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Tajikistan amidst globalization: state failure or state transformation?

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This paper considers the nature of Tajikistani statehood in an era of globalization. It takes as its foil a recent report of the International Crisis Group, 'Tajikistan: on the road to failure'. The paper interrogates this claim and finds that it is based on a poor conceptualization of the state which disregards advances in state theory made in the last two decades. However, this problematic declaration cannot simply be dismissed but, being from an authoritative source, must be considered for its constitutive functions for Tajikistani statehood. The paper thus considers Tajikistan's position in world politics theoretically in terms of the sociological and anthropological literature on global assemblages, particularly Sassen's concept of denationalization. It goes on to investigate a single case of the contemporary Tajikistani state: the state-owned Tajik Aluminium Company's (Talco) international trading arrangements and tolling agreements. The paper argues that the post-Soviet, post-conflict Tajikistani state is not simply captured by elite networks or a shell for the personnel of the regime. Rather, whilst an explicitly 'nationalizing state', it has been transformed along the lines of denationalization. Tajikistan's official institutions, in cooperation with global actors from multinational corporations to donor agencies, have been incorporated within certain global economic and political assemblages. The paper discusses the implications of all this in terms of the consequent hollowing out of the national-territorial state model and the establishing of lines of economics and politics which make the state, in parts, global.

Keywords: Tajikistan; state formation; state failure; state building; globalization; global assemblages; denationalization; nationalism

Introduction

Post-conflict Tajikistan has recently been labelled by the International Crisis Group (ICG) (2009) as being 'on the road to failure'. This is an utterance which has been picked up in the policy conversation about Tajikistan and seems to indicate a wider discursive shift from the moderate incantations of international peace building, which dominated international discourse on Tajikistan from the late 1990s, to the security-emphasizing deliberations of international state building, which have become more prominent since 2001. This shift is significant for two reasons. Firstly, for its inaccuracies: it is at best descriptively partial and, at worst, a distortion. This is because it is based on a failure of analysis where exogenous criteria of assessment, which in themselves represent a crude conceptualization of the state and state formation, are uncritically adopted despite both their general weaknesses and their lack of salience to the Tajik context. Secondly, the 'road to failure' labelling is important for its constitutive functions. As contemporary Tajikistan exists under conditions of globalization, its status as a sovereign actor in international politics is at least partly constituted by its acceptance in the 'international community'. However, the prescription that a modern republic should be first and foremost responsive to the demands of external actors for international and human security and must adhere to a certain model of governance is one that, if implemented in foreign policies towards the region, is more likely to exacerbate rather than attenuate state weakness – by this classical definition of the state. The apparent paradox here

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is that whilst the imposition of exogenous demands might undermine the emergence of an independent republic, international recognition and, increasingly, global inter-connections are key determinants of that republic's sovereignty in the society of states.

Following seven papers which have explored Tajikistani statehood in its specific historical (Kassymbekova, Dudoignon, Ferrando), ethno-national (Fernando), religious (Dudoignon, Epkenhans), gendered (Harris, Hohman and Roche) and international security (De Danieli) contexts, this paper explores the political-economic and global contexts of Tajikistani statehood – that is, how Tajikistan is a state formed in a globalizing world driven by advanced capitalist technologies. The paper lays bare the tensions of being formally independent whilst being penetrated by global political and economic actors. Yet it suggests that this is by no means a paradox or contradiction but indicative of the ambiguities of post-colonial statehood. These ambiguities are arguably all the more pronounced amongst Central Asian states that have gained independence (and sovereign recognition) in an era of globalization. It is the unique feature of this region's post-coloniality that Tajikistan and its post-Soviet neighbours came into being at the start of the 1990s, a 'governmentality decade', according to Ong and Collier, 'in which many technological, political, and ethical problems seemed to be organized around the insistent spread of global forms' (2006, p. 17). It is perhaps then incumbent upon those of us who are analysts of the global politics, geopolitics and/or international politics of Central Asia to reflect on how these global forms – from those of the dramatic arts (Adams 2008) to those of corporate accounting (this paper) – are articulated and rearticulated for and by regional states. Whilst many of the global forms of neo-liberalism may seem to be under scrutiny in the aftermaths of 11 September 2001, and the global financial crisis which peaked in 2008, globalization has continued to occur *through* the state.

This paper argues that the Republic of Tajikistan is very much part of this new global politics via specialized political and economic assemblages. These assemblages work to circulate forms of global politics, discursively and practically, yet partially and contingently. It begins by considering one of these forms as it has been transposed in Tajikistan – the international security concept of the 'failed state'. The first part outlines the argument that Tajikistan is on the verge of becoming a 'failed state' and demonstrates how it is entirely consistent with the international policy discourse on Tajikistan as it has evolved since the mid-2000s. Part two critically interrogates the assumptions inherent in this discourse and explores the conceptual weakness of 'failed state' analysis (with respect to Tajikistan). This part ends with the recognition that there is a global dimension to the production of statehood which cannot be grasped or properly resisted by national, republican or anti-colonial policies and practices. Part three goes on to suggest that the concept of 'global assemblages' advanced by Sassen (2006) and Ong and Collier (2005) offers a more fruitful line of inquiry which lays bare the way in which states articulate and rearticulate global forms of economy and polity. They are, in Sassen's terms, agents of 'denationalization'. Finally, in part four the paper explores how the Tajikistani state has denationalized its public sector through a case study of the transformation of the largest state-owned enterprise, the Tajik Aluminium Company (Talco) under international agreements which imbricate the Tajik state in global economic and political assemblages. The paper argues that this denationalization cannot simply be understood in terms of crony privatization to clan leaders and former warlords – indicating the 'failed state' of the International Crisis Group's parlance – but that these networks must be understood in their global economic and political dimensions. These dimensions provide symbolic and material resources for the hollowing out of the public sector and denationalizing of the state.

'On the road to failure'

We live in a world of 'Islamist terrorists' and 'failed states'. Alarmingly, perhaps, for those of you who are from the Republic of Tajikistan and those of us who have spent a reasonable amount

of time there, Tajikistan, we are told by some analysts, is one such place which is critically threatened by the former and on the verge of becoming the latter. Tajikistan, in the words of the International Crisis Group (ICG), is 'on the road to failure'. By contrast this paper proceeds from the critical stance that 'state failure', rather than being an objective description of Tajikistani politics, is a narrative which constructs Tajikistan in terms of the policy priorities and political imaginations of the international community. It fundamentally misunderstands the nature of authority and legitimacy in Tajikistan and the nature of state formation. However, this does not make the discourse irrelevant. To the extent that discourse might eventually shape how foreign affairs and overseas aid are conducted it constitutes an important and potentially dangerous misunderstanding of Tajikistani politics.

So, how did this claim that Tajikistan is on the brink of failure emerge? We must pay attention to both the texts and contexts of research. Early 2009 seemed to be the time when Tajikistan as a 'Failed State' arrived. The 12 February 2009 report by the International Crisis Group (2009), 'Tajikistan: on the road to failure' is the most prominent moment of naming. Like most ICG reports this is a very thorough and well-evidenced summary of recent political events for an international audience. It gives potted summaries of the appalling 2007–08 winter crisis, the battle which killed Oleg Zakharchenko in Garm, the arrest of Suhrob Langariyev in Kulob, the June 2008 demonstrations in Khorog and the mystery surrounding the apparent shooting of Hassan Sadullayev. It places these events in the context of the dependency of Tajikistani families on migrant labour, the concentration of power around President Rahmon and the scandals of Talco and the National Bank which revealed the extent of the networked and factional relations between business and government in Tajikistan.[1] It is clear that these are important events which might fatally undermine the development of a depersonalized, liberal-democratic state – if that was what was developing in Tajikistan.

