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Policy analysis

Drugs as an existential threat: An analysis of the international securitization of drugs

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ABSTRACT

The stated intention behind the establishment of the global drug prohibition regime was to protect the world from the dangers of drugs. At different points in history, drug production, use and supply have all been presented as threats to security whether human, national or international security. The international relations theory of securitization can be used as a way of explaining how and why the 'drugs as an existential threat' discourse holds so much power, even today. Speech acts such as the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Russia's 'Rainbow-2 Plan' clearly illustrate the development of the 'drugs as an existential threat' discourse at a global level with particular reference to mankind, the State and global peace and security, respectively. Analysis of these speech acts also shows how the power of the security narrative means that the global drug prohibition regime continues to remain pre-eminent despite the wealth of unintended consequences that it causes.

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Introduction

This article will argue that the Buzan, Waever and de Wilde's securitization framework provides a useful basis for analysing how drugs have been constructed as a threat and why this discourse has proved so unimpeachable. Where once drug policy concerned itself with preventing the 'social and economic danger to mankind' brought about by addiction to drugs (UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961), since the end of the Cold War, the focus of international drug policy has been associated with the security of the State (Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988) and more recently 'global peace and security' (Russia's Plan 'Rainbow-2', 2010).

The role of the United States of America (USA) has been crucial in the internationalization of the 'drugs as a threat' discourse and the USA has taken a lead in the formation of global drug policy since the beginning of the 20th century, often, though not exclusively, through the UN (Bewley-Taylor, 1999). In recent years, the USA has started to, rhetorically at least, scale back its commitment to the 'War on Drugs'. However, Russia is starting to take a more active role in global drug policy.

It will be argued that the process of securitizing drugs started in 1961 with the UN Single Convention, and that this speech act provided legitimacy for all later speech acts relating to drugs nationally and internationally. The UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the UN drugs treaties that followed were part of what Nadelmann terms the global drug prohibition regime (Nadelmann, 1990) that prohibited the non-medical and non-scientific production and use of specific drugs – namely opiates, cocaine-based substances, cannabis, amphetamines and other psychotropic substances. The global drug prohibition regime aimed to eliminate the trade in, and recreational use of, specific psychoactive substances in order to diminish the threat of drug addiction (the Single Convention) and drug trade (1988 Convention). The Single Convention was drafted in order to unify the multitude of previous drug control treaties, however although it claimed to be guided by the 'humanitarian endeavour' (International Opium Convention, 1912) of the earlier treaties, it was also substantially different in terms of its language and its aim to prohibit rather than regulate drugs (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011).

The securitization framework

The securitization framework sets out a new agenda for understanding security within a wider context than traditional security studies allow. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde define securitization as a specific grammatical process that involves a 'speech act' whereby an issue is presented as an 'existential threat' to a designated 'referent object' and finally, 'extraordinary measures' are justified in order to combat this threat (Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1998, p. 21). Securitization can be understood as "the move that takes politics beyond the established rules of the game and frames the issue

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either as a special kind of politics or as above politics" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23).

For Buzan et al. 'security' is not an objective state, rather, it can be conceptualized as the result of a specific grammatical construction of 'threats and vulnerabilities' as 'existential threats' (Williams, 2003, p. 513). These 'existential threats' are constructed within specific political and social contexts (Grayson, 2003, p. 338). The speech act, or 'securitizing move', is the first stage in the securitization process and Buzan et al. argue that an issue is not successfully securitized until the audience accepts it as such (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 25).

A successful securitization constructs a dichotomy in which the referent object, or 'Self', needs to be protected from the existential threat or 'Other' (Herschinger, 2011). It also defines which values and behaviours are acceptable, and which are not (Abrahamsen, 2005, p. 69). The construction of drug users, drug producers and drug traffickers as the 'Other' that threatens a global 'Self', which has its own specific set of morals and values, will be explored in further detail below. Rita Abrahamsen (2005) points out that security politics and the management of risk usually do not involve 'extraordinary action', rather they are moved along 'a continuum of risk/fear' and as such are more likely to involve increased law enforcement and restrictive policies rather than 'spectacular emergency politics' such as war (Abrahamsen, 2005, p. 71). Similarly, the conventions allow national governments a certain degree of flexibility which accounts for the spectrum of policies (Krajewski, 1999, p. 331) that includes de-penalization (e.g. Portugal), strict law enforcement (e.g. the USA) and the militarization of enforcement and eradication (e.g. Plan Colombia). These wide ranging policies can all be seen as sitting at various points on the security continuum mentioned by Abrahamsen.

The development of the 'drugs as an existential threat' discourse

The developing discourses surrounding drugs consistently rely on the construction of drugs, drug users, drug producers and drug traffickers as 'the antagonistic drug Other' (Herschinger, 2011) or existential threat. Initially the 'Other' was seen to be drug users, however gradually drug trafficking organisations (DTOs) and then 'narco-terrorists' became seen as the most dangerous drug 'Other'; these developments allowed a broadening of the global drug prohibition regime (Herschinger, 2011, p. 66).

