

THROUGH THE SEVENTH GENERATION:
CLANNING AS A LIMITING FACTOR IN ORGANIZED CRIMINALITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

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INTRODUCTION AND A BRIEF HISTORY OF CENTRAL ASIA

The Silk Road—originally a trading route for spices from the East to reach European markets—is today used by drug smugglers and other criminal groups to traverse the central Asian republics of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan¹. While Afghanistan produces about 90% of the world heroin supply²—along with many other opiates—not all criminal groups in the region smuggle drugs. There is significant trade in illegal arms and weapons and a burgeoning trade in smuggled and trafficked people. In this paper, I will describe the history of the region, the republics and their ties to organized politicized crime, and the various criminal organizations found in the region. Limited in scope, this paper will not attempt any discussion of terrorist groups, despite their involvement in drug and weapons trafficking throughout this region. Extremist fundamentalist groups with ties to terror do exist in this region and contribute to crime and criminality but do not alter the basic premise of this paper. My examination of organized criminal activity in this region shows multiple examples of internal politicized criminality and corruption, and external criminal groups such as the Russian and Jewish mafias, but few examples of *local* organized criminal groups. I will examine this phenomenon, show the influence of the clan and *ethos*, and describe the limitation of criminal activity to small, local, networked groups and not transnational organized criminal groups. The original intent of my research was to find examples of organized criminal groups in Central Asia. I attempted to find local or regional organized criminal groups but my examination of numerous monographs, journal articles, and government documents revealed few local organized criminal groups. The data were discouraging until I arrived at the conclusion that the reason I could not find these groups is that they do not exist. There are extensive data on

¹ Hereafter called Central Asian Republics or Central Asia.

² Uwe Halbach, “Afghanistan 2014: Shadows over Central Asia?” *Security and human rights* 24 (2) (2013): 137. Reuel E. Hanks, *Global Security Watch: Central Asia* (Santa Barbara; Denver; Oxford: ABC-Clio, 2010), 97.

criminality and political corruption and my research of these data sought to find other connections to organized crime. What I found was that in each instance of politicized criminality there was a clan connection³. I then looked at the various transport routes for narcotics, weapons, and human smuggling or trafficking. The next step in my research was to determine the root cause for a lack of organized criminality in principle despite examples of extreme political corruption. I searched for common elements or larger groups responsible for these actions. Instead, I found an overwhelming lack of larger groups and in their place, a networked chain comprised of local clan élite. The close-knit community structure, clientelism, and patronage resembles warlordism but with a unique, Central Asian perspective. My analysis of the evidence shows the apparent lack of transnational organized criminal groups in the Central Asian Republics is due to the influence of the clan. The politicized criminal activity is an extension of clan principles and political favors within the clan. These cases of corruption and political favors are not exceptions to the rule but rather endemic of clan influence. I will begin my discussion with a brief overview of the clan structure.

THE CLANNING OF TAMERLANE'S CHILDREN⁴

The clan is the basis for society in the Central Asian region. Clan relationships are both vertical and horizontal, and membership is determined by either blood or marriage. “Clan” refers to those related primarily by blood or marriage. “Tribe” is descriptive of interconnected clans who reside in close proximity. Even within the tribe, the clan is sacrosanct. Clans in this region vary in size from 2,000 to 20,000 individuals, with strong connections between the élite and non-élite. The clan provides for its members “assets and goods...in any way possible, whether that be

³ One example is Chemolganization as discussed in the subsection on Kazakhstan, pg. 19.

⁴ Tamburlaine; Tamerlane; Timour; Timur Lenk; Timurlenk (Turkic for Timur the Lame), anglicized to Tamerlane (1336-1405). Conquered most of Central Asia and features prominently in local culture. (*Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Timur: Turkic Conqueror,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/596358/Timur> (accessed May 3, 2015).)

through what the western observers consider legal or illegal ways”. Ceccarelli discusses this relationship further when she states

*While the elder’s council still governs the clan in rural areas, in urban settings this last is flanked by the élite. The élite need the support of their network in order to maintain their status, protect their group and obtain gains within the political and economic system. The non-élite need the senior clan members in order to find work, have access to scholastic institutions, do business at the bazaar, obtain a loan or procure goods.*⁵

Throughout this region, local clan leaders form links in the drug supply chain. With the exception of IMU—a terrorist organization controlling a large portion of the heroin trade in Uzbekistan—there are no large-scale mafia groups operating in the region similar to those in Afghanistan. The clans and nations of this region are semi-nomadic and do not recognize the borders set by Josef Stalin in the early 20th century. Prior to the artificial boundaries imposed by the Soviet leader, the region saw a tradition “of accepting that different peoples can live together in mutually interdependent plural societies.”⁶ Despite a distrust of the other as discussed in the section entitled Honor and Shame, the various ethnic groups of Central Asia lived and worked alongside one another without conflict. Today, the distrust has grown.

The history of the clans living and working in the same area for generations gives the clans a vast store of knowledge of the region. The ease by which the clans cross the borders provides the cover for smugglers to transfer Afghani drugs to Russia and the West and therefore

⁵ Alessandra Ceccarelli, “Clans, politics and organized crime in Central Asia,” *Trends in Organized Crime*, (2007): 23.

⁶ David Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples, Ethnic Groups, and the State* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), 63.

the clan networks are elusive and easily concealable.⁷ Various groups transport illicit drug in the region with Afghans, Kyrgyz and Russians along the Northern Route where Afghans, Turkmen and Turks transport drugs through Turkmenistan and on to Turkey.⁸ In 2005, the last Russian troops withdrew from the former Soviet border with Afghanistan. While the Soviet border patrol prevented some drug trade, after the collapse of the Soviet Union the fractured border became porous. The Central Asian republics experienced political power vacuums after the collapse and shortages led to greater influence by organized crime groups. As a result, trafficking of all kinds increased in the region. Transnational groups that operate in the region include members from China, India, Russia, Nigeria, the Balkans, and some Americans such as Andrew Klein.⁹ Trafficking of men, women, and children remains a major concern throughout the region. Children pick cotton in the fields of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Busses transport university students to pick crops in fields outside Tashkent as unpaid labor. Men and women become domestic laborers throughout the region and the Middle East. Women and children become victims of sex traffickers in many regions around the globe.¹⁰ Large, multi-ethnic criminal gangs from outside this region are unable to control vast territories in Central Asia due to the inhospitable climate. Drug smugglers and other organized criminal groups rely on a network structure of smaller, clan or family based criminal groups—loosely connected—to transport drugs, money, or other contraband. The rough terrain combined with porous borders allows transnational transportation across the region. Afghanistan and the five former-Soviet republics in the region struggle to control the flow of narcotics and other illegal acts in their territories

⁷ Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of "Blood" in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 2004), xxv.

