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Drug-trafficking through Russia's Post-Soviet Borders: Problems, Misperceptions, and Countermeasures[1]

Sergei Golunov

Introduction

Illicit drug trade is a dangerous and rapidly developing kind of trans-border crime in the post-Soviet space. Its related organizations, stimulated by the high profitability (1,000% and more) of this illegal business, are very often able to react to challenges faster than the state agencies that oppose them. Subsequent to the collapse of the USSR, Russia became obligated to protect its new national borders, the total length of which (11,000 km) as well as related security issues, are comparable to those of the EU and the US "problem borders" taken together. Considering the issue of drug-trafficking, the Russia-Kazakhstan border presents the greatest problem because most heroin that is transported into Russia passes through it. It is noteworthy that heroin is the most dangerous hard drug in terms of its harm to Russian society: the majority of the more than 1.5 million Russian drug addicts depend on it. Russia's heroin market is considered to be the largest in Europe.

The focus of this paper is evaluation of Russian policy in response to issues that arise when illicit drugs cross boundaries and border areas adjoining post-Soviet states. To assess its adequacy at the macro level, at least two key features of the drug market should be considered. The first is its geographical map, including both the routes of transboundary trafficking and regularities of consumption in border provinces. The second is organization of smuggling processes with such features as the level of centralization, typical structure of criminal groups, and their methods of conspiration. Factors of national and ethnic composition of those groups are very important in this respect because they strongly influence officials' and public perceptions as to who should be considered as the principal enemy and what should be done to solve the problem.

In the first two parts of the paper, the author responds to two sets of questions. First, how adequate is current Russian anti-narcotics policy? What role should border areas play in this light? Would it be better to create "security belts" in Russia-Kazakhstan and Caucasian borderlands or to distribute resources in other geographical directions? Second, who is the more vulnerable target of an effective anti-narcotics policy: suppliers or consumers? What enforcement methods should be stressed: repressive or "soft," i.e. social and eco-

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nomic? The proposed recommendations are grounded both in research results and relevant foreign experiences, which are also considered in the last part of the paper.

Geography of Transboundary Drug-trafficking: Is the Russian Borderland a Catchment for Drug Flows?

Main Smuggling Routes

Smuggling through Russia-Kazakhstan, Russia-Georgia, and Russia-Azerbaijan borders stems from heroin production in Afghanistan, in addition to (through Russia-Kazakhstan border) marijuana and hashish production in post-Soviet Central Asia. Although the traffic of marijuana from Ukraine and the Transcaucasian states, of poppy straw from Ukraine, and of synthetic drugs from EU through Byelorussia, Ukraine, and Baltic states have had a considerable impact on the Russian drug market, heroin and raw opium (for conversion to heroin in Russia) traffic from Afghanistan is still the most dangerous. In the 1990s, this country became a main drug producing hub and the absolute leader as a supplier of opiates. Now it produces about 75-80% of their global volume.[2]

Several opium trafficking routes from Afghanistan are used. From that country, the raw product is converted to heroin at underground laboratories. The main ways of opiate trafficking are the Balkan route, passing through Iran, Turkey, Balkan countries and then to Southern and Western Europe and the Northern route (or "the Silk road"), passing through Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan to Kazakhstan and Russia, and further to Belarus, Ukraine or northern Russian provinces to markets in EU countries. Various branches of the Northern route pass through the Afghanistan-Turkmenistan border to Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, in most cases entering Russian territory subsequently.[3] Some of these branches, however, are circuitous, wending through Turkey. Some "combined" routes are also used: Afghanistan – Iran – Azerbaijan or Armenia – Georgia – Russia.

For illegal drug suppliers, each of the above routes presents advantages and disadvantages. Advantages of "the Balkan route" are the shorter distance between Afghanistan and EU countries and close ties among ethnic mafia groups comprising citizens of Turkey, Iran, and EU states. However, this route passes through more "risky" zones, such as Iran, which is a world leader in opiate seizures. "The Silk Road" attracts drug smugglers because of the porosity of most post-Soviet borders, the availability of clan and ethnic ties for criminal operations in these states, Russia's heroin market – Europe's largest, and the absence of serious competition to opiates from cocaine or synthetic

2 Afghanistan Opium Survey. 2003.

3 Afghanistan Opium Survey. 2003.

drugs. However, use of the "Northern route" for the more lucrative EU market is hampered by its longer distance, numerous middlemen, and a sufficiently strict migration regime that the EU has established for citizens of CIS countries. For those reasons, citizens of EU states themselves, especially of the countries (Lithuania, Poland and others) that have recently joined the EU, have played a great part in drug-trafficking from the post-Soviet space westwards.[4] Consequently, the Northern route is used more frequently for supplies of opiates to Russian and most post-Soviet countries' markets, while to the EU states, most heroin is transported mainly through the Balkan route.

The global cannabis market differs from that for heroin. Because of the low price of cannabis (0.3-0.4 US dollars per gram in the CIS),[5] and because of the more substantial volume of this drug, it presents an increased risk of discovery during smuggling while offering a lower reward. Nevertheless, favorable natural conditions for large-scale cannabis planting (and wild vegetation) in wider geographic areas of Central Asia affect the smugglers' calculus. The key cannabis trafficking routes are much shorter than those for opiates. Central Asian production does not markedly influence the global conjuncture, but some regions of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (especially the Chu (Shu) river valley) are large suppliers of cannabis and associated drugs to Russia.

Regarding both opiates and cannabis drugs, the Russia-Kazakhstan border, which is the lengthiest continuous boundary in the world (more than 7,500 km), holds special importance both for drug trafficking and the fight against it. When smugglers cross it, they find themselves in another region and price zone, at one of the largest transit points en route to the EU, and at the same time, in one of the most capacious drug markets. According to Kazakhstan experts, 30% of imported narcotics are consumed in the country,[6] whereas 70% are transported further, mostly to Russia. Statistical information related to seizures at the Kazakhstan-Russian border is evidence of the huge scale of narco-trafficking. For 1997-2004, when the Southeastern Regional Branch of Border Guard Service[7] existed, the servicemen of the branch seized more than 3.5 tons of heroin. In 2004, they seized 416 kg. of drugs including 100 kg. of heroin.[8] Unfortunately, border and customs services do not always record or share comparable statistical information about all seizures.