This regime articulated the idea that the fulfilment of the global 'Self' was being hindered by the 'antagonistic drug Other' (Herschinger, 2011, p. 78). By creating the idea of 'mankind' (Single Convention, 1961) as the global 'Self' carrying out a 'humanitarian endeavour' (International Opium Convention, 1912) to rid the world of the drugs threat, the hegemonic discourse was strengthened and, therefore, the institutionalization of policies designed to negate these existential threats, even if they are policies that would not normally be acceptable, became strengthened (Herschinger, 2011, p. 87). This global 'Self' was then constructed as being morally good in contrast to the 'evil' (Single Convention, 1961) of narcotic drugs. The use of the word 'evil' in the Single Convention is exceptional as no other international convention describes the activity it seeks to prevent in such terms (Lines, 2011, p. 7). Furthermore, such language has created the space for policies that themselves threaten human rights and human security in the name of fighting this 'evil' (Lines, 2011, p. 8). At each stage of the development of the 'drugs as an existential threat' discourse, there was an individualization of the 'antagonistic drug Other', and this increased the perceived dangerousness of drugs, and augmented the power of the discourse (Herschinger, 2011, p. 67). At the same time, it undermined the 'humanitarian endeavour' of the drug control system by inextricably linking the threat with the behaviour of individuals (Lines, 2011, p. 10).

Abrahamsen (2005) argues that Blair's attempted securitization of poverty in Africa delineated who belonged to the 'international community' and who was outside it (Abrahamsen, 2005, p. 69). Those who were perceived as being outside the international community faced "at best abandonment and the withdrawal of development assistance, at worst illiberal interventions to enforce compliance and ensure survival of the international community" (Abrahamsen, 2005, p. 71). This description closely mirrors the securitization of drugs in two ways: firstly, one can see the creation of an international community or global 'Self' that supports the global drug prohibition regime with the Single Convention's near universality in terms of support – 96% of countries are currently signatories to it (Costa, 2008, p. 3). As the former Executive Director of the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) put it, "the entire world agrees that illicit drugs are a threat to health and that their production, trade and use should be regulated" (Costa, 2008, p. 3). High levels of adherence, however, do not equate to high levels of support for punitive policies (for example, the de-penalization of use in Portugal). Secondly, farmers who often live in areas of poor governance and insecurity and who grow opium and coca because they have few economic alternatives (Buxton, 2010, p. 1) risk losing their crops through eradication programmes and therefore being further impoverished because they do not comply with international community norms. Meanwhile, the failure to achieve a 'drug-free world' leads to a situation whereby the only way to defend the 'Self' against the barbaric 'Other' is through increasingly violent and restrictive policies or war (Herschinger, 2011, p. 68).

In the first half of the 20th century the 'drugs as an existential threat' discourse centred on the damage done by drugs to individuals and society, in other words, human security. Drug users were portrayed as being outsiders that threatened to undermine the fabric of society and therefore national identity (Grayson, 2008; Musto, 1987, p. 248). From the beginning there were implicit racial stereotypes in the USA and much of the West surrounding which drugs – and by extension, whose drugs – were acceptable. These issues were also closely tied up with ideas of identity and security as well as the development of the 'Self/Other' dichotomy.

Reinarmann (1994) in his analysis of the social construction of drug scares in the USA argues that "A nationwide scare focusing on opiates and cocaine began in the early 20th century" and that these drugs were first criminalized after the drug using population shifted from middle class women to working class men (Reinarmann, 1994, p. 94). Initially fear was focused on the Chinese immigrant labourers on the west coast of America; willing to work for less, these labourers were perceived to be a threat to American jobs in an economic downturn and so their cultural practices including opium smoking became a target (Bewley-Taylor, 1999, p. 17; Reinarmann, 1994). However other ethnic minorities were soon portrayed as being a threat due to their perceived drug use. Campbell (1992) notes that "Blacks were said to be made violent and sexually uncontrollable by cocaine. . . Mexicans were charged with introducing Cannabis and fomenting crime." (Campbell, 1992, p. 205)

In a study of the development of global prohibition regimes, Nadelmann (1990) argues that such regimes tend to reflect the economic, political and moral interests of the dominant powers of the day. As such, the development of a prohibition-based agenda on drug control against the recreational use of certain drugs was driven by political, economic and moral entrepreneurs in the USA (Bewley-Taylor, 1999; Nadelmann, 1990). The USA has taken a lead in the formation of global drug policy underpinned by a prohibition-based agenda since the beginning of the 20th century (Bewley-Taylor, 1999) and was a driving force behind negotiations to revise and consolidate the previous drug control treaties into one convention (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 7).

The fact that international drug policy prohibits the non-medical and non-scientific use of some drugs and not others (for example alcohol, caffeine and tobacco) reflects the power that the USA and Europe had over establishing global norms with regard to recreational substances (Nadelmann & Andreas, 2006, p. 45) and ignores alternative identities that construct drugs in different ways. Indeed it could be argued that if certain Asian countries had been leaders in establishing global drug policy, substances like cannabis and opium may have been acceptable, and if Muslim nations had been hegemonic actors then alcohol would almost certainly have been banned (Herschinger, 2011, p. 86; Nadelmann & Andreas, 2006, p. 45; Pryce, 2006, p. 603).

