

The trade in people in and from the former Soviet Union

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Abstract. This paper focuses on the trafficking and smuggling of human beings from and through the former Soviet Union. It explores the reasons for the rise in the illegal movement of people; the groups which facilitate it; the demographics of the people who are moved and the business side, including the profits, the disposition of profits and the use of corruption to facilitate the trade. With the disintegration of state control over national territory, this mass movement of people often violates national laws and the national sovereignty of the countries of the Soviet successor states and the countries where the former Soviet citizens move illegally. The paper concludes that this trade mirrors and contributes to the overall downward development of the post-Soviet economies. In contrast, a comparative look at the respective Chinese developments indicates that trade in human beings tends to facilitate the growth of both the Chinese legitimate and illegitimate economies.

The demise of the socialist system has coincided with the rise of globalization. The breakdown of borders, the diminished social control and the impoverishment of many during the transition have all been conducive to cross-border crime. At the same time, powerful crime groups emerged in the former Soviet Union and China. These crime groups are not primarily drug traffickers but diverse criminal organizations many of which make significant profits from the smuggling and trafficking of human beings. The past decade has seen a massive illegal movement of people from the transitional socialist states, which exploit the demand for cheap human services and hopes for a better future. The enormous size, lack of state controls or citizen protections has made the former USSR, the locus of massive illegal trade of people from and through its territory.

This paper focuses on the trafficking and smuggling of human beings from and through the former Soviet Union. It explores the reasons for the rise, the groups which facilitate the movement and the demographics of the people who are moved. The business side of smuggling and trafficking are examined including the profits, the disposition of profits and the use of corruption to facilitate the trade. In the absence of state control over national territory, this mass movement of people often violates national laws and the national sovereignty of the countries of the Soviet successor states and the countries where the Russians, Ukrainians and other former Soviet citizens move illegally.

The problems of the transition have resulted in large scale trafficking of women and children from Russia, Ukraine and Moldova and significant **(End Page 231)** illegal migration to and through the territory of Russia and Ukraine. The lack of physical control over territory has made the former Soviet states, a major route for Chinese and Afghans, Indians and Pakistanis seeking to move to Western Europe. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of illegal migrants now reside in Russia and Ukraine, many of them from China and other Asian countries (Popson and Ruble, 2001; Vitkovskaya and Panarin, 2000). The trafficking of women from Russia and Ukraine and the movement of Chinese and Vietnamese into Russia are consequences of the difficult transition away from the communist system. On the one hand, the ill-conceived

transition wiped out the job security and the limited social benefits which women had in the Soviet period. On the other hand, Chinese migrants are coming to Russia seeking to advance themselves as entrepreneurs, in a situation of an entrepreneurial void created by Russia's lack of trade experience combined with its citizens' lack of faith in government.

None of this illegal movement could have occurred in the Soviet period. The borders of the Soviet Union were tightly sealed by individuals who patrolled its perimeters, ports and airports. An internal passport system ensured that all citizens were registered with the police. Employment was controlled by the state and individuals without state sanctioned employment were subject to prosecution as parasites. Therefore, the structure of the economy, the extensive border and strict internal population controls limited travel within the country and abroad. The unprecedented mobility is one of the consequences of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

With the disintegration of the Communist system, trafficking and smuggling of human beings has become an important element of the second economy in both Russia and China. Yet this trade differs among states in transition from Communism. Chinese illegal migration to Russia and Ukraine, sometimes run by organized crime, is a tool for Chinese economic development. Russian speaking organized crime has a raider mentality towards their country's natural resources. Russia and Ukraine receive limited foreign capital from the trafficking of human beings. The demographic situation of China can permit the loss of human capital through smuggling whereas Russia and Ukraine, where births are far below the replacement level cannot afford the trafficking of women of childbearing years. The human trade for China is part of its overall economic growth. Money from human trafficking is repatriated to mainland China and invested in businesses and homes. For, Russia and Ukraine, however, it is a further drain on their resources as they lose people and often acquire individuals who place demands on their social services. With these serious consequences, the illegal movement of people becomes a national security issue (Vitovskaya and Panarin, 2000: 188-226). **(End Page 232)**

The Soviet Union and the status of women

At the end of the Soviet period, many women were well educated and nearly fully employed. Socialist ideology proclaimed the equality of men and women in the Slavic regions and women achieved slightly higher education than men (Lane, 1985: 224-226). These achievements came at a high cost as women shouldered the double burden of work and home, exacerbated by life in a shortage-plagued economy in which many lived in communal housing.

