

Narcotics in Iceland

Security Issues and Prohibition Policy

Brynjólfur Sveinn Ívarsson

Lokaverkefni til BA-gráðu í stjórnmálafræði

Félagsvísindasvið

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to provide a brief overview of narcotics related security issues in Iceland. The security issues that are addressed are narcotics related criminal offenses, small arms proliferation, narcotics related collusion and police misconduct, money laundering, prescription forgery, the spread of pathogens among habitual drug users, the operation of motor vehicles under the influence of narcotics, and polluted narcotics. A second theme of the analysis is whether or not the official policy of drugs prohibition serves to amplify some or all of these security concerns.

The findings of the thesis suggest that prohibition policy may serve to increase the motive for and/or scope of certain security concerns; especially insofar as it opens the way for further involvement of organized criminal syndicates. The analysis also suggests that Iceland has been until recently very ill equipped to deal with rising security concerns in this field, but that enforcement and the relevant legal framework have been growing more effective. However, at the same time it suggests that criminal syndicates have likewise become more professional.

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1 Introduction

Most products in the world are bought and sold without the melodrama and mayhem associated with narcotics. The present study is a risk assessment of the various security threats associated with the drug trade in Iceland. The responses to these threats and means of mitigating them are also briefly addressed. When these threats and countermeasures have been examined the question will be raised of whether or not some security responses are misplaced, and whether they serve to amplify the threats associated with the drug trade.

Since the security threats that the drug trade poses are very diverse, the threats are categorized by their nature. Firstly, narcotics associated violence and crime and small arms proliferation. The second category covers threats that undermine the rule of law. The threats that fall under this category are official collusion, prescription forgery, money laundering. The third set of 'softer' threats to individual and social welfare include the spread of pathogens, poisoning and the use of motor vehicles while under the influence.

Conflicts are no longer the only security threat facing nation-states. Soft security threats have begun to dominate current affairs. Soft security threats range from environmental and societal to economic, among which the threat from the narcotics trade is proving itself to be an extremely serious one. Such threats can manifest themselves as threats to political stability in weak or fragile states, while in developed countries the primary concerns have been rises in organized crime, money laundering and the spread of HIV/AIDS (Swanström, 2010).

Icelanders often consider themselves impervious to all sorts of security threats. No shots have been fired in anger since a fishing rights dispute with Great Britain in the '70s. Iceland has never been the target of terrorist plots nor has there been any internal armed conflict since the Reformation. Ships or villages have not been subjected to piracy since the 18th century. No attempt has made to orchestrate a coup d'état since the early 19th century when Jørgen Jørgensen conspired with an English soapmaker to sever Denmark's authority over the Icelandic colony and establish himself as king. However due to the country's geographic location, which is on the central fault-line in the Atlantic, volcanic eruptions are frequent. In latter years Icelanders seem impervious to those as well, since even though a volcano erupted practically inside the settlement on Heimaey in the '70s there were no casualties and have been no deaths directly caused by other eruptions since. Other natural disasters, though, have claimed many lives: for example avalanches devastated two towns in the northwest of the country in the '90s.

In terms of softer, including societal, security the picture is different. The façade of non-criminality on the island has quickly faded away since the '90s. I recall people describing the island as a safe haven where there was minimal criminality: these statements would appear absurd today as the media has been flooded with news reports on major drug seizures and what was previously unthinkable: the rise of organized crime. Most of the offences seem to be connected with drugs one way or the other. Government officials have expressed concern, and Iceland has taken some steps to gain support from foreign partners and experts (for instance in the framework of Schengen and in cooperation with Europol), but effective responses seem yet to be formulated.

The tragedy of youths wasting away their life in the vicious world of narcotics has left little sympathy for drug lords who are profiteering from the misfortune of others. Countless lives have been ruined with deadly disease or overdoses, or have ended in suicide. This grim picture has created a political imperative for harsh security responses. Despite big drug busts there always seem to be more people willing to fill the caps created by the police. Despite extensive, expansive and wide-ranging police action the influx of drugs has not been stemmed. Has the war on drugs failed? Can it even be called a war, if it does not end? The question of legalization is relevant, but is a broader issue for public policy with several sets of relevant considerations. What pertains to the subject matter of this essay is whether or not prohibition amplifies the security threats; and further, whether misplaced security responses have increased the prevalence and seriousness of some of these hazards.

One cannot at a glance realize the full scope of the narcotics-related threats. Some security threats are restricted to a single occasion: a volcanic eruption, an avalanche, a terrorist attack et cetera. The threats related to narcotics seem to be more in the line of being dispersed, continuous and small in scale. But if all the different elements are combined, do they outweigh other threats? And in what kind of conceptual or analytical framework could that judgement be made?

The concept of societal security was developed by the Copenhagen School of security studies. It refers to 'the ability of a society to persist in its essential character under changing conditions and possible or actual threats' (McSweeney, 1996). Societal security seems to provide an excellent framework for examining the subject of narcotics related threats in Iceland, given that the most relevant security threat concerns the establishment of local or foreign organized crime syndicates. These clearly have the potential to disrupt the 'essential

character' of Icelandic society in many more ways than simply the impact of the goods they supply.

There is a clear intellectual and practical imperative to assess the security threats related to narcotics and the responses to them. Because these threats have severely diminished the capabilities of governments in all regions to protect their citizenry, it is never an impossibility that the same could happen here. Attitudes have so far been relaxed in Iceland at large: perhaps because of the seeming continual advancement of the country until the recent banking crisis, which may have led people to adopt an incrementalist worldview of never-ending progress. It is necessary to face up to the fact that there are no guarantees in this world, and if vigilance does not serve as a guiding light for the nation, everything that has been gained can be lost.

In this thesis, firstly the 'hardest' security threats will be examined, a category restricted to arms proliferation and narcotics related crime. Secondly we shall address threats against the civic virtues of the rule of law. This portion deals with police misconduct, prescription forgery, and money laundering. Thirdly, the 'softest' security threats are analyzed. These are in their nature accidental and as such do not constitute an act of violence or subversion: rather they concern risky behaviors that can cause death or personal harm. This portion consists of examinations of polluted narcotics, the spread of pathogens, and accidents due to operation of motor vehicles while subject to narcotic induced intoxication.

Particular persons will be referred to in a generic manner and for illustrative purposes only. There is no imperative to identify particular victims or defendants by name, since it has no practical role in general security analysis. However those persons holding a significant role in law enforcement or the judicial system are identified, along with experts consulted for the present research –since the latter need to be identified for purposes of academic review and contacting them might prove useful for further investigation into the subject. All of these persons are public officials or are connected with judicial affairs in one way or another.

2 'Hard' Security Threats

2.1 Narcotics-related criminal offences

Drug-related crimes are offences committed under the influence of narcotics, plus acquisitive crimes to finance drug habits and crimes related to black market activities (mostly gang warfare and forceful debt collection). However this raises an epistemological question: whether one should only address the aforementioned *malum in se* offences, or the broader *malum prohibitum* offences connected to the very possession and transfer of drugs, which by definition arise only from the way such acts are viewed by the authorities. The *malum prohibitum* charges (such as the prosecutable possession and sale of drugs) will be included here, firstly because habitual drug use requires possession and sale of narcotics can serve to finance drug habits, and secondly because the enforcement of such laws requires expenditure and resource allocation which is important in connection with issues to be examined later in this text. Consequently, crimes that occur as a result of the victim's or offender's drug use, crimes that transpire subsequent to the offender's need to finance habitual drug use, and crimes that occur as a result of narcotics distribution are all considered 'drug-related crimes' in this essay. Trafficking is however addressed separately.

Firstly, narcotics-related violence that is not aimed to fulfill acquisitive purposes is briefly examined. Secondly, the scope of narcotics-related law enforcement, prosecution and penalties are examined. The bulk and cost of such activities are a societal security concern in the light of the massive expenditure required, but above all due to the increased scale of policing, which should be a concern for any state aspiring to call itself a liberal democracy. Also the scope of acquisitive crimes is estimated. Thirdly, another serious societal security concern is covered: the establishment of organized criminal syndicates. An extensive comparison will be made with alcohol prohibition to shed light on that subject.

In 2009 and 2011 two murders in Iceland have been at least in large part attributed to narcotics-induced psychosis. Neither was committed under aggravated circumstances. In one case the defendant stated that the victim had been imitating *Spiderman* and gotten himself hurt, while in fact he was killed by a blunt trauma to the head i.e. a blow with a steam iron. Another case was a deadly assault where the defendant and the victim had no prior relations. Media descriptions of the murders thus suggest mitigating factors (Greater Reykjavík Area Police District, 2010). More generally, drug and alcohol abuse contribute to higher rates of

domestic violence, child abuse and sexual violence; though overall, the use of narcotics correlates more with acquisitive crime (National Institute of Justice, 2000).