However, it is when the report moves from description to prescription that it becomes less convincing. It concludes:

> The Rakhmon regime could, theoretically speaking, collapse at any moment. This is because the institutional structures which usually support any political regime are missing in the case of Tajikistan. The only reason it has not foundered so far is that it has not been hit by a crisis of sufficient magnitude. (ICG 2009, p. 19)

This is a seductive argument but it is based on a normatively driven and descriptively negative analysis where assessments are made on the basis of what Tajikistan is not: a Weberian ideal-type state with a liberal-democratic quality. Whether such counter-factual analysis is inherently flawed is a separate question. In our case what is more important is the question of whether this kind of depersonalized and liberal-democratically institutionalized state is the model that is desired and pursued by significant organizations and/or networks in Tajik society. Put another way: are international expectations for Tajikistan echoed in local ideas and ideologies of governance and the state. Importantly, the report does not even dwell on this question but suggests that internationally assisted or even led state building is the only way. 'Far from being a bulwark against the spread of extremism and violence from Afghanistan,' ICG argues, 'Tajikistan is looking increasingly like its southern neighbour – a weak state that is suffering from a failure of leadership' (2009, p. i). This weakness is attributed directly to the government. It is claimed that 'Rahmon is not performing his expected role, the creation of a modern, functioning state that could be a firewall against the spread of extremism from Afghanistan and other parts of South Asia' (2009, p. ii). But who, we may ask, is it that expects this of Rahmon? And who is it that sees Tajikistan as resembling Afghanistan? Clearly the envisioning actors here are the Western powers whose officials, aid workers, academics and concerned citizens constitute much of the key audience for ICG reports. As the report states, the international

community 'knows the regime is not fulfilling the basic role that the West hopes for' (2009, p. 19). This role is to provide a stable base for counter-terrorism in general, and counter-insurgency in Afghanistan in particular.

As such, the report is not an objective analysis but a certain subjective vision of Tajikistan through a Western geopolitical discourse. It provides exemplary evidence for what Niebuhr has called 'the existential intimacy between idea and interest in human affairs' (1986 [1953], p. 216). 'Remote and destitute,' describes the report, 'Tajikistan stands at the intersection of most political leaders' nightmares' (ICG 2009, p. 1). Thus, it is the country's apparent marginality in the eyes of the international community, both geographically and politically, that constitutes its weakness and potentially failure. Indeed it is the complexity and hidden nature of much political machination in Tajikistan that contributes to this. Several times in the report the author is clearly frustrated that there are 'more questions than answers' (2009, p. 7). According to this viewpoint, it is Tajikistan's obscurity – its failure to become legible according to a particular Western vision of the strong, transparent, process-driven, liberal-democratic state – which determines its failure.

Whilst the ICG provides the most vivid and probably influential analysis of Tajikistan's failure in 2009 it is by no means an isolated one. A report released just a few weeks later by Warsaw's Centre for Eastern Studies (CES) addressed Tajikistan's 'crisis of statehood' and argued that Tajikistan could 'transform into a 'failing state'. Referencing the ICG report, it noted, 'within the next few months, an outbreak of open manifestations of popular discontent is also possible, or attempts may even be made to overthrow the central government, and Tajikistan may become submerged in chaos and internal conflicts' (Falkowski 2009, p. 1). The Bertelsmann Stiftung's recent report picks up on the themes:

> Instead of pursuing a long-term development agenda, the government operates in a crisis-management mode. Currently, it awaits a large-scale return of labor migrants, who may evolve into an explosive force. So far, the leadership has pulled through, balancing on the brink of a disaster, mostly because no viable political contenders are visible. This cannot continue. There are many discontented, but it is unclear who will capitalize on the protest mood. (2009, p. 2)

Such a doomsday scenario has yet to come to Tajikistan yet this has not stopped speculation of 'state failure' and the continued association of this label with Tajikistan amongst international policy analysts and journalists since the report (RFE/RL 2009). Whilst these terms spawn dissent in the blogosphere[2] and counter-claims of state resilience by policy analysts (Matveeva 2009), what is important is that the association continues. The policy discussion consequently centres on whether there is state failure rather than whether this concept is a valid one. For example, whilst avoiding the hyperbolic language of ICG, CES and Bertelsmann, the United States' Congressional Research Service report on Tajikistan in July 2009 favourably cited the ICG report and conducted an analysis in keeping with the precepts of state-failure discourse (Nichol 2009).

State failure claims may have more prominence in the ICG report but the basic principles of the discourse are actually quite widespread in much international policy analysis. Indeed, we can see that there is a far longer genealogy to the idea, going back to Tajikistan's independence in 1991. During the civil war, Barnet Rubin fairly characterized Tajikistan as a 'garrison state' dependent on Russia (Rubin 1994). Since 9/11, it has been assessed as one of a clutch of weak states in Central Asia. Influential analysts such as Fiona Hill (2002) have warned of a potential 'Afghanicization' of post-Soviet Central Asia given these states' 'extreme domestic fragility'. These themes of counter-terrorism and state-building analysis have often been repeated in policy and academic reports since 2001 (Heathershaw 2009, pp. 49–52, 128–130). As Tajikistan was perceived to regress after 2003 with the closure of newspapers, pressure on political parties and the faltering of key reforms (Heathershaw 2009, p. 36), failed-state

analysis became more prominent. At first this occurred at the fringes of serious discussion (Dadmehr 2003) but became more prominent as influential political-risk analysts Oxford Analytica (OA) declared Tajikistan 'a failed state on the brink of civil war' (Johnson's Russia List 2006, no pagination) whilst Matveeva (2006), in a report for the UK's Department for International Development argued that 'state building' should replace 'peace building' as the *modus operandi* of the international community in Tajikistan. Yet fears of 'Afghanicization', state collapse and a return to civil war have not been borne out empirically. The Oxford Analytica article prompted a response by Richard Hoagland, US Ambassador to Tajikistan, arguing that the analysis was overblown. He noted 'the problem with a truly flawed analytical report like this one is that it gets into the mix of other sources and can influence other analyses' (Johnson's Russia List 2006, no pagination). Hoagland is quite correct that the problem with a motif such as failed state is that it gets into the discourse. However, in attacking the application of the concept rather than the concept itself he reproduces it. Indeed 'failed state' has been widely used by the US Government during and since the Bush administration with respect to states in Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

A failure of analysis?

At the root of the failed-state discourse is a failure of analysis, originating in conceptual fallacies which lead in turn to empirical oversights. The failure of analysis includes more or less five missteps, many of which also affect some academic analysis of politics and international relations in the region. The first problem concerns the *simplistic use of quasi-academic concepts.* The ICG report references (2009, p. 20) the highly influential but extremely problematic report by Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing failed states* (2008), with its simplistic, neo-Weberian account of the modern state. For Ghani, Lockhart and the neo-Weberians that have responded to Skocpol *et al.*'s (1985) call to 'bring the state back in' to political analysis, the state is a system – an empirically observable, functional organization – autonomous of and standing atop its society and governing a fixed territory. This is what Agnew calls the 'territorial trap' of political geography and, what Wimmer and Schiller (2002) have diagnosed as 'methodological nationalism' in the social sciences – to take as given the state's account of itself as a hierarchical and encompassing organization. In recent analysis of 'failed states' and international state building (Chesterman 2004, Paris and Sisk 2009; see also Zartman 1995, Rotberg 2004), the ideal-type liberal-democratic state, although contextualized in given circumstances, provides the single normative foundation against which stateness is assessed. Imbued with this normative aspect, any departure from a rational-legal order of national statehood is viewed as an aberration which is inherently unstable. 'A consensus is now emerging,' Ghani and Lockhardt grandly declare, 'that only sovereign states – by which we mean states that actually perform the functions that make them sovereign – will allow human progress to continue' (2008, p. 4). Thus, the unfailed state has three features against which the failed state is judged: firstly, detachment from and authority over society; secondly, encompassment of a given territory where the world is divided into mutually exclusive zones; thirdly, a rational-legal mode of organization and source of legitimacy.