Within the Soviet culture, women were not viewed as sexual objects, in fact they were encouraged to become involved in the most unfeminine activities: building bridges, paving roads, casting iron and constructing railroads (Shishkin, 1980: 50). Although the socialist ideology of equality for women existed as propaganda rather than an institutionalized reality, tremendous resources were invested to ensure equal access to education for women and significant state funds were spent to guarantee childcare for working mothers. An elaborate system of after-school enrichment and summer programs was provided for children at minimal cost (Jones, 1994: 3-22). While educated women's professional positions were generally in lower status and lower paid occupations such as teaching, the medical profession and nursing, these occupations had a recognized and established position within society and a guaranteed income. Outside the professional realm, there was an over-concentration of women in low paid dead-end jobs (mainly in textile/clothing/food industries and services, clerical jobs and collective/state

farms) (du Plessix Gray, 1990). Despite the low wages, the non-monetary social benefits provided by the Soviet system including subsidized child care, summer programs and many cultural and athletic programs for children made it possible for women to work and support families. Despite the fact that health care was rather poor and children were not provided individualized care, women were nevertheless able to become an integral part of the Soviet economy (Hansson and Liden, 1993). The high divorce rates, often the result of high rates of male alcoholism and wife beating, gave women enormous financial responsibilities for their families. Excluded from positions within the Party bureaucracy by an absence of time and the patriarchal power relations of society, women were a presence in the work force rather than in the political process (Mamonova, 1994).

The systemic transformation, status of women, trafficking and illegal migration

The Soviet Union lived for much of the twentieth century with an ideological commitment to the Communist ideology. Under Communism, the state (**End Page 233**) assumed responsibility for development placed all production under state ownership and emphasized strong central controls at the expense of individual freedom and initiative. The formerly closed Soviet Union once controlled internal migration and prevented exodus through strict border controls.

In the past decade, the newly independent states have moved away from the Communist system. Ideological change has been accompanied by profound changes in the economic and social systems of the former Soviet states. Since the Soviet system collapsed, Russia and Ukraine have disbanded the central economic planning and many of the controls over citizens that existed for 70 years. Furthermore, they have abandoned their ideological commitment to the equality of women. Although a Communist government still exists in China, the changes are no less profound than in Russia, which has officially abandoned Communism. In states in transition from Communism, there are lessened controls over the citizenry, but also fewer social protections. Moreover, economic differentiation among regions of the country and among citizens has sharply increased.

In Russia, the economic transition has fallen particularly hard on certain regions such as the Far East, and has led to the feminization of poverty. In Ukraine, the drop of living standards has been more precipitous. In Azerbaijan, ethnic conflict and the appropriation of oil revenues by the elite have led to the impoverishment of much of the citizenry. The economic transition removed women's social safety net, however restrictive and deficient it was, without providing them with any possibilities to acquire and maintain property. The privatization of state property resulted in the mass transfer of wealth, primarily to men. Women were left without capital or the non-wage supports that allowed them to survive. Billions of dollars left the country, the revenues of the sale of natural resources were privatized by corrupt officials and taxes were not paid (Boulatov, 2001). In the absence of state budgetary resources, salaries and pensions were not paid. Sustaining the legacy of full employment for women was difficult in the economic crisis of post-Soviet society.

The flawed design of privatization, the collapse of state institutions, the rise of organized crime and the proliferation of corruption combined to ensure that women had few economic alternatives in the 1990s. Women were left with limited opportunities to function in the legitimate economy, a situation, which served the traffickers who thrived on the vulnerability of women. Many of the women affected were too old to be subjected to trafficking but their

impoverishment left no way for them to support their daughters and grandchildren. The sense that women are responsible for their extended families and are pillars of society made many women seek any available work abroad in the absence of legitimate opportunities at home. **(End Page 234)**

Socialist ideology proclaimed the end of prostitution and the criminal code did not acknowledge its existence. Prostitution, however, did not disappear in the Soviet era but was driven underground and often continued in Party and military controlled brothels. By the final decades of the Soviet period, thousands of women were prostitutes, monitored by the police and often forced to collaborate with the secret police. A full range of prostitution existed, from women who served the Party elite and the emergent business community to the lowest level who frequented railroad stations searching for clients. Yet prostitution did not become a mass phenomenon until the Gorbachev years.