⁸ Ceccarelli, "Clans, politics and organized crime," 30.

⁹ In 1999, Klein attempted a 13-ton drug shipment to Europe by coordinating drug mafias from Latin America and Afghanistan. Uzbek security forces discovered and arrested Klein in Amsterdam.

¹⁰ Hanks, *Global Security Watch*, 110.

while combating corruption. The location of these former trade routes brings other state actors into this struggle, including Iran, Russia, the European Union, and China.

METHODOLOGY

Careful examination of existing literature—monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles—along with examples from government sources and news media highlight the issues in this region. This paper examines these data to determine the history of the region, the influence of religion, the organizational structure or any organized criminal groups, and the influence of clan. The various acts of criminality in each of the republics is problematic as each piece of the literature discusses specific types of trafficking, smuggling, or government corruption with only a few examples covering multiple types. There exist vast collections of literature on this region and these subjects. I examined—and rejected—many works in researching this topic. The works examined are predominantly post-Soviet era, with a few sources of clan and ethnic descriptions supplied by Soviet sources. Some sources examined are controversial, including blogs and writings of expatriate communities and political dissidents living outside the region. The information given by these groups was useful as a means to find other sources but not trustworthy as a primary source of information. Information not verified through primary sources is not included in this paper.

TRANSNATIONAL (DIS)ORGANIZED CRIMINAL GROUPS

Based on existing literature, no criminal group in this region shares the same organizational structure with another. Localized small-scale organized crime developed in the early 1990s in Central Asia. The majority of the organized criminal groups (OCG) in Central Asia belong to six main types: Criminal Groups, Criminal Groupings, Criminal Syndicates,

Politically Orientated Communities, and Ethnic Criminal Communities.¹¹ The clan leaders and élite form the hierarchal upper echelons of many groups and clan-based honor codes keep the non-élite loyal. Transnational organized criminal group (TOCG) involvement with the local clans is close-knit. The clans control territory and their aim is “to provide assets and goods for members in any way possible, legal or illegal.”¹² The drug and arms smugglers in the region take advantage of “cross-border social and ethnic linkages” in the region.¹³ Corruption of state and local police and government officials remains rampant with extended family members of the clan placed in prominent positions. As stated by Berdikееva

The ties between crime and government in most post-Soviet countries exist to different degrees, and it is often difficult to separate the two. In fact, the definition of organized crime within the Central Asian context could include an active interaction between criminals and power structures, but such links vary from country to country. Since there is a strong tendency of collusion between organized crime and governments in Central Asia, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which these notions should be treated separately.¹⁴

Due to this rampant corruption and coercion, most of the states in this region do not pursue these groups. Add to this the weak central governments and law enforcement agencies in the region and the post-independence privatization that is non-transparent. The corrupt government officials want to maintain the existing *status quo* for the benefit of their own clan. To begin, let us examine the definitions of organized and transnational organized crime.

¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *An Assessment of Transnational Organized Crime in Central Asia: 2007* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2006), 27.

¹² Howard Abadinsky, *Organized Crime*, Tenth Edition, (Belmont, CA: Cengage, 2013), 212.

¹³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment: 2010* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2010), 9.

¹⁴ Saltanat Berdikееva, 2009, “Organized Crime in Central Asia: A Threat Assessment,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 7(2), (2009), 77.

Definitions of OCG and TOCG vary from agency to agency. Article 2 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime states

- (a) *“Organized criminal group” shall mean a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.*
- (b) *“Serious crime” shall mean conduct constituting an offence punishable by a maximum deprivation of liberty of at least four years or a more serious penalty;*
- (c) *“Structured group” shall mean a group that is not randomly formed for the immediate commission of an offence and that does not need to have formally defined roles for its members, continuity of its membership or a developed structure;*¹⁵

By this definition, Structured Groups would include the Russian Mafia and the Jewish Mafia, and quite possibly the terrorist groups in the region, as most are not “randomly formed.”¹⁶ The United Nations (UN) definition is broad in scope and leaves interpretation to the individual states and their security apparatus. The allowance of interpretation permits corrupt officials to ignore local problems that benefit them. The UN further stated in a 2007 report that positive identification of individual groups in Central Asia is difficult.¹⁷ Table 1 shows the typology of OCG in Central Asia.

¹⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2004), 9.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ United Nations 2006, 26.

TABLE 1: TYPOLOGY OF OCG IN CENTRAL ASIA¹⁸

	<i>Size</i>	<i>Structure and Hierarchy</i>	<i>Connections</i>	<i>Modus operandi</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Criminal group	2 to 10	2-3 levels of hierarchy	Links to corrupt officials from law enforcement agencies	Predatory in their behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robbery • Kidnapping • Extortion • Contract killings
Criminal groupings	Greater than 10	Structured as trade unions	Links to corrupt officials from law enforcement agencies	Less violent than most of the others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production activities • Bank fraud • Gambling • Drug trafficking
Criminal syndicate	Greater than 20 (some of whom have spent time in prison)	Structured within organized criminal communities	Symbiotic relationship with state administrative and financial bodies; amalgamated with their former competitors	High degree of organization and sophistication	Broad portfolio of criminal activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theft of state property • Smuggling • Fraud • Control over the prostitution business • Create legal branches that facilitate contact with state agencies • Assist in establishing links between organized crime and corruption
Criminal cartel	Greater than 50 (voluntary basis of (?) illegal mutual agreements to promote criminal business)	Structured within organized criminal communities hierarchical structure with several leaders who coordinate spheres of influence and develop joint criminal activities	Amalgamated with state officials and criminal market operators, foreign partners to develop influence over key sectors of the national economy; symbiotic relationship between criminals and political elites (executive and legislature)	Sophisticated variant of the syndicates	Economic crime <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank fraud • Money-laundering • Diversion of credit and humanitarian aid • Crime in the energy sector
Politically orientated criminal communities or Ethnic criminal communities	Size not specified, but likely to be at least as large as the criminal syndicate	Structure resembles political parties with well-organized administrative structures, representative in various provinces and security forces, organized along paramilitary lines	Parallel structure with figures who provide legal or legitimate fronts and shadow leaders who make the real decisions for the organizations	Especially active during civil war or ethnic conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subversion • Activities to overthrow the existing order, seize power and exercise “ethnic control” • Terrorism • Contract killings • Organization of mass riots • Trafficking in drugs and arms • Ethnic cleansing • Armed clashes with government troops