From 1981 to 2009 the number of prisoners serving out sentences for drug offences in Iceland jumped from 21 to 98 (Statistics Iceland, e.d.). This is a belated tendency that mimics those of the United States, Britain and in fact all western countries. In general relatively few people are imprisoned in Iceland, or around 43 persons out of 100,000 in 2009 (Fangelsismálastofnun, e.d.), as opposed to over 700 people out of 100,000 inhabitants in the United States which officially holds the world record (though the Democratic People's republic of Korea should probably receive that dubious honor). Even so, the Icelandic correctional services seem to be over-stretched as hundreds of prisoners have had their incarceration delayed because prisons were overcrowded (Hauksdóttir, 2011). Júlía Birgisdóttir performed a cost analysis of the impact of enforcing laws on narcotics (the only accessible Icelandic example found), as her undergraduate thesis. She estimated the proportion of narcotics-related cases handled by various law enforcement and prosecution agencies along with the penal system. In her study these cases were limited to charges pertaining to the possession and sale of narcotics. That cost alone amounted to 1,700 million ISK (Birgisdóttir, 2011); and such a price tag still does not tell the whole story, as acquisitive crimes and violent crime linked with the consumption of narcotics were not covered by the calculation. Also the numbers may be a little 'skewed' since they were an estimate judging from the proportion of narcotics related cases handled and the absolute expenses of various judicial institutions.

In 2003 the British Prime Minister's strategy unit attributed 54% of all robberies, 70-80% of burglaries, 85% of shoplifting, and 95% of street prostitution to drug addicts who aim to finance their drug habits. In total 56% of all crime in Britain was attributed to drug addicts, leaving aside possession or distribution charges. It is clear from this example that a great proportion of crimes are committed either for finance habitual drug use or result from narcotics influencing persons to perform violent actions. As a result, the indirect cost of enforcing drug prohibition laws can be seen to be much higher, if it can be demonstrated that prohibition creates a strong imperative for other crimes (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2003). This seems to be evident from the British evidence cited, and to a certain extent these numbers are likely to be applicable also to Iceland. For a start, prohibition has the effect of artificially raising the price of narcotics: which in turn might encourage much more crime

being committed to finance habitual drug use. Iceland might be more affected by this because of its relative isolation as an island (The Economist, 2007).

In the United States during prohibition, criminal syndicates took advantage of the underground market that alcohol restriction had established. Every time one supplier was shut down the profits of the others would go up. Thus prohibition had created an environment for organized crime to flourish. Despite the claim of the prohibitionist movement that a ban would reduce alcohol related crime; the reality was that the Volstead Act created conditions in which crime (including the most violent kinds) was rife.

Research by John Landesco suggests, however, that organized crime did not appear from an abyss when prohibition took effect. Rather, the overlords of the bootlegging industry had (if one may use the expression) served internships in interlocking syndicates of prostitution and gambling, before grabbing the opportunity to expand their 'business' (Landesco, 1932). Other research on alcohol consumption, judging from material regarding to hospital admittances due to alcohol poisoning, cirrhosis and alcohol induced psychosis, suggests that alcohol consumption fell sharply immediately once prohibition was instituted. However, the research suggests that alcohol consumption soon reached its former levels, and at the same time a sharp increase in admittances on account of psychosis was observed (Miron and Zwiebel, 1991).

In regards to narcotics it can be argued that the same principle applies. Despite the difference in severity of the effects between alcohol and 'hard' narcotics, both substances can be smuggled and traded under prohibition. Demand for both groups of substances is unlikely to be drastically reduced in the foreseeable future, and due to the high earnings from trafficking (the mark-up on narcotics is often in the thousands of percentiles) it is unlikely that convictions can overtake the pace of new entries into the field. As much as governments imagine themselves to be able, they cannot in fact alter the laws of human action. Governments can only hope to respond to, discourage, or mitigate certain specific forms of behavior, *ceteris paribus*.

Some differences between the effects of alcohol prohibition and narcotics prohibition may also be observed. The consumption of 'hard' narcotics in the United States has dropped in the past twenty years significantly. However despite increased government expenditure (measured purely as narcotic-related expenditure) in the last decade, the consumption level has remained about the same for the past ten years (American Broadcasting Company, 2009). This is in stark contrast to observed drinking habits during prohibition, which rebounded to

their former levels within a few years. In this sense one might assume that the war on drugs has been somewhat successful; as stated in the White House's response to a statement by Kofi Annan among others concerning the legalization of narcotics (British Broadcasting Service, 2011). However, the harm that narcotics do is probably more evident to the populace today than it was in the '70s. Countless educational programs have been executed since that time and drug addicts have gained some prominence in cinema and television shows, most often depicted in a negative light or vilified. One witticism made in support of the importance of this factor is that more people watch sitcoms than read the accounts of the death of Socrates. At the very least, the notion that people simply 'wised up' as a result of such negative examples is rather less farfetched than the notion that the relevant populations have suddenly gained a new-found respect for the law.

Some of the similarities are however more glaring. Alcohol prohibition and narcotics prohibition both create a strong incentive for crime. Others are not so obvious. Landesco's observation on the origins of the organized crime syndicates might serve to explain why organized crime did not take hold in Iceland during its own era of alcohol prohibition. Because there simply was no organized crime beforehand, the illegal alcohol trade fell into the hands of petty smugglers and pharmacists (Halldórsson, 1925). Organized crime might have eventually developed if prohibition had lasted longer, but it came to an end after 13 years; and unlike in the United States where a crime spree and unnecessary deaths were the primary reasons for the repeal of the Volstead act, prohibition in Iceland was effectively ended because of international business concerns. Namely, the Spanish called for the ban on wine to be lifted, and the Icelandic government obliged them because Spain was the primary importer of salted cod (Jakobsson, 1968). Curiously beer remained banned until 1989, apparently out of some misplaced concern that lifting the ban would especially encourage alcoholism.

This also might serve to explain why Iceland's organized crime concerns seem all of foreign origin or stem heavily from foreign influences. Syndicates in question include Hell's Angels and the Black Pistons, while alleged Lithuanian syndicates are mentioned in the media. This could simply mean that the results of prohibition do not become evident as soon as it is enacted. It might be in the case of Iceland, and perhaps other relatively isolated and peaceful places, that the rise in crime is further delayed compared with other places in which criminal syndicates are already active. It is nevertheless clear that narcotics prohibition gratuitously encourages the rise of organized crime, even if this effect may be belated or

present itself differently according to location. At the very least, narcotics prohibition allows for a drastic expansion in the activities of criminal syndicates. If none are in place, one could expect them to take longer to materialize or that foreign syndicates would be interested in entering the market – which in itself might lead to negative effects in fields other than drugs.

In sum, it is not the narcotics themselves that bring about organized crime, but rather that those ‘professions’ that are made illegal eventually fall under the control of criminal gangs. If that factor can be set aside, the correct and strictest definition of narcotics-related offences should be restricted to violence incurred under the influence of narcotics or performed under narcotics-induced psychosis. It follows that the imperative for acquisitive crimes to finance drug habits is in large part a result of government policy: drug addicts would not have to perform the said crimes to the same extent if prohibition did not artificially raise the price of narcotics. Crime would be even more dramatically reduced if drug addicts were provided with narcotics free of charge. There is never much scope for profit for criminal syndicates in trading legal goods; aside from stocking fronts used for money laundering.

The damage done and resource burden imposed by acquisitive crime to finance drug habits can, by the same token, be largely attributed to government prohibition policies that raise prices and drive the ingrained, compulsive addict towards continual thievery. This is quite a significant societal security concern because – in Iceland's case - it threatens a society which has in recent history been very peaceful, runs the risk of making it significantly more violent, and forces ordinary people to take more precautions than they used to.

Aside from acquisitive crimes, other drug-related crimes constitute a rather large portion of the remaining violent crime in Iceland. The reasons for these crimes are probably interlocked with narcotics and the traits of the people inclined to consume them. It is not evident that this is very much affected by government policy, but it is possible.

The most serious aspect of this and the most pressing security concern is the establishment of organized crime syndicates. Iceland has never in its history had organized criminal bands in open defiance of the law. It is wrong to think of it as a development that is necessarily linked with modernity or with foreign elements in particular. It must rather be laid at the door of government policy. It is an extremely pressing societal security concern because criminal syndicates assume the power of tyranny, for example claiming the right to deliberately kill people in a cold and calculating manner. If the formation of serious organized criminal syndicates is to be avoided, one must simply change policy so that it does not encourage them to form or to expand to Iceland. Disregarding their motivation and incentives

while attempting to keep them under tight control with security responses has not proven successful. There is no doubt on this point: the formation of organized criminal syndicates cannot be avoided at the same time as the narcotics trade is made one of the most profitable ‘professions’ in the world.

2.2 Small arms proliferation

Small arms proliferation and trafficking has been closely linked with the drugs trade, other forms of crime and even terrorism in many parts of the world; but it has not been considered much of an actual concern in Iceland since the intelligence department was disbanded in the early ‘70s. The small department was disbanded when fears of a possible communist *coup d’état* or armed insurrection - which had existed ever since *Alþýðuflokkurinn* started flirting with the *Komintern* in the early ‘20s – subsided (Whitehead, 2010). Concerns have however been raised afresh, mainly in the light of recent shootings by unsavory characters, about current threats that arise not just from idiosyncratic weapon collectors but also involve criminal syndicates. The shootings in question were non-lethal but were investigated as attempted murders.