The account of state underpinning the concept of 'state failure' has been shown to be both conceptually faulty and empirically unsustainable by a multitude of academic studies which have advanced our knowledge of the state over the last 20 years.[3] In the neo-Weberian 'failed state', Weber's charismatic and traditional sources of authority and detailing of the social bases of bureaucracy are easily overlooked as out of keeping with the 'standard of civilization' demanded by international state builders (Zaum 2007). Thus, concepts such as 'clan' and 'networks' are deployed simply to indicate state failure – that is, state capture by a regime – rather

than as features of the state system. The assumption here is that strong states are detached from their societies as neutral arbiters for competing interest groups. New conceptualizations deployed by contemporary political sociologists (of Central Asia) are ignored in these works. Hybrid and polyvalent forms of statehood and political life, such as 'strong-weak states' (Migdal 1994, McMann 2004), the 'state against itself' (Jones-Luong 2004) and 'modern clan politics' (Schatz 2004) remain unexplored as features of regimes (not states) or dismissed as mere indicators of weakness.

However, just as elite networks, populist discourses and well-organized interests groups become inextricably intertwined in Western state structures, so too is the Central Asian state *in* its societies (Migdal 1994, Jones-Luong 2004, p. 2). This is not to deny the possibility of autonomous decision making by state actors but to draw attention to the societal basis for the constitution of autonomous agency and 'the national interest'. In the ICG report little room is left for the inconsistencies of the actually existing state of Tajikistan. Could the Tajikistani state be strong in certain respects and not in others? Moreover, might the state itself be institutionally networked rather than organizationally hierarchical whilst retaining a 'state effect' (Mitchell 1999)? Could its territorial encompassment of Tajikistan be limited whilst its power to act as gatekeeper to key transnational flows of, for example, drugs and water, across its territory remains considerable? May we speak of a Tajikistani state that is made up of the intertwining of *both* factional networks around the president *and* global connections with offshore banks and financing arrangements? The heuristic distinction between regime and state which is deployed in order to explain forms of political order which do not conform to the neo-Weberian model is not empirically sustainable for the study of the state (in Tajikistan).

A second analytical misstep emerges directly from this deployment of the quasi-academic concept of 'failed state': that is, *analysis according to an exogenous normative model*. The foundational failure of such analysis is to judge Tajikistan or any post-Soviet or post-colonial state according to a self-referential (and thus, broadly 'Western') normative model of the modern state – that is, 'who we imagine ourselves to be'. This leads to all kinds of quite unrealistic policy recommendations and envisioned future scenarios that remain unfulfilled. For example, in 2001 the ICG made eight recommendations to the Tajikistani government for further democratization and power-sharing, without which, it was asserted, Tajikistan's fragile peace may collapse (2001, p. ii). None of these reforms were substantively pursued but equally the civil war has not returned. Often the problem appears to be that the excellent analysis of complex areas, such as in its report on the cotton industry (2005) which demonstrated how state actors are deeply connected to futures companies and global economic networks, is not pursued in the overall evaluation, conclusions and recommendations of ICG reports. The narrative is shortened and simplified for a core readership of officials and policy makers with limited interest in detail and little time to read and reflect. What was a complex conundrum where actions have inadvertent effects becomes a problem that can be solved or at least attenuated via international assistance for institutional reform.[4]

Moreover, institutions are narrowly defined in such a way that ideational and symbolic aspects are overlooked. Little attention is paid to the broader discursive environment which generates popular patriotism and elite nationalism. For example, whilst the official rhetoric of continuity between the Samanid Empire and the contemporary state is a distortion, there is little consideration of how nationalism is a strong post-war current amongst the Tajik intellectual elite (Laruelle 2007) that is fostered in the populace (Blakkisrud and Nozimova 2010) and which generates great fear of national 'encirclement' and, indirectly, concomitant support for the regime and state (Marat 2006). The ideology of *vahdati melli* (national unity) is not inspirational but it is productive and reflective of a discursive environment where regime and state are

intertwined and untouchable.[5] The failure to consider these largely endogenous and ideological features of the so-called 'failed state' indicates a failed analysis.

These two fundamental conceptual errors lead to a further problem in the analysis and evidencing of much of what passes for policy commentary on Tajikistan. Thirdly, such reports *de-historicize politics and the state*. It is almost unprecedented for any of these reports to provide any substantial historical context to their arguments. Yet as many of the papers in this volume show, the shape of contemporary Tajikistani state and society is very much the product of transformations which began in or even predated the Soviet era. Whilst it may be unrealistic to expect a contemporary policy analysis to delve deep into history it is nevertheless important that the author has a deep appreciation of the historical context of the object of inquiry. An ahistorical analysis, combined with the adoption of an exogenous normative model, produces an almost complete absence of empathy with both the political elites and citizens of Tajikistan. It is not enough to speak of the terrible suffering caused by the harsh winter of 2007–08 and the complete inadequacy of the state response without placing this in the historical context of massively reduced expectations about the role of the state since the end of the Soviet Union and the civil war. If there is a gradual 'forgetting' of the civil war hardships and a rise in expectations of government and the state as a whole then the case for this dramatic shift in the discursive environment must be made through substantive research. Otherwise, we are left with a determinism which is not merely ahistorical but crudely materialist: where poverty provokes rebellion in a simple 'rational actor' calculation of opportunities over risks.

Fourthly, and again related to conceptual difficulties, such reports are weakened by the methodological problems around elite interviews. This can be summarized as the misstep of *analysis by consensus*. The methodology of these reports involves numerous interviews with members of the diplomatic and donor community, non-governmental organization (NGO) workers, political-party representatives, businessmen and state officials in order to garner their insights and perspectives. Inevitably, representatives of the 'international community', both nationals and foreign citizens, are more open and provide more detail. This is a problem we all face in conducting research in authoritarian states where the number and availability of international actors far exceeds the readiness of officials to speak to foreign researchers. Notwithstanding the caution and cross-referencing of experienced analysts and impressively sounding techniques such as 'triangulation' there is a fundamental and unavoidable problem with an approach to political research in authoritarian, post-colonial states based on elite interviews. In the absence of detailed and time-consuming participant observation, ethnographic interviewing and technical analysis, it is easy to overlook the complexities and singularities of political order as it emerges in a given state. Whilst these methodological weaknesses are also found in much academic analysis the scale of problem is usually greater in policy commentaries. Many of the arguments and conclusions in ICG reports and others of the policy analysis genre specifically reflect the prevailing wisdom amongst ex-patriates regarding the country and with respect to foreign and overseas aid policies. They suggest minimal departures from the *status quo* rather than questioning any of the fundamental ideas underlying aid and diplomacy. This is understandable as the reports are works of advocacy which, to paraphrase Marx, seek not just to understand but to change. In speaking to an audience of international change-agents (donors, policy makers), such reports must use *their* terminology and argue according to precepts which *they* widely accept. The 'failed state' is such a widely accepted concept.

