though reputed as authoritarian regimes, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan only show a lack of hostility between the state and the criminal underworld and state functionaries may engage in activities that can be deemed typical to the criminal underworld (e.g. money laundering). Whereas in Moldova the only condition met is that the hostility between the criminal underworld and the state is not visible.

Georgia and Belarus stand as the only two FSU countries with highly divergent state-crime nexus. Significant reforms in Georgia to curb organized crime in the country yielded significant results, with many of its “avtoritety” (criminal lords) leaving Georgia for Russia or ending up in jail. Meanwhile, the war on organized crime in Belarus declared by the President Lukashenka produced the same effect, with many local Belarusian “vory” (thieves) fleeing for safe haven in Russia’s criminal underworld.

The triangular relationship between the organized criminal groups, the state and terrorist organizations in the drugs related activities does not appear to be equal. Terrorist groups and state institutions are particularly distant, most often being rivals rather than allies. It is quite likely that state-to-terror contacts (if any) are conducted via the medium of organized crime. The issue, however, is that the thin line between the organized crime and the state in the FSU region can sometimes appear to be very blurry. Indeed, Chapter IV of this study touches on drugs only tangentially, where the information was available, but its importance lies in demonstrating the vulnerability of weak state systems in the region. This raises several implications, including the following: 1. General unreliability (inefficiency and ineffectiveness) of state systems where rule of law is weak; 2. Security risks (in both the national security and the local criminal law spheres) posed to the rest of the world by isolated and/or politically repressive regimes in the FSU; and 3. Vulnerability of institutionally weak state systems to infiltration by organized criminal groups.

Hardly any post-Soviet state would qualify as a pure example of a “black hole”, where the state’s role has been taken up by an insurgent group. Nonetheless, only a handful of states demonstrate resilience to being compromised by an organized criminal group. Indeed, even Russia, where the state repression apparatus is perhaps among the strongest in the world, the Moscow’s Solntsevo gang appears to be a crucial part of the so-called “power vertical” – so much so that its alleged member was involved in recent efforts to overturn the Magnitsky Act in the U.S. (Simpson, 2017). The Solntsevo gang, however, is just the tip of the iceberg, and its dominant position in Russia is guaranteed by its location (the capital city of Moscow) and its deep ties with the repressive apparatus (FSB, SVR and MVD, among others). As the case studies show, to call Solntsevo gang a transnational organized criminal group (TOCG) would be redundant, because hardly any organized criminal activity in Russia (especially drug trafficking) is restricted to local vicinity, which is especially visible in case of Solntsevo’s ties to the criminal world in Ukraine, and the Caucasian mafia. Moreover, with few exceptions, the “Russian” mafia today is better defined as “Soviet” or “Post-Soviet” mafia, due to its transnational and ethnically diverse character. The organized criminal groups from the South Caucasus have effectively colonized the criminal underworld in Russia, and they have remained a visible actor on both black and grey market areas ever since the fall of the Soviet Union. The generally corrupt and inefficient nature of the Russian legal system may have contributed to the emergence of this status quo. Not only do alleged criminals wanted by the U.S. authorities find refuge in Russia, but even people wanted by authorities in other post-Soviet countries via Interpol. As the rift between Russia and the Western world grows larger, as it did in the past decade, the co-operation between Russia and the rest of the world in combatting organized crime is unlikely to increase.

The second implication is – on one hand – paradoxical. Even though the state institutions responsible for law enforcement and judicial resilience grow weaker, this does not mean weaker repressive system. Russia has perhaps one of the most well-equipped repressive and intelligence institutional frameworks in the world, with several agencies responsible for internal and external operations. Nonetheless, the judicial system in Russia is not famed for its transparency and consistency. Similar can be said about other FSU states. However, the situation varies from country to country. For instance, if Ukraine and the Kyrgyz Republic demonstrate relatively weak institutions with the government infiltrated by criminal elements, Turkmenistan and Belarus have reached an apogee in repressiveness, but at the same time eliminating or

minimizing the influence of local criminal underworld in local politics. In states like Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, the interests of the ruling clans have left little space for local criminal groups, more often than not forcing them to relocate to Russia. This is particularly worrying due to the state repressive apparatus beginning to operate like the organized crime in using its assets and authority to protect clandestine drug trade and the trafficking lanes from Afghanistan to Europe, hiding under such conventions as diplomatic immunity and sovereignty, which creates impenetrable barriers to anti-trafficking efforts for the European and U.S. authorities.

Drug trafficking by states does not necessarily equal the state collapse. Meehan (2011) criticizes general assumptions on the interconnectedness of drugs and state as lacking in proper understanding of specific cases. Therefore, associating drug production with the state collapse and lawlessness is far from realistic, as Meehan's case study of Burma shows. In this sense, it is necessary to abandon the paradigmatic scheme that puts illicit drug trade and production in the hands of rebels and deviants. This is especially relevant to the FSU region, where the state-building processes have not been fully finished yet, and where drugs – as a result – play an important role in the state formation, as it was seen in the post-Taliban era in Afghanistan (*ibid.*).

Furthermore, a corrupt state is not necessarily inefficient in curbing rival competitors, despite the generally assumed inefficiencies and redundancies of corruption-plagued countries. Government officials' interest in drug trade is as likely a reason for the government's involvement in trafficking, as any other. State-guided Peruvian and Bolivian coca cultivation industry preceded the U.S.-led "war on drugs" by centuries, and it continued to provide profits not only to the drug cartels involved in the trade, but also for local officials, guerillas and the cultivators themselves, aiding Andean nations' economic development (Albó, 1999). In addition, coca cultivation has created a ground for the government-guerilla rapprochement, while anti-coca campaigns have faced serious resistance from the native poor's interest groups (*ibid.*).