From 2007 up to late 2011, 1155 weapons have been confiscated by the authorities. Of these small arms 590 were knives, 136 were shotguns, 127 were bats, 96 were airsoft guns, 95 were rifles, 43 were stun guns, 38 were brass knuckles and lastly 30 were handguns (Morgunblaðið, 2011). The composition seems to represent availability. Shotguns and rifles can be purchased by individuals in Iceland after undergoing training, but the fact is that most illegitimate firearms are stolen. Licensing for handguns is very limited and burglaries represent the primary source of shotguns and rifles. Airsoft guns, knives, stun guns, brass knuckles and handguns are not domestically available, so it can be inferred that these weapons are smuggled into the country. Knives are included here, since judging from pictures of confiscated weapons, most seem not of the kitchenware designs. There are also regular reports of such weapons being confiscated by custom officials.

Shotguns are the only firearms to have been produced to any significant extent in Iceland, though production is very limited because of the small quantity required: these are however breach-loaded models while pump-action models would probably be preferred, BY WHOM? due to the extended ammunition capacity. Weapons falling under any other category are certain to be manufactured abroad; there simply is no industrial-scale manufacture of weapons in any of these types. Bats are however simple enough to be fabricated by almost

anyone. Hunting knives are also manufactured, but these are hand crafted and in very limited availability, with prices beyond most people's reaching.

It must be noted that not all these weapons are associated with organized crime. A significant portion of the firearms seized recently came from a very avid gun collector and safari exhibitionist. Those amounted to a total of 90 firearms of various kinds, which were confiscated after the owner had been firing one of his handguns within town limits. When police arrived the owner was found to be intoxicated. The owner had his license temporarily withdrawn; like an apologetic American politician he has however pledged to stop drinking and undergo therapy in an effort to gain leniency in court (Vísir, 2011a).

Police have expressed concerns that criminals are increasingly arming themselves; especially those belonging to criminal syndicates. In late 2011 a man considered the leading figure of the syndicate of 'outlaws' was arrested in connection with a shooting. An arsenal consisting of 4 shoulder firearms, a Kevlar vest, and dozens of knives was confiscated during the investigation. However it must be noted that criminal syndicates seem to be drawing unnecessary attention to themselves by intimidation with firearms, not to mention the lapses in judgment involved in storing illegitimate weaponry in their own homes. Furthermore the assailant had his cellphone turned on while committing the assault (Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, 2011a). One might think that these criminals are a disgrace to their profession, but this might make them all the more dangerous since they seem inclined to use excessive force.

In Iceland as elsewhere, the general rule is that the trafficking of narcotics makes the trafficking of arms easier, since the methods that have to be mastered for smuggling narcotics have left the smugglers with general knowledge on smuggling. Thus if the imperative for smuggling narcotics can be eliminated, perhaps arms smuggling could again become the domain of eccentric collectors rather than criminal syndicates, which would be a more favorable situation.

Suppressing the use of all weapons is a more prominent societal security concern in Iceland than in many other countries, since Icelanders have prided themselves on remaining a non-military nation and have insisted that the police do not require to wear side arms for their normal duties. This has recently been brought into question following assaults on police officers in broad daylight and arms becoming ever more common among offenders. Snorri Magnússon, the chairman of the national police officers' association, warns that in the other Nordic countries multiple shootings and murders have followed the establishment of criminal

syndicates. The most memorable moment of this crime wave was an attack on the Danish Hell's Angels headquarters in Copenhagen with an anti-tank weapon. Criminal syndicates in Iceland too are clearly arming themselves, and despite the increasing pressure being put on government to eliminate these syndicates Snorri expresses doubt that they can ever be disbanded (Icelandic National Broadcasting Service, 2011b).

Detective superintendent Karl Steinar Valsson (Interview, January 6th 2012) has however expressed doubts whether this change in situation would justify arming constables in general. He believes that the current approach of utilizing the SWAT team when apprehending suspects who are believed to be armed should be maintained. Furthermore he suggests that if police were armed in general, the high level of co-operation they have achieved with citizens could be lost, and little would be gained overall. He therefore argues for a continued approach limiting the employment of arms to specific circumstances.

3 Security Threats Concerning the Rule of Law and Civic Virtues

3.1 Narcotics related collusion and police misconduct

Police corruption is a form of police misconduct designed to obtain financial benefits or personal gain in exchange for not pursuing, or selectively pursuing, an investigation or arrest. What is also in question here is misconducts such as opportunistic theft of illegitimate narcotics earnings or the narcotics themselves, undermining criminal prosecutions by withholding evidence, the planting of evidence, direct abuses of the law by police officers and any other form of misconduct as long as it is narcotics related (Newburn, 1999). The authorities in question, that is those primarily involved in narcotics investigations or seizures, are the police, customs and coast guard.

In March 1997 the local yellow press publications *DV* and *Mannlíf* published articles in which the police were accused of misconduct and in particular of selectively pursuing related cases. Namely, a known drug dealer had been left un-harassed while he provided information on his competitors, and a known offender had also been granted a firearms license. The editor of *Mannlíf* stated that this strange occurrence of a repeat offender being granted a license to keep firearms had been the primary reason for launching their own civil investigation into the matter (Jökulsson, 1997).

The allegations were answered by the then deputy national police commissioner, Arnar Jenson, in an article in *Morgunblaðið*. The article addressed various statements by the aforementioned yellow press regarding his integrity. Despite the article being rather longwinded (mostly due to the quotations included and the provision of detailed responses) and using extremely strong and prejudicial language, it refuted most of *Mannlíf's* more outrageous claims. The article did however acknowledge that the narcotics division had no guidelines on the use of informants, despite having conducted investigations that relied on such measures since the early 1970's (Jensson, 1997).

Eleven MPs took the initiative in urging the Ministry of Justice to conduct an investigation into the actions of the narcotics division. The report's findings were that no evidence of criminal misconduct was to be found. What warrants no celebration is that many documents related to the dropping of criminal charges could not be located; however records relating to the narcotics seized were found and indicated a quantity that would usually only warrant a fine. The report nevertheless indicted the way the narcotics division had been

supervised, and stated that police officers may have exceeded their authority on several occasions (Ministry of Justice, 1997).

Despite the complete lack of evidence for any criminal misconduct, aiding a known offender in acquiring a license for firearms in 1994 must at the very least be considered peculiar. The suspect was later (1997) charged with unlawful possession of firearms and other weapons, though the weapons were mostly out of order and were an haphazard collection of rusty shoulder arms, pistols for putting sheep to death in slaughterhouses, bayonets and 'Indian sabers'. The defendant was however acquitted of improper storage of ammunition on the account that a police officer could not recall whether or not the compartment it was kept in was locked (HRD, 252/1997).

Perhaps most of the responsibility for the lack of supervision and lack of guidelines for narcotics investigations rests with the then minister of justice, Þorsteinn Pálsson. He carried more responsibility than his predecessors because the concern about such methods had had more time to develop since the 70's. It would have been his duty to initiate a pre-emptive reworking of police policy; though some blame probably rests with the office of the national police commissioner for not drawing attention to this earlier.

One factor might make Iceland's police forces unnecessarily vulnerable to police corruption. That is the low salaries they receive, judging from multiple complaints by the police officer association; and the levels do in fact seem rather low. There is general evidence including from other European countries that this factor may contribute to police corruption. Though cases in Iceland are at the very least scarce, it seems – for example - that salaries were a concern when the New Orleans police department was reformed to tackle similar concerns about integrity in the early 90's. This can be inferred from the actions taken in that case which included the raising of recruitment standards, *pay increases* of up to twenty-five percent, and reorganization and re-staffing of the internal affairs unit (Nelson and Ostrow, 1998). Detective superintendent Karl Steinar Valsson (Interview, January 6th 2012) however expressed some doubts about this point and mentioned that detectives are the highest paid police officers.

Criminal syndicates seek out and collect information on police procedure and in regards to wiretapping protocol, there is evidence that operations in Iceland have been compromised. This is due to a peculiar arrangement that requires the phone companies themselves to handle the mechanical aspects of such operations. The phone companies have emphatically demanded that this operation should be the prerogative of the police (Fréttablaðið, 2011a).

The police will however have none of it, and suggest that another agency should handle such matters. The police object on the grounds that a conflict of interests would arise if they were to supervise such operations, and have suggested that they should become the prerogative of the post and telecom administration in Iceland (Fréttablaðið, 2011b).

Though no major cases of misconduct of police officers related to narcotics have been brought to trial in Iceland, it would be a grave error to ignore the issue. Police corruption threatens the validity of the execution of the law, and is as such a grave societal security concern. It seems that Iceland has for the most part at least escaped major incidents of police corruption relating to narcotics since narcotics investigations became a mainstay of police action since the 70's. There is no reason to believe that police corruption is widespread or significant in Iceland, but with the rise of organized criminal syndicates it is more imperative than ever that extreme vigilance is observed.