The most common OCG found in Central Asia is the Criminal Group, usually two (2) to ten (10) individuals with only a few levels of hierarchy in each group. The report describes their

¹⁸ United Nations 2006, 27-28

“predatory behavior” comprising activities such as robbery, kidnapping, extortion, and contract killings in the Criminal Groups and “production activities, bank fraud, gambling, and drug trafficking”—deemed “less violent than most of the other [groups]”—when describing the Criminal Groupings. The Criminal Group or Criminal Groupings—a larger OCG—have ties to corrupt government officials and a “high degree of organizations and sophistication.”¹⁹ In many instances, these groups are entire from one family within a clan. Larger groups as characterized by the United Nations report include Criminal Syndicates, Cartels, and either Politically Orientated Criminal Communities or Ethnic Criminal Communities. These groups comprise greater than twenty members and have transnational components. In Central Asia, the Russian and Jewish mafias match the descriptions given by the United Nations for Syndicates or Cartels. Such descriptions include various relationship levels with state officials. The Politically Orientate or Ethnic Criminal Communities identified are terrorist organizations or fundamentalist organizations, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan being the prime example. The report describes the activities of these types of groups as including “Subversion, activities to overthrow the existing order, seize power and exercise ‘ethnic control,’ terrorism, contract killings, organization of mass riots, trafficking in drugs and arms, ethnic cleansing, and armed clashes with government troops.”²⁰

As stated in the previous section, the groups in this region vary and do not necessarily fit in any one category and therefore each state in the region reports the number of OCG and TOCG in varying ways, dependent on local interpretation of the UN convention and local laws. This variation of reporting makes identification difficult for researchers and government officials. The variations in the states’ responses to these groups also creates difficulties for researchers and

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ United Nations 2006, 26.

other states in the region. For example, in Kazakhstan there may be as many as 200 OCG ranging in size from less than 10 to more than 50 individuals. Some of these groups are TOCG with ties to Europe and the United States. Young people—some as young as high school age—are actively attracted to the lifestyle offered by the OCG. Kazakh OCG include Georgians and Chinese (Uyghur) leaders but there is little religious extremism. Berdikeeva writes in a threat assessment of organized crime in Central Asia that:

*a combination of negative factors, the key ones being authoritarianism, corruption, poverty, weak law enforcement capabilities, lack of the rule of law, and divisions along clan and regional lines, have created fertile grounds for the growth and entrenchment of organized crime in Central Asia. Conditions are quickly worsening and could lead to a situation where these powerful criminal elements gain real power within state structures, further diminishing the capability of the government to combat organized crime effectively.*²¹

Berdikeeva further writes there has been an influx of “illegal armed and terrorist groups under the guise of immigrants and refugees from the North Caucasus.”²² These groups smuggle arms, drugs, counterfeit currency, and perpetrate violent crimes.

In Uzbekistan, OCG including the various mafias have existed since the Soviet era. One large industry involved in TOCG since that time is black market cotton. Berdikeeva described the Uzbek government as built on “cronyism and patronage.”²³ In addition to the drug smuggling prevalent in the region, Uzbekistan is a major route for precursor chemicals headed to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Small groups controlled by local clan élite and corrupt officials handle drug smuggling. Human trafficking is worsening and according to a US Human Trafficking

²¹ Berdikeeva, “Organized Crime,” 76.

²² *Ibid.*, 82.

²³ *Ibid.*, 85.

Report, Uzbekistani men, women, and children are trafficked for labor and sex with prevalent internal trafficking.²⁴ The UN Office on Drugs and Crime states the composition of Tajikistan OCG are small groups of 3-5 members and some larger groups of 16 or more.²⁵ One result of the civil war (1992-1997) was the creation of additional smuggling routes for drugs. Arms left over from the civil war are smuggled along with the drugs. Control of Tajikistan post-civil war is warlordism at best. The crime boss Suhrob Kasymor was “put in charge of one of Tajikistan’s largest commercial banks, Orionbank.”²⁶ The UN reports that 30% of the Tajiki GDP is drug trade.²⁷ The influence of organized crime is most apparent in Kyrgyzstan. According to Berdikееva, “Organized crime in Kyrgyzstan is at the stage of fluid development and is mainly comprised of small groups (up to 10 people) and a localized form of criminal activity with a narrow ‘specialty.’” State officials in 2007 announced the existence of 12 OCG and in 2009 acknowledged only two stating, “law enforcement services liquidated six...in 2008”²⁸. One Chechen OCG in Kyrgyzstan had twelve members while other groups contain Uyghurs and “gypsies”. Human trafficking exists with men conscripted to work tobacco farms or at construction sites in Kazakhstan, Ukraine, or Russia and to some extent Turkey and Eastern Europe.²⁹ Traffickers also sell women and men as sex slaves to buyers in Eurasia and the Middle East. The perpetrators of human trafficking are usually family, friends or neighbors, and corrupt police officers.³⁰

²⁴ United States, 2014, *Trafficking in Persons Report: June 2014*, Government Report (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2014), 404.

²⁵ United Nations 2010, 116.

²⁶ Berdikееva, “Organized Crime,” 89.

²⁷ United Nations 2006, 34.

²⁸ Наргиза Юлдашева (Nargiza Yuldasheva), “В Кыргызстане действуют всего две организованные преступные группировки” (In Kyrgyzstan, there are only two organized crime groups), (accessed April 8, 2015), <http://www.zakon.kz/137125-mvd-kr-v-kyrgyzstane-dejstvujut-vsego.html>.

²⁹ United States 2014, 237.

