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## 27 The “New Silk Road” of Terrorism and Organized Crime: The Key to Countering the Terror-Crime Nexus

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### INTRODUCTION

As the global landscape in the twenty-first century has transformed via globalization, the nature of terrorist organizations is also changing. Unlike terrorist groups of the past, which were primarily substate actors, today’s terrorists are transnational groups operating on a global level.<sup>1</sup> Encouraged by state weakness; globalization; increasing technological interconnectedness; and corrupt, permissive government officials, the “new terrorists” take advantage of an overall decline in international security. These factors have not only spawned a new generation of terrorists but have also encouraged a similar

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increase in transnational crime. Much like the “new terrorists,” the “new criminals” also benefit from failing state structures, global interdependence, new technologies, and institutionalized corruption. Perhaps most disturbingly, these transnational criminal syndicates may also actively seek out cooperative relationships with the terrorist groups that thrive alongside them.<sup>2</sup>

Links between terrorists and criminals, which capitalize upon gaps in law enforcement and weak security structures, are increasingly becoming the norm in today’s transnational environment. This strategic alliance between terrorism and crime<sup>3</sup>—effectively described as a terror-crime nexus—takes advantage of transnational networks, allowing illicit actors to transcend traditional or regional spheres of influence. In some corners of the globe lacking a strong central authority, both terrorism and crime become a “means of making war without declaring it.”<sup>4</sup> Criminal and terrorist networks thrive and support situations of “low intensity” conflict, which are further exacerbated by the power vacuum that exists in international law-enforcement. As a result, populations in areas where these groups are active become increasingly impoverished and subject to conflict, while few actually benefit from the illicit activities. The negative international and local effects of transnational crime and terror reveal that the nexus between these activities is a global threat impacting actors at all levels.<sup>5</sup>

As a global phenomenon, the terror-crime nexus warrants a global response. Counterterrorism and countercrime experts, however, have been unable to successfully introduce and implement collaborative policies to address these issues on an international level. There is a tendency for policy makers to approach terrorist and criminal activities separately—because of the fact that crime is often perceived as a domestic problem, while terrorism, in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, is increasingly considered a security issue requiring international efforts.<sup>6</sup> This individualized strategy, which produces separate and frequently uncoordinated law enforcement responses to terror and crime, has proved inadequate to combat these interconnected activities.

Any successful approach to countering transnational terror and crime, however, will have to address the global conditions that facilitate both activities. Both terrorist networks and organized criminal groups tend to take advantage of the so-called gray areas of the world: weak or failing states,<sup>7</sup> which universally suffer from a lack of governance. After the cold war, a number of former Soviet republics became incubators for terror-crime collusion as they struggled to make the transition from communism and socialism to democracy and market capitalism. Ungoverned areas—particularly separatist regions such as Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, and Transnistria in the former Soviet territories<sup>8</sup>—are also ripe for terrorist and criminal collusion and warrant close attention by international law-enforcement. Here, instability has resulted in increased violence and illicit activities, including the illegal trafficking of arms, drugs, and humans.<sup>9</sup>

Given the conditions described above, the following characteristics of the emerging terror-crime nexus challenge states and the international community:

1. Terrorists and terrorist groups often collude with drug traffickers in order to finance their activities. Terrorists either engage directly in trafficking of narcotics or act in concert with drug traffickers. The links between terrorism and drug trafficking, otherwise known as “narco-terrorism,” have a long and nefarious history.

2. The links between terrorism and arms trafficking, though less pronounced than in the case of narco-terrorism, are nevertheless a means of supporting terrorist groups and activities. The increased availability of arms from formerly Soviet-allied states is of particular concern.

3. Direct links between terrorists and human traffickers are difficult to identify. However, both groups take advantage of uncontrolled borders and a general lack of policing on both the local and international levels. Terrorism and human trafficking have proved to be entrenched and growing problems.