3.2 Money laundering

Money laundering refers to actions taken to conceal the origins of illegally obtained cash while introducing it into the public banking system. The purpose is to ease transactions when purchasing items such as houses or cars that usually are not paid for in cash; otherwise suspicion would be raised. Another motive is the convenience and relative safety of having your earnings deposited in a bank.

The simplest method is simply to limit deposits to amounts that do not need to be declared, that is simply breaking up the deposits so that they are small enough not to arouse suspicion and thus avoiding reporting requirements. This method is called structuring. This however would probably prove too limited for any really significant amounts of cash, and would fit better with money handling for small scale narcotics operations.

Other methods include various uses of business fronts and invoice forgery so that illegitimate earnings can be claimed as legitimate earnings. This would include buying overpriced merchandise in cash to transfer one's cash to one's company; claiming excess sales in cash in retail fronts, that is selling an invisible inventory; or perhaps buying real estate under its actual value and making up the difference to the seller in cash, then selling the property and claiming legitimate earnings. These approaches are better suited to the needs of criminal syndicates or cleverly plotted and organized offensives.

The most serious method is simply buying a bank, usually in contexts where money laundering laws are relaxed or enforcement is weak. Casinos could serve the same purpose in

which illegitimate earnings are deliberately lost by gambling in one's own casino. However it is unlikely that any drug dealer or criminal syndicate operating in Iceland earns enough to justify the application of such methods, which require a significant capital investment (financial institutions must be provided with a capital of at least five million Euros - Lög um fjármálafyrirtæki no. 161/2002).

Gambling is for the most part illegal in Iceland, so that particular concern can also be discarded, since earnings from gambling operations would themselves have to be laundered. It is doubtful that the narcotics trade in Iceland can sustain such methods, so long as the assumption about its being much divided and dispersed holds well. Where such methods are used there are probably hundreds of millions of USD in question and these levels could be expected rather of drug cartels or very substantive organized criminal syndicates, of the sort for which Iceland (so far) does not seem to provide a market.

As for the methods prevailing in Iceland is it obvious that structuring and retail schemes are conducted on a regular basis; however it is hard to estimate their relative scale since it is hard to know the overall scope of money laundering operations.

Iceland has obligations to enact and enforce laws aimed at combatting money laundering under the EFTA agreement and Iceland is a member of the OECD's *Financial Action Task Force* (FATF). In 2007 the FATF graded relevant Icelandic laws and enforcement: out of 40 measures in force, 8 measures were considered compliant, 14 measures were considered largely compliant, 18 measures were considered partially compliant and 8 measures were considered non-compliant. Enforcement is handled by the *Money laundering office* of the *National police commissioner* (National Police Commissioner, 2007). Despite earlier lapses, Iceland now conforms in most significant manners to relevant European norms. New laws have been imposed and guidelines from the financial supervisory authority are provided (The Financial Supervisory Authority, 2011).

Financial institutions are made responsible for detecting money laundering. The vast majority of reported potential cases of money laundering are reported by financial institutions; or 491 out of 496 in 2007. Out of these 23 were investigated by the *Money laundering office*. Around half of the suspected cases concerned relatively small amounts ranging from 101.000 ISK to 500.000 ISK. In the year 2007, there were no criminal charges brought before courts concerning money laundering. The total sum involved in reported cases of such activity where amounts were specified was 961.526.361 ISK (National Police Commissioner, 2007).

In 2001 the first conviction for money laundering was made in Iceland. The money being laundered in that case consisted of illegitimate drug profits associated with the 1999 *Stóra fíkniefna málið* (e. The big drug bust). The investigation was said to be extremely expensive: 11 men worked on it for 3 months, in co-operation with the narcotics division. The amount in question was 5,000,000 ISK and was laundered through a small private company belonging in part to the defendants in the aforementioned case (Morgunblaðið, 2001). Though much larger amounts had allegedly been wired to a company in Panama, these transfers were explained as payments for construction jobs in Brazil where the head of the operation resided. Houses belonging to him were connected with a Brazilian prostitution ring; a matter which will be briefly examined in the chapter on whether particular security measures amplify security threats (Vísir, 2009).

In a more recent case from 2009, the defendant was charged with smuggling of narcotics. There were hundreds of kilos in question and the defendant had around 70 million ISK (HRD, 150/2009). According to detective superintendent Karl Steinar Valsson (Interview, January 6th 2012) the defendant could not give any credible explanation for legally acquiring such a large amount of money. Furthermore the detective superintendent contested that had new laws been brought earlier into force that the said money could most likely have been confiscated. In support of this he mentioned a case in which the defendant was found guilty of money laundering but not drug trafficking (HRD, 495/2010).

In Iceland money laundering is for the most part associated with narcotics. This can be inferred from the share of narcotics on the black market and the fact that more money is to be had in dealing with narcotics as opposed to moonshine and prostitution.

Money laundering is a grave concern to societal security. Aside from obviously enabling criminal syndicates to make investments in houses, cars, and the like it also disrupts market competition. Businesses that are used as fronts for money laundering are very unlikely to go out of business, even in the case of poor management and business decisions. Those that are engaged in competition with such fronts may conversely be prevented from reaping the benefits of good management or good business decision that they rightfully deserve. The prospect of business coming increasingly under the ownership of criminal syndicates is an entirely unappealing and dangerous prospect. Enforcement seems difficult and investigation both expensive and time consuming. Conviction rates seem to be very low, and it can be safely assumed - as the IMF has reported - that only a fraction of money launderers are ever exposed in Iceland. The IMF has put the share of 'dirty money' in the economy at 2-5%.

3.3 Prescription forgery

Prescription forgery constitutes subversion of the laws that stipulate that prescriptions may not be sold nor issued without just cause. The existence of a group of known drug addicts creates concerns regarding threats against doctors and extortions from them. However, there are also known cases of doctors prescribing drugs for financial profit, or for themselves. The concern is that controlled substances, which are largely subsidized by the state, are used to finance criminal activity. In a sense this threat challenges the state's *raison d'être*. It is acknowledged that the state's primary role is to combat crime, yet the state might turn out to be accidentally financing criminal activity itself, which goes against its very purpose. Thus, the grounds for defining prescription forgery as a security concern are threefold: the real and perceived incompetence of the state to execute its own laws, the financial costs (an amplified concern since it finances black market activities through the resale of prescription drugs), and the possible corruption of individuals in the medical profession.

Though prescription medicines are not by definition narcotics, they serve the same function in this case and generate similar security concerns. As such prescription medicines are included in this study.

The prolific prescription of methylphenidate drugs in Iceland has gathered attention. In fact, aside from American doctors, Icelandic ones are the most prolific prescribers of the said drug in the world, a fact which arouses suspicion that this problem might be widespread. That supposition is supported by the increasing numbers of people treated for methylphenidate addiction (Ministry of Welfare, 2010). There is thus strong reason to believe that the problem is widespread.

Methylphenidate is a psycho-stimulant used mainly for the treatment of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder. As such it can serve as a substitute for stimulants such as amphetamine. In Iceland it seems to be the most widely abused prescription drug. Other pharmaceuticals of concern include Contalgin, Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab), Oxycodone, Alprazolam (Xanax) and Diazepam (Valium) (Volkow, 2008).

Prescription drugs are most dangerous when taken to achieve intoxication via methods that increase their addictive potential (e.g. snorting or injection, or combining them with alcohol or narcotics). They carry the same risks of addiction, and share with conventional narcotics the danger of overdose. In the United States about 43% of hospital admissions due to overdose were attributed to the misuse of prescription drugs (Volkow, 2008).

However there is at least a small portion of unauthorized prescription drug use that is aimed at other objectives than achieving euphoria. That would include self-treatment for anxiety problems or the use of stimulants to aid concentration before college examinations *par example*.

In 2010 a joint committee composed of representatives of the Directorate of Health (general surgeon's office), the pharmaceutical office of the health ministry, Icelandic Health Insurance and the Icelandic Medicines Agency prepared a report on how to mitigate methylphenidate prescription concerns. The group made three suggestions. Firstly, that methylphenidate should be Z-marked, meaning that it could only be prescribed by pediatricians, neurologists and doctors engaged in psychiatric work. This is in compliance with EU mandates. Secondly, that prescriptions of methylphenidate should be additionally identified with the name of the prescriber, and such prescriptions would be valid from a single doctor for every patient, thus hopefully eliminating the possibility of patients receiving multiple prescriptions for the same drug. Thirdly, Z-marking the drug, as in the aforementioned suggestion but addresses some insurance concerns and updating current prescriptions, by assigning specific doctors to them. The third proposed measure should already have been brought into force during 2011 (Ministry of Welfare, 2010).

An additional concern, as mentioned, is the corruption of doctors. Men and women in this profession are entrusted with the lives of others along with the privileges of a state mandated monopoly on prescribing drugs, performing surgeries *et cetera*. Misconduct, either by voluntary intent or under extortion, can serve to undermine the integrity of the profession. Fraudulent prescription of drugs is a criminal act, not to mention being a violation of the Hippocratic Oath.