Another notable aspect is how close organized criminal groups (OCGs) and states can interact with each other. As the Solntsevo gang demonstrates, states – especially their security bodies – may operate in symbiosis with non-state actors, such as OCGs. Meanwhile, trafficking in drugs and humans has already become a point of mutual gain among organized criminals as well as terrorists (Shelley & Picarelli, 2002), which makes the issue of states' involvement in this scheme even more problematic for international security. What is difficult to explain, however, is

the hypocrisy seen in the divergence of fighting drug trafficking on one hand, and participating in it on the other. It can be claimed that such a system is constructed in itself simply for convenience and mutual benefit – trying to play both sides and minimize damage – but that is where international relations begin, and the rules of diplomacy take over the discourse.

The types of narco-state vary by country in the FSU region, ranging from a state's sheer inability to combat drug trafficking, as seen in the Kyrgyz Republic, to the complicated interrelation through the state security institutions, as it is in Russia, to a state-run clandestine business, like that in Turkmenistan. Yet, the countries that have failed to combat drug trafficking due to high corruption levels and lack of resilient and independent state institutions may still receive financial aid from international institutions, and continue their nominal anti-trafficking policy. The sheer lack of transparency and immature civic traditions make such contributions appear futile.

A transition from the commodity-focused to the money-focused strategy of eliminating international traffickers' profits may well become a blow to the Russian state-crime networks. A closer scrutiny may lead to many alleged criminal elements illegible for doing business or buying property in Europe, further isolating Russian mafia in legal sphere. The politicization of such measures is inevitable, as alleged drug trafficking participants end up as state officials, whose entry and commercial operations are barred by authorities in the U.S. and the EU.

An important paradox to keep in mind is the situation where anti-drug agencies of the FSU nation states not only try to establish control over illegal drug smuggling lanes, but also squeeze out profit from them. In this case, Fichte's Hegelian triad of thesis-antithesis-synthesis (Fichte, 2005, pp. 99-101) can, in its part, resolve the underlying sense of contradiction present in the obvious discrepancy between nominal allegiance to the international drug control regime and the FSU states' engagement in drug trafficking. However, this does not offer solutions to the problem of the state's complicity in organized crime, particularly in drug trafficking, whose impact in the developed world is clearly visible.

It is necessary to stress that three key features of state-crime and crime-terror relationship stand out in the FSU region – particularly in the sphere of drug trafficking. These are: weak and unreliable state institutions that are tasked with upholding the rule of law, then, (as a result) the

infiltration of the state institutional system by the organized crime, and finally the security risk that poses to the countries outside of the FSU region. The latter is particularly notable, as closed-off and isolated FSU states may seek additional revenues via clandestine drug trade at the social and security costs in the West. Criminal prosecution of state-connected alleged traffickers and OCGs' individual members can be complicated if these are provided with immunities relating to their official posts and diplomatic status.

Lastly, further study is needed to investigate possible connection between the state and terror groups, particularly in the drug smuggling context. Countries like Turkmenistan and Tajikistan may be of a particular interest for that purpose. However, the key limitations of this particular study include heavy reliance on mass media (newspapers in particular) as the source and Russian language proficiency, as it still remains the *lingua franca* of the entire FSU region. In addition, the model proposed in this study, plus the criteria, may be and should be expanded further to reflect Makarenko's crime-terror continuum model more.

Conclusion

The drug trafficking in the FSU region presents a case where interests of state actors, international terrorist groups and the criminal underworld come into a mutual interaction in order to gain capital and influence for their own, respective ends. Though the infiltration of the state institutions by the elements of organized crime is not a new phenomenon, there is a new challenge in drawing a clear line between non-criminal non-state actors trying to take advantage from the state's monopoly on power, and criminal elements trying to do the same. In the end, this problem impacts the drug control effort in the region, making international co-operation in this sphere unlikely.

The model of mutual relationship between state, crime and terror proposed in this study is that of a triangular model, where three competing groups of actors engage in co-operative mutual relationship for the sake of seeking profit from drug smuggling and distribution. Each group is involved in a nexus, with various degrees of convergence, showing how close the ties between two groups are. A large list of sources has been analyzed to find if the countries in the scope are meeting the nexus convergence criteria laid out in this study. These sources mostly included

news articles and writings of investigative journalism, as well as academic sources on the topics related to this work.

The results of the empirical data study have shown a lack of direct interaction between the FSU states and terrorist groups, but high convergence with criminal groups, who – in their part – may interact with the terrorist groups for co-operation in drug smuggling. However, further study is needed to investigate the nature of the individual FSU states' links to terrorist groups, as this study's angle is primarily focused on the state-crime nexus.

The ongoing process of drug liberalization in the West may go hand in hand with alienation of some of the FSU regimes from the EU- and U.S.-backed efforts to combat drugs, particularly when state functionaries of the FSU states (or their informal connections) are targeted. Like many other aspects of international co-operation between the East and West, diplomacy can be a key in dictating more efficient trends of a united anti-drug trafficking effort in the world. However, as follows from the completed study, with the current status of the *state-crime* and *crime-terror nexuses* in the FSU region, a divergence in approaches to combatting drugs may follow only if the Western nations take a strong stance to protect themselves both from drug trafficking and infiltration of criminal elements and dirty money from Russia and other FSU countries.

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