Transportation of amphetamine-type stimulants and cocaine occur in the opposite direction: from Europe to Asia. The volume of these flows is much

4 For example, Polish and Lithuanian citizens were among narco-couriers arrested in 2004 for an attempt to transport large lots of heroin to Germany using the "Northern route." Bi-Annual Seizure Report. 2004, p. 346.

5 Afghanistan Opium Survey. 2003.

6 Ashimbaev et al. 2004, p. 6.

7 This branch is responsible for most of the Russia-Kazakhstan border: exceptions are the territories of Astrakhan province and the Republic of Altai.

8 Interfax-Ural. 2004.

more modest, but the problem should not be underestimated. It is important to consider that synthetic drug consumers in the world are numerically inferior only to cannabis drug users. A widespread stereotype associates the fight against drugs with seizures of heroin supplies, which to some extent is favorable for the expansion of synthetic drugs supplied to Russia, mainly from the outside.

Regional Geography of the Dissemination of Illicit Drugs in Russia

Correct estimation of the scale or at least trends in the dissemination of illicit drugs in Russia is the necessary condition for adequate policy making. Unfortunately, this problem can be considered as only slightly solved at present. Such estimations originate mainly from several state departments: the Federal Agency for the Control over Drugs and Psychotropic Substances – Gosnarkokontrol', the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Federal Security Service, the Federal Customs Service, and the Ministry of Health Care and Social Development. The estimates are often partial and not correlated with information of other departments. Independent expertise in the field is only weakly developed because relevant information is often inaccessible.

Problems related to correct estimation can be exemplified by evident divergence in assessments of the number of drug addicts in Russia. During a one-year period (autumn 2004 – summer 2005) state officials from various departments "increased" this number from 2 million (Prosecutor-General Vladimir Ustinov, November 2004)[9] to 4 million (Minister of Interior Affairs Rashid Nurgaliev, December 2004)[10] and 3-8 million (Director of the Department for Interdepartmental Interaction in the Preventive Sphere of Gosnarkokontrol' Boris Tselinskii, June 2005).[11] In July 2005, the Ministry of Health Care and Social Development stated that there are 1.5 million drug addicts and 6 million people who have taken narcotics.[12] At the same time, mass-media and officials (including those from Gosnarkokontrol) often manipulated these figures in an attempt to present the situation as catastrophic and to persuade society to accept extraordinary measures: they focused the attention of public opinion on the number of 6 million. The regional situation is similar: estimating the number of drug addicts, some officials multiply the number of registered drug addicts by four, others by ten.

To improve the adequacy of estimations related to the respective roles of geographic routes of the drug trade in Russia, the dynamics of drug addiction and drug-related crimes in border and transit regions should be analyzed. The relevant data, obtained from The Russian State Statistical Committee (Goskomstat) in November 2005, include: 1) the number and relative share (for 100,000

9 Igoshina. 2004.

10 Cry.ru. 2004.

11 NEWsru.com. 2005.

12 Mironov. 2005.

inhabitants of a particular province) of officially registered drug addicts at regional narcotic health centers; 2) the annual increase in number of these citizens; and the 3) number and share (for 100,000 inhabitants) of drug-related crimes for 1999-2004.

It must also be taken into account that the representativeness of such data is far from sufficient. The number of officially registered drug addicts in Russia is only a small fraction (probably not more than a quarter) of their true number; moreover, their proportion of the population would reasonably vary among provinces, depending in many cases on the effectiveness of local social policy. Many drug-related crimes have not been registered at all, although a great share of crimes that are being registered were committed by ordinary addicts. Therefore, in light of this research, this statistical information reflects only some manifestations of drug-related activity discovered and registered by law-enforcement bodies. Taking into account these considerations, the author specifically addresses not so much quantitative indicators and estimations as the relative position of a province in comparison to other provinces according to the above-mentioned indicators. If such tendencies, fixed by several indicators simultaneously, coincide, the reliability of comparative conclusions is inferred to be sufficiently high.

To discover tendencies in drug addiction and drug-related criminality for 1999-2004, the top ten regions, ranked by relative and absolute indicators, were distinguished. In this case, emphasizing only ten (not more or less) regions seems to be adequately representational: it can be justified by the fact that the "top ten" provinces explain more than 50% of the data related to registered drug addicts and 35-45% of drug-related crimes in Russia.[13] For the reasons described previously, only relative ranks of regions, rather than absolute figures, are used to produce the following table.

Therefore, taking into account absolute and relative indicators for 1999-2004 considered in aggregate, the "top five"[14] include Novosibirsk, Samara, and Tyumen oblasts, and Krasnodar and Primorskii krais. Only two of those provinces (Krasnodar Krai and Tyumen Oblast) border post-Soviet states. On the whole, in 2004 all the considered top ten regions taken together include 46 provinces, among which 9 border Kazakhstan (but only Tyumen Oblast, Altai Krai and Novosibirsk Oblast were frequently among these top ten); 1 (Krasnodar Krai) is adjacent to Georgia, and 2 (Krasnodar Krai and Rostov Oblast) border on Ukraine. It is noteworthy that no Russian province bordering Belarus or the Baltic states was ever among the "leaders" of 1999-2004.

Overall, the importance of borderland areas in the structure of drug consumption and drug-related criminality is not equal among various areas.

13 Calculated by the author according to the statistical information used.

14 In this case, just five (not ten) regions are definitely distinguished by the aggregate of the mentioned indicators for the period from 1999 until 2004. Other regions are distinguishable only by separate indicators for shorter periods.