Many of the same security concerns apply to substance abuse with pharmaceuticals as ~~de~~ with narcotics. Regular drugs are also traded on the black market, are injected or ingested, and carry the risks of addiction and all other concerns linked with narcotics proper. What differs is that pharmaceuticals are issued and often paid by the state or agents acting on its behalf. This makes this security concern particularly interesting from the vantage point of societal security. Since the state, whose primary function is providing security, in this case is essentially financing criminal activity, it runs the risk of creating an atmosphere in which people perceive it as incompetent and a cesspool of corruption: charges that are justified if the authorities cannot reduce such abuses to a minimum. The only real answer to this concern is for government to put its working gloves on and provide effective remedies to these concerns.

It must simply demonstrate its ability to do so within the limits of the possible, while failing to act runs the risk of consolidating a general neglect of the law in this field - and perhaps others.

4 'Soft' Security Threats

4.1 The spread of pathogens among habitual drug users

The sharing of syringes and their re-use provides a direct route for pathogens such as HIV and hepatitis C from one bloodstream to another. To avoid all such contact, clinical professionals only use sterilized needles and only employ them once before they are discarded. This is a methodologically and clinically sound method which habitual drug users usually do not employ. Due to the general lack of concern towards health risk that habitual drug users display, they seem to be on the edge of superseding all other groups in terms of new HIV infections per annum. While the spike in HIV transmissions between homosexual men in the 80's receded in the early 90's, to be steadily surpassed by heterosexuals, it now seems that drug users are becoming the group with the highest absolute rates of transmission. In regard to other means of contagion, from 1983 in only 1 instance was HIV transmitted from mother to infant and only in 3 cases via blood transfusions, and no further such cases are known since 1989. Of the 257 registered HIV infections from 1983 to 2010, 40.9% were attributed to homosexual men who maintain their status as the most infected group despite the dwindling numbers of new transmissions. 37.7% were attributed to heterosexual men and women. Only 16.3% of the patients had their contagion attributed to minuscule and accidental blood transfusions while administering narcotics directly into the bloodstream. However, if only the years from 2001 and 2010 are taken into account the ratio changes dramatically. Then 22.8% of contagions were among homosexual men, 23.4% among drug users and 48.2% among heterosexual men and women (Directorate of Health, e.d.).

In regards to hepatitis C, it is much more prevalent among drug users than HIV. From the years 1991 to 1993 307 habitual drug users who administered narcotics via syringes underwent rehabilitation. Of those 152 were tested for hepatitis C and 95 tests proved positive, or 63% of all instances. Due to the fact that the means of contagion of hepatitis C and HIV are very similar, HIV has the potential to become just as widespread. Dr. Guðbjörn Björnsson remarks one instance where 10 people were infected with hepatitis B at a single gathering among drug users. Haraldur Briem stated in 1994 that if there was a sufficient base for HIV infections amongst drug users, one could expect the HIV virus to spread very rapidly among the group. In that regard he estimated that spikes of HIV infections could occur with about 30 people infected in a short time: a number he said would most likely double within a year or so of such a spike (Morgunblaðið, 1994).

Farsóttufréttir (lit. Epidemic News) published by the office of the general surgeon, and edited by Haraldur Briem (title: Sóttvarnalæknir, in charge of disease control under the office of the general surgeon) states in an article that of the 53 drug users diagnosed with HIV, 32 have been diagnosed within the last four years (as of 2011). Briem adds that drug users are close to surpassing homosexual men in absolute numbers of diagnoses. He also remarks that the median age of the people thus diagnosed has been relatively high (34 years). Already in June 2011, the instances of HIV among drug users had surpassed the level of the year before which was the highest ever recorded. Briem stressed that is imperative to provide sterilized needles and syringes at no cost to drug users, to stem the tide against the boom in HIV infections (Briem, 2011).

When establishing the scope of the threat posed by various pathogens, their ease of spreading and the durability of the virus are paramount. The severity of the given condition can be determined from death rates and whether or not the pathogen affects critical cells.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV is a lentivirus that causes Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The virus affects the critical CD4 and T white blood cells, leaving the patient vulnerable to opportunistic infections that would otherwise be of little or no threat. It is a chronic condition that will eventually drag the patient to death. However in recent years new medication has drastically improved the quality of life and life expectancy of the patients. The cost of treatment depends on how advanced the condition is, it is less expensive in the early stages when costs are limited to drugs. However in later stages treatment becomes more expansive as patients require extensive hospitalization (CBS Broadcasting Inc, 2006). Costs are around 24,000 USD per year for non-hospitalized patients, but about double that figure for hospitalized ones.

Hepatitis C is a RNA virus which can cause cirrhosis and is often associated with jaundice. Cirrhosis being the end stage of continual liver fibrosis, the median time for it to occur is 30 years. However the rate can be accelerated by alcohol consumption, vulnerable age, HIV co-infection, low CD4 count and diabetes. Hepatitis is the most frequent cause of the need for liver transplants in Europe and in the U.S. The virus can be eradicated in the majority of cases but it does often manifest as a chronic condition . The cost of treatment can vary but the cost has been averaged at 30,000 USD per year. The cost however for liver transplants and the immunosuppressive drugs needed for the remainder of the patient's life is exponentially increased to about 300,000-500,000 USD (Ponyard, Yuen, Ratziu, and Lai, 2003).

HIV and Hepatitis C both present serious health hazards and both conditions are characterized by being chronic, in all cases with HIV and some with hepatitis C. When the conditions have developed they will severely affect the quality of life. However the means of contagion are rather limited, at least compared to waterborne or especially vector borne pathogens. The vast majority of transmissions stem from the use of unsterile needles and sexual intercourse. The first of these is our primary concern in the drugs context, as it has been demonstrated that these diseases can be and are transmitted to a group of people in a single instance. Such events could lead to a massive outbreak amongst habitual drug users as they carry their infection to another group.

There are several ways to mitigate the threat from pathogens that spread via blood mixing. Firstly, sterile needles can be handed out to addicts, along with containers for medical waste which can be turned in for disposal, so as to limit collateral damage. This is already being done by the Icelandic Red Cross (2011). The spread of HIV can be severely limited with anti-retroviral medication aimed at preventing contagion; but that only applies for childbirth (AIDS info, 2010) and sexual intercourse (Matassa, 2011). However it might be prudent to administer such drugs to addicts, since they often engage in prostitution or other risky sexual behavior. Investigative methods are also used, such as tracking down people who have been in contact with a diagnosed patient, which can serve to identify new transmissions earlier and prevent unknown contagion. However this method has proved difficult at times, as in one instance where two recently diagnosed HIV patients are thought to have infected four others. The investigation proved difficult because the people in question could not identify each other (Vísir, 2011b).

4.2 Operation of motor vehicles under the influence of narcotics

It is evident that the operation of motor vehicles under the influence of narcotics is extremely dangerous, due to the lack of timely reaction displayed by operators intoxicated in that manner. The present examination is restricted to automobiles, since these are involved in the most common form of such traffic violations. It is a security concern because it also concerns other drivers and pedestrians, who are put at risk by such carelessness.

From 2006 the numbers of persons charged with driving under the influence of narcotics have been recorded. In the police district of the greater Reykjavík area in the years from 2008 to 2010, 330, 441 and 514 charges were brought against drivers for operation under the influence of narcotics, respectively. Accidents attributed to the operation of

automobiles under the influence of narcotics during the same years were 42, 48, and 57, respectively (Greater Reykjavík Area Police District, 2011). Furthermore spikes in arrests on such grounds are observed in the summer as young people flock to various festivals, especially during the first weekend of August. Since the Monday after the said weekend is a public holiday, a lot of festivals are held around the country that demand added police enforcement directed at traffic violations, especially those linked with alcohol and drugs.

The directorate of health, however, only records the literal cause of deaths on the road. Fatal traffic accidents that could safely be attributed to intoxication are thus described as blunt trauma or even, in the case of overdose, cardiac arrest. The directorate of health does however realize the problems this causes and intends to enable the registration of secondary causes of death as well.

4.3 Polluted Narcotics

Lacing or 'cutting' is the act of adulterating narcotics with less expensive chemicals to increase their volume or weight, thus increasing the profit margin on their sale. Drugs can also be adulterated with other drugs to induce dependency on them; such as lacing marijuana with cocaine or opiates.

For the purposes of presenting this issue clearly, a brief overview follows on the general cutting agents followed by a category-by-category approach to narcotic types. Cocaine, marijuana and hashish, ecstasy, and heroin will be addressed respectively. Then an example of a death attributed to PMMA (*para*-Methoxymethamphetamine) will be examined and the danger of the drug evaluated. Finally the issue of home synthesized opiates will be examined.

The cutting agent should preferably be easy to obtain, inexpensive, relatively non-toxic, and should mimic the attributes of the drug to be adulterated. Melting and boiling points are important if the drug is to be injected or smoked. Similarly if the drug is water soluble the cutting agent should preferably be so too. Some commonly used household substances for these purposes are starch, lactose, glucose, sucrose, and rice flour. Various food additives are also commonly used such as mannitol, inositol, maltodextrin and pectin. None of the forementioned substances pose any health hazards in small quantities; except in case of allergies, which can be a threat because the drug consumer is usually unaware of what additives are in the product. However, lack of knowledge of the potency of various drugs can result in an overdose when a stronger substance is taken instead of a diluted one.

