

# The Simulation and Dissimulation of Sovereignty in Post-Conflict Spaces: the case of security sector reform in Tajikistan<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This paper explores how support to the security sector has contributed to the simulation and concomitant dissimulation of Tajikistan's sovereignty.

The nature of sovereignty in post-conflict spaces requires detailed empirical study combined with theoretical insight. In Tajikistan, if we see both security and sovereignty as fixed, objectively existing phenomena which are deduced rationally from ideal-type concepts we lose the ability to see how they constitute the very things they seek to protect (the state and its community). If we recognise security in terms of processes of (de-/re-) securitisation, and sovereignty (and the state itself) as simulated, then we begin to grasp how practices of security can simulate or dissimulate the state itself. The unintended or indirect consequences of international assistance (in terms of 'sovereignty') are more significant than cosmetic changes that may be achieved in border management (in terms of 'security').

I focus on an increasingly securitised aspect of the security sector in Tajikistan: the state border. The first part of the paper dwells on the contrasting nature of three performances (resecuritisations) of sovereignty – national, regional and international – during the handover of the Tajik-Afghan border from regional to national responsibility from 2004-2005. The second part extends this argument to evaluate the symbolic effects of attempts to reform border management. It shows how the state border, and by extension sovereignty, as an attribute of post-conflict peace, seems at once both ever-present (in ideal-type form in contending discourse and representations) and strangely absent (in the rent-seeking actions of 'state' actors and the struggles of daily life). This paradox can only be resolved analytically through the acceptance of contrariety. Ontologically, sovereignty is neither present nor absent, but in a constant process of constitution and de-constitution. In other words, it is concomitantly simulated and dissimulated.

## Introduction

In 2004, an agreement was reached with the government of the Russian Federation to transfer responsibility for, and control of, the Tajik-Afghan border to the government of Tajikistan. Following a friendship treaty signed in 1993, Russian troops had continued to patrol almost the entire length of the 1,344-kilometre frontier, with just 70km guarded by

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Tajik troops.<sup>2</sup> By 2004, Russia had approximately 11,000 troops in Tajikistan. Whilst border management was supposed to be financed jointly and equally, in 2003 Dushanbe made only 2.4% of its installment and never made more than 5% in any year (Matveeva 2005: 146). Despite these unpromising circumstances the hand-over began in late-2004. The agreement allowed for the presence of Russian advisors and the training of Tajik officers in Russia. With the fear of a growth in narcotics trafficking and instability in Afghanistan in mind, Western governments moved fast to increase security assistance to Tajikistan particularly in the area of border management. Yet the hand-over was clearly about something other than ensuring efficient border management. Many of the personnel guarding the border before 2005 were Tajik citizens; yet they wore the uniform of the Russian state. After 2005 they wore and flew the Tajik flag. The transfer was driven by a national security discourse which asserted the sovereignty of the Tajik government, its authority over its territory and people, its place in the region, and its status in the international community.

With this symbolic dimension in focus, this paper explores the reform of border management, one aspect of post-conflict Security Sector Reform (SSR). It is an interpretative account which outlines the discursive environment of the state border in Tajikistan before going on, with reflection upon theory, to evaluate the significance of these contrasting discourses and practices for security and sovereignty. It is divided into two halves. Part one, considers three performances (securitisations) of the state border – national, regional and international – during the handover of the Tajik-Afghan border from regional to national responsibility from 2004-2005. Part two shows how the state border, and by extension sovereignty, as an attribute of post-conflict peace, seems at once both ever-present (in ideal-type form in contending discourses) and strangely absent (in the rent-seeking actions of ‘state’ actors and the struggles of daily life). This paradox can only be resolved analytically through the acceptance of contrariety. Ontologically, sovereignty is neither present nor absent, but in a constant process of construction and deconstruction. More accurately, it is concomitantly simulated and dissimulated.

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<sup>2</sup> Whilst article 9 of the 1993 agreement had always envisioned a gradual handover to local control, this had never been seen as feasible given the weakness of the Tajik state. IWPR, *RCA*, No.284, 15/03/04.

## **PART ONE: Managing the Tajik-Afghan Border: three securitisations**

The handover of the guarding of the Tajik-Afghan border to national security forces is emblematic of the dynamics of security and sovereignty in contemporary Tajikistan. The above findings indicate that the Tajik government has been remarkably successful in having its representation of ‘authority’ affirmed by subordinates, elites and, to a lesser extent, internationals. However, authoritarian elites generally face a much more difficulty controlling representations of state *sovereignty* – the status of government to represent the people. Often the primary site for claims about sovereignty is the border and the nature of trans-border dynamics. If a piece of its territory (e.g. Kosovo, Iraqi Kurdistan) is successfully represented as a political community of its own, beyond the control of the state, then the state may lose representational and, ultimately, physical control of that territory. As we have seen, some observers in the 1990s feared that Tajikistan might break up, perhaps losing control of the Northern province of Leninobod (now Sughd) or the Pamiri autonomous region of GBAO. In fact, nascent irredentist claims failed despite only limited decentralisation. The idea of a single Tajik political community survived and even strengthened since 2000. This section charts how both elite and international representations of Tajikistan community/security affirmed Tajikistan’s territorial boundaries and the right of its government to police them. On the other hand they offer contrasting accounts of how this is and should be done.

**Fig. 1: UN slide showing border handover from Russian to Tajik control, 2004-2005 (UNODC 2004: 12)**

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### ***1.i. International Security/Community***

‘International security’ is the first transcript through which the Tajik-Afghan border was represented. The picture of a sovereign Tajikistan is performed through its representation in the International Community under the maxims of ‘statebuilding’ and the ‘War on Terror’. Before 9/11, Tajikistan committed to joining NATO’s Partnership for Peace programme and received a visit from the Commander of the US Central Command

(CENTCOM) Tommy Franks.<sup>3</sup> In the months following 9/11, some confusion ensued as to whether Tajikistan would provide the US with basing rights as its neighbours had done. The US went through Russia to negotiate but in the end settled on over-flight rights, perhaps partly because of the lack of appropriate facilities. Tajikistan instead hosted a small French air force detachment of around 20 men which provided logistical support to operations in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> This is shown most strongly in the writings of a Washington-based community of security analysts who are part of, or act as consultants for, US defence establishments. International security discourse on Tajikistan thus inscribes it as a part of an orientalist ‘Central Asia’ and, thus, in need of Western-style statebuilding.

*In Central Asia and the Global War on Terror*

Tajikistan’s significance for international security derives from spatial imagination and territorial reasoning where Central Asia is on the ‘frontline’ with Afghanistan, and even part of the same region (MacFarlane 2004; Hill 2002: 17; Wishnick 2004: 1). By such accounts, it is part of ‘Central Asia’, an especially perilous and porous region of the world. The region is described by the head of the Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College as a ‘key theatre in the war on terror’ (Lovelace 2004: iii) which according to Giragosian, ‘has acquired a new strategic relevance’ (2006: 133). In the US Secretary of Defence’s 2002 report to Congress it was identified as part of an ‘arc of instability’ from the Middle East to North East Asia. Wishnick, familiarly, adds that it is part of the ‘Great Game’ (p. 29).