The rise of prostitution has been a result not only of economic necessity but also a rejection of socialist ideology in which prostitution was suppressed and its existence denied. During the final years of the Soviet Union the "emancipation from the desexualization of life under communism" meant that for many there was a glorification of the erotic and the idealization of the prostitute as an individual breaking barriers (Lissyutkina, 1993). This accounted for some of the attraction to prostitution. In surveys of high school and vocational schools at the end of the Soviet period, many indicated prostitution as a favored career choice, a response that reflected the benefits of foreign currency and the lure of the business world (Sanjian, 1991: 270-295).

In China, the economic transition has resulted in a boom for some with the skills to survive in a rapidly developing economy. It is the disparities of economic opportunity in China, rather than the collapse of the economy as in Russia, which lies at the base of the illegal population movement. The opening up of the borders between Russia and China in the Far East has facilitated trade across the border but it has also facilitated a larger scale illegal migration. This is evident as thousands of Chinese settle in the Far East and Siberia and even as far as Moscow, often as prelude to moving farther West.

In former Soviet states and in China, strong crime groups, with links to the surviving Communist power structure have stepped in to fill the power vacuum and now operate on a global scale. Many of these groups are not what may be defined as traditional organized crime but represent some amalgam of traditional organized crime, individuals from the same region, corrupt government officials and members of the diaspora community. Members of the security apparatus, the FSB (Federal Security Bureau) in Russia and the Public Security Bureau in China, are involved. In China, as in Russia, the collusion of government officials is central to the capacity of smugglers to operate (Chin, 1999: 44-45). These criminal groups also work with corrupt officials in other countries and cooperate with international crime groups as necessary (Chin, 1999: 41-42; Myers, 1994, 1996). The trade in human beings from both countries owes much to the legacy of corrupted Party power structures. **(End Page 235)**

State controls are less pronounced far from the nations' capitals. The Southern regions of China and the Far East of Russia are both areas where the operations of crime groups are least controlled by the central state. Trafficking and smuggling activities are especially acute in these regions but by no means confined to these areas as evidenced by the large number of illegal migrants in Moscow and Kyiv.

Research methodology

The research for this paper draws on a wide variety of sources. It includes the reading of American and Russian newspaper reports on cases which have been initiated and investigated, human rights reports, and materials prepared by multinational organizations such as the United Nations and the International Organization of Migration. Scholarly literature was used but even now with a rise in interest in the topic, there is limited material available.¹

The analysis of the Russian trafficking situation has been facilitated by research conducted in conjunction with two grants received by the Transnational Crime and Corruption Center (TraCCC) at American University in Washington, D.C. The first of these grants permitted the hiring of a team of interdisciplinary researchers across Russia and Ukraine to investigate human trafficking. These specialists were in some regions given access to police records. They were also able to conduct interviews with individuals who had been trafficked and those who were involved in recruiting women to be trafficked. The second grant, for the purpose of preparing training materials to combat trafficking has given us access to western law enforcement investigators and prosecutors who have conducted investigations of these cases in the United States. Interviews have also been conducted by the author with law enforcement in England, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, and Germany to gain better understanding of the dynamics of the trafficking and smuggling in Europe.²

Ongoing research at TraCCC centers in Siberia and the Far East, the locale of many visa-free border crossings from China, provides extensive information on the immigration of Chinese, the illicit activities within the "foreign" communities and the extensive trafficking of women in these regions.

To understand trafficking of Chinese and other illegal immigrants into Russia and Ukraine, the author has met with scholars working on the problem in different parts of Russia and with law enforcement personnel involved in analyzing and addressing the problem. General insights on Chinese organized crime are based on actual investigations of the business side of Chinese organized crime conducted in the West. These include financial records of Chinese traffickers and information obtained from Interpol's organized crime division (**End Page 236**) which is currently analyzing the relationship among different Chinese trafficking organizations operating in Europe.³

Smuggling vs. trafficking

According to the United Nations protocol, "Smuggling of migrants shall mean the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or permanent resident."⁴ This protocol was established to address the burgeoning trade of illegal immigration facilitated by criminals specializing in the illegal movement of people.