The development of international drug control

In the early 20th century the idea that drugs were an international problem was gaining ground (Herschinger, 2011, p. 6). The USA, having already instituted a ban on opium in their new colony, the Philippines (Bewley-Taylor, 1999, p. 11), was determined to internationalize this policy. This moral rectitude, combined with the desire to improve their access to Chinese markets by vocalizing support of China's anti-opium policies, encouraged the US to convene the Shanghai Opium Commission in 1909. The commission called for the homogenization of domestic drug policies at an international level (Herschinger, 2011, p. 6), and resolved to limit use to medical and scientific purposes only. It was, however, only signed by 12 countries (Jelsma, 2011a, p. 2).

Three years after the Shanghai meeting another commission was called together in The Hague. The Hague Opium Commission of 1912 became the first legally binding multilateral drug control treaty (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 2) and was incorporated into the Treaty of Versailles at the insistence of the British and the Americans (Campbell, 1992, p. 199). The 1912 Convention, and later the League of Nations treaties, were "more regulatory than prohibitive in nature", that is they established import and export controls and licensed systems of manufacture and distribution rather than trying to prohibit use, production and trade. There were also no obligations to make drug production, or use, illicit or apply criminal penalties (Jelsma, 2011a, p. 2). Non-medical and non-scientific use was only addressed through the restriction of licit production in order to prevent leakage onto the black market (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 2).

In the 1930s focus started to shift towards the illicit markets rather than the regulation of licit markets. The 1931 Convention on the Limitation of Manufacture of Narcotic Drugs called for signatory nations to estimate the quantities of drugs that were required annually and in 1936 the Conference for the Suppression of Illicit Drugs in Geneva established criminal penalties for illicit trafficking (Herschinger, 2011, p. 62). In this respect the 1936 Convention was different to its predecessors because it was the first to make drug trafficking an international crime (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 5). The 1936 Convention was not universally accepted however and was only signed by thirteen nations (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 5).

The securitization of drugs: the speech acts

The conceptual framework of securitization is used in order to explore the development of the 'drugs as a threat' discourse in relation to global drug policy. Three key speech acts – the 1961 UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances and Russia's 2010 'Rainbow-2' Plan to eradicate opium production in Afghanistan – have been analysed in order to understand how drugs have been constructed as a threat to human,

national and international security within the realm of global drug policy (see Table 1).

Whilst the three speech acts discussed here are not the only examples of drugs having been securitized, they help shed light on how the drugs discourse became so explicitly linked with human, national and international security. Analysis of these speech acts also offers useful explanatory power in understanding the apparently unassailable hegemonic discourse of prohibition. The first two speech acts come from the preambles of the 1961 UN Single Convention and the 1988 UN Convention, respectively. Preambles can be seen as a statement of aspiration (McKenna, Simpson, & Williams, 2001) and although they do not necessarily carry much legal weight (Levinson, 2011) they are crucial in setting the normative tone of a legal document. In the case of the UN drug conventions they are the speech acts that set out the guiding principles by which the document should be interpreted. The third speech act analysed here, 'Rainbow-2' is similar to the UN preambles in that it sets out a statement of aspiration aimed at eliminating the opium poppy in Afghanistan and whilst it is not an internationally sponsored speech act, it does attempt to internationalize the securitization by calling on the UN Security Council to recognize that Afghan opium production is a threat to 'global peace and security' (Russia's Plan 'Rainbow-2', 2010).

The three speech acts are quantifiably different but also very closely connected. Each (see Table 1) concerns itself with a different referent object: mankind; the State; and global peace and security. However within the speech acts there have been only two symbiotic existential threats, the first being addiction to drugs (the Single Convention) and the second being the threat caused by the illicit production and trafficking of drugs and the ways in which this trade undermined the State by benefiting terrorism, organized crime and corruption (the 1988 Convention and 'Rainbow-2'). What will follow is an analysis of the speech acts and the context in which they were devised.

The Single Convention

> " *The Parties*,
> *Concerned* with the health and welfare of mankind,
> *Recognizing* that the medical use of narcotic drugs continues to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes,
> *Recognizing* that addiction to narcotic drugs constitutes a serious evil for the individual and is fraught with social and economic danger to mankind,
> *Conscious* of their duty to prevent and combat this evil,
> *Considering* that effective measures against abuse of narcotic drugs require co-ordinated and universal action,
> *Understanding* that such universal action calls for international co-operation guided by the same principles and aimed at common objectives," (Single Convention, 1961).