This spatial imaginary has had a dramatic effect on foreign policy approaches to the region. According to Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs Elizabeth Jones, ‘since 9/11 US strategic interests in the region have focused on anti-terrorism, especially the elimination of terrorist and other destabilising groups.’<sup>5</sup> This has led to a massive increase in US strategic involvement following 9/11 in the establishment of the

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<sup>3</sup> *Asia-Plus Blitz* No. 754, 17/05/01.

<sup>4</sup> Personal communication with French military attaché in Dushanbe, July 2003

<sup>5</sup> A paraphrasing of the testimony in Wishnick (2004: 4).

Ganci and Kharshi-Khanabad military bases, and overflight rights across Tajikistan. Hill notes,

The primary American interest is in security, in preventing the “Afghanicisation” of Central Asia and the spawning of more terrorist groups with transnational reach that can threaten the stability of the interlocking regions and strike the United States (p. 18).

Such thinking has even contributed to an internal re-organisation of the US state department. By late-2005, Jones’ department of European and Eurasian affairs had lost responsibility for the region which had been incorporated into a South and Central Asian section. In itself this bureaucratic change reflects US thinking about Central Asia as a region apart from other Former Soviet Slavic states. The move is a particularly fascinating one which reveals much about how discourse shapes even the structure of foreign policy-making institutions. It is easier, for example, to understand why Washington-based analysts may believe Russia’s role in the region is decreasing and peripheral (Plater-Zyberk 2004) if they see Central Asian states as culturally and politically akin to Pakistan or Afghanistan. As we shall see below, however, such spatial imaginaries are vehemently opposed within the region by elites who often present themselves as more European than Asian.

### *In Need of Statebuilding*

Understanding Tajikistan as a part of a ‘Central Asia’ or ‘South and Central Asia’ seemingly leads to hyperbolic analyses of Tajikistan’s political dynamics and, in turn, inscribes as a state which requires building. For one US diplomat in Dushanbe, there are ‘shallow roots to stability’ in Tajikistan and the country remains a ‘tinderbox.’ As such it is at risk of ‘violent Islamisation’ or the danger that ‘narco-traffickers could take the government out.’<sup>6</sup> Under discourses of the ‘failed state’/statebuilding, societal forces are set up as both ‘strong’ and in opposition to a government which is ‘weak’. For Hill, Central Asian states are challenged by ‘extreme domestic fragility’ (2002: 19). The complexity of relations between state and society, where the formers inextricability from the latter is the basis for its hegemonic position, are rarely acknowledged in these

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<sup>6</sup> Interview, Amanda Cranmer, 2nd Secretary, US Embassy, Dushanbe, 01/03/05

accounts. That organized criminals might be constitutive or supportive of many Central Asian regimes themselves is difficult to explore (ICG 2003, Marat 2006), and is never part of the testimonies of diplomats and international officials.

Based on very limited understandings of Tajik state and society, statebuilding is prescribed even in the face of evidence that formal models have little scope for success. Mihalka, a US Army War College professor, laments ‘state weakness’ and the lack of political will in Central Asia to introduce the necessary reforms ‘to counter insurgency and terrorism’ (2006: 150). For Giragosian, the central problem is ‘the vulnerability of illegitimate governance’ (2006: 150). Such thin analyses feed into official announcements and policy statements. Richard Boucher, the Assistant Secretary of State for the new bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, remarked in his 2006 testimony to Congress:

Central Asia faces numerous threats to its stability, including Islamic extremism, a population that remains poor and has little economic opportunity, the post-Soviet legacy of authoritarianism, public perceptions of injustice, and high levels of corruption (cited in Mihalka 2006: 133).

Underwriting such testimony is the assumption that ‘they’ ought to be more like ‘us’ – that is more like who we imagine ourselves to be. Therefore, whilst the initiatives of regional governments are assumed to be ineffective, U.S. officials and analysts furthermore imagine their own government to provide the solutions. Giragosian notes, ‘what is essential for Central Asia is a continued and even greater US commitment’, and specifically argues against regional coalitions such as the SCO (2006: 152).

*SSR: International Assistance to Border Management*

International assistance to the security sector in Tajikistan continued to expand to pursue the goals of statebuilding following the announcement of the Russian withdrawal. As one former German diplomat noted, news of the shift to Tajik control meant, ‘the western community in Dushanbe was all turned upside down for a couple of days’ (Epkenhans [T5]). Similarly, a US diplomat acknowledged that they were ‘caught off guard’ by the Russian border guards withdrawal and that it was ‘not in our interests for them not to be

there.’<sup>7</sup> Thus, events accelerated a shift towards a statebuilding following disappointment with democratisation initiatives. According to Epkenhans,

the attention of the International Community shifted from this intra-Tajikistan dialogue, peace and reconciliation of the Civil War and [with the] IRP, to other problems in the country, mainly drug trafficking – definitely for the Americans, the Germans, the British, they are all focused on this right now [in early 2005]. (Epkenhans [T5]: 3)

Matveeva contends that it was Rahmonov’s visit to Washington in January 2002, shortly after the launching of the ‘war on terror’, which ‘provided impetus for development of a relationship in the security field’ (2005: 149). Such a shift reflects a changing international environment (the post-9/11 global trends towards statebuilding), as well as a certain degree of responsiveness to context (the need to find ‘common ground’ with local elites).

However, the shift to security and statebuilding issues did not signal conformity with *national stabilisation* discourse. International initiatives mixed, to varying degrees, a liberal-reformist plank with capacity-building. Two very large EU regional programmes, initiated by Austria, including Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA), had been launched and funded prior to the announcement of the Russian withdrawal in March 2004.<sup>8</sup> Subsequent to this, the International Community found US\$4 million of new funding specifically for projects at the Tajik-Afghan border.<sup>9</sup> European donors in particular publicly reiterated ‘multilateral cooperation’ and ‘integrated border management’ with the international community in order to introduce

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<sup>7</sup> Interview, Amanda Cranmer, 2nd Secretary, US Embassy, Dushanbe, 01/03/05

<sup>8</sup> The latter was worth €23.5mln, 5 million of which was earmarked for Tajikistan, over 2003 to 2008. BOMCA worked in legal assistance, staff development, infrastructure and social integration with the following objectives: to increase effectiveness of border management systems; to improve cross-border cooperation; to facilitate the movement of people and goods; to ensure border protection while easing border tension. Two smaller projects in 2004 were by IOM (worth USD 400,000 and aimed at improving legislative and technical facilities for migrants) and UNHCR (worth USD 350,000 and aimed at making asylum procedures more efficient). (UNODC 2005; UNDP 2005a).