Fifthly, and most egregiously, it is not unusual for policy analyses of this kind to contain *factual errors*. This charge cannot be made against ICG, which is careful in its fact checking. However, factual mistakes seem quite common in policy analysis where there is often a focus on the 'big picture' and a lack of attention to detail. The 2009 CES report claims that Tajikistan's

gross domestic product (GDP) decreased by 51% in January 2009 (on a month-by-month basis) without either providing a reference or an explanation for this preposterous statistic. Oxford Analytica made a comparable error in its 2006 briefing on state weakness in Tajikistan. In Richard Hoagland's response he took issue with OA's description of an organization called 'the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan' (IMT) as 'the local wing of Hizb ut-Tahrir'. Hoagland riposted that his staff had only heard two sketchy reports of something called the IMT and that if one of them had written this report he would have asked them 'what the hell have you been smoking?' (Johnson's Russia List 2006, no pagination, Heathershaw 2009, pp. 54–55). In both these case it seems that 'facts' have been selected with minimal crosschecking or none at all simply because they reinforce prevailing opinions of state failure. Moreover, names such as 'IMT' may either refer to a small and fleeting faction within a more significant but weakened group – the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) – and/or be entirely non-existent or insignificant as an organizational entity. Yet they can be considered significant for their currency, in symbolic terms, in much of the international community: as indications of the perceived threat of Islamic militancy and state failure in Central Asia. Such lazy empirical work and analysis is unfortunately a common feature of analysis of state failure and radicalization in the blogosphere, which occasionally seeps into published work.[6]

These five missteps indicate that 'state failure' should be understood as a varied discourse rather than a homogenous school of thought. However, whilst the analysts of the ICG and the US Embassy in Tajikistan may avoid many of the worst errors they remain wedded to a moribund, exogenous and self-referential concept of the state. Moreover, this concept of the state, as articulated in the policies and practices of international state building, contains a fundamental contradiction: that of building internal authority through external intervention.[7] If one is wedded to the neo-Weberian notion of a singular sovereign state which exercises exclusive authority within a given territory then the very demand to perform 'the role expected of it by the international community' contradicts the stated ends. If as is apparently favoured by the ICG, Tajikistan's government started not just talking the talk of the international community but walking the walk then, logically, we are more likely, not less, to see something like state collapse. Authority and order in Tajikistan would be shattered if there were, by some means, the imposition of a depersonalized and highly competitive system against both elite and societal demands. The reason why the state has not collapsed despite Tajikistan's dependencies on regional and international actors since independence is surely found in the fact that territory, authority and rights are not defined exclusively by the nation state or by 'external' interveners but subject to wider local and global processes within which the state is both transformer and transformed.[8] The point here is not that Tajikistan's state and society will not face future crises and substantial difficulties but that its state will not collapse in the manner and for the reasons asserted by the discourse of state failure. The reality is that state formation and state collapse are far too complex and far too contingent to be determined in this way.

Global assemblages and 'denationalization'

To make claims about statehood we need to think more substantively about the state and consider alternative accounts which assert the qualities (sources, features, forms) of statehood before considering its extent (strength, weakness or failure). The fields of historical and political sociology and political anthropology have advanced our understanding of state formation and statehood in recent decades. Abrams tells us, for the state to acquire a unity, purpose and legitimacy it requires a state-idea where the state,

> starts its life as an implicit construct; it is then reified – as the *res publica*, the public reification, no less – and acquires an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practice as an illusory

> account of practice. The ideological function is extended to a point where conservatives and radicals alike believe that their practice is not directed at each other but at the state: the world of illusion prevails. (1988 [1977], p. 82)

Mitchell (1999) has conceptualized this as a 'state effect' where highly fractured and personalized regimes are treated by their citizens and interlocutors as unified states despite their evident inconsistency, heterogeneity and even 'corruption'. He notes that 'the elusiveness of the state–society boundary needs to be taken seriously, not as a problem of conceptual precision but as a clue to the nature of the phenomenon' (Mitchell 1991, p. 78). Moreover, 'the appearance that state and society are separate things is part of the way a given financial and economic order is maintained' (Mitchell 1991, p. 90). Thus the state-idea continues to be constitutive of political order long after 'the state' is naturalized in modern political consciousness. This is not just a matter of instrumental benefits – substantive bases for legitimacy – but the symbolic power and allure of the idea of the state. The neo-Weberian account of the state critiqued above is not blind to the significance of the state-idea but errs in understanding it as universal and a prerequisite for fully fledged statehood. The advantage of Mitchell's approach is that we can assess variations in the state-idea over time and space, and how these are affected by actual state practices. In the Tajikistani case we must consider how an ideology of national statehood (*davlatdori melli*) has fared despite the considerable penetration of the Tajikistani state and society by 'external' actors since independence.

There are strong grounds to believe that the Republic of Tajikistan, like many of the other post-Soviet Central Asian states, is in possession of a considerable state effect whilst possessing very weak state institutions according to 'universal' neo-Weberian standards. This inconsistent empirical reality has led to confusion in the study of the states of Central Asia. At the Oxford conference that initiated this collection of essays, two participants provided apparently opposing yet equally convincing analyses of Tajikistan's statehood as 'fragile'[9] and 'resilient' (Matveeva 2009). The puzzle here is that despite the fact the fragile and resilient are opposing depictions both may be accurate in part. This fragility–resilience tension evokes wider debates in Central Asian studies as scholars have sought to bring advances in state theory into the study of the region. Jones-Luong's 'state-against-itself' (2004), McMann's 'strong-weak states' (2004), and Kavalski's 'awkward states' (2010) all mirror the puzzle we face with regard to Tajikistan. Moreover, these conceptualizations preclude any possibility of speaking simply of state strength and weakness.

This more sophisticated thinking on the state leads to qualitative rather than quantitative analyses of Central Asian statehood. For some authors this awkwardness or inconsistency is explained by the unpreparedness of Central Asian states for the international democratization, development and state-building programmes which were thrust upon them (Lewis 2008, p. 123) where a state like Kyrgyzstan under President Askar Akaev can be denoted as 'virtual' (Lewis 2008, pp. 124, 148). Similarly for neo-institutionalist analyses of Central Asian statehood this apparent 'virtuality' reflects the triumph of the informal over the formal where the state becomes a mere shell for the regime (Jones-Luong 2002, Lewis 2008, Collins 2009)– thus the paradox is resolved by the conclusion of strong (resilient) regime, weak (fragile) state.

However, these explanations are not wholly convincing for two reasons. Firstly, this is because whilst the distinction between state and regime may be of heuristic value for analysts, it is not necessarily part of the political practices or discourses of Central Asian citizens and political elites (Heathershaw 2009, p. 81). Nor is it necessarily part of the political history of the region whose states grew during the Soviet Union when state and society were understood in quite different terms, not as exclusively bounded but, to a large extent, as mutually inclusive. A second concern arises from the fact that, as Reeves has noted, 'these paradoxes and puzzles

arise from an initial assumption that the state "ought", in both a normative and descriptive sense, to be a singular rather than multiple entity' (2006, p. 11). This leaves us with a rearticulation of the initial paradox into a more intellectually promising puzzle. On the one hand we have a state which is locally imagined as being *coterminous* with the regime whilst on the other hand we have a state which is practically *multiple* – acting in often inconsistent ways and being strong in certain respects and weak in others. This leads not to a state which is single and unitary in practice but one which, *because* of the salience of the idea of the state as a single entity coterminous with the regime, can be 'impersonated' in various ways by informal actors who are networked to the regime (cf. Reeves 2006). Thus, it is practically multiple and dispersed.