The linkages between terror and crime groups are diverse and disparate, rendering it difficult, if not impossible, to unilaterally categorize particular actors as either terrorist or criminal groups. Terrorists will continue to rely on criminal means to finance their activities; criminals will increasingly use violence to further advance their objectives. Thus, a combined law enforcement and security approach may be necessary. Whether affiliated with the law enforcement or security apparatus, officials need to acknowledge the network structure of the terror-crime nexus and fight the networks cooperatively. Due to terror-crime linkages, penetrating crime groups may be an appropriate tactic to get closer to terrorist groups, particularly al Qaeda. The interaction between international terrorism and transnational organized crime will continue to challenge local and international security specialists and policy makers. However, successful strategies against the terror-crime nexus will require local, regional, national, and international security and law enforcement agencies to encourage interagency and multilateral coordination on the highest levels. Such synchronization is crucial to effectively combating both phenomena simultaneously.

This article explores the existing and potential interactions between international terrorist networks and organized criminal groups along the transit route from central Asia to western Europe—the “new Silk Road” in the trade of terrorism and crime. In particular, it examines the existence and extent of collusion between terrorism and crime—specifically arms, drug, and human trafficking—and discusses the distinctiveness of the terror-crime nexus with respect to these forms of trafficking. Ultimately, this article argues that the nexus must be understood and that cooperative international strategies must be achieved to successfully counter both transnational terrorism and criminal activities.

## **TERRORISM AND DRUG TRAFFICKING**

The trafficking of drugs involves the production, sale, and transfer of narcotics. Because of high demand throughout the world, drug trafficking generates relatively high profits, and the proceeds can be used to finance other criminal activities. Drug trafficking “remains the most common and lucrative source of revenue to terrorist groups, leading many to legitimize this criminal activity by emphasizing the financial needs of the organization and the role of narcotics in undermining Western society.”<sup>10</sup> Following the cold war, reduced levels of state sponsorship for terrorist groups have spurred the linkage of narcotics trafficking and terrorism.<sup>11</sup> Although the term “narco-terrorism” existed prior to the 1990s, transnational terrorist groups now increasingly rely on the profits from drug trafficking since the end of the East-West conflict. Territories formerly within the Soviet sphere of control have experienced an increase in narco-terrorism. Central Asia,

the Caucasus, and southeastern Europe are suspected to be points along a major drug transit route that stretches from Afghanistan to western Europe.<sup>12</sup>

### Central Asia

More than 75 percent of the current world heroin supply originates in Afghanistan;<sup>13</sup> however, the trafficking of narcotics from source countries in central Asia is nothing new. The Afghanistan opium trade has roots in the Soviet-Afghan War (1979–1989), during which drug addiction spread and transnational trafficking began.<sup>14</sup> Historically, Afghan drugs transited Iran and Turkey to western Europe.<sup>15</sup> The opium trade was promoted by fighting between tribal clans as well as between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban.<sup>16</sup> However, since the end of the cold war, and particularly in the aftermath of the 2001 war in Afghanistan, criminals have increasingly transported these drugs through central Asia.<sup>17</sup> Narcotics, primarily opium products, are currently produced and exported from Afghanistan to other central Asia countries. Present-day narcotic-smuggling routes flow from central Asia through the Caucasus and southeastern Europe to reach markets in western Europe.

Unlike Afghanistan—a production hub—the central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan serve primarily as transit routes for narcotics.<sup>18</sup> Given the segmented nature of society, local clans or tribes—such as major Turkmen clans in Turkmenistan<sup>19</sup>—are often involved in the smuggling. Across the board, law enforcement officials are susceptible to corruption, often soliciting bribes as in Soviet times.<sup>20</sup>

Terrorism, organized crime, and corruption have proved to be a lethal recipe within central Asia. Throughout the region, terrorist groups and individuals are involved in trafficking in order to finance other activities, with drugs the commodity most often traded to support terrorism.<sup>21</sup> Drug trafficking is primarily used as a quick method of earning income to purchase arms and other war supplies. A mutually reinforcing relationship has developed between the illicit-narcotics trade and other illicit actors within Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.<sup>22</sup> In short, drug trafficking has grown in tandem with terrorist groups as well as other criminal organizations in central Asia. Since the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, the links between terror and crime have only increased in central Asia. The terror-crime nexus is particularly prevalent in state institutions, which have been infiltrated by criminals.<sup>23</sup> In other cases, illicit actors have used corrupt affiliations with government officials in order to gain favors.