<sup>9</sup> Hoagland, US Ambassador to Tajikistan, noted that the US was interested in establishing air surveillance of the border and even salary support to Tajik border guards, although this would require ‘anticorruption programmes’. This included an increase from USD6.87 to 9.5mil in funding from 2004 to 2005, the majority of which was for ‘strengthening border posts’. Financed primarily by new US funding, UNODC added the project AD/TAJ/E24, ‘Strengthening Control along the Tajik-Afghan Border’ to BOMCA in April 2004 (EC 2005).

‘legal and institutional reforms’.<sup>10</sup> Such programmes aimed not just at building the government’s capacity but socialising it into better practices.

### ***1.ii Tajikistan’s National Security/Community***

Such overtures, despite their self-referential precepts, elicit enthusiastic responses from a Tajik government eager to be accepted into the International Community. Elites seized on the increased anti-terror discourse as an invitation to assert its sovereignty and crack down on transnational dissident groups whilst representing themselves as a part of the International Community in ‘the war on terror’. The government banned *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* in 2001 (before 9/11) and was quick to associate them with the ‘war on terror’ following the attacks. As early as October 2001, Minister of Security, Khayriddin Abdurahimov, noted that *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* was ‘undoubtedly connected with those terrorist centers being prosecuted by world community.’<sup>11</sup> While up to 2001, Tajikistan had arrested just 120 members, far fewer than its neighbours in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the suppression of the organisation intensified following the launch of the ‘war on terror.’<sup>12</sup> Such actions are frequently cited to international researchers and policymakers in terms of working together against Islamic extremism and drugs. For example, Asozoda reminded me of these ‘common’ problems:

Indeed, we mustn’t forget that in Tajikistan 90% of the population is Muslim, and this is the only state where there is an Islamic Party. And their only aim is the creation of an Islamic state. But we say that religion is separated from the state. We accepted a unified constitution, and whoever comes to power must observe this. But we need help: from the USA, China, Russia – our strategic partners. If they support us, this will be good for them and for us. We were the first to speak at the UN and say that we need to create an anti-terrorist ring around the Talibs. Emomoli Rahmonov called to everyone from the platform of the UN. But they didn’t listen to us and as a result they got September 11<sup>th</sup>. Now we say that in Afghanistan 90% of agriculture is narcotics. We say, “let’s create a belt around Afghanistan,” so that they don’t produce opium or drugs but something else. If they listen to us this time then we will do everything possible to keep out the drugs. ( [T2]: 10)

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<sup>10</sup> Comments by Pierre Cleostrat (European Commission), Stephen Lysaght (UK), and Harold Loeschner (Germany) in, EC 2005, meeting minutes. See also, Odyssey Migration Control 2005.

<sup>11</sup> *Asia-Plus Blitz* #188 (850) 03/10/01.

<sup>12</sup> IWPR, RCA, No. 271, 17/03/04

Here, the definition of threat widens to potentially include legal political parties within the country, and the identification of proportionate response expands to a suggested blockade of the country.

In this manner, with its particular contrasts to international discourse, Tajikistan articulates its sovereign position in the International Community under the ‘war on terror’. They explicitly represented the takeover of the southern border from 2004 as a triumph of national sovereignty. Official discourse exhibits four representational strategies which serve to reinscribe ‘us’ and ‘them’ onto the border:

1. The imperative of ‘national security’ for a unitary Tajik state-nation
2. The specific location of authority over the border with President Rahmonov
3. A broad definition of a transnational ‘terrorist’ threat
4. The specific location of the threat of drugs and terrorism in Afghanistan

The first two of these relate to the representation of ‘inside’ or ‘Us’, while the second two concern the ‘outside’ or ‘Them’.

#### *‘Us’*

The drive to national security and stabilisation led to a strategically dubious shift to exclusively national border protection. The move was predicated in discursive trends leading up to the handover. Rahmonov, for example, stated that ‘the border is one of the most important symbols of a state, and its defence is [the] honourable debt of every citizen of the state.’<sup>13</sup> The national press provided extensive coverage of the various stages of the handover which largely supported this version of events. Prior to 2004, it was frequently emphasised that ‘2,912 of 4,183 kilometres of the Tajik border is being defended by Tajik border guards’ and that ‘80% of Russian border guards are Tajik citizens.’<sup>14</sup> Following the 2004 decision, it was often repeated that ‘from the beginning of 2006 the Tajik flag will be waving along the whole Tajik border of 4183 km’, thus

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<sup>13</sup> *Jumhuriyat* 53, 14/05/05. [transl. Otabek Sindarov]

<sup>14</sup> *Jumhuriyat*, 113, 05/10/04. [transl. Otabek Sindarov]

showing that the Tajik guards are ‘ready to defend their border themselves.’<sup>15</sup> A report by the state newspaper, *Jumhuriyat*, of 28 May 2005, official Border Guards Day, entitled ‘We are able to defend our border’ [*Mo sorhadoti hudro hifz karda metavonem* (Taj.)], nicely summarises the official discourse on the border handover.

The Tajik state and government is always concerned about strengthening the border. The passing of the law, “Border Military Forces of Tajikistan” increases the responsibility of Tajik border guards. Until taking over the defence of the border with Afghanistan, the border forces of Tajikistan were second behind Russian border guards. Now they have taken the first place, i.e. they took the defence of the state border upon them. It is right that the challenges of state border defence are plenty, but it is our motherland. Every independent state should defend its borders itself.<sup>16</sup>

Such understandings unite the Tajik people under the state. The Chairman of KOGG, Colonel-General Saidamir Zuhurov, noted that according to the Law on the State Border of the Republic, ‘all citizens of Tajikistan are obliged to participate in border security.’<sup>17</sup>

Secondly, discourse highlights the personal authority of the President over the national border. President Rahmonov performs his own authority over Tajikistan by making frequent speeches on and sometimes at the border.<sup>18</sup> In a 2000 speech, he argued that ‘half-measures’ and ‘not enough orderliness’ on the Central Asian continent are ‘inadmissible.’<sup>19</sup> The concept of ‘authority’ which underlies such statements is one which suggests maximum credit to, and minimum debit from, the President’s personal power. This is affirmed by Rahmonov’s inferiors. Zuhurov tied the integrity of the national border to the personal authority of the President. He noted at an international conference on the border in February 2005 that ‘the President personally checks on the status of achievements.’<sup>20</sup> The President thus has the authority to identify those responsible for violations of the border, rather than take personal responsibility for any

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<sup>15</sup> See *Jumhuriyat* 136, 02/12/04. [transl. Otabek Sindarov]

<sup>16</sup> *Jumhuriyat* 59, 28/05/05. [transl. Otabek Sindarov]

<sup>17</sup> Official transcript of conference, ‘Response of the international community to assist the Government of Tajikistan on the Tajik-Afghan Border,’ 15-16 February 2005.

<sup>18</sup> *Asia-Plus Blitz* # 172 (585), 08/09/00.

<sup>19</sup> *Asia-Plus Blitz* # 170 (583), 06/09/00.