³⁰ Berdikееva, “Organized Crime,” 98.
United States 2014, 225.

MYTH AND MYSTICISM: RELIGION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia is predominantly Sunni Muslim³¹ with the exception of areas influenced by Persian Shi'a. The Shi'a include parts of Azerbaijan, the Khazara people of Afghanistan, some forms of Ismailism among the Pamiris in the Badashkhan region of Tajikistan and Afghanistan, and minority groups such as the Turkmen in Afghanistan.³² The first wave in the spread of Islam reached Kazakhstan in the eighth century. The position of the country along the Silk Road exposed the Kazakh tribes to various other religions including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, Tengrianism and Zoroastrianism. During the era of the Soviet Union, the people of Central Asia were nominally atheist. As in the case of Russia, the State allowed some sanctioned religious practices. In Russia, this was the Orthodox Church and in Central Asia, it was state-sponsored Islam. In 1942 and 1943, Stalin tolerated the practice of Islam in the region in exchange for Muslim conscripts to fight the Germans in Stalingrad. The result was a declaration of a jihad or holy war against the Nazis—at the cost of nearly 50% of all Kazakh conscripts. After WWII, the state elevated the imams who spread a version of Islam compatible with the autocratic state. The state sponsored version of Islam created a parallel culture within the Soviet Union. Islam and religion as unifying agents were the tools of autocratic rulers before and after Communism. Today, the principle school of Islam in Kyrgyzstan teaches a form of Islam that some consider “the most liberal of the four schools of Sunni Islam.”³³ This version of Islam combines traditional teaching with Naqshbandi Sufism.³⁴ In Tajikistan, one former religious leader suggested that 90% of all imams preaching in the mosques are state appointed.³⁵ The influence of the state on religion and religion on the state is not in question. The question is which has the

³¹ Hanks, *Global Security Watch*, 65.

³² Turkmenistan proper is predominantly Sunni.

³³ Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali are the four branches of Sunni Islam.

³⁴ Naqshbandi Sufism is a mystic founded by the Central Asian leader Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari.

³⁵ If true, this violates Tajik law, which states that the congregation elects the imam.

greater influence. The press secretary for the Muslim Religious Directorate in Kazakhstan stated, “According to our constitution the state and religion are separate. But, in fact, we can't divide the body from the soul of a human being.” The influence of the state includes limiting what the imams preach or say at prayers.

The governments seek to retain control by labeling any Islamic opposition groups as linked to terrorist groups in the region. Islam remains a unifying force in the region in both pro- and anti-government groups. The years of Soviet oppression and state dictated versions of Islam created secular preferences in the general populace. Despite the declaration in the constitutions of all five republics stating they are Islamic republics, the populace as a whole does not adhere to strict Islamic interpretation. The practice of Islam in this region shows influence of the nomadic religions of the steppes. Animist religions such as Zoroastrianism influences many groups today and as Ceccarelli explains:

The influence of ancient nomadic traditions highly affects the everyday practice of the Islamic religion. This is particularly true in northern Kyrgyzstan and in Kazakhstan, where Islam is not deeply rooted. The influence of Islam in Central Asian societies is not therefore undifferentiated within the region. It is difficult to understand to what extent religion directly affects society, in other words, to what extent clans are affected by religion. It is certainly possible to say that clans belonging to a certain tribe and to a certain ethnic group are Muslims while others are more strongly tied to the ancient animist traditions and religions of the area such as Zoroastrianism. The question that arises is whether religion, in this

*case Islam, biases the political arena, to what extent if so, and what the consequent implications are.*³⁶

In addition, ancestor worship among the Kyrgyz remains interwoven with veneration of “holy places.”³⁷ The adherence to the presence of and legitimate authority of ancestors exemplifies primordialism and the strong kinship ties of the clan. Further research on the influence of Islam on this region may prove insightful. As globalization transforms the region and religious expression expand, changes to local versions of Islam and the traditional nomadic religions are likely. The next section will give a brief analysis of each Central Asian republics with emphasis on the examples of criminal activity found in each.

HONOR AND SHAME, KITH AND KIN

The various states in Central Asia contain multitudes of ethnic, linguistic, and religious minorities. All of the ethnic groups have codes of honor and kinship dating back millennia. It was Genghis Khan who “overlaid onto the existing regional and familial clans symbolic forms of kinship, such as gift exchange and ties of office.”³⁸ The required reciprocation of gifts exists today in most of this region, and the “ties of office” show with the appointment of family and clan members to élite positions. The downside of placing close relatives in positions of power comes in the form of shame. If a clan member displaces the trust of another, it becomes a matter of shame. The sense of shame can be understood in the Kazakh proverb, *Өлімнен ұят күшті* (Shame is greater than death).³⁹ A recent example of public shaming is the case of Rakhatay

³⁶ Ceccarelli, “Clans, politics and organized crime,” 25.

³⁷ Giampaolo R. Capisani, 2000, *The Handbook of Central Asia: A Comprehensive Survey of the New Republics* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 232.

³⁸ Chris Seiple, “Uzbekistan: Civil Society in the Heartland,” *Orbis* 49 (no. 2) (2005): 248.

³⁹ Baglan Bazylova, *et al*, “Language as an Instrument of Socialization and a Representation of National Linguistic Personality” *Creative Education* (Science Research Publishing) 6 (2015): 74.

Razzakova found in the Turkmenistan section of my analysis of the Central Asian republics further in this work.

The influence of history is significant to understanding the Central Asian region and its peoples as it has shaped the clan, the basis of social order in Central Asia. Social networks among the clans are often more valuable than money. Social networks in the region “operate without guidebooks or formal regulations” and are “considered institutions in that they pattern recurrent transactions and exact social consequences for failure to honor agreements.”⁴⁰ As an example, the poor use inter-household transfers instead of loans from a bank. One report from the World Bank Forum in 2001 states that:

Networks vary in composition and form, from horizontal or flat networks that link equals or near-equals to “vertical” networks—including patron-client relationships—that hierarchically link people with unequal power and access to resources.⁴¹

It is the access to resources that reinforces the trust in the clan (the near) over the government (the far), especially in scarcity. The clans provided for their people during the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing turbulent independence years. The burgeoning black market had the goods and services the people desired and clan leaders and élite utilized clan networks to transport those goods to people in need.