In Afghanistan and central Asia, the entire spectrum of the so-called “crime-terror nexus” is represented.<sup>24</sup> The region not only serves as a base for terror and crime groups, including al Qaeda and drug cartels, but also serves as an operational region for groups that are both terrorist and criminal in nature.<sup>25</sup> In Uzbekistan, for example, radical Islamic groups are suspected of being involved with the trafficking of narcotics. One such group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), thrives as both a major actor in the drug trade and the most serious violent nonstate actor in the region.<sup>26</sup> The IMU is truly a global actor: it has links to al Qaeda, emphasizing the fact that terrorism and drug trafficking are global phenomena that threaten both host nations and those further afield.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to drug mafias and other transnational criminal organizations, which dominate narcotics trafficking in central Asia, insurgent and terrorist groups are of particular concern due to their capacities for violence.<sup>28</sup> Afghan warlords have profited from the drug trade by collecting bribes (“taxes”) from local farmers and traffickers, by controlling production, or even by using drug trafficking to buy weapons.<sup>29</sup> Warlords were limited in their involvement by the dominant insurgency movements, specifically the Taliban and Northern Alliance. While members of the Taliban tended to profit by collecting bribes, members of the Northern Alliance were more directly involved in controlling production.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to the Taliban and Northern Alliance, which did not rely on drug trafficking as a major source of revenue, the IMU has relied on drug trafficking as a major source of profit.<sup>31</sup> The IMU is a quintessential example of the terror-crime nexus, as it has engaged in both criminal and insurgency activities. In contrast, there is little evidence that suggests the use of narcotics trafficking by Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), another radical Islamic group operating in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>32</sup> However, there is some suggestion that, like the IMU, a number of HT cells are involved in narcotics trafficking.<sup>33</sup> If HT turns violent, this would represent another indication of the terror-crime nexus in central Asia.

### **The Caucasus**

The Caucasus is not immune from the “unholy trinity” of terrorism, organized crime, and corruption.<sup>34</sup> The various separatist regions of the Caucasus are ideal incubators for the interaction of terror and organized crime activities, such as drug trafficking.<sup>35</sup> Continued instability in separatist regions such as Abkhazia, Chechnya, the Pankisi Gorge, Nagorno-Karabakh, and South Ossetia has only contributed to the formation of “black holes” of criminality and terrorism.<sup>36</sup> Separatist regions remain uncontrolled by the central government and provide refuge for both nonstate armed groups and drug traffickers.

Since the cold war, the strengthening of the state in the south Caucasus has placed some pressure on terror and criminal elements within the controlled regions of society, although not in the uncontrolled separatist regions. In contrast, in the north Caucasus, a political and social meltdown has resulted in a loss of government control over the region.<sup>37</sup> Foreign and indigenous fighters as well as drug traffickers have the freedom to run rampant. As a result, terrorists and criminals with contradictory and changing relations with one another have taken over, threatening the impending “Afghanization” of the north Caucasus.<sup>38</sup>

### **Southeastern Europe**

A so-called Balkan route of drug trafficking has developed in southeastern Europe. Significant drug-trafficking activity is present along this route, through which heroin travels from Turkey into western Europe.<sup>39</sup> Heroin is trafficked from Turkey through Bulgaria, Macedonia, and Kosovo before continuing to Serbia, Hungary, or Albania.<sup>40</sup> The Balkans are arguably a perilous stop in the “instability train” running from central Asia to western Europe.<sup>41</sup> Terrorists and organized criminals, including drug traffickers, benefit from the same weak regional infrastructure, characterized by uncontrolled borders and limited policing. In some cases, terrorists and drug traffickers provide support for one another. It is

not uncommon for paramilitary organizations to be directly linked to organized crime, creating terror-crime conglomerates.<sup>42</sup> In the former Yugoslavia, postconflict regions provide a supporting environment for terrorist cells.<sup>43</sup>

### **Western Europe**

The drug trade in western Europe, the destination of the new Silk Road in the trade of terrorism and crime, is controlled by the ex-Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and Albanian terror-crime groups. KLA drug-trafficking profits are traded for arms and funneled into the Balkan conflict.<sup>44</sup> Due to the high demand for drugs and the relative ease in transport, drugs are by far the most commonly traded illicit commodity in western Europe. Profits from drug trafficking are funneled back along the transit route, providing support for armed groups with interests in other regions.