<sup>20</sup> Official transcript the conference, ‘Response of the international community to assist the Government of Tajikistan on the Tajik-Afghan Border,’ 15-16 February 2005.

failings. For example, the President has threatened to forcibly relocate border residents who are ‘involved in drugs trafficking.’<sup>21</sup> Moreover, he will occasionally purge the Tajik border forces (KOGG) not just to distribute patronage but to illustrate his authority as head of state.<sup>22</sup> Such practices may not constitute an effective counter-narcotics strategy but they do serve purposes for Rahmonov who is able to practice intra-elite rotations in terms of national stabilisation.

*‘Them’*

The third representational strategy of elite discourse is the creation of a transnational terrorist other, which encompasses both criminal and political groups. The construction of the transnationalism of ‘them’ is the mirror image of ‘us’ who are peacefully united within Tajik territory. Thus, the threat is located as both foreign and refusing to abide by state boundaries which, it is implied, are natural. Commenting on joint CIS military exercises in April 2000, the President noted that, ‘we must remember that international terrorism, extremism and national separatism do not recognise borders and act at their [sic.] will. Therefore [the] armed forces must be ready to resist any threat to our security, no matter where it originates from.’<sup>23</sup> This invocation of ‘terrorism, separatism and extremism’ discursively links oppositional, criminal and militant activity. It is commonly deployed across post-Soviet Central Asia.<sup>24</sup> The definition is invoked particularly against *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, a militant group with no confirmed record of violence.<sup>25</sup> Such representational strategies once again create space between ‘the state’ and criminal and militant groups which in practice are very closely linked to state officials (Marat 2006: 103-108).

Fourthly, in elite discourse the threat especially emanates from Afghanistan. Tajikistan has typically been portrayed by Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as the haven for

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<sup>21</sup> See *Jumhuriyat* 99, 21/08/02. [transl. Otabek Sindarov]

<sup>22</sup> One such purge of KOGG occurred in January-February 2002. See *Asia-Plus Blitz* #014 (923), 21/01/02; *Asia-Plus Blitz* # 039 (948), 26/02/02.

<sup>23</sup> See *Asia-Plus Blitz* # 61 (474), 03/04/00.

<sup>24</sup> See for example, SCO statement on first anniversary of 9/11. See *Asia-Plus Blitz* # 174 (1083), 12/09/02

<sup>25</sup> See for example, *Asia-Plus Blitz* #188, (850) 03/10/01.

the IMU, for example;<sup>26</sup> in turn, Tajikistan has sought to locate that threat in Afghanistan.<sup>27</sup> Afghanistan was identified by Rahmon as ‘the source of international terrorism’ and an ‘outpost of extremism’<sup>28</sup> both before and after September 11<sup>th</sup>. In May 2001, in an interview with the Russian newspaper *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, Rahmonov remarked that ‘not all realise the threat coming from the situation in Afghanistan and they try to make do “economically” with small means.’<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Afghanistan is inscribed as a backward and primitive place – a place which post-conflict Tajikistan must leave in the past.<sup>30</sup> Drugs trafficking and extremism are thus the ‘Afghan problem’, a problem *for* Tajikistan, the region and the international community rather than a problem which deeply implicates Tajikistan’s elite themselves. For example, a Tajik National Security Council statement noted that ‘many foreign mass media portray Tajikistan as a drug-trafficking country. However, they fail to mention that the drugs come from Afghanistan that Tajikistan has common borders with.’ These drugs, the statement noted, are trafficked across the CIS and Europe. Thus, ‘the international community should not view Afghan drugs as solely a problem for Tajikistan.’<sup>31</sup>

### ***1.iii. Central Asia’s Regional Community/Security***

A third representation of Tajik sovereignty is that ‘Tajikistan’ is a part of ‘Central Asia’. However, this Central Asia, a post-Soviet regional space which includes a leading role for Russia, is quite different from that rendered in the US State Department’s ‘South and Central Asia’. This is perhaps the most significant of the three performances in the border handover.

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<sup>26</sup> Eurasianet, ‘Tajik minister tells Iranian radio Uzbek militants agreed to leave Tajikistan,’ Source: Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mashhad, in Persian 1600 gmt, 25/04/00; *Asia-Plus Blitz* # 85 (498) 06/05/00.

<sup>27</sup> At times the government has also sought to portray the threat as emanating from Uzbekistan. See *Asia-Plus Blitz* #149 (562), 08/08/00; *Asia-Plus Blitz* #104 (1013), 04/06/02; RFE/RL, ‘Central Asia: Is the IMU still a threat to regional security?’, 24/01/04.

<sup>28</sup> See, *Asia-Plus Blitz* #27 (440) 09/02/00, #170 (583) 06/09/00.

<sup>29</sup> *Asia-Plus Blitz* #102 (764) 31/05/01.

<sup>30</sup> See *Asia-Plus Blitz* #18 (431), 27/01/00, #170 (1079), 05/09/02.

<sup>31</sup> *Jumhuriyat* 20, 25/02/00. [transl. Otabek Sindarov]

*A regional community of states and statesmen*

Tajikistan's elite networks today are primarily understood in terms of their regional (provincial) ties. However, elite networks in the post-Soviet space extend beyond national boundaries. Soviet legacies provide a unique historical basis for Central Asia's new regionalism – networked elites across the region who share similar experiences, spaces and discourse. As an imagined rather than a territorially-based community, it can be argued that Central Asia is a regional space governed by illiberal norms of 'authority' and 'stability' (Heathershaw 2006). The continuance of a cadre of Soviet-era elites and bureaucrats in the region, and the almost complete marginalisation of liberal reformers in all of the five new states (with the partial exception of Kyrgyzstan), provides the human foundation for this.

As a space, the boundaries of the region are fluid not fixed. Adler and Barnett remark that 'regions themselves are socially constructed and susceptible to redefinition' (1996: 77). Locating 'Central Asia' provides a particular challenge. Regional leaders have often been ambivalent about Russia's role in the region, at times calling on the Kremlin for leadership, at other times resisting arrangements which create an exclusive relationship with Moscow (Allison 2004). Furthermore, Central Asia's imagined community is accompanied by apparently contradictory national independence discourses in the new republics (Prazaukas 1997; Rumer 2002; Vasiliev 2001). However, one must ask whether this contrariety must necessarily be resolved. The existence of multiple and contending identities should not be a surprise in a region where political elites were practised at playing both national and regional cards (Brill-Olcott 1996: 40-41). Such ambivalences are very much a part of neo-Soviet ideology and post-Soviet politics. Elsewhere, I have argued that the prevalence of multiple signifiers of regional space – from 'Middle Asia and Kazakhstan' (*Srednaya Aziya i Kazakhstan*, the term commonly used during the Soviet Union) to 'Eurasia' (*Evroaziya*, which has a particularly complex genealogy [Smith 1999b]), from 'the New Great Game' to 'the Heartland' – indicates a space-making as well as space-contesting function for 'Central Asia' (Heathershaw 2006). Whilst territory may provide a bone of contention between elites, and border

clashes remain frequent, in their similar spatial, ethical and temporal imaginaries they often find common ground.