Trust is another facet of honor and shame in the clans. Trust in immediate family first, extended family and clan second, and ethnic relations last explains the push to give preferential treatment to clan members when moving up the social ladder. The level of trust in *near* before *far* influences the clan. As quoted by Seiple, Uzbekistan’s former president Islam Karimov

⁴⁰ Shantayanan Devarajan and F. Halsey Rogers, *World Bank Economists’ Forum: Volume 2* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2002), 54.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

wrote, “The ultimate goal of a clan is to push its members as far as possible up into the ranks of the state hierarchy. The feature which distinguishes members of a clan is . . . simply a shared birthplace.”⁴²

THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS IN BRIEF

The introductory section explained the joint history of the Central Asian region. This next section focuses on each state individually in an attempt to show the cultural differences and their impact on criminality. There is a regional post-Soviet distrust of the government. Gleave, Robbins, and Kolko provide some answers when they write:

Individuals have a tendency to favor in-groups (Perdue et al., 1990)⁴³ or those groups with which they share a common identity (Tajfel, 1978). This can result in homophilic bias, whereby individuals develop a preference for their own group (Perdue et al., 1990), namely those with whom they engage in regular, daily interaction. This process is observed among groups in which participants share a number of ascribed characteristics, but if individuals differ along a number of dimensions, such as race and nationality, then interactions within small, heterogeneous communities will reduce the perceived trustworthiness of others and levels of trust (Glaeser et al., 2000). So, for members of a minority, trust would be lower toward the population majority than toward members of their own minority group.⁴⁴

⁴² Seiple, “Uzbekistan,” 249.

⁴³ These citations are original to the work by Gleave, Robbins, and Kolko.

⁴⁴ Eric Gleave, Blaine Robbins, and Beth Kolko, “Trust in Uzbekistan,” *International Political Science Review* (Sage) 33 (2) (2010): 224.

Further, Gullette shows the influence of Soviet-era meddling in regional affairs. The colonial, arbitrary setting of borders fosters regionalism in some areas, tribalism in other, and as a whole destabilizes the existing order. Gullette writes:

Jones Luong notes that the Soviet administrative-territorial structure imposed in the region 'fostered regional rather than national cleavages due to its coincidence with very weak (or nonexistent) national identities and very strong (preexisting) local identities'. In essence, the new structure did not eradicate the perceived 'tribal' organisation, but it reoriented their relationships. For example, Jones Luong argues that despite the revisions to the administrative segmentation of Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s to reflect 'tribal' areas, the new divisions imposed by the Soviet authorities instead split 'tribes', but left 'clans' intact in the same region. This division therefore contributed to the rise of regional identities as opposed to 'tribal' identities. Administrative divisions further cultivated a separate regional view, reinforced by historical differences. Furthermore, Jones Luong notes that people from titular ethnic groups nominated to the Communist Party in their own republics, precipitated the 'redefinition and extension of existing clan- and tribal-based patronage networks to the regional level'.

The borders in this region show the attempts to create artificial spaces, with straight lines delineating breaks between nations. The various civil wars and disputes in Central Asia “arose largely as a result of the destruction of a working multiethnic system.”⁴⁵ Other areas show the attempt to keep ethnic and tribal groups linked together. Figure 1 is a map of the region showing the major cities and towns. Because the various groups in this region are nomadic in origin, there

⁴⁵ Maybury-Lewis, *Indigenous Peoples*, 62.

continue multiple border disputes between the various states. There are pockets of territory within each state claimed by other states to protect the interests of ethnic minorities in the region.

FIGURE 1 MAP OF THE CENTRAL ASIA REPUBLICS



Available from: http://orientalreview.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Map_of_Central_Asia.png (accessed May 4, 2015).⁴⁶

Because of cultural dissimilarities, I omitted Pakistan from this study with the exception of brief mentions when necessary. For the same cultural reasons the information presented here concerning Afghanistan relates to the northern provinces of Afghanistan and those along the Iranian border.

AFGHANISTAN

In the north, Afghanistan borders Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. These three countries border Kazakhstan to the north. The main smuggling routes begin in Afghanistan

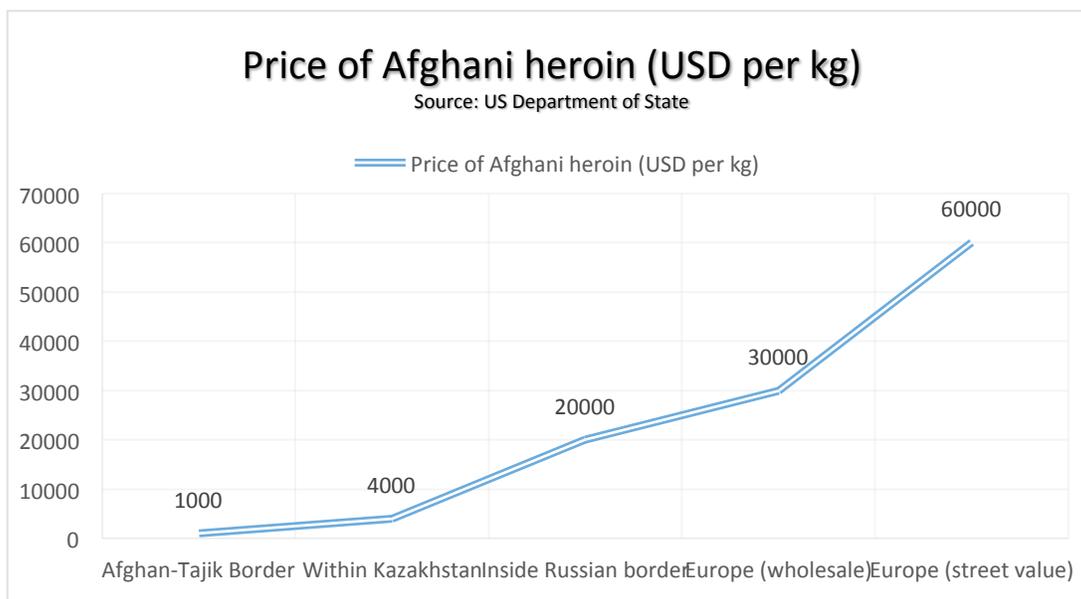
⁴⁶ Andrew Korybko, "The US is juggling chaos and coordination in order to contain China," *OrientalReview.org*, March 16, 2015, <http://orientalreview.org/2015/03/16/the-us-is-juggling-chaos-and-coordination-in-order-to-contain-china/> (accessed May 4, 2015).