Russia today has no legislation criminalizing the trafficking of adults. The penal code allows aspects of trafficking to be prosecuted but these are difficult charges to prove and there have been only a limited number of cases (Victims of Trafficking Act). Ukraine's new criminal

code allows more effective prosecution of trafficking and there have been already several cases against trafficking groups.⁵

While both human smuggling and trafficking result in the mistreatment of the individual being moved across borders, there is a fundamental difference between them. In smuggling, a voluntary relationship is entered into by the individual who wants to be moved across borders. "Smuggling is sometimes called 'facilitated migration,' which more accurately reflects the process" from the point of view of the person being smuggled.⁶ Smuggling because it involves the crossing of borders is a violation of state sovereignty.⁷ The potential migrant contracts with the smuggler to be moved to his intended destination abroad. The smuggler may subject the individual to much worse conditions than he anticipated at the time of the agreement. Or the smuggler may change the terms of the contract demanding more money from the individual or a longer period of service until the "debt has been paid." Nevertheless, at the outset, there is a consensual relationship between the smuggler and the person who seeks to leave the country. This is not to say that significant violations of human rights may not occur even though this started as a consensual relationship. Smugglers may physically abuse the humans they move, subject them to overcrowding, deprive them of food or water or needed medical care. They may leave them stranded along their route, abandoning them before they reach their ultimate destination.

In contrast to smuggling, there is no consensual relationship in trafficking. It routinely involves deception, coercion, abduction, fraud, debt bondage and abuse of power. According to the United Nations Protocol definition, exploitation shall include sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.⁸ Through deception, **(End Page 237)** threats of violence or actual use of violence, the trafficker forces the individual to work in conditions of forced labor, servitude or debt bondage. A person who hires a "smuggler" or travels for a job promised by a "recruiter" may not realize that this person is actually a trafficker who will place him or her in these unanticipated conditions. Some traffickers do not move individuals internationally. Therefore, this is a crime against the individual and only in the international context is it a violation of state sovereignty.⁹

Demographics of those being trafficked and smuggled

In many of the Soviet successor states, there are significant numbers of citizens who are ready to seek employment or a new life abroad. Many of these seek more economic opportunities, a relief from violence in their war-torn regions or an alternative to the dislocations of the post-Communist transition. Many survived under Communism with well-developed coping techniques. In Russia and Ukraine, a well-developed informal economy based on scrounging, pilfering, dealing, tending small private plots helped people survive at a low level (Ledeneva, 1998). Individuals from Azerbaijan ran food markets, a key part of the second economy in the Soviet period. Likewise in China, a significant second economy arose based on farmers' markets, underground protection and commercial activity tied to Communist cadres (Los, 1990; Lu, 2000: 122-123, 190-227). These intricate, familiar arrangements were disrupted in many transition countries in the 1990s.

The population controls and barriers to residence and immigration in many countries of the world mean that desperate individuals caught in the throes of the post-Communist transition cannot legally move to other countries. The potential emigrants from the Soviet successor states,

China and Vietnam as well as the women of the former Soviet Union lack the financial resources to emigrate legally and many desirable regions of the world will not permit them to enter. The men often pay smugglers to move them. The women are vulnerable to the services of the traffickers who move individuals illegally around the world and extract payments through subsequent employment in sweatshops, as laborers or providers of sexual services.

Smuggled Chinese do not have the possibility of legally obtaining entry permits in many developed countries because they are unskilled. Furthermore, the subsequent generations who follow those who originally emigrated are not part of a nuclear family and therefore are not recognized under the immigration laws of almost all countries for favorable treatment. Migration must be done by irregular means because the structure of relationships and the financing of migration are outside the immigration framework of the western societies where they seek to move (Myers, 1996: 44-47). **(End Page 238)**

The Chinese gangs traffic women for prostitution but their largest trade may be the smuggling of males for labor abroad. Many Chinese in Russia are traders, living in difficult conditions, often forced to pay fellow Chinese who control the increasingly visible Asian markets.

Whereas Chinese smugglers draw from low economic and educational strata, different strata of women are recruited by the Russian trafficker as research done by law enforcement in the St. Petersburg area revealed. The women from that region trafficked abroad for prostitution are no different from the general demographics of women of that age group. Some of the women are more enterprising and seek this activity as an alternative to their limited economic horizons. Many of the women involved are the risk takers who see a chance to possibly achieve more outside of Russia than their presently impoverished lives provide. Before the end of communist rule, many women led "dead end" lives, but could not even think about re-locating within the Soviet Union, let alone outside it.