This multiplicity of the state is so complex that it largely defeats further conceptualization and demands detailed empirical and interpretative analysis on a case-by-case basis. However, there is one aspect of this multiplicitous state which has been under-explored in the literature and thus warrants further conceptual analysis. That is, its global quality; or, put another way, the relationship between statehood and globalization. However, the mainstream literature on global governance and globalization has focused on the emergence of transnational institutions above and authoritative over the state. This has led to an unhelpful debate between globalists and sceptics regarding whether such global governance is emerging, hamstrung by a spatio-hierarchical conception of the global being above the state.[10] The concept of 'global assemblages' (Ong and Collier 2005, Sassen 2006) offers a way forward to assess this relationship. These assemblages are global forms where new territorializations, authorities and rights emerge[11] from 'new material, collective and discursive relationships' (Ong and Collier 2006, p. 4). The concept of global assemblages is a specific attempt to adopt an innovative approach to studying globalization which neither fetishizes it as the unremitting usurpation of statehood nor dismisses it as mere globalist ideology. For Sassen, globalization (and global assemblages) are partial in that they are 'bits of territory, authority and rights that begin to escape the grip of national institutional frames' (2008, p. 61) Thus we have the co-existence, imbrication and even integration of new types of ordering with the old type of ordering – the centralized state and inter-state relations (denoted problematically as 'Westphalian' in the study of International Relations) that emerged and evolved in Europe and were spread across the world through decolonization. Lawson paraphrases Sassen in his review article: 'globalization, even as it adds to the sense of decreasing state capacity, must still be shaped, channeled and enabled by institutions and networks which are rooted in the nation state' (2007, p. 68).

Globalization is not, then, a teleological process towards some kind of supranational system of governance that may be defined as a world government. Rather it is an open-ended process which has shifted the character of statehood to such an extent that 'we can no longer speak of "the" state, and hence of "the" national state versus "the" global order' (Sassen 2008, p. 72). Thus, *global assemblages* take multiple forms and can be understood as,

> domains in which the forms and values of individual and collective existence are problematized or at stake, in the sense that they are subject to technological, political, and ethical reflection and intervention. (Sassen and Wennerhag 2006, p. 8)

Importantly, in terms of thinking about statehood, 'global forms are limited or delimited by specific technical infrastructures, administrative apparatuses, or value regimes, not by the vagaries of the social and cultural field' (Sasser and Wennerhag 2006, p. 11). In our examples below, technical infrastructures include specialized social expertise such as complex tolling arrangements and financial audits. Administrative apparatuses may include the procedural systems of the High Court in London whilst value regimes may include the legal traditions of the London High Court, the neo-liberal precepts of offshore financing and the principles of decentralization of authority incumbent in 'international norms' of local governance. As global forms

are assembled and reassembled so too is the nature of statehood shaped and reshaped as the state-system partially works through these technologies, apparatuses and regimes.

Sassen (2006, p. 2) characterizes this process as 'denationalization'. This term should neither be equated with privatization nor with the erosion of the state as an institution.[12] Whilst both private and global actors play a greater role, state actors remain as powerful facilitators of this or that form of global politics and economics. The state itself is not eroded but transformed via its increased adoption of private and global technologies, policies and ethics. Whilst centripetal dynamics of greater nationalization and socialization occurred, in Sassen's historical survey, through the Bretton Woods institutions and up to the 1970s, they were gradually overcome by centrifugal forces as capital flows were freed from state control amidst the triumph of neoliberal thought and practice in the 1980s. Sassen notes that 'Global' (2006) or 'specialized' (2008) assemblages constitute centrifugal dynamics as 'instantiations of the global, which are in good part structured inside the national' (2006, p. 2). As such, 'state institutions reorient their particular policy work or, more broadly, state agendas toward the requirements of the global economy' (2006, p. 22). They 'denationalize what has been constructed as national but do not necessarily make this evident' (2006, p. 2). Tajikistan's submission to an Ernst & Young audit of its National Bank, for example, may not necessarily be seen as denationalization in an era in which the use of private consultancy by public sector bodies has grown exponentially. It is neither unique nor necessarily indicative of Tajikistan's dependency. However, it is an example of the state's increasingly global orientation after a Soviet era in which it was explicitly cut off from these demands of the global market. It will be shown below that the position of the state of Tajikistan through its place in global assemblages is fundamentally different to the core–periphery relations of Soviet times. These assemblages, rather than being spatio-hierarchical and relatively stable, function as networks and are very much subject to market competition and conflict which produce new financial arrangements and lines of legal responsibility.

State transformation: the Tajik Aluminium Company (Talco)

The Tajikistan Aluminium Company (Talco) is a fully state-owned enterprise and the largest single exporter in Tajikistan. Aluminium from Talco constitutes around 60% of Tajikistan's exports and generates 20% of its GDP.[13] Producing this aluminium takes approximately 40% of the electricity supply of Tajikistan and employs over 12,000 workers,[14] consuming power in a country where power cuts are not unusual in the capital and severe electricity rationing and irregularity of supply takes place over the winter. Talco, known until 2007 by its Russian abbreviation TadAz, opened in 1975 and is now the world's fourth largest aluminium smelter, and is based outside the town of Tursunzade. As Tajikistan does not produce alumina this is purchased from other countries – from allies of or from within the Soviet Union until 1991 and on the global market since independence. Since 1991 it has remained state property whilst many national enterprises have been privatized. As described by the World Bank in 2004, 'the company is not governed by a board of directors or any other type of executive committee' but 'is under the sole command of its director, who reports only to the Tajik President at a monthly meeting' (quoted in Helmer 2008a, no pagination). During the civil war, Talco was one of the key assets over which battles took place, with warlords Ghaffor Mirzoev and Mahmud Khudoiberdiev fighting for control. Abdukadir Ermatov, the director of Talco from 1994–2004, reports credibly incidents where his life was threatened as he struggled to keep the smelter working.[15] From 1996 he began to receive assistance from Avaz Nazarov, a friend and businessman from the same region of Tajikistan as Ermatov but now resident overseas.[16] From 1996 until 2004, Talco's trading activities were facilitated by financing and bartering arrangements with Nazarov and his various companies. From 1998

the principal partner was Nazarov's Ansol Company, registered in the tax shelter of Guernsey in the British Channel Islands. These arrangements, accepted by President Rahmon, brought Talco back to profitability whilst providing significant revenues for Nazarov and Ansol.[17]

In 2004 there was a management change orchestrated by the Rahmon regime. The arrangement with Nazarov was ended in favour of new agreements with multinational corporations Rusal, from December 2004, and Hydro Aluminium, from June 2006. These changes took place due to domestic and international political developments, as well as global economic competition between rival multinational corporations. The conflicts over management also prompted Talco to begin legal action in the London High Court in an ill-fated attempt to have the previous management and the Ansol company convicted of fraud,[18] thus legitimating the shift to new management and relieving Talco of responsibility for fraudulent trading arrangements. That this conflict over a Tajikistani state-owned enterprise fell under the jurisdiction of English law was a puzzle for justices presiding[19] but indicated the global assemblages within which the Tajik state had become imbricated. The hearings, which ran from May 2005 to November 2008, and cost between US$150–200 million, make the case one of the most expensive in legal history – costs largely borne by the Government of Tajikistan. Whilst the case became notorious in 2008 as allegation met counter-allegation, it ended without conclusion. Nevertheless transcripts and judgments from the hearings exposed the details of trading arrangements and management structures which are discussed here.[20] These can be said to constitute global assemblages where a state-owned enterprise is denationalized for private and global interests.