### **Terror-Crime Nexus**

The nexus between terrorism and drug trafficking is particularly clear and present. This is most evident along the new Silk Road, where there is ample evidence of direct links between terrorism and drug trafficking. From central Asia to western Europe, no region is immune. The inability of security and law enforcement officials to counter both terrorist and criminal activities appears to be problematic in developed and undeveloped regions alike. The level of collusion between terrorists and drug traffickers, however, tends to vary across regions.

Central Asia remains the crucial point of support for terror-crime collusion. Various predictions that American military presence in Afghanistan would curb the opium trade have proved short sighted. In fact, the illicit trade of narcotics has only increased since the war in Afghanistan. The Taliban appear to have been more effective in discouraging opium production; the Taliban's 2002 opium ban actually reduced Afghanistan's yield of opium from 70 percent to 10 percent.<sup>45</sup> Since the end of the Taliban's reign, however, that trend has reversed.

Yet the drug trade is dependent upon a market for the illicit good: a market that can be found along the route from central Asia to western Europe. In fact, the West serves as the primary customer for drugs that travel along the new Silk Road originating in Afghanistan. Collusion between terrorism and drug trafficking is evident across all regions, including central Asia, the south Caucasus, southeastern Europe, and western Europe. The extent of the nexus between terrorism and drug trafficking is a prime example of the threat this transnational phenomenon presents to the international community.

## **TERRORISM AND ARMS TRAFFICKING**

The trafficking of arms involves the illegal transfer of small arms and light weapons, as well as the raw materials to create chemical and radiological weapons. These arms are typically obtained through theft and are transferred to criminals or terrorists. The trafficking of weapons has a natural symbiosis with terrorism; the unauthorized buyers of trafficked arms are typically nonstate actors with an ax to grind. The market for arms, however, tends to be smaller than the market for drugs. The smaller demand results in fewer profits in the long run; yet the trafficking of arms remains a secondary method of financing terrorism.

Weak, failing, or postconflict regions are prime incubators for the arms trade.<sup>46</sup> Such regions of central Asia, the Caucasus, and southeastern Europe only promote the transfer of the estimated 640 million illegal weapons around the world.<sup>47</sup> The proximity of these regions to stockpiled Soviet weaponry makes them convenient targets and prime sources for arms traffickers. The nexus between terrorism and arms trafficking is particularly enabled through the widespread availability of small and light arms, which may be trafficked for profit or used in terrorist operations.<sup>48</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union, former Soviet republics, including those in both central Asia and the south Caucasus, found themselves flush with an oversupply of armaments, which have disappeared into the illegal arms market.<sup>49</sup> Because of the lack of security surrounding these arms, they are tempting targets for all kinds of violent nonstate actors, including international criminal organizations and terrorists.<sup>50</sup>

Of even greater concern is the availability of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons in the former Soviet Union. These sources can be used in the production of "dirty bombs." Within the entire former Soviet Union, there are an estimated 22,000 nuclear weapons that are impossible to secure. If 1 percent of that material was left vulnerable, then 220 nuclear weapons would potentially be available for trafficking and sale by organized crime syndicates and use by terrorist groups in attacks.<sup>51</sup> The lack of border controls within Russia and other portions of the former Soviet Union makes acquiring weapons attractive to transnational terrorists.<sup>52</sup> The creation of a dirty bomb from radiological materials is a real threat, and is likely to require the support of criminal enclaves or black holes within weak states.<sup>53</sup>

### **Central Asia**

Abandoned arms in Kazakhstan are a prime example of the threat from "loose nukes" and other radiological materials in former Soviet territories, particularly those in central Asia. Kazakhstan is reportedly the source of a cache of smuggled osmium-187, a slightly radioactive material of atomic weight 187, which was discovered en route to nonstate actors with nefarious intentions.<sup>54</sup> In 2001, Russian authorities apprehended a group of Kazakhstani in possession of osmium-187.<sup>55</sup> This apprehension is the exception and not the norm; the illegal transit of radiological material is more often not detected.