By the 1950s it was felt that the sheer number of international treaties concerning drug control was becoming burdensome, so it was decided that one Single Convention was required to streamline the system thus merging all the previous treaties together. The USA was a driving force behind this move (Bewley-Taylor, 1999) and to persuade the rest of the world that certain drugs needed to be prohibited (Herschinger, 2011, p. 62). However, certain manufacturing nations (for example the UK, West Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and Canada) and producer nations (such as Iran and Turkey) also played a large role in drafting the treaty in order protect their economic interests and limit some of

Table 1
The speech acts.

Speech act	Actors	Referent object	Existential threat	Extraordinary measures	Audiences
1961 UN Single Convention states that "addiction to narcotic drugs constitutes a serious evil for the individual and is fraught with social and economic danger to mankind" (preamble, UN Single Convention, 1961)	UN (principally the US, manufacturing and producing nations)	'Mankind' – **Human Security**	'Evil' of addiction to drugs	GLOBAL PROHIBITION through the international regime	UN country representatives and member states' national governments
1988 UN Convention states that "illicit production of, demand for, and traffic in [drugs] adversely affect[s] the economic, cultural and political foundations of society... [and] links between illicit traffic and other related organized criminal activities... undermine the legitimate economies and threaten the stability, security and sovereignty of States" (preamble, UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988)	UN (principally the US)	Society and the State – **National security**	Production and trafficking of drugs and the links with organized crime and terrorism	Increased militarization of law enforcement and eradication strategies	UN country representatives and member states' national governments
2010 'Rainbow-2' aims to raise "the problem of Afghan drug production to that of a threat to global peace and security" (Russia's Plan 'Rainbow-2', 2010, p. 1)	The Russian Federation	Global security – **International security**	Afghan opium production	Attempt to make the UN Security Council and NATO support the eradication of opium poppy in Afghanistan	NATO and the UN Security Council and Russian general public

the most restrictive articles from the 1953 Opium Protocol that the USA and France wanted kept in the Single Convention (McAllister, 2000, pp. 161–206).

The Single Convention concerned itself with human security, focusing on 'mankind' (Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961) as its referent object. In calling for the international community to "Recognise that addiction to narcotic drugs constitutes a serious evil", the Single Convention portrayed "addiction to narcotic drugs" as the existential threat. While the language of the UN Single Convention builds on earlier conventions calling for drug control to be a 'humanitarian endeavour' (International Opium Convention, 1912) it should be viewed as a significant change in international drug control (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 2). Firstly because, unlike the previous international drug control treaties which had been more concerned with regulating the licit trade, the Single Convention demanded that countries went further in prohibiting the trade in non-medical and non-scientific use of specific psychoactive substances (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 2). Secondly, the use of the word "evil" in the preamble establishes a moral framework that juxtaposes drugs and drug addiction against an idea of "mankind" or the global 'Self' that needed protection from such threats.

The Single Convention also marked a departure from previous treaties in that for the first time it included provisions regarding the cultivation of plants from which the psychoactive substances were derived, thus placing the burden on producer countries to restrict supply (Jelsma, 2011a, p. 4; Woodiwiss & Bewley-Taylor, 2005, p. 12). This focus on 'producer' countries fitted conveniently with American ideas that their domestic drug problems had their source externally (Woodiwiss & Bewley-Taylor, 2005, p. 19). In the years following the ratification of the Single Convention, the division between 'producer', 'manufacturing' and 'consumer' states was emphasized; each group routinely argued that the other was not doing enough to address the route of the problem. Coca 'producing' nations such as Peru and Bolivia argued that the problem was demand rather than supply and 'consumer' nations placed the blame on regions where the drugs were grown rather than on the users (Herschinger, 2011, p. 72).

The Single Convention established the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) as an 'independent quasi-judicial monitoring body for the implementation of all United Nations drugs control conventions'. The purpose of the INCB was to oversee the global drug prohibition regime and monitor compliance. Whilst the INCB has limited formal powers, it is not a passive actor and has often tried to make recommendations on scheduling issues despite this

formally being under the remit of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and has been reluctant to speak out over issues included in its mandate such as aerial eradication. In 2011 the INCB criticized Bolivia for withdrawing from the Single Convention and then re-acceding in order to enter a formal objection to articles on coca use in order to comply with the Bolivian constitution (Jelsma, 2011b).

The Single Convention was intended to be the convention that ended all drug control conventions (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 2) however in this respect, it failed as it had to be amended in 1972 and two supplementary UN drug conventions were drawn up in 1971 and 1988. Each new treaty was devised in order to close loop holes left by previous conventions and to combat new threats as they emerged. The 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances was drawn up in response to the development of new synthetic substances. It established strict controls for so-called recreational 'street drugs' but control of synthetic substances was considerably weaker, in part because of the influence of big pharmaceutical companies (Jelsma, 2011a, p. 4). By the 1980s there was a growing realization that a multibillion dollar trade in illicit drugs was being controlled by organized crime and that the power of these DTO's was growing exponentially (Jelsma, 2011a, p. 5) so the 1988 Convention was drafted.