Russian women recruited by the traffickers come from all regions of the country, especially impoverished regions with limited economic alternatives. Some are single mothers with no means of providing for their children in communities where work for women is low paid or almost non-existent. Particular targets for the traffickers are women from the Russian Far East but also from poverty-stricken parts of the Urals and Siberia.¹⁰ Interviews with women from the Far East reveal that many had high school education but went into prostitution because of their limited prospects and their boredom with the impoverished lives of their communities (Erokhina, 2001).

A notable group of young female prostitutes comes from the lowest tier of post-Soviet society, a sector of Russian society that has grown significantly in the 1990s. These are the homeless, children of alcoholic and abusive parents and the hundreds of thousands of abandoned and orphaned children and youth confined to children's homes who are all natural targets for the traffickers. These large-scale institutions existed in Soviet times but their numbers have swelled during the post-Communist transition. Children live for years in the abusive conditions of these homes; the residents have little preparation for life after the institutions. The number of homeless and unsupervised children has swelled and represents about two percent of the Russian population, a consequence of the rise in alcoholism, poor health conditions and the collapse of families (Stoecker, 2000: 132-134).

Another likely target for the traffickers are women subjected to domestic violence and spousal abuse. Violence against women has a very long history in Russian society and was widespread and tolerated by the state under communism. Yet, according to sociological

researchers, the demise of the USSR and the precipitous drop in living standards which followed has contributed to **(End Page 239)** a rise in domestic and sexual violence, a problem that is not addressed by the totally inadequate social and law enforcement resources (Kon and Riordan, 1993).

Trafficking and smuggling are also tied to the sense of familial responsibility. In China and some other Asian countries, male children assume the role of guarantor of the family's well being. In Russia, in contrast, it is the woman who has been pillars of support. This was evidenced in pre-revolutionary Russian literature and continued through the Soviet period as well. Women support children, keep the economy going and epitomize the *rodina* (or motherland). Under the changed circumstances, they are now being pressured to leave and seek employment abroad to keep the family afloat. The disproportionate number of male children born in China is explained by the desire by parents to produce sons to take care of them in their old age. Scientific technology is now being used to identify female fetuses for abortion (Pomfret, 2001: 24). In the Chinese transition, without guarantees of state support in old age, family members must rely on each other and their male family members, in particular. Therefore, many Chinese go overseas for the purpose of supporting their families.

Illegal movement of people

The opening of borders, particularly that between Russia and China, and the decline of border controls has facilitated a massive movement of people from and through the states of the former Soviet Union. In a country where all entrance and exit was strictly controlled through the 1980s, this unprecedented mobility is one of the greatest changes of the post-Communist transition. Although much of this illegal movement of people is towards the West, particularly Europe, it is not confined to there but is part of an international global movement that includes Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Women from the former Soviet Union often have little control over where they will be trafficked. They are sent by their traffickers to Asia, Europe, the United States and even as far as Latin America. The vast majority are trafficked to Western Europe and estimates range from the tens to the hundreds of thousands.

Groups in the Russian Far East work with Japanese and Korean organized crime to transport women to China, Japan, Korea, Thailand and other destinations of the Pacific Rim. These ties are particularly important for Russian organized crime as Japanese groups have years of experience in this area. Groups in the Caucasus work with traffickers in Turkey to move women to brothels in Turkey, Cyprus and elsewhere in the Middle East. **(End Page 240)** Women from Kazakhstan are trafficked to Bahrain, where the Moslem links of the traffickers provide women for this free trade zone (Isaeva, 1995).

In the Asian region, the largest number of Russian women is trafficked to China, followed in frequency by South Korea and Japan. The latter two are less frequent because of the higher costs of transport and also the costs of obtaining entry documents for the women. Among those working under registered businesses the figures are different. According to the internal affairs department of the Khabarovsk region last year, there were 27 firms specializing in finding foreign employment in show business. In six months in 2000, 407 people left under these show business firms. Among these 240 went to South Korea, 160 to Japan and 5 to China (Erokhina,

2001). But many more women went to China under different terms because border crossings are easier between Russia and China than other Asian countries.