These imaginaries are reproduced discursively, and in the formal institutions of regional international relations. Discernible post-Soviet discourses of *mirostroitelstvo*, *mirotvorchestvo* (Lynch 1999; Smith-Serrano 2003), and *konfliktologiya* (Reeves 2005), communicated primarily in Russian and under an ideology of neo-Sovietism, establish the norms and beliefs which divide ‘Us’ from ‘Them’ as a nation and as a region. Governments across the region seek to de-legitimize terrorists by portraying them as an external and nihilistic challenge to the legitimate authority of the state, and a threat to the prospects for economic development and social stability (Horsman 2005; Liu 2006). In this sense it is a shared image of the importance of state territorial independence that paradoxically constitutes common regional space. In such a way, since 2000, Tajikistan has increasingly been cast among leaders less as regional bogeyman and more as a sovereign member of ‘Central Asia.’ Numerous CIS, SCO, Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), and Central Asian Cooperation Organisation (CACO) summit meetings often do little more than express one another’s membership and the ethics of ‘Central Asia’. Joint military exercises and military cooperation agreements frequently performed between Central Asian states and Russia are usually conducted under the auspices of the CIS or CSTO.<sup>32</sup> They perform a continuing sense of ‘Us’ and a degree of cooperation against domestic opposition and transnational foes, and facilitate substantial economic investment by Russia and China into the region.<sup>33</sup> The USSR’s disintegration, we might argue, served to *de-territorialise* and *de-spatialise* one regional identity but *re-spatialise* imagined communities of ‘Tajikistan’ and ‘Central Asia’, at the heart of both of which is the strong state.

#### *Regionalism in the border handover*

It would have been implausible for Tajikistan to present national control of the southern border without articulating a continuing and strong role for Russia whose troops have

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<sup>32</sup> Initially CIS cooperation was based on the collective security treaty and later, after it was set up in 2002, independently under the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).

<sup>33</sup> During the Batken incursions in 2000 there were attempts at military cooperation between Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. See, *Asia-Plus Blitz* # 154, 15/08/00.

remained in the country throughout independence. However, this is not merely instrumental but highlights a certain and irresolvable ambiguity in the representations of sovereignty. For example, the state newspaper *Jumhuriyat* in December 2004, tells the audience that ‘we longed for many years [for the Russian border control] to come to an end’, whilst simultaneously being told that Russian guards ‘made a great contribution to protecting the region,’<sup>34</sup> and in a subsequent edition that ‘the beginning of activity of the Russian military base on the territory of Tajikistan provides for regional security.’<sup>35</sup> Moreover, testimonies of national independence in border management are habitually supplemented with the caveat that Russians will remain as advisors and trainers of Tajik guards.<sup>36</sup>

The shared political ethics and spatial imaginaries of Rahmonov and Putin underpinned the 2004 Tajik-Russian agreement. While the beginning of the hand-over was announced in March, sparking local and international concern, it became clear that the exact terms were linked to other negotiations between the two governments related to the establishment of a permanent Russian base to house the 5,000 troops of the 201<sup>st</sup> Motorised Rifle Division, the status of the Nurek space facility, Russian investment into hydro-power, and relief of Tajikistan’s bi-lateral debt. After a meeting between Rahmonov and Putin in Sochi on 4 July, an agreement was signed on 17 October 2004 (Arman 2004). Moreover, following the establishment of US bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan following September 11<sup>th</sup>, the news of the permanent Russian base in Tajikistan was greeted as an example of the renewal of Russian influence by its national press. For example, the Moscow daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda* wrote that the base will act as ‘a firm fist to protect Russian interests abroad’ (cited in Arman 2004). Initially the negotiations over the base had been held up by Tajikistan’s demand that the President be able to take over command of Russian troops ‘under extraordinary circumstances’.<sup>37</sup> However, as an alternative, the agreement eventually reached included an informal security guarantee from Putin to Rahmonov (Epkenhans [T5]; Matveeva 2006: 142).

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<sup>34</sup> *Jumhuriyat* 138, 07/12/04. [transl. Otabek Sindarov]

<sup>35</sup> *Jumhuriyat* 121, 2/10/04. [transl. Otabek Sindarov]

<sup>36</sup> *Jumhuriyat* 126, 03/12/05.

<sup>37</sup> IWPR, *RCA*, No. 270, 12/03/04.

Here ‘hard’ power issues of military cooperation are interdependent with ‘soft’ power issues of trust, prestige and performance.

## **PART TWO: Simulating and Dissimulating Sovereignty**

The three representations above show how discourse generates the security policies of national, international and regional actors in Tajikistan. However, the contrasting representations of the Tajik-Afghan border outlined above indicate that a myriad of actors in national, regional and international spaces together negotiate exceptions and, in doing so, draw the line of sovereignty/intervention. There are clear overlaps in the three performances of security/community outlined above which provide the links in a code of sovereignty. Yet their fundamental differences indicate that sovereignty is not singularly represented but is ultimately *simulated*, via this playing to multiple audiences, and *dissimulated*, via the hidden transcripts and practices of these audiences which deny that such authority exists. This section considers what processes of simulation and dissimulation do for the state and for peace in Tajikistan.

### ***2.i. Discourses versus Practices in Border Management***

The Tajik-Afghan border as a site which is manipulated by state actors (both elite, senior officers and subordinate foot soldiers) as it is represented as the boundary of the state – simultaneously the frontier of national, regional and international community/security. Yet the clandestine nature of trafficking ensures that research can rarely provide more than glimpses of its practices at the border.

#### *Drugs Trafficking and the Violation of Borders*

Tajikistan is a key transit country for Afghan opium on its way to be processed as heroin and shipped to the markets of Europe. Production of opiates has risen since the defeat of the Taleban in Afghanistan in 2001, with the subsequent weakening of central control, despite international intervention – 2004, in particular, was a bumper year. Both Tajik and Afghan state representatives are deeply bound up in the trade. Much of the violence in the latter stages of the civil war and the post-war period can be linked to drugs

trafficking<sup>38</sup>. Organised crime groupings are very powerful in Tajikistan, include high-level government officials and therefore retain significant political influence (Marat 2006: 107-108; Akiner 2001: 72-76). High-level officials carry ‘virtual immunity’ from prosecution and thus there are few public examples of their complicity. One exception concerns the Tajik Ambassador to Kazakhstan, twice caught for trafficking (ICG 2001: 15-16). Occasionally ‘turf wars’ between official actors simmer to the surface with recriminations and accusations of trafficking between elites.<sup>39</sup>

**Fig. 2: UN slide showing drug trafficking routes through Tajikistan (UNODC 2004: 6)**

[Removed]