Table: "Top Ten" Russian Provinces by the Numbers of Officially Registered Drug-addicts and Drug-related Crimes in 1999-2004[15]

Provinces	*Rank in Russia by the number of officially registered drug-addicts in Russia/ Rank by the share of officially registered drug-addicts per 100,000 inhabitants*						*Rank in Russia by the number of officially registered drug-related crimes/ Rank by the share of officially registered drug-related crimes per 100,000 inhabitants*					
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
North and Central												
Moscow province								8/-				
City of Moscow	1/-	1/-	2/-	1/-	1/-	1/-	2/-	1/-	2/-	1/-	1/-	1/-
City of Saint-Petersburg							1/1	2/-	1/-	3/-	4/-	
Southwest and Volga Area												
Krasnodar Krai*	**2/9**	**3/-**	**3/8**	**3/9**	**3/10**	**2/10**	**3/7**	**4/10**	**3/10**	**2/7**	**2/-**	**3/-**
Astrakhan Province					-/10	-/10		-/5	-/1	-/4		
Rostov Province	7/-	7/-		7/-	7/-	7/-	5/9	3/4	8/-	7/-	6/-	4/-
Samara Province*	**3/2**	**2/2**	**1/1**	**2/2**	**2/2**	**3/1**	**4/4**	**5/2**	**4/7**	**8/-**	**9/10**	**5/-**
Ural and Siberia												
Kurgan Province												-/10
Sverdlovsk Province	6/-	6/-	7/-	7/-	9/-		6/-	6/-	6/-	10/-		9/-
Tyumen Province*	**4/4**	**4/5**	**4/4**	**4/6**	**4/7**	**4/7**	**7/10**	**8/-**	**5/10**	**4/10**	**3/7**	**2/5**
Khanty-Mansy Autonomous District	n/a	-/1	n/a	-/1	-/1	-/3		-/10		-/5	-/3	-/2
Yamalo-Nenets Autonomous District	n/a	-/10										-/4
Republic of Tyva	-/6							-/9			-/3	-/3
Altai Krai	8/5	8/9	9/7	10/8	-/9	9/9						
Krasnoiarsk Krai		10/-					10/-			9/-	10/-	7/-
Taimyr Autonomous District		-/7										
Irkutsk Province	9/7	-/6	6/5	6/7	6/6	7/6						10/-
Kemerovo Province	5/3	5/4	5/3	5/4	5/4	5/6		10/-	10/-	10/-	8/-	
Novosibirsk* Province	**10/9**	**9/10**	**8/8**	**9/9**	**8/8**	**8/8**	**8/5**	**7/-**	**5/2**	**6/7**	**7/8**	**6/10**
Omsk Province									-/10		-/10	
Tomsk Province	-/1	-/3	-/2	-/3	-/3	-/3	-/7	-/8			-/6	
Far East												
Primorskii Krai*	**-/8**	**-/8**	**10/6**	**-/5**	**10/5**	**10/4**	**9/3**	**-/6**	**9/3**	**5/1**	**5/1**	**9/6**
Khabarovsk Krai							-/5	-/5	-/6	-/3	-/5	-/8
Amur Province										-/6	-/7	-/6
Magadan Province												-/9
Jewish Autonomous Oblast							-/1	-/1	-/1	-/1	-/1	-/1

* Data related to regions distinguished by both absolute and relative indices in 1999-2004 are shown in bold font.

15 Figures are calculated based on information obtained by the author from the State Statistical Agency of the Russian Federation.

Provinces adjoining the Russian-Kazakhstan border have especially high rates of both corresponding indices (numbers and shares of drug addicts and drug-related crimes). As described above, the top ten by those two indicators include Tyumen and Novosibirsk oblasts: more rarely Altai Krai. The second and third top ten consistently included 5-7 regions (especially Omsk, Orenburg, Saratov, and Chelyabinsk oblasts). Among regions adjacent to the Caucasian and Ukrainian borders, Rostov Oblast and Krasnodar Krai in 2004 were consistently among the leaders (as a rule, they were first and second of the "top ten"). Other regions have never been among the "top 20." Provinces bordering Belarus and the Baltic states have never been in the "top 30" of regions according to any indicator: by drug consumption or drug-related criminality.

Taken together, the data seem to show that a location near a border through which most hard drugs are imported greatly influences drug consumption and drug-related criminality. Notwithstanding, the geographic location is a less crucial factor than is purchasing capacity and the presence of large groups of people having a high income, but doubtful social prospects (e.g., in mining cities or heavy-industry centers). In particular, among regions distinguished by high levels of both consumption and drug-related crimes are Moscow city, and Samara and Tyumen oblasts for their inhabitants' high average incomes.[16] Krasnodar and Primorskii krais as well as Samara oblast are leaders in trade activities in their respective federal areas; Kemerovo Oblast has coal production. Novosibirsk Oblast has a notably high share of heavy industry.[17] Transit locations of the territories through which hard drugs are exported from the Russian Federation to the EU have no recognizable impact on drug consumption in such border provinces.

Similar tendencies in the sphere of drug consumption are apparent for the CIS countries bordering Russia. In Kazakhstan, Almaty and Karaganda oblasts (the latter is the main mining region of the country) were leaders both in narcotic consumption and drug-related criminality for 2003-2004. Among Kazakhstani provinces bordering Russia (7 of its 14 provinces belong to this category), East Kazakhstan Oblast ranked third according to the number of drug-related crimes and fifth according to the number of officially registered drug addicts. Pavlodar and Aktiubinsk oblasts ranked equally with East Kazakhstan province according to the relative share of drug addicts among the total regional population.[18] At the same time, most Kazakhstani provinces that share borders with Russia are not at the top of related indices.

In Ukraine, regions bordering Russia (among them such mining centers as Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts and the main resort zone of the country – the Autonomous Republic of the Crimea) ranked from second to fourth in their

16 At the end of 2003 the city of Moscow ranked 1st, Tyumen oblast 3rd, Samara oblast 12th by the average incomes of their inhabitants. *Regiony Rossii.* 2004.

17 *Regiony Rossii.* 2004.

18 Calculated according to data in Ministry of Internal Affairs. 2005.

officially registered numbers of drug addicts, surpassed only by the Dnepropetrovsk Oblast.[19] According to the relative share of drug addicts, these regions ranked from third to fifth. It is noteworthy that Kharkiv Oblast, which is one of the largest regions of the Ukraine-Russia borderland, was not among the provinces that were top-ranked by the mentioned indices. In Belarus, the apparent leaders in drug consumption are the city of Minsk (1917 registered addicts in 2004), Gomel Oblast bordering Russia (1,454), and Brest Oblast bordering Poland (797). According to the corresponding relative indicator, the regions' positions are equivalent. However, other than the Gomel oblast regions bordering Russia, Vitebsk and Mogilev oblasts, ranked seventh and eighth,[20] even though very important transboundary motorways and railways also pass through Mogilev Oblast.