before traveling through Uzbekistan. At the border crossing near Termez, officials found narcotics in trucks returning from humanitarian deliveries to Afghanistan. Other routes take drugs from Afghanistan, through Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan on to Uzbekistan. There are few terrorist organizations in the region but the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan—an ally of al Qaeda and the Taliban—controls 70% of the drugs smuggled through Kyrgyzstan.⁴⁷ The rough terrain throughout the region provides cover for overland smuggling routes. Gorno-Badakhshan—an autonomous province in Tajikistan—is one route for drugs passing through the town of Murghab to the Kyrgyz province of Osh while the Gharm region of Tajikistani border with Batken in Kyrgyzstan is another. All of these routes lead to Kazakhstan and eventually the Russian Federation or Western Europe. This section on Afghanistan is brief despite Afghanistan's position as the main producer of opiates in the region. The inflated prices as heroin transverses the region makes smuggling a source of wealth for local clans throughout the region. For example, according to the United States Department of State, one kilogram (kg) of Afghani heroin is worth \$1000 when it arrives at the Afghan-Tajik border. After crossing Tajikistan into Kazakhstan, that same heroin is worth \$4000/kg. Inside the Russian Federation, the price jumps to \$20,000/kg, and \$30,000/kg in Western Europe (wholesale). The retail paid by addicts is about \$60,000/kg, a value added increase of 6000%. Figure 2 shows this example in a graphical format.

FIGURE 2 HEROIN PRICES AFTER LEAVING AFGHANISTAN

⁴⁷ Ceccarelli, "Clans, politics and organized crime," 31.

Ceccarelli further unpacks the connections between terrorism and opium production



when she writes:

*The third group of actors involved in drug trafficking is comprised of terrorist and rebel groups such as the Taliban, al-Qaeda and the Northern Alliance. Operating in Afghanistan, these three groups have filled different roles in the production and trafficking of narcotics. The Taliban have sealed an unspoken agreement with the drug traffickers; in exchange for the payment of a tax of 10–20% on the profits, the drug mafias would be guaranteed immunity. The Northern Alliance, on the other hand, has been directly involved in the production of opiates. This group, through its connections, was also able to bypass the drug mafia’s controls and deal directly with international networks.*⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Ceccarelli, “Clans, politics and organized crime,” 31.

Narcotics smuggling is not the only trafficking found in Afghanistan. The horrific crime of human trafficking exists and despite being a “source, transit, and destination country” for human trafficking, the majority of trafficking in persons in Afghanistan is internal rather than transnational, according to a State Department report on trafficking in person.⁴⁹ Data collection is sporadic as many areas are inaccessible and threats from the Taliban prevent some families from reporting missing women and girls.

KAZAKHSTAN

Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country in the world and shares a long, porous border with Russia. Stalin force-relocated ethnic Russians and other groups to the region during the implementation of the first of Stalin’s Five-Year Plans. Collective farming brought together existing clans and newcomers. The harsh climate of the steppes forced the groups to work together for survival, creating a sense of community despite cultural, ethnic, and religious differences. Early exposure of the traditionally nomadic people to a variety of cultures and religions developed into religious and racial tolerance not seen in the other Central Asian republics. The nomadic origin of the Kazakh people created geographic groups called hordes (*juz*) with a leader called the *khan*. Within the Greater, Middle, and Lesser hordes were the clans and the “*aul*, a social grouping generally consisting of several related families who migrated together as a single unit.”⁵⁰ Individuals adhere to *gety zhargy*, the law code of the last *khan*⁵¹ of a unified Kazakh nation.⁵² The clan influence is evident in Kazakhstan with family members, clan members, and even villagers from politicians’ hometowns given prominent government positions. This is a prime example of politicized criminality. The number of people from the

⁴⁹ United States 2014, 68.

⁵⁰ Reuel E. Hanks, *Central Asia: A Global Studies Handbook* (Santa Barbara; Denver; Oxford: ABC-Clio, 2005), 161.

⁵¹ The last *khan* was Tauke (r. 1680-1718).

⁵² Capisani, *Handbook of Central Asia*, 64.

former president's home village of Chemolgan who formed the élite created the new term "Chemolganization."⁵³

Early criminal groups in Kazakhstan model themselves after the Italian mafia, and include Slavic and Caucasian controlled elements of the Russian *vory v zakone*⁵⁴. Other groups in Kazakhstan include Russian Jewish Organized Criminal Groups (OCG) and Izmailovskaya OCG (a Russian group), and corrupt customs officials at the Korgos/Korgas border crossing with China.⁵⁵ The organized criminal groups in Kazakhstan deal in money laundering, tax evasion, internal and external smuggling, smuggling of narcotics, and a new type of crime first seen in Russia: wire transfers to newly created, short-term bank accounts in exchange for the location of drugs. Russian officials are attempting to help the Kazakhs to stem this new type of cyber-crime. Smuggled drugs can traverse long distances without security checkpoints before entering Russia. From there the drugs travel through Georgia to Turkey or Ukraine to Western Europe. The majority of drugs smuggled travel via Almaty, Karaganda, Semey, Novosibirsk, Barnaul, and Omsk. The border with Uzbekistan is better patrolled than the Afghanistan border. There are reports of drugs smuggled into western China but there is little documentation of an eastern flow of drugs. The types of drugs smuggles through Kazakhstan include Afghani opiates (heroin and opium) along with marijuana and hashish. Currently the government of Kazakhstan has three agencies fighting transnational narcotics trade, the Committee for National Security (KNB), the Customs Control Committee (CCC), and the Ministry of the Interior (MVD). There is some corruption of officials but the government has added pay incentives to deter bribery of police. In 2009, there were only four cases of officer-involvement with drugs, two tested positive for drug

⁵³ Boris Rumer, *Central Asia at the End of the Transition* (Armonk, NY; London: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 219.

⁵⁴ Вори в законе. Russian for "thieves-in-law".