Traffickers move large numbers of Slavic women to Belgium, Italy, Netherlands and Germany where there is a large demand for attractive blondes. They have used violence against competitors and trafficked women to gain a foothold in the lucrative prostitution markets of Western Europe (Fijnaut et al., 1998). Dutch researchers suggest that approximately one-third of the women illegally engaged in prostitution in the Netherlands are from Ukraine and that the countries of the former USSR have overtaken all other countries in providing the preponderance of women engaged in unauthorized prostitution in the Netherlands (Bruinsma and Meershoek, 1997: 105-118). The problem is not unique to the Netherlands but the patterns their researchers have identified are common throughout Western Europe.

The human traffickers are increasingly moving individuals to Russia and Ukraine because these states do not have the law enforcement capacity to control the activity or the financial resources to expel detained illegal immigrants within their borders. Ukraine's police and border troops detain between 25 and 30,000 illegal immigrants annually (Radio Free Europe, 2001). Many, such as Abkhazians, Afghans, Kurds, Sudanese and Somalis, are refugees from ethnic conflicts. Many come from impoverished areas of Asia such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, while others such as the Chinese and Vietnamese are there to develop trade. Many of these migrants remain in the country illegally. There is little understanding of the mechanism by which these 100,000 "foreigners" have arrived in Kyiv. Many more individuals have arrived in other parts of Ukraine although the concentration of immigration is greatest in Kyiv and border areas (Popson and Ruble, 2001).

Many of the same groups are present in Russia but with the ease of cross-border transit many more are from China. Azerbaijan, according to International Organization of Migration (2001) estimates, has as many as one million of its citizens residing temporarily or permanently in Russia, the vast (**End Page 241**) majority failing to fulfill the registration requirements. For many, the stay in Russia is a temporary step before a move to Western Europe (10M). The Russian Immigration Service estimates that there are 3,500,000 foreigners today in Russia, the vast majority of them living there illegally. They come not only from the states of the former Soviet Union but also from Iran, Iraq and Mongolia as well as the previously named countries in Asia and Africa. To survive in a society, in which they reside illegally, many engage in smuggling arms, precious metals and contraband. These activities are most pronounced in Moscow, Siberian regions and the Far East (Interfax, 1999).

The crime groups which move human beings

The crime groups trafficking and smuggling people from and to the former Soviet Union vary considerably. These variations reflect fundamental differences that exist between Russian-speaking and Asian organized crime groups. Russian-speaking organized crime is not familial based. Instead, the crime groups are structured on the basis of cells or small units that operate through a network structure. This provides them enormous flexibility to conduct different operations. The Vietnamese and Chinese groups more closely resemble traditional "mafia-type" crime groups that are based on familial or community relationships. Less is known about the groups which traffic people from Afghanistan, Kurdish areas and Asian parts of the former Soviet Union, but these are believed to be more familial or clan based. These groups are more

hierarchical and conventionally structured than the Russian-speaking groups. Despite their structural differences, all human smugglers and traffickers rely on their links with the state bureaucracy and often the security apparatus to achieve their goals and allow them to operate without restraint in many areas. Relationships are central to their activities.¹¹

Russian-speaking trafficking organizations range from small scale operations which traffic a limited number of women each year to significant criminal organizations which use trafficking in women as a major revenue source (Caldwell et al., 1997). Some of the larger groups are the gangster element of organized crime who emerged visibly in the early 1990s with the privatization of state property. They have now moved into the international trade in women and drugs. They could not operate internationally without their employment of present and former security personnel who benefit these criminal organizations in several ways. The FSB's (security police) ability to monitor telephone communications, e-mail and traffic over websites allows its personnel an ideal opportunity to participate in trafficking and profit from its continued existence.¹² Furthermore, they have experience in the international arena and **(End Page 242)** their skills as money launderers allow them to move the significant profits of the traffickers.

Azerbaijani traffickers engage in both smuggling and trafficking. The groups which operate appear to have much in common with the other forms of Azerbaijani organized crime (International Organization for Migration, 2001). The human smugglers have people as their commodity rather than drugs or arms.

In China, the human traffickers, often referred to as snakeheads, have emerged from a variety of sources including traditional Chinese organized criminal structures that continued in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macao and other parts of Southern China. Also included are individuals, not part of these groups, who are linked by language or lineage. Communist officials in Beijing crack down on Southern officials for corruption but there have been few similar reprisals against the crime groups which continue to acquire wealth and influence in their region. According to recent analyses by Interpol, based on tracking the communications of the traffickers across Europe, these are not small disparate groups, but networks that link back to a single larger boss in China.¹³ Many of these traverse the former Soviet Union on their way to their destination.

