

Afghanistan's Opium Challenge: A Decentralized Solution

By

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Abstract

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan since 2003 is the largest producer of illicit opium in the world. In 2011, it produced 5,800 metric tons of opium from approximately 131,000 hectares cultivated land – an increase from its lowest production level of 200 metric tons in 2001. The resurgence of opium poppy in Afghanistan seriously undermines the post-2001 progress in rebuilding Afghanistan and contributes to the on-going insurgency. A combination of external, internal, political and economic factors have contributed to this resurgence of the Afghan Opium Industry. These factors, among others, include insecurity, poverty, corruption, lack of agricultural subsidies and lack of alternative livelihoods, unemployment, lawlessness, and poor infrastructure.

The Afghan government and its international allies have been fighting the illicit drugs in Afghanistan post-2001. Various policies have been applied but no positive sustainable reduction has been achieved so far. This thesis proposes/argues that decentralizing governmental authority over narcotic production and management from the national to sub-national level would be more effective in curbing the illicit opium industry of Afghanistan. Specifically, this research will examine the nature and root causes of the opium poppy cultivation and production, trafficking and consumption, the past and current policies and their implication, and successful cases of decentralized approaches.

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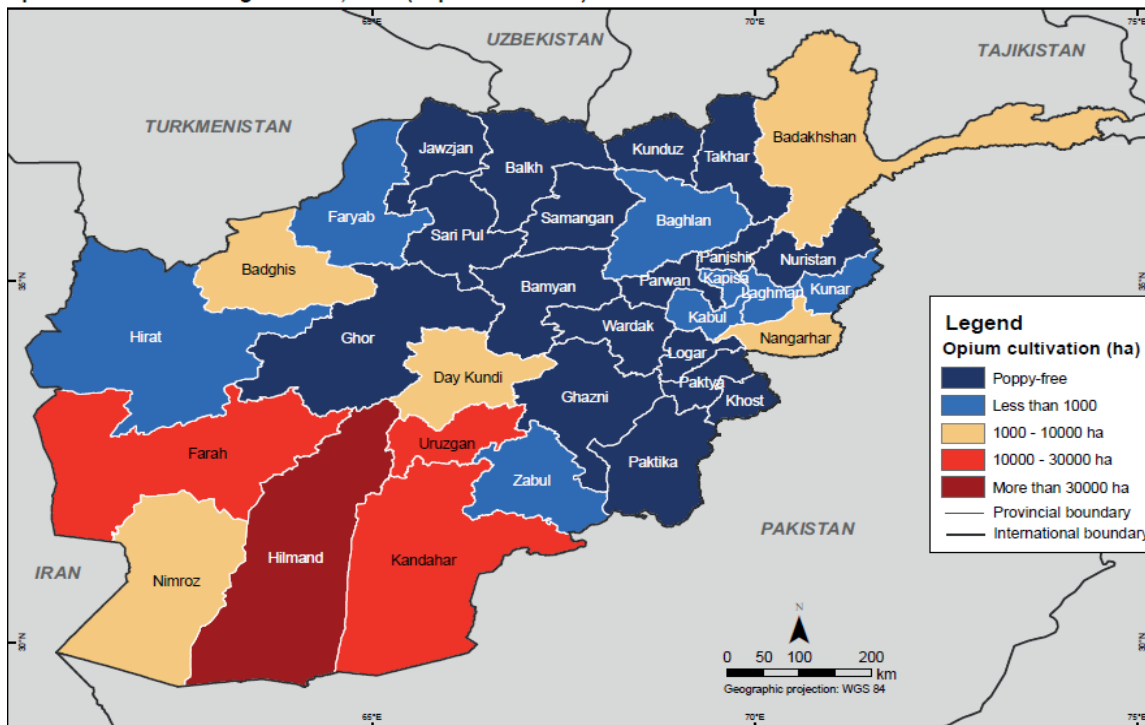
UNODC- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
MCN- Ministry of Counter Narcotic
MoD- Ministry of Defense
Mol- Ministry of Interiors
MoF- Ministry of Finance
MFA- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NDCS- National Drug Control Strategy
DEA- Drug Enforcement Agency (U.S.)
DoS- Department of State (U.S.)
ANA- Afghan National Police
ANSF- Afghan National Security Forces
CNPA- Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan
NDS- National Directorate of Security
MHA- Ministry of Haj and Awqaf
CEPMC- Central Eradication Poppy Monitoring –Cell
ADIDU- Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit (U.K.)
CCPEF- Controlled Central Poppy Eradication Unit
NATO- North Atlantic Treaty Organization
GLE- Governor –Led Eradication
ASNF- Afghan Special Narcotics Force
CJTF- Criminal Justice Task Force
NIU- National Interdiction Unit
US- United States
UK- United Kingdom
PDPA- People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan
USSR- Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UN- United Nations
I-ANDS- Interim- Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANDS- Afghanistan National Development Strategy
GDP- Gross Domestic Production
UN-HDI- United Nations Human Development Index
ORAS- Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey
IDLG- Independent Directorate of Local Governance
PRCD- Provincial Relations Coordination Directorate