1988 Convention

> " *The Parties to this Convention*,
> *Deeply concerned* by the magnitude of and rising trend in the illicit production of, demand for and traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, which pose a serious threat to the health and welfare of human beings and adversely affect the economic, cultural and political foundations of society...
> *Recognizing* the links between illicit traffic and other related organized criminal activities which undermine the legitimate economies and threaten the stability, security and sovereignty of States,
> *Recognizing also* that illicit traffic is an international criminal activity, the suppression of which demands urgent attention and the highest priority..." (UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988).

In the intervening years between the drafting of the Single Convention and the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotics there was a change in the rhetoric surrounding drugs.

The religious-metaphor of 'evil' though still used, gave ground to an emphasis on the 'war-metaphor' (Herschinger, 2011, p. 96). As the 'war-metaphor' took over from the religious metaphor, the referent object of the speech act changed from 'mankind' to the State. In a sense the war-metaphor relied on a state-based way of thinking whereas the religious metaphor was more reliant on the idea of 'humanity' and 'mankind.'

This use of the 'war-metaphor' can be seen clearly in US President Nixon's 1971 speech where he announced that drugs were 'public enemy number one' and launched the 'War on Drugs'. This announcement coincided with the beginning of what Nixon perceived to be the 'GI heroin epidemic' and "the Nixon administration and other US officials attempted to promote an antidrug American identity by identifying GI heroin users in Vietnam, domestic addicts, and foreign traffickers in Southeast Asia as sources of danger that threatened not only to spread crime and societal decay within the USA but also threaten the contingent national identity" (Weimer, 2003, p. 261). It has since been argued however, that this idea of the 'addicted army' and the 'drug menace' was a convenient way of deflecting attention away from a war that was deeply unpopular at home (Kuzmarov, 2009) and a way of expanding presidential control over, and creating a more unified structure for, the multitude of law enforcement agencies in the USA (Epstein, 1990).

As the Cold War drew to a close, the intelligence agencies and the military, looking for a new enemy since the demise of the Soviet threat, offered to share their expertise and military hardware with law enforcement agencies in the fight against drugs (Campbell, 1992, p. 213; Sheptycki, 1996, p. 69). The collapse of the Iron Curtain and the growth in globalization created the pre-conditions for the rise of transnational criminal organizations (Glenny, 2008) that were often part of, or closely connected to, DTOs. This alliance between criminal enterprise, drug traffickers and 'terrorists' gave rise to a new threat: the 'narco-terrorist'. The term 'narco-terrorist' was coined in 1983 by Peruvian President Belaunde Terry, who used the phrase to refer to attacks on the country's drug law enforcement agents. This concept was further broadened by the USA, under Presidents Reagan and Bush, to include anyone who aided or abetted drug trafficking in order to fund terrorist activities (Holmberg, 2009, p. 2). President Reagan argued that leftist allies of the Soviet Union in Latin America were involved in 'narco-terrorist' activities (Chouvy, 2004) and both Reagan and Bush used the 'narco-terror' threat as a cover for anti-Sandinista policies in Central America even when these operations undermined counter-narcotics policies (Scott & Marshall, 1998). Campbell notes, "The conflation of narcotics production and trafficking with insurgent and revolutionary movements in central and southern America has been an attempt, largely without foundation, to both inflate the dimensions of the danger associated with drugs, and render it more intelligible on a traditional national security register. . .. The power of 'narco-terrorism' as a concept is that it subsumes under one banner a number of ideas, including the assertion that guerrilla movements finance their operations largely through drug trafficking, and the more believable argument that the principals in the drug industry employ extreme violence" (Campbell, 1992, p. 212).

In 1986 President Reagan signed National Security Directive 221 which identified drug trafficking and organized crime as a threat to the State, 2 years later this argument was articulated at a global level through the 1988 UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. The similarities in the two documents indicate the level to which the USA was one of the principal securitizing actors in this second speech act, indeed a member of the US delegation involved in the drafting of the Convention has noted that "The U.S. participated actively in the negotiation of the Convention, and many of its [the 1988 Convention] provisions reflect legal approaches and devices already found in U.S. law" (Stewart, 1990, p. 388).

One of the underlying principles of the 1988 Convention was the security threat posed by the drugs trade and its associations with organized crime: the stated concern was that DTOs and 'narco-terrorists' could challenge the security of States (e.g. Peru or Colombia) and regions (e.g. the Andean region or West Africa). The referent object became the State and the existential threat became drug production and trafficking and the organizations that profited from these activities. The 1988 Convention aimed to combat some of the negative implications of the first extraordinary measure – the global drugs prohibition regime – most notably the burgeoning illicit trade in drugs and the ways in which this trade financed insurgents and organized crime thus contributing to corruption and conflict thereby undermining national security.

Various forms of extraordinary measures followed including the US certification programme whereby trade and aid deals were tied to action on a range of stipulated counter-narcotics measures (Hesselroth, 2005) and an increased militarization of enforcement and eradication strategies which have seen US military personnel training and equipping Latin American law enforcement officers (Hesselroth, 2005, p. 6). The USA used the 1988 Convention to legitimize their global certification mechanism, arguing that all countries must deliver a report to US Congress stating how far they had "met the goals and objectives of the [1988 Convention]" (Woodiwiss & Bewley-Taylor, 2005, p. 20). The militarized crop eradication policies, that can be seen particularly in Latin America and Afghanistan, are part of 'the hegemonic regime's punitive approach' and as such are considered as acceptable means of reducing the drug problem irrespective of whether these measures have negative outcomes for producer societies (Herschinger, 2011, pp. 90–91).