⁵⁵ Bakhyt Nirgaliyev, Kanat Sametovich Lakbayev, and Alexy Vladimirovich Boretsky, 2014, "Organized Crime in Kazakhstan: The Past, Present, Development Tendencies and Social Consequences," *Journal of Applied Science* 14 (24) (2014): 3439.

use and two were sentences for corruption.⁵⁶ There is an increase in drug addiction due to the increase in smuggling. Led by former convicts, some smaller criminal groups also facilitate human trafficking. These traffickers can include “women formerly in prostitution, career criminals, independent business people, taxi drivers, sauna owners or administrators, and farm owners.”⁵⁷

KYRGYZSTAN/THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

The strength of the clan shows in the Kyrgyz proverb, “Those who do not know their ancestors up to the seventh generation are slaves!” The *jeti ata*, or patrilineal ancestry, is important to the clan. The meaning of the proverb is that if a person is unable to recite patrilineal ancestors for seven generations they are a *kul* (slave) or *joo* (enemy). The *jeti ata*—when combined with *sanjyra*⁵⁸—demonstrates the shared descent of the clan and creates an ethnic identity. Many Kyrgyz politicians attempt to form political parties from their clan. The clans seldom interact and this creates a culture of “us” versus “them.” Clan identity is visible during life events. Even if one does not personally know a member of his clan, it is “duty” and form of “respect” to attend a clan member’s funeral.⁵⁹ At the funeral, the mourners take an offering to pay for the funeral services. Because of this clan structure, Kyrgyz criminal groups are traditionally clan-based. The first example of an originally transnational group is the prison gang structures found in Kyrgyzstan. The Russian mafia and *vory v zakone* were influential in all Soviet republics. After the fall of the Soviet Union, local bosses kept the Russian title of *vory v*

⁵⁶ United States, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Government Report (Washington, DC: Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, Department of State, 2010), 391.

⁵⁷ United States 2014, 225.

⁵⁸ “Kyrgyz: genealogical information combined with an account of the past.” (Gullette, “Central Asian Factionalism,” 383).

⁵⁹ David Gullette, “Theories on Central Asian factionalism: the debate in political science and its wider implications,” *Central Asian Survey*, (2007): 381.

Hanks, *Global Studies Handbook*, 232 and 377.

zakone. In Kyrgyzstan, the *vory* and local leaders collude, allowing criminal control of local prisons. The local *vory* appoints the *polozhenets* who are the criminal wardens for each prison.

There are two administrative and trading bodies called *obshchaks* based on voluntary or extracted contributions. The prison system is separate from the outside *obshchak*. The *polozhenets* and *smatryashi* (sub-wardens) control the financial transactions while the *muzhiki* (the “men”) trade food, cigarettes, and alcohol. A separate group of individuals titles *blatnye* are independent of the *obshchak* but adhere to the “thieves’ code”⁶⁰ and answer to the local *vory v zakone*. Finally, there is a low-caste group termed *opushenie* (the offenders) who live completely outside the “thieves’ code.”⁶¹

The Kyrgyz Republic has minimal internal production of narcotics⁶² but is a major transit country for smugglers. Many of the mountain pass border stations on the Tajik and Chinese borders remain closed for up to four months per year due to heavy snow. These border stations then become operations bases for smugglers. The main drug smuggling routes are in the Osh and Batken districts. The drugs travel from Tajikistan to the Uzbek part of the Ferghana Valley and then north to Kazakhstan. There is some corruption and in 2008, the government identified four Internal Affairs officials with involvement in the illegal narcotics trade.⁶³ Currently, the Kyrgyz Republic is the only one of the Central Asian states “that offers a methadone treatment program, but even this limited effort has been hampered by uncooperative law enforcement officials.”⁶⁴ In addition to drugs and weapon smuggling, the Kyrgyz Republic “is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to forced labor, and for women and

⁶⁰ The Thieves’ Code includes statutes for paying gambling debts, rules against informing police, and a prohibition against rape.

⁶¹ Alexander Kupatadze, 2013, “Prisons, politics and organized crime: the case of Kyrgyzstan,” *Trends in Organized Crime* (2013): 143-144.

⁶² Cannabis, ephedra, and poppy grow wild in the Kyrgyz Republic and the government has no programs to eliminate the crops.

⁶³ United States 2010, 401.

⁶⁴ Hanks, *Global Security Watch*, 103.

children subjected to sex trafficking.”⁶⁵ The traffickers “lure women abroad with promises of better jobs and then force them into prostitution.”⁶⁶ Threats of physical violence by the traffickers and the employers in the West along with confiscated passports prevent the women returning home.

TAJIKISTAN

Identity within a group is of high importance to the people of Tajikistan. Self-identification as part of a clan, tribe, ethnicity, or religion come before identity as Tajik. This in-group identity causes ethnic and nationalist tensions within the country. Religious tensions exist as people trust their local imam more than national religious figures.⁶⁷ This follows the trust of near versus far discussed in the Honor and Shame section. Post-independence, Tajikistan is the poorest of the Central Asian republics. The government is unable or unwilling to target and prosecute major traffickers, preferring to detain and prosecute petty criminals in the cities. Despite this, Tajikistani officials seized more Afghani opiates than all the other Central Asian republics combined. The United States Department of State estimates that 50 tons of narcotics flow in and out of Tajikistan each year⁶⁸. Tajikistan has small-scale crops of marijuana but the majority of the drug trade is transitory. Tajikistan shares a 1344 km border with Afghanistan and part of the border is the Pyanj/Vakhsh River, which the smugglers cross easily. Limited amounts of drugs are smuggled west into Xinjiang region in China but the majority travel to Russia. There is endemic corruption within Tajikistan, with 666 officials and police implicated in 2009. In addition, information divorce of Tajik women by their migrant husbands and the need to provide food and income for families force women into prostitution. The use of citizens as unpaid farm

⁶⁵ United States 2014, 237.

⁶⁶ Hanks, *Global Studies Handbook*, 384.

⁶⁷ Karina Korostelina, “The system of social identities in Tajikistan: Early warning and conflict prevention,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 2 (49) (2007): 226-227.