Even though most Russian areas that border a post-Soviet state are not among the first-rate drug consumers, some adjoining provinces of the Russia-Ukraine and Russia-Kazakhstan borderlands are leaders according to indices of drug-related criminality and drug consumption. Conditionally such areas can be called "transboundary narco-regions." Chief among them, situated along the Russia-Kazakhstan border, are Tyumen, Omsk, and Novosibirsk oblasts, also Kemerovo and Khanty-Mansy autonomous okrugs (the latter two provinces do not directly border Kazakhstan) in the Russian Federation; whereas in the Republic of Kazakhstan, Pavlodar and Eastern Kazakhstan oblasts as well as Karaganda Oblast do not border Russia. The second "transboundary narco-region" situated at a Russia-Ukraine borderland includes Krasnodar Krai and Rostov Oblast on the Russian side, along with Donetsk and Lugansk border oblasts, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Dnepropetrovsk Oblast (not bordering Russia) on the Ukrainian side.

The phenomenon of "transboundary narco-regions" is explainable by several factors. Among them are transit locations of some borderland provinces on the way to the "lucrative" regional markets of neighboring countries: for example, Karaganda, Pavlodar, and Kostanay oblasts of Kazakhstan have such importance for Russia's Tyumen Oblast. Another important factor is the transit role of some "rich" regions as locations of intermediate wholesale markets from which illegal transboundary trade is made: such a role is played by wholesale illicit hard drug markets in Krasnodar Krai and Rostov Oblast for eastern regions of Ukraine. The presence of a depressed extractive industry with extremely dangerous production in such border provinces as Pavlodar and Eastern Kazakhstan oblasts in Kazakhstan,[21] Kemerovo Oblast in Russia, Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts in Ukraine, etc. also create a fertile ground for

19 *Region Online*. 2003; *Kilkist' hvorih.* 2004.

20 Belorusskoe. 2005.

21 Together with Karaganda Oblast, Pavlodar and Eastern Kazakhstan oblasts are the leading centers of mining, Karaganda and Eastern Kazakhstan oblasts – also of heavy industry in Kazakhstan. Calculated on the basis of *Regiony Kazakhstana*. 2005, pp. 254-257.

concentration of narcotics supplies both in and around such areas. All the factors described above create serious prerequisites for involving adjacent regions in a unified system of narcotics consumption and criminal drug circulation. The problem requires more serious study as a special research project.

In conclusions, analysis shows that a border or transit location of a region is an important but not decisive factor for dissemination and consumption of illicit drugs (especially hard) in provinces of the Russian Federation and neighboring CIS states. The most important factors in this case are the level of socio-economic development (such as high purchasing capacity of large groups) and low social mobility. These aspects are insufficiently considered in making or planning modern national anti-narcotics policies. The emphasis is made on strengthening national borders and forming "security belts" at the Russia-Kazakhstan borderland. However, at borders, as explained later, only a small fraction of the whole volume of the national illicit drug market is seized: border regions do not play a decisive role in the structure of narcotics consumption in Russia.

Portrait of "Evildoers": Real and Imagined Features

Methods of Smuggling and the Structure of Criminal Groups Involved

Crossing the border is the most risky stage of drug trafficking. It forces smugglers to use special tactics, modified strategies and novel techniques. The methods most often used by smugglers discovered by law enforcement are classifiable as the following: 1) masking drugs in large lots of transported vegetables and fruits (including them inside these products), industrial goods and raw materials; 2) concealment inside human bodies (swallowing, etc.); 3) concealment in baggage, under clothes and inside shoes; 4) preparing hiding places in cars, trucks, and train carriages; 5) concealment in packed lots of products and industrial goods, including factory wrapping and built-in hiding places; 6) throwing down drugs before arrival at checkpoints; accessories later pick them up.

For masking cargo, criminals try to create a favorable impression about couriers as representatives of a "less suspicious" social group. Large lots of narcotics are often transported by women, children, pensioners (sometimes even World War II veterans), representatives of "European" ethnic groups (Russians in particular) and so on. Organizers of large-scale smuggling operations in the direction from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan to Russia prefer to use Russian vehicles and drivers because vehicles having Azerbaijani and Kazakhstani license plates, being on Russian territory, can be stopped and inspected at almost every police checkpoint.[22]

22 Information from the interview with deputy director of the Main Directorate for Fighting against Smuggling of the Federal Customs Service Tatiana Beklemishcheva. She was interviewed by Yana Denissova in February of 2005.

In many respects, methods of drug transportation are determined by peculiarities of transborder drug dealing organizations. Individuals, small groups, and major groupings controlling all stages of supply can be involved in smuggling. In the post-Soviet period, a main trend of transboundary narco-traffic has become the growth of the share of organized crime, branch groups in contrast to individuals, and small groups. They want to control not only smuggling, but also sales. A considerable number, or even most of them, specialize in several kinds of transboundary criminal activity, e.g. smuggling other goods. At the same time, small criminal groups, often allied by family relations or ethnic links, continue to dominate Eurasian drug trafficking. Large hierarchical cartels of monopolists controlling all operations at drug markets, have not appeared in the area. The process of centralization is hampered by several factors including the broad sphere of activity, the necessity of surviving in a hostile environment (it is easier to discover centralized structures), and even by unwritten norms of the criminal community. According to these norms, drug-trafficking is a condemned occupation, a taboo that prevents the involvement of organized criminals.

Supplying drugs to Russia, large groupings divide traffic into several stages in which different carriers are involved; in some cases, these carriers act as second-hand dealers. With such a scheme, drugs are delivered to a fixed place and passed to another courier who pays his or her partner money for the work done.

The extreme difficulty of discovering such criminal networks reduces the effectiveness of a "force strategy" of struggle against narco-traffic. It is often admitted that, in most situations, only small-scale traffickers ("camels"/"*verbliudy*" in slang), dealers ("pushers"), and consumers are detained. Such persons are also accused in the majority of criminal cases. Arrests of ordinary couriers do not seriously impede narco-business because it is not difficult to hire new carriers. It is no wonder that tactical achievements of power structures cannot change the situation at the long-term outlook: organized criminality both in Russia and neighboring post-Soviet countries redesigns its strategy and tactics. Sometimes criminal groups provide official structures through their reliable reports: exposing inveterate drug addicts to police or border control officers.

Criminal groups recruit, as assistants, representatives of some professions and occupations whose status or professional skills help smugglers to cross the border undetected. Among such professions are railway workers and train conductors, passenger bus drivers, workers of wrapper-producing enterprises, etc. Many border area inhabitants are also recruited to participate in this criminal business, perfectly orientating themselves at localities and remaining well-informed about the regimens of Border Guard and Customs Services' work. For many local inhabitants of border areas, illegal transboundary operations are almost the sole source of income.