The 1988 Convention aimed to tighten up loop holes left by previous treaties and strengthen the ability of the international community to fight the growing power of the DTOs. It focused on illicit production and trafficking as well as the control of precursors used to make opium into heroin and coca into cocaine; previous treaties only dealt with this issue briefly (Woodiwiss & Bewley-Taylor, 2005, p. 25). Not only did the 1988 Convention require nations to criminalize the drug trade but it also dealt with illicit demand for the first time. Article 3(2) of the convention specifically dealt with the user, calling on all signatory nations to make possession a criminal offence under domestic law. The inclusion of this article was at the behest of producer nations who wanted to shift the emphasis away from supply-side enforcement and on to demand-side polices (Woodiwiss & Bewley-Taylor, 2005, p. 25).

The 1988 Convention required signatory nations to apply criminal sanctions in domestic law against various aspects of the illicit drug trade (Jelsma, 2011a, p. 5) and it also included measures to allow asset seizures and control money laundering (Levine, 2003, p. 147; Woodiwiss & Bewley-Taylor, 2005, p. 20). Many governments and international agencies such as the UN and Interpol were encouraged to follow the USA enforcement policies, including the seizure of assets derived from the drug trade, despite a lack of evidence that they were effective (Woodiwiss & Bewley-Taylor, 2005, p. 19). Not only did the USA transport their law enforcement approaches into the global arena, but they also succeeded in changing the UN definition of organized crime: in 2003 the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) was ratified, it defined organized crime in terms of activity rather than specifically structured groups of people, the USA hoped that this approach would strengthen the global drug prohibition regime (Woodiwiss & Bewley-Taylor, 2005, pp. 24–26).

'Rainbow-2'

The 9/11 attacks and the launch of the 'War on Terror' expanded the 'drugs as a threat' discourse further: from national and regional

> "Raising through the UN Security Council the status of the problem of Afghan drug production to that of a threat to global peace and security." (Russia's 'Plan 'Rainbow-2', 2010).

to international. Afghanistan had been a producer of opium since the decline of the Golden Triangle in the 1990s and opium production has soared since the NATO forces invaded (UNODC, 2010a, 2010b, p. 2). Opium is now portrayed as an important funding source for the Taliban and their Al-Qaeda allies and as such this trade is being posited as a threat to 'global peace and security (Russia's Plan 'Rainbow-2', 2010). As terrorist/insurgent groups and DTOs work together sharing networks for transiting drugs, money and weapons, they are frequently seen as regional and international security threats. In 2009 UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon said, "The problems [terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime] harm not only the Afghan people. They pose a major danger to the region and the world at large. And all of us must be involved in helping to solve them" (UNODC, 2009).

The international legitimacy given by the UN conventions has allowed individual countries to carry out speech acts designating various aspects of drugs as existential threats, Russia's 2010 'Rainbow-2' plan, to eradicate opium in Afghanistan, is one such example. In 'Rainbow-2' Russia attempted to expand the referent object beyond the State by arguing that Afghan opium production was a threat to 'global peace and security' (Russia's Plan 'Rainbow-2', 2010). The existential threat remained the same as the 1988 Convention – the production and trafficking of illicit drugs – and as such 'Rainbow-2' can be seen as an attempted re-securitization. 'Rainbow-2' followed the US pattern of blaming external forces: in this case, Afghan opium production, for internal problems such as the rise in heroin use and associated negative health impacts in Russia. There are no reliable statistics on drug use in the former USSR which suggests levels of use were low, but since statistics have started to be collected, Russia has seen a huge explosion of drug use and related negative health impacts: the Russian Ministry of Health estimates that drug use rose by 400% between 1992 and 2002 (Zigon, 2011) and it is estimated that over 60% of new HIV infections involve injecting drug users (Mascolini, 2011). Data from 2008 suggests that 21% of global illicit opiates end up in the Russian Federation (DuPee & Kauffman, 2010).

In 'Rainbow-2' various extraordinary measures were called for and these can be seen as sitting at both ends of the security continuum. At one end 'Rainbow-2' explicitly called for alternative development in order to encourage farmers not to grow poppies. At the other end of the security continuum, 'Rainbow-2' called for NATO forces to carry out poppy eradication in Afghanistan despite this policy having been rejected by the Afghan government, the UK and even the US as being counter-productive to the long term goal of improving security and governance in the country (DuPee, 2009).