Such analyses suggest that border management in Tajikistan is subject to the power-struggles of the black economy. Yet international programmes are premised upon the possibility of demarcating a non-corrupt or at least considerably less corrupt space. It assumes that newly trained units of guards, or new institutions such as the Drug Control Agency (DCA) under Zuhurov, can operate relatively honestly and effectively within an extremely dishonest system. However, the sheer extent and nature of the trade suggests that this is overly optimistic. The direct profits of trafficking are so great as to make such institutionalised corruption a comfortable business cost. UNODC estimated in 2003 that drugs smuggling was worth USD2.27bn to Central Asian gangs, the majority of which are Tajik. By these statistics, it is possible that the profits from drugs trafficking to Tajik gangs exceed the country’s official GDP of USD1.64bn in 2003 (UNODC 2003: 167).<sup>40</sup> Unsurprisingly, interdiction rates are low. Traffickers report that it is relatively easy to pass checkpoints with bribes (Torjesen et al 2005: 43). One study reports how little resistance traffickers face noting, ‘it is striking how little violence is associated with the multibillion dollar drugs business in Tajikistan’ (ibid: 29). UNODC estimates that 23%

<sup>38</sup> For example, incursions into Khujond, November 1998 were allegedly linked to a failed drugs deal. See Akiner (2001: 72-74).

<sup>39</sup> For example, in 2005, in Moskovskiy district, Tajik and Russian guards publicly accused each other of drugs trafficking. Interview, Bojidor Dmitrov, regional representative, OSCE, Kulob, 02/06/05.

<sup>40</sup> For GDP figures see USAID data sheet, available at: [http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe\\_eurasia/pdfs/tajprofile.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/europe_eurasia/pdfs/tajprofile.pdf).

of Afghan heroine and morphine transit through Tajikistan, yet only 16% of all seizures were made there (2003: 161, 167). In short, despite increasing international assistance, traffickers and state officials continue to transport drugs through Tajikistan on a grand scale.

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The Tajik regime pays lip-service to donor objectives but emphasizes retrenchment over reform. This is reflected in the maxim that, according to a DCA official, ‘Tajikistan is the main barrier to prevent [Afghan] drugs reaching markets’ and ‘that only joint efforts can be effective.’<sup>41</sup> Through such ‘thin simplification’ Tajikistan becomes an increasingly important member of the International Community for the first time in its history as an independent state. The Tajik authorities have responded in kind with performances of sovereignty which feign international standards. KOGG makes monthly and annual reports on drug seizures and comments on the nature of the trafficking threat which are widely reported in the national press.<sup>42</sup> Such reports create a public transcript of state border protection which denies collusion with drugs traffickers.

Yet there is dissonance between international and national approaches. In the press conference following a major international meeting in February 2005, General Zuhurov, in accordance with a public transcript of *national stabilisation*, summarised the two days of talks:

I have been talking about the projects and wishes of the country donors that are interested to equip the Tajik-Afghan border. Everybody is interested about how this border will be equipped and secured and this depends not only on the security of Tajikistan but other neighbouring countries.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See speech by Faizullo Abdulloev, First Deputy Director, Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan, in EC 2005.

<sup>42</sup> All copies of the state newspaper *Jumhuriyat* which I reviewed from 2002 to 2003 contained one account of the arrest or killing of border violators. See *Jumhuriyat*: 21, 19/02/02; 56, 18/05/02; 99, 21/08/02; 20, 18/05/03; 54, 17/05/03. For a more recent account see, ‘We are able to defend our border,’ [*Mo sorhadoti hudro hizf karda metavonem*], *Jumhuriyat* 59, 28/05/05.

<sup>43</sup> See ‘press conference’ and speech by Col-Gen. Saidamir Zuhurov, Director, Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan, in EC (2005).

But in the same press conference Zuhurov departed from the international consensus in defending Tajikistan's right to fixed border outposts (*zastava*), in the face of donor calls for mobile units which would be better equipped to interdict highly mobile smuggling gangs. 'I know better the status on the border than regional reps of UNODC,' he noted, adding that effective border posts in Tajikistan 'must be physical.'<sup>44</sup> This dispute gets to the heart of the different conceptions of Tajikistan as a barrier and the different notions of Tajik sovereignty being performed. While Zuhurov is widely respected in the International Community for being an 'honest guy', it is also acknowledged that *zastava* are integral for institutionalised corruption as fixed outposts provide points for the collection of bribes from legal as well as illegal travelers and traders.<sup>45</sup>

While SSR may be ineffective this is not to say that they do not indirectly effect security in Tajikistan. As argued by Matveeva, with the financing, infrastructure and training for border security and anti-drugs operations being 'outsourced to external powers', the ruling elite is able 'to concentrate on the challenges it considers important' (2005: 134). These include suppressing internal dissent. Moreover, simulating sovereignty through 'border management' and 'reintegration' allows this sovereignty to be dissimulated by state actors' complicity in trafficking and the looting of official resources. For example, the process of border guarding in Tajikistan provides a means of extraction for guards and officials, as described by Matveeva:

Presently, corrupt networks of border guards/policemen/customs officials are firmly entrenched and are interested in the preservation of a *status quo* of closed borders. They also have a lobbying capacity in the capital to argue the case for 'better security' which in reality means more barriers to the movement of goods and people, and more extraction opportunities. (2005: 138)

However, there is little alternative for the International Community but to work within the local system. 'People who are corrupt are experienced in dealing with border management,' one international representative working on BOMCA privately noted. 'If we remove them there will be none left.'<sup>46</sup> Publicly, the solution (reformed border

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Interview, Suhrob Kaharov, Country Manager for Tajikistan (BOMCA), UNDP, Dushanbe, 02/08/05

<sup>46</sup> Interview, international programme officer, Dushanbe, March 2005

management) is found in the problem (corrupt border management). ‘Hidden transcripts’ reverse this logic: the problem is found in the solution. Thus, in broad terms, it seems a matter of interpretation as to whether ‘the state’ should be seen as part of the problem or part of the solution for ‘porous’ borders in Tajikistan. Moreover, this conclusion indicates the limited power and political imagination of the International Community if international actors cannot find alternative allies in combating trafficking in Tajikistan to the very people who are benefiting from the illegal trade. It furthermore illustrates the inauthentic character of such SSR programmes; they are often practised not because of real belief that they will work but because of the absence of widely-accepted alternatives and the presence of an institutional interest in seeing it through for its own sake.

### ***2.ii. Simulating Sovereignty***

To understand this puzzle one must reflect theoretically on this interplay of discourse and practice in international security assistance. In addition to these counter-productive effects, there is a symbolic effect of SSR which is in accordance with the interests of international powers. The international relations of border management serves to inscribe internationally the government as responsible authority. In doing so, they simulate Tajik sovereignty. Asadulloev, a Tajik political scientist, describes this as,

the transition from declared to real independence, which is continuing to this day. The transition of Tajikistan to a full international standing [sic.] in relation to other Central Asian countries as well as in relation to regional and international organisations such as UNTOP, OSCE, and OIC [Organisation of the Islamic Conference] (2004: 7).