It is a legitimate question whether or not the danger from artificially synthesized narcotics presents another specific security threat. Here it is treated as such because the effect of incurring addiction can be viewed as a foreseen and natural effect of drug users' choice to intoxicate themselves, while the additional dangers of newly created drugs are incalculable and a sort of morbid game of luck. In other words, there is an accidental and potentially fatal risk, which can be shown to constitute a security issue.

156 samples of cocaine were tested in research supervised by Nadia Fucci and Nadia De Giovanni. A difference in the purity of the cocaine by the weight of the sample was observed. In samples that weighed more than 1000 grams the purity was always over 50%. Out of 10 such specimens only two were adulterated with other drugs (phenobarbital and procaine in one case, lidocaine in the other). In general the most common additives found in the cocaine samples were lidocaine (16.5% in 1996 and 12.3% in 1997) and caffeine (11% in 1996 and 6.1% in 1997). More than half of the examples were diluted, mostly with sugars. Most samples showed the presence of impurities (*cis*- and *trans*-cinnamoylcocaine, benzoylecgonine, ecgonine methylester, methylbenzoate) (Fucci and Giovanni, 1998). Some of these are found naturally in the coca plant.

Samples in Iceland are not tested for the natural impurities of the plant. However a few samples have been found to contain starch (and then maize or potato starch instead of rice flour). The aforementioned sugars have also been found, mostly lactose and mannitol. Lidocaine is the most common additive. Being a localized anesthetic it mimics the effects of cocaine when applied to the tongue. About 5% of the samples in Iceland contained only about 1% of cocaine, and it is likely that these samples contained a lot of lidocaine so that the relatively impotent material could be passed off as a stronger product. Samples have tested positive for various animal drugs, such as de-worming agents. A pharmacologist mentioned a theory that these found their way into the cocaine by its being stored in unwashed containers and/or by other materials being layered on top of the cocaine in an effort to mislead samplers. The average potency of cocaine samples tested in Iceland is 48% and the median 52%, the minimal and maximum values are 1% and 90% respectively. When the values are expressed graphically they form a linear upward slope. According to unpublished records from Jakob Kristinsson (Interview, September 20th 2011).

Marijuana and hashish are often found to contain pesticides, though these have not been detected in samples in Iceland. Drug dealers in Leipzig for instance resorted to reckless tactics to increase their profits by adulterating their product of marijuana with lead, which in turn

provoked a baffling spike in lead poisonings. This led to 29 people being hospitalized with lead intoxication. The New England Journal of Medicine wrote that "The medical community, including pediatricians, should consider adulterated marijuana as a potential source of lead intoxication." It is also believed that the addition of lead increased the dealers' profit margin significantly (Busse, Omid, Leichtle, Windgassen, Kluge, and Stumvoll, 2008). No lead has been detected in Icelandic samples.

In Iceland the average potency of amphetamine samples is 17% and the median value 9,3%, but the variance is great as the potency ranges from 0.2% to 74%. When these values are expressed graphically they form a hockey stick curve, where more than 80% of the samples have potency lower than 30%, but about 10% of the samples express a potency higher than 50%. It must be borne in mind however that the authorities only test samples in cases where charges are brought before the criminal justice system. The tests conducted will be biased towards larger confiscations, since confiscation of small doses usually only results in a fine where no charges are laid against the accused. According to unpublished records from Jakob Kristinsson and his own account (Interview, September 20th 2011). Research performed in Norway on samples of amphetamine and methamphetamine resulted in a typical finding of sugars, caffeine and procaine (Lambrechts and Rasmussen 1984).

Even though heroin is an unpopular drug in Iceland some is confiscated from time to time. Notably strychnine has been found in samples in Iceland. Again from Jakob Kristinsson (Interview, September 20th 2011). Strychnine is a highly toxic pesticide, used particularly for killing small vertebrates such as birds and rodents. Internationally it is found in other narcotics, though rarely. Like most drugs it is commonly diluted with sugars and starches. In the United States there are reports of heroin being adulterated with fentanyl. Fentanyl is a very potent synthetic narcotic analgesic with rapid onset and short duration of action. It is commonly used in pre-procedures as a pain reliever as well as an anesthetic in combination with a benzodiazepine (Slevin and Lydersen, 2006).

PMMA (*para*-Methoxymethamphetamine) is a drug related to PMA (*para*-methoxyamphetamine) both of which are methoxylated phenylethylamine derivatives. It is a stimulant which gained attention in Iceland after the death of a teenage girl in 2011 was attributed to this particular drug, according to Jakob Kristinsson (Interview, September 20th 2011). As of January 2011 the Norwegian media had attributed 12 deaths to this particular substance and three fatal cases were reported in Denmark (Johansen, Hansen, Müller, Lundemose, and Franzmann, 2003). It is a fairly new narcotic that was probably invented by

Dr. Alexander Shulgin some time before 1990, as it is first known to have appeared in his novel *PiHKAL: A Chemical Love Story*, which contains detailed instruction on how to synthesize PMMA and over 200 other compounds, mostly psychedelics (Shulgin and Shulgin, 1990) On a side note, these recipes can be easily accessed and acquired them in less than two minutes via the internet, once the author's name is known.

Little research has been conducted to examine the effects of PMMA, though the Danish case study referenced above mentioned varying post mortem concentrations ranging from 3.4 mg/kg to 0.68 mg/kg. The research also suggested that this drug's slow onset of action could encourage users to take large doses. Only two samples have been tested in Iceland, so it considered very rare.

In Russia a very flawed method of synthesizing desomorphine has received attention. It is a very easy process of synthesizing desomorphine from codeine with the use of various corrosive materials. The resulting product is very impure, but it is around 10-20 times cheaper to make than buying heroin. It is nicknamed *Krokodil* because of the horrendous consequences it has on its consumer, the name being drawn from the injection wounds which take a dark coloring and resemble crocodile scales. Thankfully, there are no reports of this method being used to make desomorphine in Iceland, but it perhaps the most telling example of the dangers of home brewed synthesized drugs (Pravda, 2011).

To sum up: the addition of sugars and starches to drugs is harmless. Anesthetics might be dangerous in high dosages but are hardly ever deadly to their user. Dangerous additives such as strychnine are rare. The variation in potency caused inter alia by adulteration can however significantly contribute to risks of overdose. Jakob Kristinsson who supervises the chemical analysis of confiscated narcotics in Iceland commented that these factors present a permanent danger, but it gets overshadowed by synthetic drugs that immediately start causing deaths when introduced to the market, as in the case of PMMA. These substances are themselves dangerous to the lives of first time users, much more so than the conventional drugs (Interview, September 20th 2011). The evidence cited above seems to support Jakob's position, and contradicts the conventional wisdom that all drugs are routinely laced with rat poison on account of sheer malignance of drug dealers and the manufactures of narcotics. The name of the chapter seems possibly a misnomer in this light, as the synthesized narcotics that now number in the hundreds seem to be much more dangerous to the immediate wellbeing of people than additives in conventional drugs such as cocaine, marijuana or heroin.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Does prohibition amplify narcotics related security concerns?

Many of the security effects of the prohibition of narcotics that are identified in this study can be seen, in their present form, as aggravating the overall security situation in Iceland. The strongest case for this argument relates to narcotics associated violence, and especially the establishment of organized criminal syndicates. Other security effects such as the transmission of pathogens, polluted narcotics, money laundering, small arms proliferation and collusion, can also be seen as significantly or even primarily caused by a context of illegality and clandestinity. With some however the relationship is harder to establish, such as in the case of operation of motor vehicles under the influence of narcotics and random acts of narcotics-induced violence. These concerns will be addressed again below as part of a more detailed argument over whether or not prohibition or other harsh policies serve to amplify narcotics-related security concerns rather than reducing them. What must be considered here is the opportunity cost: i.e., to judge whether or not prohibition is effective it must be weighed against the likely effects of de-criminalization, legalization or other liberal policies.

In this section, first the concern about establishment of organized criminal syndicates will be addressed from this point of view; secondly, the other direct means of violence and small arms proliferation; thirdly, threats against the civic virtues of the rule of law; and fourthly, the ‘softest’ security threats that are in their nature accidental and as such do not constitute an act of violence or subversion, but rather risky behaviors that can cause death or personal harm.

It was demonstrated during alcohol prohibition in the United States early in the 20th century that organized criminal groups, mostly established beforehand, within a few years got around to selling alcohol under prohibition on a scale that equaled alcohol sales before prohibition (Miron and Zwiebel, 1991). In the case of drugs trade in Iceland, where no significant organized crime had existed beforehand, the relationship seems reversed, since criminals engaged in narcotics have expanded their operations into or at least been influential in other activities such as organized prostitution for example. It remains uncertain, however, whether or not illegal gambling is interconnected with narcotics sales directly. Generally speaking, if organized crime prevails in one mode, it more easily expands into other theatres.