The rejection of eradication policies could suggest that Russia's attempted securitization has not been entirely successful. However 'Rainbow-2' can be seen as speaking to multiple audiences, ranging from the Russian general public to the political and military elites both nationally and internationally. Recent analysis of the securitization framework has focused on examining the relative power of the securitizing actor and the importance of the audience in accepting the securitization and thus making the move successful (Balzacq, 2005; Collins, 2005). Buzan et al. argue that, "At the micro end of the spectrum, individuals or small groups can seldom establish a wider security legitimacy in their own right. They may speak about security to and of themselves, but few will listen" (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 23). This leads one to suggest that power and influence, if not the legitimacy to speak for large groups of people, is needed in order to make a successful securitizing move. Taureck

(2006) argues that the relative power of the securitizing actor, vis-à-vis the audience, could be interpreted in two ways: either, the more powerful the actor, the greater the capability to influence the audience; or, that the more powerful the actor, the less relevant the role of the audience. This means that the influence that the securitizing actor has over specific audiences can vary greatly and therefore this power relationship is intimately connected to whether a securitizing move will be successful or not. In some cases, such as the Single Convention and the 1988 Convention, the audiences – national representatives from Member States and their national governments – are part of the same political and military elites that are also making the securitizing move. In other cases, such as 'Rainbow-2' the actor (the Russian government) is trying to convince both external audiences such as the UN Security Council and NATO, and internal ones such as the Russian general public. The Russian government has far less influence and power over the audiences at the international level than at a national level and as such whilst 'Rainbow-2' may not have been successful internationally, it was accepted at home and enshrined in national discourses (Russian Federation National Drug Strategy, 2009).

In this sense, analysis of 'Rainbow-2' is useful because it shows how the UN Conventions give legitimacy to any country wishing to make a securitizing move in relation to drugs. It is important to note, that although the USA has been one of the key drivers of a zero-tolerance approach to drugs since the beginning of the 20th century, the prohibitionist stance has been supported by other major powers such as Russia and China. Furthermore, Russia is now moving to position itself as a major advocate for the continuation of prohibitionist policy and rhetoric as evidenced by their recent plan to eradicate opium production in Afghanistan – 'Rainbow-2' – and their contribution in 2010 of $7 million to the UNODC General Purpose Fund (GPF) with a further $2 million to be given annually (UNODC, 2011). The GPF is unrestricted funding used by the UNODC to cover infrastructure costs and to support programmes that are not covered by Special Purpose Funds (Bewley-Taylor & Trace, 2006, p. 2). Previous research into UNODC funding has shown that the largest GPF contributions tend to come from the more prohibitionist nations (Thoumi & Jensema, 2003 in Bewley-Taylor & Trace, 2006, p. 7) suggesting that such contributions allow greater influence in shaping UNODC policy.

The negative impacts of securitizing drugs

Franke (2005) argues that there are two inherent problems in securitizing an issue. Firstly, the successful securitizing move allows the securitizing actor to exploit threats and occasionally avert attention away from a specific issue. The second concern is that if there is a perceived failure to address the issue through normal political means, then it is possible to securitize an issue in order to gain 'tactical attention' rather than because the existential threat is immediate (Franke, 2005, p. 8). Russia's attempted securitization of opium production in Afghanistan is an example of Franke's (2005) first problem surrounding securitization. 'Rainbow-2' could be interpreted as a way of deflecting attention away from increasing levels of drug misuse and rising HIV/hepatitis C infections, focussing on the role of production and supply externally rather than the plethora of internal reasons, including national drug policies and zero-tolerance on needle exchanges and opiate substitution therapies.

Franke's (2005) second problem with securitizing an issue can be seen in the preamble of the UN Single Convention. The previous drugs treaties had not achieved the aim of limiting drug use to purely medical and scientific use and therefore normal political measures – in this case international trade agreements – did not work and this meant that 'tactical attention' needed to be drawn to

the problem of drug use in other ways. The use of the word "evil" in the Single Convention in reference to addiction to drugs can be seen not only as a way of gaining tactical attention but also as an attempt to raise drug control above the realm of national interest (Bewley-Taylor & Jelsma, 2011, p. 6) and formulate it as above politics.

Waever (1995) points out that whilst labelling a problem a 'security issue' may allow it to be given a higher priority, securitization is not without its own dangers as the range of options with which to address a securitized issue becomes limited to 'threat, defence and state-centred solutions' (Waever, 1995, p. 52). In the 1988 Convention and 'Rainbow-2' the security of the State and international community are posed as being threatened by the power, money and violence of the DTOs and their association with 'terrorists'. Threat/defence-based solutions can be seen in the form of the increasingly militarized resources that have been put into enforcement and eradication strategies in countries such as Afghanistan and Colombia.

These countries have experienced violent conflict for decades and the illicit drugs trade has become inextricably linked with insurgencies. Not only does drug production flourish in areas of poor governance but also the sheer volume of cash and weapons helps perpetuate the cycles of violence. Despite the huge profits to be made from the illicit drugs trade – the UNODC estimates that the global trade is worth $320 billion annually (UNODC, 2007, p. 170) – virtually all the revenues go to the national and international DTOs. Not only do farmers get little reward for the crops they produce but they have to pay a high cost in terms of security. Many of these farmers live in relatively remote areas that often suffer from poor governance and they are caught between the DTOs who have a definite interest in keeping 'normal' government services out of the producing areas and the risk of counter-narcotics forces eradicating their crops and further impoverishing them (Herschinger, 2011, p. 91). Areas of insecurity where drug production thrives can be seen as part of the 'Self'/'Other' dichotomy whereby because they exist outside of the international community, they are to some extent abandoned.