The traffickers' and smugglers' international links allow them to "enforce contracts" across borders. Although these contracts are not legitimate in the destination countries, individuals cannot run away from their contracts because the crime groups can retaliate against family members at home. The ability of post-Soviet crime groups to threaten the women under their control and to threaten retaliation against family members in the Soviet successor states makes the women particularly vulnerable. International law enforcement cooperation both in the United States and in Europe has been impeded by viable threats made against trafficking victims.¹⁴ Chinese smugglers enforce contracts across continents. Traffickers and smugglers use encoded phone conversations and encrypted email to ensure rapid communications and provide themselves security. The illegal status of the immigrants compounds their dilemma and increases the control of the traffickers. Until the recent anti-trafficking legislation, the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, was passed in the United States, women who had been trafficked enjoyed no protection from deportation under the law and were treated as criminals. In many countries of the world, those who are victims of trafficking have the same legal status as the traffickers. Therefore, those trafficked can expect no protection from the country to which they are trafficked. **(End Page 243)**

The business of trafficking and smuggling

Many former Soviet states are now exporters of women but recipients of large numbers of illicit migrants. The countries of the former Soviet Union, once cut off from the rest of the world by their closed borders, are now part of the large and growing international business of human smuggling and trafficking. The business is growing because the profits are high, the risks of detection are low and the capacity of the Soviet successor states to act against this activity is limited.

Smuggled and trafficked individuals are considered "commodities," an especially lucrative source of funds for international organized crime because they are a renewable resource. They can constantly generate profits for the crime groups because they can be exploited repeatedly unlike the one-time profits in a drug delivery.

In the post-Soviet case, women are often sold into prostitution to brothel owners and pimps of different nationalities. While post-Soviet groups do control the sex trade in Israel (Amir, 1999) and, to a smaller extent, run some sex services in the United States and Europe, the women are most frequently traded as a commodity like drugs and arms. They are not used as a continual source of financial profit as is the case in the people-smuggling trade out of China or the prostitution rings procuring women for the brothels of India or Thailand.

Chinese trafficking operates as a business, integrated from start to finish. The control of the smuggling from recruitment through employment or debt bondage allows for long-term profits. Much of the profits are repatriated and fuel development in China. In contrast, Russian traffickers, even if they are part of larger criminal organizations, do not run as integrated businesses. They sell the women at relatively low prices to other crime groups at the first opportunity, often in countries of Eastern Europe. Therefore, their profits are smaller than those of the Chinese.

Both trafficking and smuggling represent gross violations of human rights, but the degree of violations is dependent on the structure of the business. Although some Chinese smugglers severely abuse those who are moved, individuals must be able to maintain contact with their families and must survive in order that new individuals are recruited for the pipeline. The situation of Russian women is quite different. Sold off to different pimps and brothel owners of other nationalities, they are often severely abused and cannot maintain contact with their families. The greater abuse of the women is not just the result of coercion and deception. Russian traffickers do not depend on the women they presently control to obtain subsequent trafficking victims. In contrast, Chinese smugglers cannot stay in business if their abuses are too great because they are dependent on individuals agreeing to conclude "contracts" (**End Page 244**) with the traffickers. Chinese who "contract" to be smuggled rationally calculate their decision based on past experience of their compatriots.

Despite warnings in the media in Russia and Ukraine and to a lesser extent in other successor states on the dangers posed by traffickers, women are still recruited. Many are deceived thinking they will work as seasonal agricultural workers, chamber maids or in the service sector. The fact that some manage to secure such positions reduces suspicion. Traffickers in the former Soviet states are not drawing from one region as are the Chinese; therefore the word of what conditions exist abroad is not spread as readily. Some of the trafficked women are homeless or from children's homes, therefore they do not have families to stay in touch with. This contrasts sharply with the Chinese case where smuggled individuals are integrated into familial networks.