It cannot be said however that the security responses that the police provide, or narcotics prohibition itself, have resulted in the establishment of criminal syndicates. There are also other areas in which organized crime can establish itself in Iceland; such as prostitution,

gambling, human trafficking, or fraud. Even so, legalization or providing addicts with access to certain narcotics would more or less remove the imperative and motivation for complex criminal operations in the field of narcotics. De-criminalization or non-enforcement might even be enough to reduce violence significantly, but it is difficult to see how such measures could be as effective as legalization or official distribution. Liberalization in general could serve to lessen the scope of organized criminal activities, possibly also in the case of prostitution and gambling, but it is difficult to see how it could impact human trafficking or fraud. Thus, even though the establishment of criminal syndicates can possibly not be avoided, at the very least their scope could be significantly reduced through policy modification on narcotics.

The high seizure rates required to make narcotics smuggling a unappealing option in the sense of financial gain pose a substantial challenge to law enforcement. A seizure rate of 60% is required at the very least and anecdotal evidence suggests it may even have to be as high as 80% in some cases. Seizure rates of that magnitude have never been successfully sustained for any significant period of time. Even if seizures rates were higher resulting in price increases for narcotics, heavy users would probably be inclined to more crime while perhaps initial use might be thwarted. Overall prohibition has failed to disrupt the market in any significant sense while the supply has not dwindled, prices are low enough not to thwart initiation, and at the same time prices are high enough to motivate heavy users to commit higher levels of crime. Even if price increases could be achieved there is not sufficient evidence that this would reduce harm. (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2003).

It is however difficult to see how liberalization in and of itself could do much to reduce random acts of violence that are committed under the influence of narcotics. An additional policy of perhaps supervised administration would have to come into force as well to achieve a reduction. Supervised administration of narcotics would however probably be evaded in some cases, especially with ecstasy or other 'social drugs'.

Small arms proliferation goes more or less hand in hand with organized crime activities. It can be inferred that if the latter is reduced there remains less imperative for small arms proliferation.

Collusion is also a security concern which goes hand in hand with organized criminal activities. As criminal syndicates arise, it becomes more apparent that collusion has become an increasingly pressing concern. No narcotics related police misconduct of the corrupt kind has been observed, and only a few incidents of excessive use of force. According to detective

superintendent Karl Steinar Valsson detectives are handpicked and represent the highest paid portion of the police force. Despite the police force being of a high standard, however, corruption of such a nature can never be excluded and vigilance is imperative.

What has been shown as liable to collusion in Icelandic judicial matters are phone tapping operations. The local phone companies have complained strongly about being involved in such activities and some collusion between their employees and criminal syndicates has been brought before the courts (Fréttablaðið, 2011a). The detective superintendent stressed that wiretapping practices must be reviewed and remedied soon. He suggested that they would be handled by another institution besides the police, Commissioner Stefán Eiríksson agrees (Fréttablaðið, 2011b).

Recently Icelandic law on money laundering has been overhauled, so that Iceland now enjoys a similar environment to Europe. Even though narcotics-related money laundering represents the bulk of money laundering, enforcement efforts in this area could not be abandoned even if de-criminalization or legalization were enacted. There should be less motivation for establishing business fronts or engaging in money laundering in general if liberalization was pursued, limiting the problem to a certain extent, but enforcement in this area can in no way be relaxed also because loopholes the Icelandic system (such as poor cyber-defences) might be exploited by unrelated foreign groups.

Prescription forgery remains a costly and significant concern. It is akin to collusion but relates primarily to clinical professionals as opposed to judicial institutions. Perhaps supervised administration of narcotics could satisfy the demand that is directed towards pharmaceuticals. Or perhaps it would be safer to administer them instead of narcotics, but then it would be imperative to keep a strict overview of such prescriptions. The enforcement of the prescription protocols for relevant pharmaceuticals so far has been abysmal. These practices are being reviewed and amended, but improvement is yet to be realized.

The transmission of pathogens has been demonstrated to be reduced by de-criminalization. In Portugal harm reduction policy has resulted in decrease in intravenous narcotics use and better sanitary standards for intravenous administration of narcotics. This has resulted in decreases in HIV transmissions and hepatitis C transmissions (Cardoso, Santos, and Duarte, 2009). Soft approaches such as providing sanitary needles for addicts may also prove successful in reducing transmissions. What could also possibly decrease transmissions is official administration of narcotics, since it would reduce the need for addicts to resort to prostitution.

What remains uncertain is whether or not liberalization would have any effect on the frequency of operating automobiles under the influence of narcotics. Perhaps more resources could be put into traffic enforcement, but it is difficult to establish any relationship.

In regards to polluted narcotics, official administration of narcotics should all but eliminate concerns about dangerous pollutants and varied potency. What can however not be avoided is the very dangerous nature of many synthetic narcotics themselves. No matter under which laws apply to them, they have proven deadly in and of themselves. These do however have effects similar to certain conventional narcotics, so perhaps de-criminalization of conventional narcotics could direct consumption to less dangerous substances, assuming that their availability is a factor. As the PMSU states, most of the financial gain lies however at the top of the distribution chain (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2003). Thus the manufacture of synthetic drugs might be appealing to local criminal syndicates as a way to avoid importing narcotics from, e.g., producers in South America and to put themselves at the top of the supply chain instead. Thus, prohibition of conventional drugs might be contributing to the rise in more dangerous synthetic substances by encouraging organized crime.

While experience elsewhere with various forms of liberalization provides reason to believe that harmful security effects can be reduced quite significantly, these measures could also prove harmful when exercised without caution. Even though liberalization can very reasonably be said to promise to be quite successful, it is imperative to take every precaution if such steps are enacted. Legalization must not be viewed in the light of a free for all in the field of narcotics. Perhaps marijuana could be fully legalized under similar regulations to that of alcohol. But when it comes to harder narcotics, perhaps supervised administration might be a more prudent approach. Liberalization will probably prove more successful if it is not simply the repeal of current laws, but rather when it coincides with reasonable laws aimed to reduce harm. Legalization then would not involve abandoning legal restraints but rather, applying the same restrictions as is done with other dangerous substances such as pharmaceuticals or explosives.

Narcotics prohibition does amplify some of the security concerns, but abandoning that policy will in no way guarantee that the said concerns will simply vanish. To believe so would be just as self-deceiving as to ignore the clear relationship between prohibition and organized crime. Liberalization does present its challenges but it also has very promising aspects: notably, the hopes of decreasing the workload of the criminal justice system, increased uptake of treatment, reduction in pathogen transmissions, reduction in drug related

deaths, and decreasing the street value of drugs (thus also the imperative to commit crime to finance drug habits). Its major drawback could possibly be the increased uptake of narcotics, but it seems that such fears are mostly unfounded. In known examples, even though drug use might have increased by a small percentage, the benefits appear to outweigh that significantly (Hughes and Stevens, 2010).

In the light of the evidence that has been presented and judging the experiences of other nations such as Portugal, refusal to consider liberalization or stigmatizing its advocates cannot be held to be anything but intellectual arrogance or even prejudice. Advocates can perhaps counter this by posing the question: Who benefits most from prohibition? Relatively strong evidence can be provided that the general populace does not gain from it, quite on the contrary - while drug traffickers, marijuana cultivators, and criminal syndicates may owe their very existence to prohibition at least in part. However, *par example* marijuana cultivators have no interest in seeing a significant price decrease of their product. Prices could drop from say 300 USD/oz to 60 USD/oz as suggested in the case of the possible implementation of proposition 19 in California, so why would any marijuana cultivator vote for that (Vlahos, 2011)?

5.2 Reflections on the politics of narcotics prohibition

To serve and protect or to patrol and control? Or in other words, to aid and minimize harm or increase police action and outright prohibition. This is what drug policy boils down to. In the light of classical liberal thought prohibitionist drug policies can be objected to on moral grounds founded in the theory of natural rights, as well as opposed with utilitarian arguments. Have western nations perhaps accepted the categorical imperative behind Mao's policy of mass execution of drug dealers and drug addicts? That policy proved effective, but it also raises the question of for whom societal security exists. Is it for the populace or is it for the state? If one accepts that a prohibitionist drug policy amplifies security concerns, one must - if one takes the side of the people - consider the state itself to be a security threat. It seems that prohibitionist drug policies are unsound in principle from the classical liberal perspective. If one accepts prohibition one rejects in part the role of the state to protect the people, and adapts that premise to controlling the people instead.

It may be tempting to put the blame on politicians, but it is an overly convenient explanation. Do politicians not represent public sentiment in this matter? It is hardly reasonable to expect democratically elected politicians to go against overwhelming public

sentiment. Even though one can suspect that a handful of MPs are sympathetic to the idea of de-criminalization or legalization, is it fair to demand that they risk their careers in an Edmund Burke-esque, Quixotic style? The main difference between the standpoints of the independent inquirer and the politician is that despite a common purpose in terms of trying to find the best solutions, the politician must also ensure that the governed do not oppose his arrangements with open defiance or must at the very least appease them by other means, on pain of being tarred and feathered (or its equivalent in politics). In this sense the situation of the politician is more demanding and dangerous. Voters have perhaps grown accustomed to demanding the impossible of their leaders. „You must ban narcotics yet also secure us from bandits! “ or „You must clothe and feed me without raising taxes!” - exclaims the electorate. One will always be disappointed if one makes impossible or contradictory demands. The serfs of mediaeval times or the slaves of ancient times had perhaps only one demand: „Don‘t beat me master. “ Though their position was not enviable, it is however a reasonable demand. Even if often denied, it could at the very least be fulfilled. When presented with such dilemmas as the public creates today, the politician can only offer pious sentiments or evasions.