Achieving respect and recognition regionally and internationally is particularly valued by Tajik elites. Yet ‘real independence’ here must be understood to be contingent upon wider regional and international acceptance of the government’s performance in terms of anti-terrorism and drugs control. To this extent, rather than sovereignty being cooperatively shared (singly represented) or competed for (contradictorily represented), contrasting representations are, to a limited extent, complementary as they allow representations (and, by extension, different communities) to exist in parallel. Simulation is a product of this ambiguity: the persistence of multiple interpretations over a single

interpretation (Weber 1995: xii). Sovereignty carries different meanings nationally (where it supposes self-sufficiency) compared to regionally and internationally (where, in different ways, it requires intervention).

The understanding of sovereignty adopted here is based on post-positivist theoretical thinking. Classical international relations theory, particularly realism, takes the sovereignty of the state as an essential given, axiomatic to the field itself (Krasner 1992: 39). An alternative tack, increasingly popular in the statebuilding literature, is the idea of a scale of sovereignty measured objectively in factors such as security apparatus and economic infrastructure. However, both of these approaches fails to grasp the symbolic dimension of sovereignty. Walker challenges such objectivist assumptions:

State sovereignty works because it has come to seem to be simply there, out in the world, demarcating the national orders of here and there. But the lessons that theorists of international relations have consistently refused to learn since Hobbes is that sovereignty is never simply there. And what was never simply there can never simply disappear. (Walker 1995: 322)

It is not simply some tendency towards stasis or tradition that reproduces this centrality of the state, but continuous processes of representation. If a government is represented as fostering conflict in other countries, or failing to prevent such ‘spillover’ of extremism, then it can find itself subject to the beginnings of an international discourse of intervention and the loss of a constructed image of sovereignty. If a state is unable to represent its people it risks losing its source of sovereign authority. This is the case in ‘weak’ or ‘failed’ states subject to statebuilding and humanitarianism. By maintaining control over the depiction of itself can the state authoritatively claim to be the agent of its people (Weber 1995: 28). In reality, few states possess this degree of control under conditions of empire. This raises the question of what explains the survival of state sovereignty as the political ideal despite its practical incoherence and unevenness.

The idea of the simulation of sovereignty is based on Baudrillian-inspired theoretical thinking. Weber (1995) argues that it is no longer possible to fix sovereignty according to a single representation of the nation-state. Sovereignty and intervention, for example in the case of border management in Tajikistan, have been so saturated by

multiple and contrasting representations that as signifiers they have lost all meaning. The two are frequently invoked in the same sentence. Weber contends,

If in the same discursive locale where one finds a “legitimate” claim to sovereignty, one finds a “legitimate” example of intervention, sovereignty and intervention cannot be opposed to one another. Rather they can be substituted for one another. Sovereignty is intervention, and intervention is sovereignty. (1995: 121)

The world has simply become so complex that the principles of international law that may have made it easier to ‘fix’ or ‘mark’ the sovereign state are no longer widely accepted. Moreover, when ‘sovereignty’ and ‘intervention’ are used interchangeably, a state loses control of its claim to legitimacy (p. 41). Weber argues that such competing and co-existing representations of sovereignty displace a ‘logic or representation’ with a ‘logic of simulation’ (p.xi-xii). In cases of simulation, discourses constantly shift in their use of referent objects, where any of *inter alia* ‘the people’, ‘the state’ or ‘the international community’ may be inscribed as sovereign. These shifting sets of norms and symbols comprise a ‘code’ (p. 127) for statesmen to adopt in their representations to various audiences. Yet despite this lack, Der Derian with Baudrillard, argues that such simulations are affective: they ‘produce real symptoms, hyper-real effects’ (2001: 214). It is an ‘order of simulation’ which ‘marks the legitimate range of its legitimate powers and competencies’ (Weber 1995: 129).

Simulation allows the elite to manipulate international assistance for their own ends, such as in the case of border assistance under the ‘war on terror’. Often agents are able to avoid the functional fulfillment of agreements, but simultaneously adhere to contrasting ‘codes’ of sovereignty and intervention. Tajik elites are well practised in this, having signed dozens of international agreements which remain unfulfilled (Lavrakas: 2004: 18). However, elite actors will increasingly seek to gain control for themselves of these representations of sovereign authority, seeking to manage the ‘hyper-real effects’. Der Derian, in the context of US national security, considers the ability to manage hyper-reality make wars virtuous through a Military-Industrial Media-Entertainment Network (2001). In such ways, strong states are thus able to affect and to a greater degree than others ‘fix’ the representations of their ‘source’ of authority, and the location of their

boundaries (what's 'inside' and 'outside'). Weaker states without a large entertainment industry and (the need for) sophisticated strategies of media management, seek to manage the 'unreality' of peace and security through more prosaic strategies. Yet, in similar ways, the ability to shape these representations and make them conform to one's own sense of 'self' is for the leaders of a state intrinsic to their agency and their authority, locally and globally. Indeed, it relates to the very ability to control what is local ('domestic', 'internal', 'national', 'inside') and what is global ('external', 'international', 'outside').

In recent years, as shown in terms of reintegration of ex-commanders and border management, Tajikistan has regained some ability to perform a sovereignty/intervention boundary to determine how the country is represented nationally, regionally and internationally. Its increasing acceptance as an equal by regional partners and the increased emphasis on statebuilding by the International Community allows it to justify, to a national audience, the use of state violence by one group (the regime representing the 'the state') over everyone else (the 'citizens'). Threats to the state are identified and demonised as 'external' and – to a certain extent – suppressed. The 'logic of simulation' in Tajikistan has remained stable since the handover of the border to Tajik forces from 2004. In neighbouring Kyrgyzstan, by contrast, representations of the border have been the subject of significant political dispute as powerful opposition discourses have emerged against the government (Megoran 2002). Whereas in Kyrgyzstan 'the border' became a hotly contested site of controversy in newspapers in the run-up to the popular putsch of March 2005, in Tajikistan articles in the infrequently published opposition paper *Ruzi Nav* did not impact public discourse.<sup>47</sup> This comparative lack of dissent illustrates the powerful effects of the simulacra of sovereignty. But, once again, security has been practised in different ways with different partners: national, regional and international. Herewith the state is imagined as a security provider for various wider

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<sup>47</sup> Even opposition party representatives were unsure of the details of what had happened and whether the government had 'sold' land to China. SDPT representative Samadova comments that people did not believe the news: 'You know that last year in the newspaper 'Ruzi Nav' they printed about our parliament selling a portion of land to China. But when we were speaking about this to the common folk (*prostomu narodu*), no one believed us! Is there actually that policy?' ([T18]: 5)

constituencies. Meanwhile the iterative reproduction of such an image justifies the unassailable position of the hegemonic elite.

### ***2.iii. Dissimulating Sovereignty***

Discussion at the representational level of analysis inevitably raise questions which go beyond the discursive environment: about the reception of discourse and how and when simulacra are dissimulated. Whilst public practices are intrinsic to peace/legitimacy, they are negated by hidden practices. In other words, as sovereignty is simulated it is concomitantly dissimulated by elite and popular practices. We must go beyond simulation to dissimulation.