Overall, the former Soviet republics of central Asia have taken few steps to control nuclear proliferation in the aftermath of the cold war. As recently as September 2006, the five central Asian republics signed a treaty establishing a central Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone (CANWFZ),<sup>56</sup> which could potentially lead to a nuclear-weapon-control regime within central Asia. However, in the absence of control since the end of the cold war, the damage may have already been done.

### **The Caucasus**

The terror-crime nexus is alive and well in both the north and south Caucasus. In the north Caucasus, a "strategic linkage" exists between the Chechen Mafia in Moscow and the Chechen guerrillas in Grozny.<sup>57</sup> The Chechen Mafia has reportedly supported Chechen terrorists by financing groups within the separatist region.<sup>58</sup> In return, Chechen rebels have supposedly organized and implemented bombings within Moscow.<sup>59</sup> This

example demonstrates the transnational nature of terror-crime interaction, which can transcend great distances.

In the south Caucasus, ethnic conflict has fueled the weapons trade. As elsewhere, arms are often traded alongside drugs in the separatist regions. As a result, the very existence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia has been supported by the trade of weapons.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, in Nagorno-Karabakh, the trade of illegal weapons has led to the sustained independence of this separatist region.<sup>61</sup> The trade of small arms and light weapons sustains the conflicts in the separatist regions. The “gray zones” have also emerged as conduits for radiological weapons.<sup>62</sup>

### **Southeastern Europe**

The Balkan region, where routes of trafficking and terrorism overlap with one another,<sup>63</sup> has contributed significantly to the new Silk Road in the trade of terrorism and weapons. In 2002, weaknesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina’s control of arms exports were revealed when an aircraft components firm from the region known as Orao delivered spare parts of fighter aircraft to Iraq, violating international sanctions.<sup>64</sup> Croatia has also been implicated in arms trafficking—activities that have been protected by officials in the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the customs service, the intelligence service, and at least one political party.<sup>65</sup> As a result, Croatia has emerged as a major distributor of arms and explosives in Europe.<sup>66</sup>

Albanian nonstate armed groups such as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), the Kosovo National Front (KNF), and the Albanian National Army have strong links to organized crime.<sup>67</sup> These groups have gained profits from narcotics smuggling, which they then used to purchase arms.<sup>68</sup> The trafficking profits were estimated to be “tens of millions” of dollars and were primarily used to buy weapons in a “drugs for arms” arrangement.<sup>69</sup> An example of continuing cooperation between terrorist and criminal organizations, the groups have maintained the relationship as a result of common political goals. Crime and terror remain complementary phenomena in countries of the former Yugoslavia, transitioning in a postconflict environment.<sup>70</sup>

### **Western Europe**

In contrast to the nexus between terrorism and drug trafficking, the link between terrorism and arms trafficking is generally less pronounced along the route leading to western Europe. The illegal weapons trade tends to be concentrated in conflict areas along the route, such as those in the Balkan region of the former Yugoslavia.<sup>71</sup> Western officials believe that the KLA has formed a strategic alliance with other rebel groups, such as the Chechens, as well as with criminal groups.<sup>72</sup> However, western Europe remains a place of origin and transport for arms. Arms are often traded for practical use by terrorist organizations, including the Basque Homeland and Freedom (ETA), the Irish Republican Army (IRA), and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), or for financial gain by primarily criminal groups.<sup>73</sup>

### **Terror-Crime Nexus**

Even in western Europe, the nexus between terrorism and arms trafficking cannot be dismissed. As a hosting hub for networks of terrorists and traffickers, western Europe is

challenged to monitor and combat these networks. Beyond western Europe, the link between the arms trade and insurgencies has sustained global conflicts, including those in central Asia, the Caucasus, and southeastern Europe. Although less integrated into the illicit economy than narco-terrorism, the links between terrorism and arms trafficking are nonetheless thriving.