In 2004, government officials and the Oriyonbank, under President Rahmon's brother-in-law Hasan Sadulloev, arranged for the replacement of the management of Nazarov and the Ansol Company by new management under United Company Rusal, the Russian producer headed by Oleg Deripaska (Helmer 2008c).[21] Court documents present considerable evidence as to how this occurred and, in particular, the role of Rahmon and Sadulloev in these events.[22] The High Court judge, Justice Blackburne, concluded that Rahmon family members and Deripaska's Rusal conspired to expel Ansol from its partnership with Talco following an August 2004 meeting between Deripaska and Rahmon.[23] An agreement was signed with Rusal in October 2004 and shortly thereafter Ermatov was asked to step down as director and stand as a candidate in the February 2005 parliamentary elections.[24] There appear to be both domestic political and geopolitical factors behind this move. In 2004, Rahmon moved against several former civil-war allies and foes to remove them from their positions of power. In particular, Ghaffor Mirzoev was removed as head of the Presidential Guard and, after several months, arrested, tried and convicted of numerous offences including murder, embezzlement and the illegal possession of arms, and, in 2006, sentenced to life in prison. Mirzoev was said to have interests in Talco. By 2004, Rahmon clearly felt strong enough in his position to remove former associates such as Mirzoev and Nazarov from their positions and consolidate his own family's position in the state. In addition, geopolitically, 2004 was the high point in recent relations between Tajikistan and Russia. The July 2004 agreement between presidents Rahmon and Putin in Sochi addressed state-to-state issues such as the transfer of Tajikistan's southern border from Russian to Tajik control, the status of Russia's space observation centre in Nurek and Tajikistan's debt to Russia. It also included a number of formal and informal commitments regarding Russian investment into Tajik hydropower and aluminium industries.

Whilst there were certainly classical 'internal' and 'inter-state' factors in the 2004 shift to CDH and the Russian Aluminum Company (Rusal) the effect was to further denationalize the Tajik state through its intertwining with global financial and trading assemblages. Following the removal of Nazarov and Ansol in December 2004, Talco entered into a partnership with two companies, CDH and Talco Management Limited (TML), registered in the British Virgin Islands. CDH and TML became the trading companies for Talco. This is a trading arrangement

known as a 'tolling scheme' designed to avoid the companies involved paying tax. It was agreed in the settlement of an earlier legal action brought by Hydro against Talco for breach of contract.[25] CDH and TML are off-shore 'cut-out' companies created to reduce tax burdens; they have no formal obligations to the Government of Tajikistan but are apparently owned by the Oriyonbank – for the profit of members of the Rahmon family and their associates.[26] The new arrangement was enabled by a presidential decree of 23 December 2004, allowing aluminium to be transferred from Talco to CDH without payment.[27] This arrangement reproduces and intensifies many of the features of the old – those who own CDH also control Talco, creating a greater conflict of interest than the previous arrangement with Ansol (whose owner, Nazarov, did not control but influenced Talco). Justice Blackburne concluded that it is difficult to see how this arrangement could have been for the benefit of Talco which is likely to be operating at a 'significant loss'.[28]

In 2006, Talco's production was shifted to a third trading arrangement, this time with Norway's Hydro Aluminium, part of a conglomerate whose majority shareholder is the Government of Norway. After a June 2006 settlement agreement between Talco and Hydro, the latter became Talco's principal partner, pushing its rival Rusal out of the arrangement. The agreement was part of the settlement agreed between the companies and arranged under the auspices of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the World Bank.[29] This 2006 move came at a time of worsening relations between Russia and Tajikistan when the government was once again pursing a more active 'multi-vector' foreign policy with greater cooperation with China, India and Iran amongst other regional powers. Thus, at the time this move was seen as part of the 'new Great Game' – a shift in Tajikistan's foreign and economic policy away from Russia and towards new foreign partners.

However, what we see here, since 1996, is the emergence and intensification of global economic and political assemblages of denationalization. Whilst the 2006 agreement apparently established a quite different arrangement – with a Western company, Hydro, and under the auspices of international financial institutions (IFIs) – it is interesting to observe the continuities. Firstly, these players and their involvement in Talco were not new. Hydro had been connected to Talco for some time with barter arrangements through Ansol, in partnership with Rusal, since 2000.[30] Hydro's barter arrangements were, moreover, discussed in a World Bank-facilitated video conference in May 2004 involving the president's advisor on economic issues. Given the strategic importance of Talco to the Tajik economy, the IFIs too had been involved in international trading and financing arrangements since the late-1990s. Secondly, although the actors have changed, the structure of the tolling agreements has probably changed little since the involvement of Nazarov in 1996. Whilst the London High Court hearings did not reach a verdict, they heard considerable evidence that 'tolling agreements' established since 1996 through Ansol (under Ermatov/Nazarov management) and subsequently CDH/TML (under the new management) were and are illegitimate and thus constitute fraud.[31] Justice Blackburne concludes that there is 'a seriously arguable case' that, as presented in the evidence by Ansol, 'the new arrangement [from December 2004] was designed to enable the benefit of TadAZ's smelting activities to pass to those who own or control CDH, namely Rusal and/or close associates and relatives of President Rakhmonov led by Mr Saduloev.'[32] Following the Talco-Hydro agreement of June 2006, Rusal was usurped from the assemblage but the basic structure of the 'tolling agreement' remained in place with CDH/TML accruing profits for the benefits of their owners and to the disadvantage of state-owned Talco. At the very least the IFIs were unwittingly complicit in the fraud perpetrated by Talco's various partners.

So precisely how did these global economic assemblages work? John Helmer, a Moscow-based journalist who followed the court proceedings describes the arrangements as they were established since the June 2006 Talco-Hydro agreement:

> The court presentation of the documents shows that, according to a scheme of tolling the raw materials for processing at contrived prices, Talco receives alumina from Hydro and gives it to CDH. CDH then contracts it for processing by the smelter and receives the metal back in exchange. CDH then sells the same metal back to Talco at the market price, and Talco sells it to Hydro at a loss. (2008b, no pagination)[33]

The system works with the transfer of profits to CDH/TML whilst only a small portion is returned to Talco in the form of a 'tolling fee' for services rendered. Talco is thus transformed from an aluminium exporter to a processor of aluminium and sub-contractor to the offshore trading company, CDH/TML. As Talco bears all the costs of production, as well as the legal fees of the court case, it made just US$15 million profit over the period from 2005–2007, despite an approximately 200% increase in the price aluminium over this time. Meanwhile, CDH/TML is estimated to have made US$500 million for its owners.[34] In 2008, Helmer, drawing on a published International Monetary Fund (IMF) report, estimated that Talco earned just 17% of the total value of its exports to foreign buyers in 2006 and 2007. The report lists the value of the 'tolling fees' received as US$173 million for 2006 and $183 million for 2007 whilst the total market value of the exported aluminium for each year is calculated at around US$1 billion (Helmer 2008d, IMF 2008). According to Helmer's calculations based on the available evidence, this would mean that over the period from 2005 to 2008, Talco, and thus the Tajik state, lost US$1.145 billion in revenues due to this trading scheme (2008c, no pagination) – a massive amount for a country with a GDP of just US$3.7 billion in 2007.[35] These profits, according to the trading scheme, would have been accrued by the owners of CDH/TML and Hydro Aluminium.[36]

In the state-failure account presented by ICG (2009, pp. 14–15) the Talco case is seen in light of the Rahmon regime's re-centralization of power and resources to his regime and to the detriment of the state. However, this is not simply state capture by the regime but the creation of a specific assemblage which serves to denationalize the state to serve private and global interests. Whilst this weakens the state in its ideal-type, it brings the actually existing state of Tajikistan into new assemblages with partners who have interests in its survival and continued denationalization. This is not just state weakness but state transformation. The fraud, its exposure and subsequent demands for reform would not be possible without the dynamics of globalization to which Tajikistan has been exposed increasingly since its independence in 1991. Indeed, these dynamics are themselves products of both the global and state as scales of political order. What is fascinating is how both the economic arrangements and the political accountability for them both occur at the global, that is denationalized, scale of the state. It was the conflict between multiple competing international tolling arrangements, and the contentions between the parties these engendered, that led directly to the exposure of these arrangements in the London High Court case. This scandal, along with a not entirely dissimilar case of the misappropriation of IMF funds to cotton financiers which was finally exposed by an Ernst & Young audit of the National Bank of Tajikistan published in 2008, led the IFIs to demand 'greater transparency and accountability' in Tajikistan's state institutions and state-owned enterprises. In 2008 they called for two further audits, of Talco and the state electricity producer, Barqi Tojik. Importantly, it was not public outcry but international-donor and IFI demands that led to these audits. Similarly, Nazarov, Ermatov and their associates were not able to launch their case in the Tajik courts but the London High Court. The state is assembled economically and politically through global economic and political arrangements.