Conclusion

The smuggling through and into the former Soviet states and the trafficking of women and children out of these countries has occurred only since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This massive illegal movement of people is a consequence of globalization. Even more, however, it is a result of the post-Communist transition from centrally controlled and planned economies to more open economies, accompanied by the weakening or disappearance of border and domestic controls. In most of the Soviet successor states, the central state and the police controls of the Communist period have ended and have not been replaced with any meaningful institutions or social and economic policies. Millions have suffered in the transitions. Many have been left without the possibilities of supporting themselves or their families.

These fundamental changes in the Soviet successor states and in China have coincided with the rise of international organized crime, the increasing mobility of people and the official barriers to entry into many countries in the world. Therefore, the illicit trade in human beings has arisen to satisfy the desire of individuals to leave difficult financial circumstances and to move to the West which was off limits for so many decades. Many of these countries place barriers to entry even though they have a demand for cheap labor and sexual services.

The rise of international organized crime has coincided with the collapse of the Soviet system and the profound changes in the Chinese state and society. The crime groups emerging from these communist states are among the most prominent of global international crime groups. Both groups have capitalized, on the one hand, on the demand to leave transitional states and the demand for cheap physical and sexual labor in developed countries. Unlike many international crime groups that are almost exclusively focused (**End Page 245**) on the drug trade, Chinese and Russian crime groups have made the illegal movement of people a central focus.

This mass movement of citizens can occur only because officials who guard the borders and police the society are passive or, more often, complicit. Often law enforcement and security personnel are key actors in this process. Corruption at home, in transit countries and recipient countries is also central to the success of the traffickers and smugglers.

The "business" of people smuggling and trafficking differs dramatically between Russia and China even though both have emerged from Communist states. The Chinese who have always been great traders run their smuggling operations as integrated business operations, maximizing profits from start to finish. As traders illegally residing in Russia and Ukraine, they make a profit in markets where Russians cannot succeed. Chinese organized crime views trafficking as a means of generating capital for development at home. The Russians who historically have always been sellers of natural resources rather than traders treat their trafficking business as a commodity market. The human resource of women is plundered like the precious metals, oil and gas of the former Soviet Union with no thought to the investment of the profits of this trade in the domestic economy. Some women send money back but they are not building an economy based on remittances as are many women trafficked from Asian countries. Russian and Ukrainian women may send home money to support children and parents. Unlike the Chinese, they are not sending enough to provide capital for investment.

The post-Soviet trade mirrors the overall downward development of the post-Soviet economies. In the former Soviet states the trade in women drains the countries and limits their potential for future economic growth and sustainable development. In contrast, the Chinese trade

facilitates the growth of both the Chinese legitimate and illegitimate economies. This trade occurs in the context of a large population that can afford to export its human resources.

Notes

¹ Among the notable exceptions are the books by Smith, Chin, Bales, Weitzer, Phongpaichit et al., Kyle and Koslowski, Andreas and Snyder, Williams' special issue of *Transnational Organized Crime* in 1997 and the recent article of Aronowitz.

² One grant was provided by United States Information Agency of the U.S. State Department and supported interdisciplinary research on trafficking and the other was to prepare training material for the Bureau of International Law Enforcement.

³ Presentation of Gwen McClure at the Conference, "Corruption within Security Forces: A Threat to National Security," sponsored by the George Marshall Center, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bundeskriminalamt, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, May 18-21, 2001.

⁴ Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, United Nations, 2000.

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⁵ Research on trafficking has been done by O. Pischulina and N. Gutorova of Kharkyiv on trafficking in Ukraine under a grant from the USIA (United States Information Agency).

⁶ Human Rights Caucus, website www.hriawgroup.org/site/programs/traffic/No3.htm

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, United Nations, 2000.

⁹ Human Rights Caucus, website www.hrlawgroup.org/site/programs/traffic/No3.htm

¹⁰ The non-governmental organization, Miramed, has worked extensively in these areas with the most severe problems to combat trafficking.

¹¹ For Chinese this is guanxi, whereas Russians refer to this as "znakomstvo i sviazi." Willard H. Myers, III, 1997: 93-133.

¹² This information is based on information obtained from interviews with U.S. customs officials and prosecutors in organized crime strike forces who have investigated these cases.

¹³ Similar analysis has been done in the United States, see, for example, Harder, 2001: 18.

¹⁴ Interviews with U.S. diplomats as well as investigators and prosecutors in the United States and Western Europe.

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⁷ Ibid.

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¹⁴ Interviews with U.S. diplomats as well as investigators and prosecutors in the United States and Western Europe.