## **TERRORISM AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

Human trafficking is commonly defined as the involuntary movement of people across borders for forced labor, prostitution, or other nefarious purposes. Human trafficking is differentiated from human smuggling, in which migrants are voluntarily transported across borders via illegal methods. The instability associated with the end of the cold war has encouraged increased levels of human trafficking, and in post-Soviet states, human trafficking is growing as a serious form of organized crime.<sup>74</sup> In these regions, traffickers trade women as if they were a “readily available natural resource.”<sup>75</sup> Traffickers are interested in short-term profits rather than the long-term sustainability of the trafficking regime.<sup>76</sup> They use deceptive tactics to recruit women and even sell them to other criminal groups.<sup>77</sup>

In regions where both terrorism and human trafficking thrive, they are reportedly linked to one another. As human trafficking has become a significant component of the underground economy, the likelihood of relationships between trafficking groups and terrorist networks has increased.<sup>78</sup>

### **Central Asia**

In recent years, human trafficking has increased in central Asia as a result of poor economic conditions, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM).<sup>79</sup> Reportedly, traffickers have sold at least several thousand women into the sex trade, effectively circumventing law enforcement officials.<sup>80</sup> From Kyrgyzstan alone, women have been trafficked to Germany, Russia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).<sup>81</sup> In central Asia, human-trafficking activity tends to follow the same routes as drug trafficking, as well as the same routes that terrorists use to transit the region.<sup>82</sup>

### **The Caucasus**

As in central Asia, human traffickers and terrorists tend to use the same routes to transit the Caucasus. Furthermore, human trafficking persists as a problem due to the region’s economic downturn.<sup>83</sup> In the Caucasus, more than 10,000 to 15,000 people have been involved in human trafficking annually.<sup>84</sup> Women and children are particularly susceptible to the offers of traffickers. The countries of the Caucasus—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia—tend to be mainly source and transit countries for human trafficking. To a lesser extent, they are also destination countries. In Georgia, for example, trafficking tends to be of women for the purposes of sexual exploitation, but also includes men for labor exploitation.<sup>85</sup>

### **Southeastern Europe**

In the Balkan region of southeastern Europe, human trafficking is a “thriving business.”<sup>86</sup> Traffickers target women who are easily manipulated, inflicting terrible violence against them.<sup>87</sup> Human trafficking has thrived in the absence of law enforcement and security in

the Balkans, which serve primarily as a destination for victims of trafficking.<sup>88</sup> Law enforcement and security officials are ineffective, as they are often the major clientele of the sex trade.<sup>89</sup> Due to the geographic location of the region, the women are primarily trafficked from Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine,<sup>90</sup> although human trafficking in Croatia has also increased in recent years.<sup>91</sup>

In southeastern Europe, Moldova is the primary source for trafficked women.<sup>92</sup> Moldova has been described as a “black hole” in Europe in which the trafficking of human beings (as well as other illegal activities) is running rampant.<sup>93</sup> Reportedly, women in Moldova compose up to 60 percent of victims of trafficking in southeastern Europe.<sup>94</sup> In Moldova, the combination of a dire economic situation and weak law enforcement has served to promote human trafficking.<sup>95</sup> Moldovan victims typically transit Romania and Serbia before arriving in Bosnia, Kosovo, Albania, Greece, or Italy.<sup>96</sup> Albanian crime groups have fostered a huge market for Moldovan women in Kosovo.<sup>97</sup>

Turkey and Greece are located on the so-called southern Balkan route, which funnels illegal migrants from central Asia through Turkey and Greece to western Europe.<sup>98</sup> In contrast, along the “north Balkan route” or “Istanbul Express,” illegal migrants travel from Turkey to the European Union by way of Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic.<sup>99</sup> In contrast to drugs and arms trafficking, human trafficking is carried out “through a web of communication and transportation” and not through an “all-encompassing criminal organization.”<sup>100</sup> As in central Asia and the Caucasus, the human traffickers tend to use the same routes as terrorists in transiting the region.

### **Western Europe**

Western Europe is a place of origin and transport for human trafficking, although to a more limited degree than the other regions. Western Europe tends to serve as the destination in the transit route, particularly from poorer regions of southeastern Europe to the more affluent areas of western Europe. Of particular concern is the interaction between groups in central Asia, the Caucasus, and southeastern Europe with those operating and serving the west. As western Europe continues to function as a hosting hub for networks of terrorists and drug, arms, and human traffickers alike, the west likewise continues to be challenged in monitoring and combating these networks.