Through the summer of 2010, as this paper was being finalized, IFI pressure mounted on Talco to publish the results of the IMF-ordered audit and revaluation. It is not clear that these audits will be made fully public and it seems unlikely that they will establish fraud in the eyes of either Tajik or English law. Moreover, the IFIs themselves are implicated in an

arrangement which is perfectly legal and seen as vital for business and thus economic growth. The global economic assemblage provides both. Ibragimova quotes Tajik political scientist Rustam Samiyev's explanation for the delay in completion and publication:

> Most likely, Talco is trying to conceal its 'tolling system' of partnerships with raw material suppliers that helps deflect hundreds of millions of dollars into tax-free zones. Nothing is wrong with that practice in the eyes of international business and donors. ... Yet it betrays the Tajik people's interests. (2010, no pagination)

On 25 June 2010, the IMF called once again for the publication of the audit and revaluation of Talco on the company's website and made a new request for an audit of TML. On 3 August 2010, Talco announced that it had received these reports from the auditors and provided a rather defensive summary of their findings.[37] Talco's press release states that the audit showed that the US$51 million spent on legal fees in the legal action against Nazarov and the Ansol company was 'forced [in order] to uphold the interests of, in the first instance, the country and defence of the company'.[38] It had committed to publish the audit by the end of 2009 but, as of mid-August 2010, had failed to do so. It is not clear whether the Talco order will be made public in full or simply copies provided to the IFIs who remain the only, and highly problematical, institutions holding the Rahmon regime to account regarding its conduct over Talco.

Conclusions

The brief case study considered above is not meant to indicate that the Tajik state is predominantly globalized and denationalized; in other respects it has been regionalized, localized and even nationalized. Globalization-denationalization is but one of the modalities of the multiplicitous Tajikistani state. But the example does demonstrate how in this respect the state-system has been transformed in Tajikistan since the end of the Soviet Union. It has not simply been captured by private networks or factions but it has been denationalized in that it has become imbricated with the global political economy in ways which were beyond the imagination of Tajikistanis 20 years ago. To a large extent, moreover, these global assemblages remain beyond the imagination of Tajikistanis today despite the fact they themselves create new global networks and practically further deeper denationalization as they migrate to Russia and the Gulf, or draw on the Internet for entertainment and social life.

Part of the explanation for this gap between popular discourse and practice is that denationalization has happened alongside an explicit campaign by the state elite to cultivate a political order of national statehood (*davlatdori melli*), as examined elsewhere in the literature on Tajikistan (Nourzhanov 2001, Marat 2006, Blakkisrud and Nozimova 2010). Roy (2000) has identified Tajikistan and Central Asian states as 'nationalising'. Indeed, the Tajikistani nation-state idea with its dimensions of the temporal (the urgency of the post-Soviet period for the survival of the state), spatial (a homeland for the Tajiks amidst Turkic encirclement and legacies of Soviet colonization) and ethical (patriarchal maxims of 'authority' and 'stability') has apparently survived an actually existing state that functions according to various logics. Some of these are familial, some national, some regional and some global (Heathershaw 2009, pp. 80–81). The survival of the ideology of nation-statehood amongst the elites and citizens has seemingly been instrumental in concealing the contradictions of denationalization. As Sassen remarks, the 'constituting and shaping of global dynamics inside the national generally gets coded, represented, formulated or experienced through the vocabularies and institutional arrangements of the national as historically constituted' (2008, p. 75).[39] The question then is how far this virtual statehood – this gaping chasm between state-idea and state-system, between the discursive environment and the more complex realm of actual practice – can

be maintained in post-Soviet Tajikistan. To what extent can the Tajikistani state remain formally and discursively homogenous (the state-idea) whilst being informally and practically heterogeneous (the various logics of the state-system with its participation in global assemblages)?

But if the ways in which the Tajikistani state has been denationalized are particular and complex that is not to say that this denationalization is unique, nor exclusively occurring in the economic realm. Other post-Soviet and post-colonial Central Asian states have apparently endured similar processes where the state becomes denationalized in its cultural and political forms and content: Kazakhstan's 'autonomous elite' performing to the democratic ideals of the EU and US (Nourzhanov 2010, p. 128); the 'delocalization of external norms' in Kyrgyzstan (Wilkinson 2010, p. 153) where Akaev's reforms generated a virtual state by the time of the ill-fated 'Tulip Revolution' of 2005; and, the exacerbation of clientelism and patronage networks of the state across the region due to the 'grassroots' initiatives of international NGOs across the region (Liu 2003, pp. 3–4). Perhaps even the performing arts and Olympic-style spectacles of Uzbekistan, with their emphasis on national sovereignty, can be considered as denationalizing in terms of their internationalized form and Soviet-style production (Adams 2010, p. 8). Nevertheless, this process is not uniform across the region and is still most clearly seen in states' imbrications with global economic assemblages. This broadening of the scope beyond Tajikistan to Central Asia also reminds us that there is a regional dimension to these global assemblages as we see most clearly in the security formations and credit agreements proffered by Russia and China to their Central Asian neighbours.

The literature on global assemblages emphasizes how statehood is in flux, subject to global technologies, politics and ethics as well as the play of contingency. 'Global phenomena', Ong and Collier note, 'have a distinct capacity for decontextualization and recontextualization, abstractability and movement' (2006, p. 11). This should deter us from assuming a *status quo* or stability in Tajikistan's authoritarian state. But rather than look for the collapse of a singular polity (a 'failed state') or the emergence of a new one (a fully globalized state or regionalized one that is subordinate to Chinese and/or Russian hegemony), there are strong grounds to expect the transformation of the state in terms of multiple registers of statehood. In such a multiplicitous state, globally derived rights for citizens' gender equality and human rights may be challenged by the purported national ethical regime of patriarchy. In the case of Talco, the authority of the president was limited not by Parliament but by foreign courts and the World Bank. The claim of Tajikistan to be sovereign over its own territory is challenged by regional and international arrangements for border-guarding with Russia and the European Union, amongst others, demanding a role in policy and practice (Heathershaw 2009, pp. 139–141). Off-shore branches of state companies and state border regimes may both be considered as 'bits of territory, authority and rights' that have never really been established as the sole purview of the national authorities despite remaining part of the nation-state.

To some this analysis might itself be too encompassing, bringing together as it does various agents of political and economic globalization. It is quite correct that multinational corporations must be distinguished from donor agencies. The predicament of Tajikistan amidst globalization is not all bad – global assemblages provide for the looting of public goods for private gain, but also bring opportunities for some transparency and, even, moments of accountability. Yet to suggest that such circumstances constitute a failure to meet international standards due to state capture by factional groups misses the point. To draw too clear a division between 'private' and 'public' and 'national' and 'global' may itself underestimate the transformation of the state in modern times. Both the World Bank and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) promote the further opening of Tajikistani territory and authorities to global assemblages of finance and commerce, as much as they open them up to new rights regimes

in public-sector accounting and local government. Such global assemblages enable the capture of the state by global networks whilst they lay down the pathway to democratization and development.