Effectiveness of drug trafficking often depends on corruption ties between drug dealers and state officials. Corruption creates chances to earn prof-

its rapidly by rendering assistance to criminal operations. For instance, if an official passes a large lot of narcotics, he can become the owner of an apartment or a car produced abroad immediately. There are also cadre problems: officers of the Border Service are recruited from among the local citizenry and they have numerous informal connections with border area residents. Low salaries of the border staff are also problematic. The fight against trafficking is complicated by the problem of establishing criminal intent in officials' actions. State officials might be merely inattentive or insufficiently diligent at a crucial moment of passage. For those reasons, actions can be misinterpreted as criminal negligence or violation of administrative law, not resulting in criminal responsibility.

In addition to making shady transactions, customs officers and border guards can be merely uninformed about cargo characteristics. Criminals attempt to penetrate Border and Customs services and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. State officials hold the opinion that smugglers very often know about operations prepared against them.

The Importance of the Ethnic Factor

According to a stereotype that is widespread both in power structures and public opinion, drug dealing is a field in which some ethnic groups, especially Tajiks, Gypsies, Azeris, and Chechens, specialize. Unfortunately, officials often have a friendly neutral, and even favorable, attitude towards mass media (including state and even departmental ones) that equate these groups prejudicially with narco-dealers. Such ideas decrease the level of tolerance in Russian society.

This situation requires thorough and impartial analysis of the importance that the ethnic factor has in illicit drug dealing. Unfortunately, having almost no access to corresponding official files, the author often relied on interpretations of indirect statistical information and reliable expert estimations on structural organization of the drug-trafficking process.

As explained below, law enforcement structures can discover merely a paltry share of the hard drugs demanded in Russia. Therefore, it is rather doubtful if the data on seizures could be an even partially adequate reflection of the structure of drug dealing. This information can mirror, on the one hand, more successful activity of police and security agencies against some criminal groups including the mono-ethnic groupings, and, on the other hand, greater latency of some drug-trafficking mechanisms in respect to other ones. Representatives of "visible" ethnic minorities from Central Asia evidently attract more attention during customs and other inspections. Consequently, it seems to be very probable that attempts at smuggling made by representatives of such groups, are discovered much more often than similar attempts made by persons having "European appearance."

If the assumption is made that the statistical data on drug-related seizures partially reflect the actual structure of drug dealing, rather contradictory

conclusions can be derived. At first sight, the analysis of this information supports the assertion that Russian citizens (a majority are ethnic Russians) rank first in this respect, with Ukrainians ranking second, and citizens of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Azerbaijan ranking behind the top three. This correlation is regularly reflected in annual reports of the Federal Customs Service[23] and reports of other agencies.

Such statistical information does not reflect, however, the importance of ethnic factors in heroin trafficking, which is considered the most dangerous hard drug. It should also be considered that a substantial fraction of drug-related arrests are of small-scale retailers (including many consumers) and drug addicts themselves who were detained for storage of overly large doses. Therefore, an analysis of the ethnic structure of all drug-related arrests yields no clear notion of the composition of transboundary drug-trafficking criminal groups.

Despite its insufficient representation, event analyses of Internet news informing about seizures at the Russia-Kazakhstan border gives some idea about the structure of drug smuggling.[24] According to the results obtained, in almost 60% of cases, traffickers were citizens of Russia or Kazakhstan, but in a significant majority of these cases, they tried to smuggle cannabis drugs. During that time, almost all citizens of Tajikistan and Usbekistan, as well as the majority of Kyrgyzstan citizens, the facts of whose arrests were recorded during the event analysis, were detained for smuggling of opiates. Tajikistan was ranked first by the citizenship of persons arrested for trafficking of heroin and raw opium, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan ranked second, third and fourth, respectively. An attempt to analyze an ethnic structure of these arrests based on this information can imply that the number of Russians and representatives of other "European" ethnic groups detained is comparable to that of Tajiks, Uzbeks and other "ethnic Central Asians."

Statistical information related to drug-related crimes committed in Kazakhstan in 2004 can also be variously interpreted. Kazakhstan citizens committed 94.5% of such crimes while the citizens of Russia committed 2.5%, those of Kyrgyzstan committed 1.8%, and those of Uzbekistan committed 1%; those of Tajikistan committed only 0.3%. However, the structure of confiscations made by national law enforcement structures is telling: 96% were of cannabis

23 *Tamozhnia.* 2004.

24 The analysis was carried out by Sergei Golunov, Yana Denissova, and Liudmila Reshetnikova within research projects "Drug Trafficking as a Challenge for Russia-Kazakhstan Border Security" and "Transboundary Crime through Russia's Borders with Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Kazakhstan: Social and Political Effects." These projects were coordinated by the Center of Regional and Transboundary Studies of Volgograd State University in 2004–2005 and supported by the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (American University, Washington, D.C., USA) and were headed by the author. The database contains information from Internet mass-media about 248 cases of drugs seized during 1997 – August 2004.

drugs and only 4% (2% heroin and 2% raw opium) were of opiates. This does not imply a direct connection between the two analyzed groups of indices, but such a relationship renders unconvincing the statistically-based arguments that the contribution of Central Asian ethnic minorities to trafficking of hard drugs is less than that of Russian citizens and "European" ethnic groups.

A contrary assertion can be called into serious question by analysis of qualitative information on seizures of extremely large lots of heroin. Border Guard and Customs services are now able to interdict approximately 1 ton per year, whereas all law enforcement structures discover roughly 4 tons. At the same time, several cases exist in which more than 200 kg of heroin at a time were confiscated at Russia-Kazakhstan borders. Because this and other Russian post-Soviet boundaries are crossed by many tens of millions of people, motor vehicles, and thousands of trains annually, the probability exists that many extremely large lots of drugs are smuggled by groups of various ethnic composition. Mono-ethnic criminal groups might be merely the tip of the iceberg if this assumption is correct.