### **Terror-Crime Nexus**

In contrast to narco-terrorism and the interaction between terrorism and arms trafficking, the terror–human trafficking “nexus” is less understood. Terrorist groups engage in human smuggling in order to move their operatives transnationally. However, it is unclear to what extent terrorists rely on profit from human trafficking to finance their activity. Although less understood, human traffickers themselves are no less dangerous. Human trafficking is an endemic problem, particularly in southeastern Europe, and is a symptom of a failing economy and political system common to the regions along the new Silk Road in the trade of terrorism and organized crime.

## **THE THREAT OF THE TERROR-CRIME NEXUS**

In the short term, organized criminal activity such as drug, arms, and human trafficking provides nefarious people means of income that would otherwise be unavailable to them

in the legal economy.<sup>101</sup> However, in the long term, the criminalization of the economy will add to political and social instability.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, criminalization can escalate from widespread disaffection to protest movements—and, ultimately, to terrorism.<sup>103</sup> Transnational crime, particularly narcotics trafficking, is a lucrative enterprise, providing opportunities and support for violent groups while simultaneously destabilizing states. The terror-crime nexus has long-term destabilizing consequences that far outweigh any short-term economic benefits.

Although security and intelligence agencies at the state level engage in bilateral cooperation with respect to terrorism and organized crime, a global law-enforcement regime is essentially nonexistent.<sup>104</sup> Most international counterterrorism and countercrime operations are organized and implemented on an ad hoc basis. The International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) is the organization closest to bridging the international gap in policing; despite its efforts, a basic lack of trust between members has hindered the organization’s effectiveness.<sup>105</sup> Differences in capabilities have also limited the cooperation among states at the international level. The United States has a record of skepticism regarding international policing. In counterterrorism matters, American law-enforcement agencies tend to operate unilaterally rather than through an international organization such as Interpol.<sup>106</sup> In contrast to U.S. involvement in international policing, western European countries have been more willing to participate in Interpol. However, the lack of preparedness for terrorist bombings in Madrid (11 March 2004) and London (11 July 2005) has only revealed inadequate coordination on the European level.

Other international organizations, such as the North American Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), hold regional counterterrorism responsibilities. Yet the extent and efficiency of their efforts to combat crime and terror simultaneously are limited. Along the terrorism and trafficking routes from central Asia to western Europe—regions within the mandates of both NATO and the OSCE—strategies to counter both terrorism and crime are lacking. Law enforcement and security agencies function independently and thus are generally ineffective in countering both terrorism and crime across the new Silk road.

### **Central Asia**

Within central Asia, law enforcement agencies and security services have not commonly approached either terror or crime. As a result, they have struggled to detect, monitor, and respond to both terrorist and criminal threats. The foreign assistance to central Asia has focused on a “security belt” around Afghanistan, focusing on the improvement of border controls for Afghanistan while neglecting the region as a whole. Central Asian republics, which do not serve as bases for terrorists or criminals, often contribute to the terror-crime nexus by serving as transit countries.<sup>107</sup> For example, the Kazakhstan-Russia border is reportedly the major source of opium products destined for the Russian market.<sup>108</sup> Corruption is pervasive and endemic across the route from central Asia to western Europe; the legacy of the Soviet era appears to remain a factor. In Kazakhstan, drug dealers with wealthy or powerful friends are often released upon the payment of a bribe, revealing corruption within law enforcement.<sup>109</sup>

### The Caucasus and Southeastern Europe

In the Caucasus, there is an evident split between officials involved in counterterrorism and countercrime. International interest in countering terrorism has increased, while organized crime has been typically left to state law-enforcement agencies. The nexus between terrorism and crime has not been fully recognized. Similarly, in southeastern Europe, the “Balkan route” has received more international attention due to its position along the routes of terror and crime. In the Balkans, by contrast, officials have emphasized the policing of criminals within the illicit economy; at the same time, terrorism has been neglected.<sup>110</sup>

### Western Europe

In western Europe (and elsewhere), there is evidence to suggest that transnational terror and crime groups have evolved into networks, providing them with “flexibility, adaptability, deniability, multidimensionality, and the capacity to do things at a distance, often through surrogates.”<sup>111</sup> Typically organized hierarchically and into bureaucracies, governments tend to be ill equipped to fight network structures. The lack of interagency cooperation makes it difficult to share information within a single government,<sup>112</sup> let alone among and between many governments.