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Notes

1. For a discussion of approaches to factionalism in the study of Central Asian politics see Gulette (2007). For approaches to factionalism through networks and neo-patrimonialism in neighbouring states, see Radnitz (2006) and Ilkhamov (2006). As numerous authors have shown, Tajikistan's elite networks are not simply constituted of sub-ethnic or 'clan' solidarity (Collins 2009) but are formed of complex network relations based also on fictive kinship, social histories and economic relations (Dudoignon 1994, Rubin 1998, Roy 2000, Akiner 2001).
2. Various authors, 'Tajikistan: On the Road to Exaggeration?', *Turan and Iran*, 1 March 2009. Available from: http://turaniran.wordpress.com/2009/03/01/tajikistan-on-the-road-to-exaggeration/ [Accessed 11 August 2010].
3. See Mitchell's (1991) response to the 'bringing the state back in' thesis (Skocpol *et al.* 1985) as well as Migdal's later discussion of these issues (2001).
4. This claim is based on my own experience of struggling to produce reports for donor agencies and NGOs which were both true to the complexities of context and readable for a non-academic audience. See my discussion of monitoring and evaluation in Heathershaw (forthcoming).
5. Parviz Mullojanov, 'The politics of national-state ideology in Tajikistan', presentation to the conference, 'Tajikistan: birth and rebirth', 13 October 2009, St Antony's College, Oxford.
6. The recent press and policy commentary on the armed conflict between the Government of Tajikistan and factions under Ali Bedak and Mirzokhuja Ahmadov in the Rasht Valley region (from September 2010) provided many examples. For example, West (2010, p. 24) cursorily summarizes nine militant groups operating in Central Asia including the Islamic Revival Party (IRP) of Tajikistan. The IRP is, of course, a legal and moderate Islamic political party which has very good relations with Western states.
7. The mainstream literature has recognized this dilemma of international state building: Chesterman (2004), Zaum (2007) and Paris and Sisk (2009). For critical scholars this remains an inherent contradiction within the discourse of international state building: Chandler (2006), Bickerton (2007), Heathershaw and Lambach (2008), and Bliesmann de Guevara (2010).
8. In the context of Tajikistan, the neo-colonialism of international state-building interventions evoke the early Soviet era where Moscow attempted to build a Soviet colony in explicitly anti-colonial terms (see Kassymbekova, this volume). However, by the late Soviet period the boundaries between 'internal' and 'external' were less clear-cut and both Tajik national and Soviet international spaces had begun to be instantiated. This suggests that the logical contradiction of building sovereignty through intervention does not prevent the emergence of new, hybrid forms of political order. There may then be a historical basis for the transformation of statehood in Tajikistan described below. However, post-1991 transformation, shaped by the emergence of global assemblages, is of a qualitatively different kind to Soviet era nationalization and internationalization.
9. Antoine Buisson, 'Twelve years after the peace agreements: what lessons have been learnt from the civil war and its causes', presentation to the conference, 'Tajikistan: birth and rebirth', 14 October 2009, St Antony's College, Oxford.
10. See Held and McGrew (2003) for the debate between globalists and sceptics. See Brenner (1999) and Ferguson and Gupta (2002) for critiques of the spatio-hierarchical premises of the globalization debate.

11. Sassen (2006) uses 'Territory, Authority, Rights' (TAR) as the criteria of assessment whilst Ong and Collier (2005) speak of territorialization. I prefer the process ('territorialization') to the state ('territory') because it allows us to consider incomplete processes of making and remaking territories as much as the emergence of new territories themselves. Sassen speaks of the global city and Special Economic Zones as examples of new territories made under globalization as well as 'emergent institutionalizations of territory that unsettle the national encasement of territory' (2008, p. 64). In the case of Tajikistan we see new territorializations and spatializations occurring under the dynamics of land reform and seasonal labour migration networks (see also Heathershaw 2009, pp. 164–169).
12. The question of the depletion or transformation of the state-idea is more complex and shall be considered only in the conclusion of this paper.
13. Asia-Plus, 'TALCO receives report on audit of its financial activity', 4 August 2010, http://www.asiaplus.tj/en/news/54/68017.html [Accessed 11 August 2010]
14. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors [2005] EWHC 2241 (Ch) (21 October 2005), para 22–23, available from: http://www.bailii.org/ [Accessed 14 August 2010].
15. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), para 59.
16. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), paras 28, 60.
17. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), paras 61.
18. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), paras 81–85.
19. In fact the barter agreements of 2000 and 2003 were made under the jurisdiction of English Law in the form of the London Court of International Arbitration. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), para 23.
20. In particular, the judgment of Justice Blackburne of 21 October 2005, Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), and the subsequent *Settlement Agreement between Hydro Aluminium and Tajik Aluminium Company*, 20 December 2006. Available from: http://johnhelmer.net/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/taj-trial-hydro-tadaz-agreement-of-dec-20-2006.pdf [Accessed 15 August 2010].
21. It seems that these moves began in at least 2003 as Ermatov, by his subsequent testimony, was pressured by Sadulloev to transfer Talco accounts to Oriyonbank. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), para 63.
22. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005).
23. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), paras 74, 191.
24. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), paras 75, 76.
25. This 'breach of contract' action referred to a 2003 barter agreement between the two parties where Talco had failed to deliver US$128 million in aluminium shipments.
26. Justice Blackburne states: 'TadAZ [Talco] claims that CDH is ultimately owned by Orienbank [*sic*]. The evidence lends support to the view that Orienbank is controlled by close members and/or associates of President Rakhmonov's family.' Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), para 180.
27. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), para 182.
28. Justice Blackburne states: 'It is difficult to see why TadAZ should have wished to enter into an agreement of this kind with an off-shore shelf company, as CDH was, which had no track record in alumina, aluminium or any other kind of dealings.' Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), paras 181, 183–4.
29. The agreement also includes 'settlement sums' totalling $94 million made in instalments from 31 December 2006 to 31 December 2010. *Settlement Agreement between Hydro Aluminium and Tajik Aluminium Company*, 20 June 2006, pp. 5, 21–25. See also Helmer 2008e.
30. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), paras 29, 99.
31. Justice Blackburne states, 'a "near irresistible" inference of all of this is that, in the period between 1996 to the end of 2000, there was a fraudulent scheme similar to the scheme between TadAZ and Ansol after that time.' Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), para 35.
32. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), paras 175, 177.
33. Similar arrangements are described with respect to the 1996–2004 partnership with Ansol in the 2005 judgement. Tajik Aluminium Plant v Ermatov & Ors (21 October 2005), para 163.
34. Eurasianet, *Tajikistan: suit settlement brings no resolution*. 1 December 2008, available from: http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav120208a.shtml [Accessed 10 August 2010].
35. World Bank, *World development indicators 2009*. Available from: http://data.worldbank.org/indicator. [Accessed 10 August 2010].

36. Nazarov's lawyer, John Doctor QC, estimated the losses of Talco to be $450 million from 2005 to 2005 whilst the profits of CDH/TML were around $500 million, all of which were transferred directly to CDH/TML unknown owners (Helmer 2008e, no pagination).
37. 'Press-reliz po auditu', Talco, 3 August 2010. Available from: http://www.Talco.com.tj/index.php?l=2&action=newslist&id=153&page=1. [Accessed 14 August 2010].
38. 'Press-reliz po auditu', Talco, 3 August 2010. Available from: http://www.Talco.com.tj/index.php?l=2&action=newslist&id=153&page=1. [Accessed 14 August 2010].
39. The survival of a state-idea which jars with state practice may be explained by a traditional analysis of authoritarianism in terms of a passive populous, weak press and relatively strong capacity for coercion. However, this seems incomplete partly because the effect of globalization on the state remains invisible in democratic states (Sassen 2006, p. 12). Moreover, whilst the analysts of ICG were open to the idea of state failure, their own neo-Weberian idea of the state left them ignorant of the globalization of the state. The vitality of the ideas of national statehood and state sovereignty, despite considerable evidence to suggest frequent violations of the principles of both, is a product, in part, of the hegemony of the modern discourse of nationalism. This raises issue beyond the scope of this paper.

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