⁶⁸ United States 2010, 599.

labor occurs as well. Those women “engaged in prostitution are increasingly vulnerable to exploitation by traffickers,” and kidnapping is on the rise in Tajikistan. As in most of the Central Asian region, traffickers target men, women, and children for “forced labor in agriculture and construction in Russia,” and women and children for the sex trade, primarily in Russia and the United Arab Emirates.⁶⁹ Tajikistan suffers from the additional problem of increased drug use among the smugglers themselves. The number of heroin addicts is rising and the government lacks the resources to combat this secondary issue.⁷⁰

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan is a smuggling route for narcotics to Kazakhstan, as all the other Central Asian republics, but also to Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Russia. The Caspian Sea ports of Turkmenistan provide routes to Azerbaijan and from there traditional land routes carry the drugs into Turkey or Russia and on to Europe. Turkmenistan shares a 744 km border with Afghanistan but also a 992 km border with Iran. The Iranians combat drug smugglers using northern Iran to transport drugs to Europe and into Tehran but data are limited. Corruption of officials is evident throughout the country. In Mari Province, the government arrested 20 physicians and staff at a prison for selling heroin to prisoners. The most notable arrest came in 2009 with the arrest of Rakhatay Razzakova—a female mafia boss the government dubbed the “Drug Godmother.” The Turkmen government charged Razzakova with “large-scale heroin trafficking.”⁷¹ This case is most interesting as Turkmenistan is an Islamic state and a female crime boss is highly unusual. The government arrested Razzakova and some close relatives, televised her confession and apology, and placed her in jail where she was within two weeks. Turkmen men and women seek employment abroad and fall victim to traffickers. These victims labor in sweatshops,

⁶⁹ United States 2014, 369.

⁷⁰ Tom Parfitt, “Drug addiction and HIV infection on rise in Tajikistan,” *The Lancet* 362 (Issue 9391) (2003): 1206.

⁷¹ United States 2010, 624.

construction, or become domestic servants. Victims who identify as Turkmen predominantly end up in Turkey. The internal, informal construction industry uses forced labor as well. Within the cotton industry, one finds “compulsory” workers from the public sector. Those women and children trafficked for the sex trade do not remain in Turkmenistan as buyers in the Middle and Far East—or in some cases, Europe—seek them.⁷² The human trafficking follows the same routes as the trafficking in drugs and arms.

UZBEKISTAN

Uzbekistan did not form a national identity until late in the Soviet era. To the Uzbek, family and locality were more important than even their ethnicity.⁷³ There exist numerous corrupt officials in the counter-narcotics system of Uzbekistan.⁷⁴ In spite of this, the country has succeeded in nearly eliminating poppy cultivation domestically. The domestic crops produced limited supplies, usually for the immediate area. The primary regions for drug smuggling routes include Tashkent, Termez, the Ferghana Valley (shared with the Kyrgyz Republic), Samarkand, and Syrdarya. A news article by Xinhua states that Uzbekistan signed an agreement with Iran to combat narcotics smuggling in 2000. Another serious issue, trafficking in persons, is problematic in Uzbekistan with prevalent internal trafficking. Average citizens, including schoolchildren, pick cotton to avoid punishment or fines and traffickers force men, women, and children into labor camps abroad. Women and children kidnapped from Uzbekistan become sex workers throughout the region, the Middle East, and East Asia.⁷⁵ The Uzbek government appears unable to combat these issues alone and attempts to coordinate efforts with other states in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

⁷² United States 2014, 385.

⁷³ Seiple, “Uzbekistan,” 249.

⁷⁴ United States 2010, 650.

⁷⁵ United States 2014, 404-405.

After attempting to find concrete examples of transnational organized criminal groups operating in the Central Asian republics of Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, I found no data relating to such groups. Exhaustive research of existing monographs, journal articles, and government reports directed my research in a new direction. I determined the explanation for the lack of data was not that the data were missing but were nearly nonexistent. This led to my new supposition that Central Asia, influenced by the historical importance of the clan, does not support large organized criminal groups. My original research to find examples of organized criminal activity in Central Asia focused on the criminality without the cultural background. I found examples of organized criminality, but these are imported groups including the Russian and Jewish mafias. After changing direction, I was able to discern the major influence of the clan on criminality in this region. As has been shown, throughout this region, local clan leaders act as links in the various criminal supply chains. The clans of this region are semi-nomadic in origin and the ease by which the clans cross the borders provides the cover for smugglers to transfer Afghani drugs to Russia and the West. Some groups attempt to move drugs, weapons, and trafficked persons east into Xinjiang province in China. The organization of criminal groups appears to be limited to intra-clan, family groups occasionally networked with neighboring clans. No groups examined in the republics of Central Asia show similarities to other groups in either organizational structure or history. The only similarity between the groups is the interaction with the state and their ethnic or clan basis. Inter-clan coalitions to form larger criminal groupings and syndicates exist but the basis remains the individual clan. Politicized criminality exists as clan leaders at all levels of organization and state government operate in order to provide for their clan. High levels of collusion and corruption in local and state government are rampant and the state entities tasked

with eliminating criminal groups ignore the larger groups and pursue small-scale operations or individuals to protect their own interests. Transnational criminal groups use the clan linkages to their own advantages as they prevent state government agencies tracking every possible route. In addition, the various caches of arms left over after civil wars in the region give OCG and TOCG additional revenue for bribing officials along trade routes. The weapons provide offensive and defensive capabilities for the criminal groups as well. Unless the state agencies are better organized, funded, and strengthened, this region will continue to see an increase in TOCG activity. The various state governments need strengthening as the increase in drug and weapons smuggling undermines their legitimacy and threatens stability in surrounding states such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, China, the Russian Federation, and Pakistan.

My conclusions show that organized criminal groups do not exist in a native form in Central Asian region. Those syndicates and cartels existing today within the former Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, and in Afghanistan are the products of Soviet-era expansions of the Russian *vory* and Jewish mafia into the region. Other groups of concern in this region include terrorist organizations such as the Taliban and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The terrorist groups contribute to the criminal activities of this region and help fund smaller groups and organizations. The trafficking of drugs by these groups also contributes to increases in addiction throughout Central Asia. These are some of the issues not addressed by this paper. It is my hope that further research on these topics reveals solutions to the real problems of trafficking around the globe. The need continues for further research into trafficking in humans as this unfortunate trade continues. These aspects of the region I will address in the future.

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