## COUNTERING THE TERROR-CRIME NEXUS

In order to combat both terror and crime, the following recommendations for counterterrorism and countercrime operations are suggested:

- **Prioritize interagency cooperation on the highest levels.** Regional and international actors must be on board in order to counter the terror-crime nexus. Across central Asia, the Caucasus, southeastern Europe, and western Europe, there must be a deeper and more widespread effort to share intelligence. This will necessitate closer interagency cooperation among nations.<sup>113</sup> Just as terrorists and criminals act transnationally, governments must also respond transnationally.
- **Establish interagency cooperation at the lowest levels.** On the local and national levels, both law enforcement and security officials must work together to combat the terror-crime nexus. Because of linkages between terrorists and criminals, governments must recognize that terror cannot be approached from merely a security perspective, and crime from a law enforcement perspective. Both security and law enforcement apparatuses need to be on board.
- **Fight a network with a network.** Security and law enforcement agencies should recognize that terror and criminal groups are often (if not always) organized in network structures. It is absolutely crucial to organize to fight a network with another network. Government officials should engage in association, network, or link analysis in order to fight terrorist and criminal networks.<sup>114</sup> Network attacks can include both external attacks, which aim at the critical nodes within the network, and internal attacks, which require infiltration of the network.<sup>115</sup> Security and law enforcement agencies need to imitate network structures to be effective; it is absolutely crucial to combat a network with a similar organization.<sup>116</sup>
- **Identify the level of collusion and respond accordingly.** Law enforcement and security officials need to recognize that the extent of collusion between terrorists and drug, arms, and human traffickers varies across the trafficking spectrum—from nexus to symbiotic relationship to activity appropriation<sup>117</sup>—as well as across regions. In fighting narco-terrorism, security and law enforcement officials are fighting a “nexus” and can infiltrate drug groups in order to counter terrorist groups.<sup>118</sup> This may not be

possible with terrorism and arms trafficking—a “symbiotic relationship”—or with terrorism and human trafficking—an “activity appropriation.”

## CONCLUSION

In a world of increasing conflict, particularly within marginalized areas, “privatized violence,”<sup>119</sup> including international terrorism and transnational organized crime, promises only to rise. Globalization and the technology revolution have brought the world closer together and facilitated “a single global market for both licit and illicit commodities.”<sup>120</sup> Thus, the West is affected and will continue to be affected and sometimes even threatened by conflict in remote regions.

Collusion between terrorist and criminal groups takes on different degrees of interaction, from “activity appropriation” to “hybrid.”<sup>121</sup> Some terrorist groups have even transformed completely into transnational criminal organizations, emphasizing profits rather than politics.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, the combining of terror-crime policies such as those that have been implemented to combat narco-terrorism serves as both an example and a guide.

Yet the lack of a “global law-enforcement regime” is particularly alarming in a post-9/11 world in which criminal and terrorist groups increasingly take advantage of their ability to act transnationally. Multilateral efforts to counter transnational terror and crime, as well as regional security initiatives, are vital to combating the growing terror-crime nexus. Although multilateral efforts are crucial, unilaterally executed transnational operations cannot be eliminated.

With land and maritime links from central Asia to western Europe, the countries housed within these regions are exploited by terror and crime groups.<sup>123</sup> The route from central Asia to western Europe has effectively become the new Silk Road for terrorism as it historically has been for drugs, arms, and humans. Western and eastern governments alike must recognize that the route of terrorism and trafficking is the key to combating the terror-crime nexus.

## NOTES

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Asia, the south Caucasus, southeastern Europe, and western Europe. The work of the CTWG represents an initial attempt to examine the terror-crime nexus across these regions.

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