Dissimulation is concomitant to simulation. In Baudrillard's terms, cited by Der Derian, 'dissimulation is to feign not to have what one has' (2001: 214). Public transcripts profess state sovereignty and claim the rights and responsibilities that this entails; hidden transcripts deny these rights and responsibilities. Sovereignty becomes a thin simplification. Its unreality can at times give it an Orwellian character: a trope used to convey its very antonym. Elites claim official rights and responsibilities but deny them in their actions, in effect saying: we are sovereign but powerless to prevent trafficking. The people have greater security but deny this, in effect saying: we are at peace but subject to violence. Elite practices entail illegality and corruption (as discussed above). Popular practices challenge state sovereignty by highlighting the continual failure of the elite to represent national or public interests (as discussed below). However, as Baudrillard notes, to dissimulate something 'implies a presence' (cited in Der Derian 2001: 213). As will be discussed in the conclusion, one dynamic of the practices of dissimulation is inherently conservative: the reproduction of the (artificial) reality – state sovereignty.

#### *Daily life at the border*

Everyday life at the border serves to dissimulate state sovereignty and challenges the meaning of peace itself. Consequent to the high volumes of drugs trafficked through the country, drug abuse in Tajikistan is on the rise, although exact figures are hard to

determine.<sup>48</sup> Hidden transcripts of life at the border represent this murky picture in terms of poverty, the reappropriation of the state for personal enrichment, and accounts of state violence against communities.

The reaction in borderlands to the Russian withdrawal was couched primarily in terms of livelihoods, both the wages that Tajik contract soldiers received directly from their Russian paymasters, and the benefits to the economy of the extra consumption of soldiers. In 2004, most ‘Russian’ troops were contract soldiers (*kontraktniki*) recruited locally. They typically earned USD200-300 per month (whilst the head of the Tajik border forces officially earned USD42 a month). ‘Where can you find a salary like that in Tajikistan?’ one *kontraktnik* complained. ‘Tajik soldiers get 30 somoni [USD10], which is laughable - one person can’t even live on this money, let alone feed five children.’<sup>49</sup> Among soldiers themselves, it is widely believed that poverty wages, poor quality equipment and training will mean that Tajik soldiers are even less likely to interdict drugs than Russian troops were. IWPR quotes a former soldier with the RBF.<sup>50</sup> Thus, a further concern was that the handover to Tajik control would increase the flow of drugs across the border. ‘If the Russian border guards leave for good, it’s hard to imagine the amount of drugs that will arrive here,’ commented one villager from Buni, near Khorog. ‘A lot of young people here have become addicts, and it’s terrible to think of what will happen. Our politicians should think about this when making decisions.’<sup>51</sup>

**Fig. 3: Conscripts patrolling the Tajik-Afghan border between Khorog and Ishkashim, July 2005**

[Removed]

State violence in Tajikistan can be physical but it is often economic or ‘structural’. With contract soldiers unlikely to sign up to vastly reduced salaries, the Tajik government has had to rely on rounding up conscripts to patrol the border. However, those recruited into the armed forces are not necessarily bound to be used

<sup>48</sup> UNODC cites 1.1% of Central Asia aged 15 and above as ‘problem users’ (2003: 168).

<sup>49</sup> IWPR, *RCA*, 316, 28/09/04.

<sup>50</sup> Cited in, IWPR, *RCA*, 374, 07/05/05

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

exclusively in public service. Families complain that their sons are being used as free labour by officers to renovate houses and other construction jobs.<sup>52</sup> These proceeds go straight into the pockets of senior officers. Traveling along the remote Badakhshoni stretch of the border in 2005, I talked to numerous conscripts, mainly teenagers from Khatlon province, who were walking along the road with only their weapons (see figure 3). They complained of not having enough to eat and asked for food and cigarettes from us. Poor food and living conditions and widespread bullying are reported and lead to resistance or evasion by families during government conscription campaigns.<sup>53</sup> Such practices indicate that the boundary between security providers and ‘threats’ is a largely a constructed one.<sup>54</sup> International discourses of the Tajik ‘other’ and national elite ideals of ‘us’ maintain this ideal of state protection, whilst acts of state violence against its own people continue without redress. Such practices dissimulate sovereignty and make the divide between ‘state’ and ‘terrorist’ which state actors are seeking to re-inscribe extremely thin indeed. The state is thus maintained by inconsistent and limited adherence to multiple public transcripts (or simulated ‘code’) of sovereignty.

Practices of dissimulation are begotten by the ‘logic of simulation’ but, in this case, have not superseded it. As Reeves has perceptively claimed (Reeves 2006), it is this intrinsic ambiguity of (Central Asian) post-colonial state formation which produces paradoxes such as McMann’s (2004) ‘strong-weak’ states in Central Asia, and Migdal’s (2001) ‘states against themselves’. ‘These paradoxes and puzzles arise,’ Reeves argues, ‘from an initial assumption that *the* state “ought”, in both a normative and descriptive sense, to be a singular rather than multiple entity’ (2006: 11, emphasis added). However, Reeves goes further, via ethnographic study and notes that these multiplicitous acts – what I call practices of dissimulation – are themselves reproductive of state sovereignty. ‘What initially appears,’ she notes, ‘as a violation of a pre-existing boundary between “state” and “society”, “legal” and “illegal” can rather be understood as *constitutive* acts’ (p. 12). They constitute the state but not one that exists in an ideal form. Thus, both

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<sup>52</sup> Cited in, IWPR, *RCA*, 374, 07/05/05

<sup>53</sup> See, IWPR, *RCA*, 324 part 2, 05/11/04

<sup>54</sup> Locals report that when IMU fighters camping in the Tavildara region between 1999 and 2001 were well-behaved and even paid for goods, unlike some government troops stationed nearby in Garm (Matveeva 2005: 141).

simulation (of its ‘presence’) and dissimulation (in its ‘absence’) make the state appear as if it is real, in *both* the daily life of subordinates and discursive and representational practices of elites and internationals. This, once again, points to the inherently ambiguous and precarious nature of statehood and peacefulness in post-conflict Tajikistan.

### **Concluding remarks**

If we see security and sovereignty as fixed, objectively existing phenomena, we lose the ability to see how they constitute the very things they seek to protect (the state and its community). The unintended or indirect consequences of international assistance (in terms of sovereignty) are more significant than any cosmetic changes that may be achieved in border management. Yet this sovereignty and this peace remain unreal in that they are denied by the practices, often hidden, of elite self-enrichment and popular avoidance. I have used the Baudrillian idea of simulation to convey this unreality. Thus, this paper has sought to take the argument beyond representation to show its unreality: how multiple performances or securitisations beget processes of simulation and dissimulation. As representations break down so wider hidden practices which undermine public performances become more important. Sovereignty is a simulacra which at once obscures and enables dissimulative practice.

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