Whether the contribution of Central Asian criminals to transboundary trafficking in heroin is predominant or not, it seems that only a small contingent of migrants from these countries is involved in smuggling. It is difficult to access complete and trustworthy aggregate information about the structure of arrests for drug-trafficking at the Russia-Kazakhstan border: officials (especially of the Russian Border Guard Service, which is now a unit of the Federal Security Service) are not willing to share such information with researchers. Only partial data on particular areas of this border and for rather short periods are available in open sources. In the second half of 2003, border guards of the Southeastern regional branch prevented 47 drug smuggling attempts.[25] At border areas controlled by Siberian and Ural Customs-Houses,[26] more arrests are made: according to the first of the mentioned branches, 53 drug confiscations (yielding 30 criminal cases against smugglers) occurred in the first quarter of 2006,[27] whereas 33 similar criminal cases were initiated during that period by Ural customs officers.[28]

Based on those figures, which represent the situation in the main part of the Russia-Kazakhstan border area, one can presume that roughly 300-350 drug confiscation events take place annually along the entire boundary. The quantity of such cases is probably between 150 and 180 if we assume that the share of opiate-related cases in the whole structure of arrests and confiscations is about a half. According to the event analysis described above, about 60% of those detained are citizens of Central Asia, excepting Kazakhstan. Based on

25 Press release of Russian Federal Border Guard Service, 16.07.2003.

26 Siberian and Ural Customs Houses are responsible for the main share of the Russia-Kazakhstan border except for areas of Astrakhan and Volgograd oblasts.

27 *Tamozhennyi kompiuternyi servis*. 2006.

28 Uralpress.ru 2006.

that proportion, we can presume conditionally that the number of detainees for heroin smuggling from the region is around 100 persons per year. The supposed number of labor migrants from Tajikistan to Russia is 600-800 thousand,[29] from Uzbekistan – roughly the same,[30] and from Kyrgyzstan – about 350 thousand persons[31] annually, which implies approximately 1.5-2 million from post-Soviet Central Asia (excepting Kazakhstan) in total. Even if Russian Border Guard and Customs services were able to uncover just 1% of the Kyrgyz, Tajik, and Uzbek smugglers, only 0.5-0.7% of ethnic migrants of post-Soviet Central Asia (excepting Kazakhstan) are heroin traffickers. Of course, these figures and calculations can be contested, but even vastly different, probably unrealistic, assumptions would only slightly support cardinally different conclusions.

Data on seizures do not clearly indicate that ethnic migrants from Central Asia dominate transboundary drug-trafficking to Russia, nor that any especially large share of these migrants is involved in smuggling of hard drugs. To reach more definite conclusions, organizational mechanisms of drug-trafficking will also be examined.

As described previously, the drug-dealing structure includes the following main stages: production – trafficking – wholesale markets – retail, and their numerous constituents. Both interrelated and independent criminal groupings of different scales operate at each stage. They are mono-ethnic and inter-ethnic. A situation in which different stages of drug-trafficking processes are controlled by various groupings of both kinds is rather typical.

According to representatives of law enforcement structures, some schemes that are used by organized criminal groups do not correspond to notions of their mono-ethnic character. In many cases, the traffic is supposedly divided into several stages: at the end of each one, the illicit cargo is loaded to another vehicle having a new driver who pays off a previous courier.[32] In this case, the Russia-Kazakhstan border is crossed by a vehicle having a Kazakhstan, or better still, a Russian license plate and which is driven by a Kazakh or Russian. The flexibility of drug traffickers and their familiar with the changing regulations of border regimes is often noted by officials of related agencies. Nevertheless, these features imply not only the inter-ethnic character of a criminal organization, but also that its planning center is situated not in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan or Uzbekistan, but in Kazakhstan or Russia itself. The involvement of other ethnic groups fundamentally diminishes the share of Central Asians

29 Appraisal of the First Deputy of Russian Federal Migration Service I. Yunash from his statement at a meeting with journalists from CIS countries in September 2004. See: Tajikistan National Informational Agency. 2004.

30 This figure was inferred by the author based on informal expert estimations.

31 Statement of Dr. Saodat Olimova at the seminar of the Network of Ethnological Monitoring and Early Warning of Conflicts (Sochi, September 2004).

32 Golunov et al. 2004, pp. 27-28.

in the smuggling process if one assumes that such organizations are headed by Tajiks or Central Asian migrants having Russian citizenship. Again, it provides no sufficient reason to hold entire ethnic groups responsible.

Statements of some experts from law enforcement agencies also engender another conclusion. According to these statements, in many Russian provinces (including regions bordering Kazakhstan), there is no criminal group specializing in trading opiates.[33] Such "multi-faceted specialization" assumes a capability to penetrate different fields of activity that can be achieved more easily by multi-ethnic groups.

Putative ethnic bases of drug-trafficking contribute to a noticeable decrease of tolerance in Russia and complicate inter-ethnic relations. The idea that some groups of ethnic migrants are mainly drug dealers is rather popular both in public opinion and among many officials. The information and analysis presented above, however, suggests that this idea is weakly grounded and that, most likely, only a tiny minority of Central Asian migrants engage in drug-trafficking.

Drug Control Methodology: Repression or Reduction?

International experience indicates four main ways of dealing with narcotraffic and its consequences: 1) restrictive measures, including strengthening of border and customs control; 2) demand reduction programs (social advertising, health protection, active policy targeting youth); and 3) harm reduction (prevention of overdose, AIDS, and other diseases directly or indirectly caused by narcotics use, along with social protection of drug addicts, etc.), which asserts some control over consumption of drugs; and 4) limited legalization of some drugs.

Repressive policies are part and parcel of anti-narcotics policies of all states. They include: systems of strict punishment for drug dealing; strengthening of police enforcement, border and other state bodies; special anti-drug operations; and international cooperation among corresponding law-enforcement bodies. Because of such policies, drug dealers work illegally. For that reason, the price of narcotics is high and demand is suppressed. At the same time, international experience demonstrates that even the strictest repressive policies can not eliminate drug abuse. Notwithstanding, drug-related social threats are used to justify state power expansion (often inhibiting democratic freedoms) and increased financing of security structures.

To all appearances, the first variant (restrictive measures) has been selected in Russia: a "hard-edged struggle against drug-trafficking." An even more expressive mobilization vocabulary than that used in the USA of the 1980s is used. Such a perception in some cases is combined with ideas in the manner

33 For example, this opinion was expressed by the Head of Orenburg Province Branch of Gosnarkokontrol interviewed by the author on 30 September 2004.

of "conspiracy theories" according to which "narco-aggression" against Russia has been organized skillfully by its enemies (USA or some clandestine forces). This kind of idea represents a non-traditional threat in traditional terms; it compels a search for a "traditional" adversary that is supposedly waging a war behind the scenes. Within this approach, the situation in Russia is perceived as unique, its systematic comparison with international experience is rarely made.