Grayson (2003) and Collins (2005) have explored the idea that securitizing an issue can create 'Frankenstein's Monster' whereby giving resources, power and legitimacy to the securitization, releases it from the ordinary checks and balances of normal policy making. As Grayson notes, 'With all the diverse aspects of the 'War on Terror' and the 'War on Drugs' human rights abuses, human suffering and loss of life seem to be largely unproblematic for US policymakers as long as the USA, its interests and important segments of domestic population remain secure' (Grayson, 2003, p. 339). This idea of Frankenstein's Monster also partly explains the 'bureaucratic inertia' that some argue characterizes the development of the global drug prohibition regime (Collins, 2011) and also contributes to understanding why once something has been constructed and accepted as a security threat, challenging that assumption becomes extremely difficult.

The difficulty of desecuritizing

Buzan et al. argue that desecuritization, which for Waever means the "shifting of issues out of emergency mode and into the normal bargaining processes of the political sphere", should be the preferred way of dealing with problems (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 4). However, because of the power of the security narrative, especially when used in conjunction with the 'Self/Other' dichotomy and reliant on a set of morals that are portrayed as being universally accepted, desecuritization becomes very difficult.

Waever recognizes that "A characteristic feature of the CS [Copenhagen School] is its scepticism towards 'security'.

It [security] has often anti-democratic and anti-creative implications... [and it can be seen as] a failure to deal with issues as normal politics" (Waever, 2004, p. 10). Carston Bagge Laustsen and Ole Waever, in their article 'In Defence of Religion: Sacred Referent Objects for Securitization' (2000), note that when something is securitized there are implications, "'internally' (for instance by inhibiting debate and democracy) and 'externally' by often stimulating conflict, security dilemmas and escalation" (Laustsen & Waever, 2000, pp. 708–709).

This critique seems particularly pertinent to drugs policy. Herschinger (2011) argues that using the language of war justifies violence as the rational response to the 'antagonistic drug Other', but it also frames alternative discourses as immoral and irrational. She notes that the securitization of drugs allows actors to carry out extraordinary measures but also to restrict the contestation of the current regime (Herschinger, 2011, p. 88) Medical and scientific experts, she notes, are endowed with special powers to articulate the drugs threat as long as they support the global drug prohibition regime, if however they attempt to discuss alternative viewpoints, including harm reduction methods, their reports often remain unpublished and are labelled non-scientific (Herschinger, 2011, pp. 77–78) or 'pro-drug' (UNODC, 2009, p. 1). The external implications are even plainer to see: the rhetorical 'War on Drugs' at times becomes a very real war as in, for example, Colombia, Mexico or Afghanistan.

As has been explored earlier, the relationship between the audience and the actor not only influences whether the securitization is successful, it may go some way towards explaining why it is so difficult to desecuritize an issue. Taureck suggests that the audiences are unlikely to be the general public; rather those groups needing to be "convinced" are more often political and military elites who are already part of, or closely connected to, the securitizing actor (Taureck, 2006, p. 20). Influential bureaucracies associated with the maintenance and enforcement of the global drug prohibition regime, such as the UNODC and the INCB at international level or the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the Russian drugs tsar, Viktor Ivanov, as a close ally of Prime Minister Putin, on the national level, are closely allied to the political elites that carried out the securitizing moves and they have a vested interest in maintaining their funding alongside their role in enforcing prohibition and thus continuing the securitization of drugs.

Conclusion

International drug control has developed greatly since the beginning of the 20th century when the USA summoned the global powers to Shanghai for what can now be seen as the start of the global drug prohibition regime. In the hundred or so years since the International Opium Commission was called, one discourse has remained consistent: drugs are a threat to humanity and need to be controlled or prohibited. In the 50 years since the Single Convention was ratified, the 'drugs as a threat' discourse has focused on 'mankind' (UN Single Convention, 1961), the State (preamble, Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988) or 'global peace and security (Russia's Plan 'Rainbow-2', 2010) and the basic assumption that drugs are a threat remains very powerful today. The securitization of drugs can be seen as one mechanism for adherence to the global drug prohibition regime despite the wealth of evidence that it has failed to reduce the 'social and economic danger to mankind' (UN Single Convention, 1961) brought about by drug misuse or the ability of organized crime to 'undermine the legitimate economies and threaten the stability, security and sovereignty of States' (Convention Against Illicit Trafficking of Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic

Substances, 1988). Instead of looking at how to desecuritize drugs, the international community has introduced new securitizations each time a new threat is identified. It seems that the international community continues to be hooked on the 'drugs as a threat' discourse.

Acknowledgements

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