If a state is governed well, it should be able demonstrate objectively the success of its policy. Currently there is not much to show for except occasional drug seizures. But these do not really change the game; in fact, judging by prices, they seem to have less of an effect on supply than the exchange rate (Ragnarsson and Sigurðsson, 2010). These gather a lot of media attention, as has been seen in a myriad different cases, but the situation remains the same. Liberalization on the other hand comes across as non-action. People seem to think it is simply immoral not to act on narcotics. The concern is thus expressed as a moral issue: yet the moral case is not very strong, or at least seems unable to withstand much application of the *reductio ad absurdum* approach. One such argument is the rationalization that the state must provide a moral example. Yet the state itself can hardly be justified without a certain double standard. If someone was to imitate the state by himself, he might soon find himself charged with racketeering (i.e taxation) or kidnapping (i.e. vigilante imprisonment).

Then there is the other rationalization that drug addicts cause real harm by their actions. They do indeed cause great harm to their families, and such personal harm probably outweighs all the security concerns put together. It is however not active harm in the same way as violence or accidents are. The drug addict is not harming his family; the harm comes from the concern of the family for the drug addict. It is a personal tragedy but neither violent

nor accidental, and thus should have no legal bearing. By the same logic adultery should be a criminal offence or the obese should be barred from *Sauce béarnaise* if its consumption risks the eater's demise from heart attack, which would be a tragedy for the people close to him. However, a legitimate concern would be whether addicts can meet their alimony payments or support their children, since failure to do so would hurt people objectively and said addicts would be in violation of laws. Then again, alcoholics are also well known to abuse their partners or neglect their responsibilities. So a moralistic approach is not completely out of order, but often overstated. The aforementioned moralistic approach against self-inflicted harm is not in line with the liberal tradition and neither is dogmatic adherence to policies that are ineffective in terms of good governance. If one wished to justify prohibition, occasional drug busts and moral rationalizations simply do not do the trick.

Advocacy for liberalization of narcotics policy is the domain of those in secure positions and those with no position. Those who are receptive to the wrath of the electorate keep silent, so as not to end up as lone voices in the political wilderness. Of those in 'secure positions', such an authority as supreme court justice Jón Steinar Gunnlaugsson has spoken out against prohibition (Stöð 2, 2007); while an example of those with no position is former MP for the *independence party* and later the *liberal party* and supreme court lawyer Jón Magnússon, who appears to be sympathetic to such policy change but no longer holds any elected office (Magnússon, 2011). Curiously some right-wingers and some environmentalists seem most sympathetic, though the latter at least stereotypically consume soft drugs recreationally. This basic structural resistance among office-holders seems hard to defeat; a more efficient policy might be put into force once the initial stigma is overcome, yet one cannot expect politicians to stick their necks out.

The true reasons why reformation of these policies seems politically impossible are in my opinion threefold. Firstly, most people are instinctively repulsed by the idea of letting narcotics prevail to any degree, and remain ignorant of the actual effects of prohibiting them. Secondly, there is a lack of a suitable example in this matter for Icelanders. This may perhaps change as Denmark seems more open to adopting a more liberal policy, and even though Danes have a reputation in Iceland of being '*ligeglad*' (apathetic) they are still generally held in higher regard than the Swedes or Norwegians. Thirdly, the fear of drugs reflects an incrementalist world view of continuing technical advances: a notion that requires further explanation.

It can be considered quite possible that because of the unprecedented advances in science and technology witnessed since the middle of the 19th century, and especially in the last few decades, people find themselves disassociated or alienated from earlier modes of thought. In other words, it is perhaps because of the refined nature of narcotics by chemical isolation that modern narcotics may seem categorically different from earlier socially tolerated methods of achieving euphoria. Examples of deliberate drug use can for example be found in Icelandic mediaeval literature; namely the use of the mushroom *Amanita muscaria* or ‘*Berserkjasveppur*’ from which the English noun and adjective berserk is derived. Or it could be that warnings against prohibitionist policy such as that provided by the early modern thinker Spinoza¹ and even from the ancient world, as with Lao Tzu and Tacitus², are disregarded as belonging to another world. It could be argued that despite advances in technology one is always presented with the same problems and dilemmas. Thus no matter how one is equipped one is always faced with the same existential truths of life. Only if this point is demonstrated will people take heed of the experiences from recent historical examples such as alcohol prohibition, which mimics narcotics prohibition in most ways, though the scale of the current issue is smaller. Even though there were no computers or Facebook in the ‘30s the same human principles of action and reaction apply. This phenomenon of disassociation from earlier times could be considered to be compounded by an incrementalist view of progress. Continual scientific advances have installed a world view that assumes progress to be natural; which could be considered a form of a victory complex, and certainly diminishes vigilance and self-examination. Governments are inclined to overstate their success. As with the Vietnam War, the war on drugs is reinforced by ‘tales of success’.

The politics of narcotics liberalization can be unpredictable and challenging, as reflected recently in the alleged opposition of business owners to proposition 19 in California. One article suggests that some business owners opposed it in many cases not on any moral grounds or because they believed prohibition was the way to go; but rather because they feared that marijuana users would fall under laws concerned employee discrimination. Thus fear of not being able to fire employees on the grounds of their marijuana consumption may have had an effect in the election results (Vlahos, 2011). On the other side, measures by the

¹ For all laws which can be broken without any injury to another, are counted but a laughing-stock, and are so far from bridling the desires and lusts of men, that on the contrary they stimulate them. For "we are ever eager for forbidden fruit, and desire what is denied." Nor do idle men ever lack ability to elude

² As laws and decrees grow salient, robbers and brigands grow numerous. (Lao Tzu) And now bills were passed, not only for national objects but for individual cases, and laws were most numerous when the commonwealth was most corrupt. (Tacitus)

Alþingi have been belated compared to other countries and Iceland's failure to comply with up-to-date foreign standards has hampered international co-operation, as is evident in the case of laws on money laundering (and only recently has Iceland come into line with the European Arrest Warrant).

One of the roles of the national police commissioner according to regulation 404/2007 is to make strategic analyses of threats that might materialize on account of organized crime. In the latest report announced on January 2012, fears are expressed that the banking crisis might lead to increased money laundering and that currency restrictions might encourage more domestic investment by criminal syndicates (National Police Commissioner, 2012). The national police commissioner's office seems well aware of the possible inter-connection of organized crime activities; though it rightly points out that organized crime in Iceland leans towards thievery and shoplifting, especially by foreign syndicates. Fears are also mentioned that Romania's entry to the Schengen agreement – which the Danish EU Presidency hopes to finalize in 2012 – might trigger a rise in criminal activity here, partly because Roma originating from that country are considered vulnerable to exploitation by fellow Roma who have affiliations with criminal syndicates or operate them on their own. Further, the possibility is recognized that amphetamines and marijuana might be exported from Iceland, which could compromise the nation's standing in the international community.

Detective superintendent Karl Steinar Valsson in his interview also suggested that manufacturing narcotics in Iceland and smuggling them out might be a smart move for dealers. Firstly, because Iceland's major exports that could be used to conceal drugs packages are fresh fish products; which pass quickly through customs. Secondly, foreign customs services would not expect narcotics to arrive from Iceland (Interview, January 6th 2012). The exportation of narcotics might have consequences that could prove very expensive to Icelandic industry. Because the market value of fish products relies heavily on quick delivery, increased customs surveillance of Icelandic products and resulting delays might prove harmful. Icelanders have had no qualms about defying the British fleet (and the European Union in more recent mackerel disputes) when it comes to their fisheries interests. This new threat from criminal activity should thus be taken very seriously and an imperative exists to prevent all exportation of narcotics. This is good example of a challenge that liberalization faces; unless that it can be demonstrated that this development could be blocked as and when liberalization is adopted, opposition akin to that of Californian business owners is to be expected, and understandably so.

Alcohol prohibition and the dictatorship of the proletariat have alike been relegated to the dustbin of history. Both could be considered needless exercises in futility, because both were unsound in principle. Perhaps narcotics prohibition will also be relegated to the dustbin of history. Not to provoke an existential crisis amongst my readers, there simply is no political solution to the drug problem: all political actions to ratify the problem are futile or at the very least carry too much opportunity cost, if their aims more than simply accommodating narcotics use to minimize harm. Making the narcotics trade one of the single most profitable industries on the planet through prohibition will never prove successful, because it is simply unsound in principle. Perhaps there lies a solution somewhere, but probably only in the field of medicine. Perhaps addiction will become an easily remedied problem sometime, but in the foreseeable future one can only hope to avoid scenes from *License to Kill* and *Die Hard* from playing out on our streets.

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