In fact, restrictive measures in Russia (taking into account far more modest resources) resemble those already used in the USA in the 1980s-1990s. The strategy is apparently popular both within the power structure and in public opinion. A complex of concrete measures includes strengthening of technical and organizational potential of force structures, development of informational databases, equipping border checkpoints, establishment of cynological (detector dog) centers, etc. These measures demand increased funding that might be achieved at the expense of important spheres (education, health protection, support of activities of children and youth) that directly or indirectly affect the struggle against narcotism.

An important constituent of such repressive policies is the system of criminal penalties for drug dealing. In this respect, Russian legislation is at least as strict as similar legislation of the USA and EU countries. However, aside from the legislation itself, the law enforcement practices are problematic. Different from EU countries, in which the prevailing attitude towards drug addicts and small-scale drug dealers is liberal, those groups are the main targets of repressive measures in Russia. The approach indirectly encourages cohesion among ordinary drug addicts and criminal communities, thereby strengthening the narco-mafia. Such an attitude, driving drug addicts into a corner, creates an environment of increased mortality (dozens of times higher than in EU countries) and disease (AIDS, hepatitis).

A salient disadvantage of the restrictive strategy is its reliance on security and police agencies, with excessive administrative staff and armies of low-paid but poorly-equipped employees to fight drug-trafficking. In May 2004, President Vladimir Putin admitted that, in Russia, about 40,000 personnel are involved directly in this field: in the USA, the corresponding number is about 10,000.[34] In that year, up to 80% of the financial resources and staff of some Border Guard Service regional branches were concentrated in their managing departments.[35] Such structures are vulnerable to corruption: bribes can be hundreds of times larger than salaries.

However, the main weakness of restrictive policies of Russia and many other countries seems to be that their effectiveness is low in comparison to their financial resources. Even after such resources are sharply increased, enforcement rarely brings commensurate results in supply reduction. International

34 *Rodnaia gazeta*. 2004, p. 6.

35 *Krasnaia zvezda*. 2004.

experience shows that law enforcement agencies are seldom able to seize more than 10% of supplied illicit drugs, whereas confiscation of 70% or more of this supply is believed necessary to undermine narco-business' profitability.

As described previously, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of security and police structures' repressive measures because related statistical information is closed to public access. This situation presents government organizations a wide range of opportunities to manipulate information to stress favorable results and conceal unfavorable ones.

Moreover, some calculations indicate that the efficiency of the work of law enforcement structures is low. Based on very moderate expert estimations assuming that an average Russian heroin addict, the total number of which is 1 million, consumes 0.5 g. daily, the demand for heroin in Russia is greater than 180 tons annually. As described previously, the Southeastern Branch of the Federal Border Guard Service seized only 3.5 tons of heroin (500 kg. per year on average) during the entire period of its existence. In 2003, the Federal Customs Service seized 488 kg.,[36] in 2004 – more than 680 kg. of heroin.[37] Hence, the total volume of heroin that is confiscated annually by Border Guard and Customs services is less than 1% of the Russian illegal market's demand. It is also markedly less than the volume of seizures in Tajikistan: in 2004, 4,794.1 kg. of heroin (a share equivalent to 2.6% of the mentioned demand – S.G.) was seized.[38] The total volume of heroin confiscated by all law enforcement agencies at Russian borders and inside the country in 2001-2003 did not exceed 1 ton annually. In 2004 it was 3,897 tons, and slightly more in 2005. Additionally, 2,058 kg. of raw opium (with about 10% heroin contents) were seized in 2004.[39]

In sum, all law enforcement agencies were able to seize not more that 2.5% of the volume demanded by the Russian heroin market, these great efforts totaling slightly less than the volume of heroin confiscated in Tajikistan. This data raises serious doubts about the adequacy of current national anti-narcotics policy, within which the main financial and organizational resources are concentrated in the hands of police and militarized structures. Using a similar rationale, the idea that the withdrawal of Russian troops from Tajikistan can have catastrophic consequences for national security, which can be partially prevented only by the closure of the Russia-Kazakhstan border is also evidently incorrect. Considering that most illicit drugs flow through this border via existing checkpoints, such a variant could be effective only if these points were provided with expensive modern equipment, along with more and better-paid border guards and customs officers. Such a system would impose an excessive burden on the Russian government budget. Nevertheless, even with such a system, smugglers would be able to use a wide range of geographic (use of

36 Federal Customs Service. 2004a.

37 Federal Customs Service. 2004.

38 The Review of Central Asia. 2005.

39 Tendentsii. 2005, pp. 8, 19.

routes passing through other borders) and tactical alternatives to elude border controls.

The realistic role of border guards, customs, police, and other security structures within the national anti-narcotics policy is in narrowing opportunities for drug-traffickers, especially for traffickers of hard drugs. Strengthening customs control at the most risky directions (at multilateral checkpoints in particular) might diminish the role of mono-ethnic criminal groups and thereby augment the importance of intermediaries in the drug-trafficking process, create additional risks for transportation of especially large lots of heroin, and necessitate their division among more intermediaries. Effective international cooperation among security structures, especially in fields of control over transboundary flows passing through multilateral checkpoints and complementary patrols of problem border areas, can also create impediments for international criminal groups.

Successful achievement of even such modest aims depends on the effectiveness of cooperation among Russia, its neighbor states and other countries situated at the main trafficking routes. In each particular case, both Russia and other mentioned states are interested to different degrees in efforts requiring substantial financial expenses and mutual trust among the parties involved. In this respect, mutual cooperation between Russia and Kazakhstan seems to be the most promising. Although Kazakhstan is now mainly a transit country, the economic growth and increased purchasing capacity of its population have made this state more attractive to a greater volume of heroin trade and have transformed it into a prospective market for hard drugs. Therefore, joint and, in many respects, unified anti-narcotics policies, including control over potentially dangerous flows within Kazakhstan and partial financing of such projects by Russia, is a realistic objective.

An important alternative to restrictive policies is demand reduction, which includes health protection, youth policies, social advertising, and other measures. This strategy assumes active involvement of non-governmental structures: anti-narcotics foundations, sports clubs, and religious organizations. The psychological grounds for demand reduction are the support of important social aims diverting young people from drugs or creating powerful stimuli that surpass the attraction of drug addiction.

Unfortunately, the effectiveness of many officially supported anti-narcotics programs in Russia is low. They frequently take the form of Soviet-style agitation conducted by bureaucrats having insufficient qualifications in the field. This agitation often only provokes interest in drugs among teenagers. Even effective demand reduction measures are usually underfinanced. For example, in Orenburg Oblast, they were funded only by 12% for 2003 and by 6% for the first half of 2004.[40]

40 *Program.* 2002.

The new Federal Program "Complex Measures for Counteraction to Drug Abuse and their Illicit Circulation" adopted in September 2005[41] can be regarded as a shift to demand reduction. The Program has the very ambitious aim of diminishing the number of drug addicts by 20%, although the estimated percent of confiscated drugs increased only from 8.9 to 10.7%. The Program's budget of US$108.2 million is distributed among Gosnarkokontrol (41%), the Ministry of Health and Social Development (12%), "Rospechat" (8%), the Ministry of Internal Affairs (7%) and the Ministry of Education (7%). The Federal Security Service, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Federal Sport Agency and the Physical Culture Agency (each receive 4%). Starting in 2006, the greatest share of funds allocated to Gosnarkokontrol are to spent for social advertising and other propaganda, about US$107.8 million of these funds are destined for direct distribution among NGOs. Although the Program aims at "creation of a unified system of positive moral values fostering negative attitude towards illicit drug consumption," it seems, however, that many of its actions resemble centralized Soviet-style agitation, without serious effect.

A main problem is that the budget is too small to achieve its aims. Nevertheless, the financing of anti-narcotics agencies in 2006, according to the national budget's project, is 14 times as great as the funds allocated for the Program for that period. On the other hand, if the complex of mainly social measures aimed at reducing drug addiction by 20% has four-year funding of US$107.8 million, the need in state antinarcotics bodies, having a budget of US$299.2 million for 2006 only,[42] is rather doubtful. Also, considering the huge share of expenses for national security in 2006, the program cannot be regarded as a real turning point from a restrictive strategy to a demand-reduction strategy.

The importance of "harm reduction" as a strategy of struggle against narco-mania and drug-related crime in Russia is not only underestimated, but also often perceived by officials and public opinion as tacit encouragement of consumption. Such a distorted perception (for a healthy person, the possibility of obtaining gratuitous treatment is not a very powerful stimulus to fall sick) combined with a widespread contemptuous attitude towards addicts impedes estimation of its strategic advantages that, in the Netherlands, are considered as important an element of national drug control policy as demand reduction.[43] Social and medical support can recruit or neutralize a part of the huge army of Russian drug addicts, who are currently allied with organized crime because of an intolerant restrictive policy, in the fight between the state and drug mafias. It is also important that harm reduction measures essentially diminish the number of deaths resulting from overdoses and infection by AIDS and hepatitis. In the Netherlands, this number is evidently less than the number of deaths caused by alcohol and tobacco consumption.

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41 *Federal'naia tselevaia programma*. 2005.

42 *Prilozhenie 8*. 2005.

43 Synthetic Drug Trafficking. 2003, p. 74.

Demonstrably, the effectiveness of restriction measures undertaken by Russian law enforcement and security agencies is paltry in comparison to the level of hard drug consumption. Taking into account geographical problems and other factors, no serious grounds exist to believe that such effectiveness will fundamentally increase. Within the national anti-narcotics policy, social measures including demand reduction and harm reduction programs, should be emphasized.

Conclusion

Problems related to drug consumption and trade seriously challenge Russian security. Simultaneously, they engender very serious social problems by fostering cardiovascular diseases, consequences of alcoholism and smoking, traffic accidents, and so on. Although drug addicts have been increasing slowly in number, the situation remains difficult because the supply, especially that of heroin, continues to rise.

Analyses described in this study show that the main factors of narcotics consumption (especially of hard drugs) in Russian provinces and regions of some neighbor states are not the borderland or transit locations of the territory, but rather peculiarities of the area's socio-economic development: high average purchasing capacity of the population and low social mobility of some groups, whose members might face uncertain prospects. Statistical information about narcotics consumption and drug-related crimes seems to show that 50% or more of drug-related activities are concentrated in about 20 major Russian cities. Conditionally, one can assert the existence of "transboundary narco-regions" at Russia's borders with Kazakhstan and Ukraine as contiguous administrative-territory units of those countries.

The structure of drug trafficking through Russia's borders assumes many forms and units. Post-Soviet narco-mafia are not controlled by one or several centralized groups: drug dealing is carried out by individuals or groups with different levels of organization. These groups are often ethnically based, but the role of ethnic factors must not be overestimated: although most arrests for drug-trafficking to and within Russia are probably related to ethnic migrants, one can cogently assert that only a small minority of Central Asian immigrants to Russia are involved in smuggling.

In response to the expansion of illicit drugs in Russia, restriction and repressive measures are supported by redistribution of the lion's share of funding for national anti-narcotics policy in favor of militarized structures. This redistribution does not engender proportional results: apparently, all Russian security and police agencies are able to seize not more than 2.5% of heroin brought to and circulating in Russian illegal markets. The largest lots of drugs are brought through existing checkpoints that provide ineffective control.

The Federal Program "Complex Measures for Counteraction to Drug Abuse and their Illicit Circulation" adopted in September 2005 can be regarded

as a shift to demand reduction. This shift, however, has only been reflected slightly in the structure of funding for anti-narcotics policy. Moreover, for demand reduction, excessive emphasis has been laid upon agitational and advertising actions, the professionalism of which is questionable. Harm-reduction attracts even less official attention, although it can fundamentally diminish the rate of drug addicts' mortality and weaken ties between addicts and the criminal community.

Taking into account the apparent low effectiveness of restrictive measures, Russian anti-narcotics policy should emphasize social outcomes, reducing both demand and harm and strongly considering the corresponding experiences of the EU and other countries. Restrictive policies, including border security, should be auxiliary and based on real objectives including the creation of maximal obstacles to the functioning of large-scale trafficking. The key condition for effective law enforcement measures is extremely close cooperation among corresponding agencies of Russia and Kazakhstan and, at the local level, within "transboundary narco-regions" at the Russia-Kazakhstan and Russia-Ukraine borders. Simultaneously, instead of creating a "security belt" in the Russia-Kazakhstan borderland, it would be far more efficient to launch pilot projects for the roughly 10 regions and/or 20 major cities that are most affected by narco-mania.

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