Political Map of Afghanistan



Source: <http://www.ezilon.com/maps/asia/Afghanistan-maps>

Opium cultivation in Afghanistan, 2011 (at province level)



Source: UNODC

Chapter One

Introduction:

It has been ten years since the Taliban regime has been removed Afghanistan after the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. There are promising signs of development in a nation that has suffered from nearly three decades of conflict, destruction, and despair. Toppling the extremist regime of the Taliban paved the way for rebuilding Afghanistan as a democratic state. Presidential elections have been held twice, a constitution has been adopted, and the country has a democratically elected parliament and an independent judiciary system. Millions of children returned to school thereby improving the literacy with each passing year. Every year hundreds of thousands of student are enrolled in national universities and private higher studies institution throughout the country. Afghanistan currently has approximately 305,600 national security forces comprising 171,600 national army and 134,000 national Police.

Despite these developments, President Hamid Karzai's government in Kabul faces a multitude of political, security, and economic challenges. Insecurity, corruption, poverty, lawlessness, and booming illicit opium poppy cultivation and production are amongst the challenges that the Afghan government and its international allies must overcome to ensure a stable democratic Afghanistan. From among these many challenges, the illicit opium industry is the prime focus of this thesis. The Afghan opium kills more than 100,000 people each year globally -more than any other drug. According to the UN Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) 2011 report on the Afghan opiate trade, heroin annually kills five times as many people in NATO countries than the total number of troops killed in Afghanistan from 2001-2009. About 16.5

million people around the world use heroin, opium, or morphine. Trade in Afghan opiate is also very profitable, generating \$61 billion out of the total opiate trade of \$68 billion in 2009. Of the \$61 billion, Afghan traffickers received only \$2.2 billion or 3.6%, with Afghan farmers receiving less than 0.7% or \$ 450-500 million. Traffickers and farmers are not the only ones to benefit from poppy production. Between 2004 and 2008, the Taliban raised \$450 million to \$600 million by taxing Afghanopium farmers and traffickers –a significant portion of their operating expenses.¹

In 2010, Afghanistan produced 3,600 metric tons (mt) of the global total of 4,860 mt of opium. The following year, Afghan production increased 61% to 5,800 mt. After the fall of the Taliban, the Afghan government, as had several other governments afflicted by illicit drugs, turned to international allies for assistance in launching counter-narcotics efforts. In 2003, the Afghan government formulated a National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) with four national priorities of (a) - Disrupting the drug trade by targeting the traffickers and their backers (b) - Strengthening and diversifying legal alternative livelihoods (c) - Reducing the demand for illicit drugs and treatment of problem drug users, and (d) - Developing state institutions at the center and provincial level vital to the delivery of counter narcotics strategy. In line with this strategy's priorities, supplementary policies such as interdiction and law enforcement, eradication, and provision of agricultural subsidies were initiated. In 2005, the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN) was established. The ministry is responsible for the coordination, evaluation, management, and implementation of Counter Narcotics law and NDCS. The international

¹ United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC), "Global Afghan Opiate Trade, 2011", http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Global_Afghan_Opium_Trade_2011-web.pdf and, u UNODC, "World Drug Report, 2011", http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2011/World_Drug_Report_2011_ebook.pdf (accessed, March 16, 2012)

community provided the Afghan government with financial, technical, and logistical assistance. Despite the efforts of the Afghan government and its international partners there has been no significant sustainable reduction in Afghan opium cultivation, production and trafficking.

This thesis argues that the government's failure to reduce opium production lies, not in its strategy and sub-policies, but in the government's decision to implement these policies from the central governmental level. The problem is the centralistic approach of the government. Beginning in 2003, the Afghan government adopted a highly-centralized approach to combat narcotics production - an approach that is opposite to the diversity and decentralized nature of the Afghan opium cultivation and production. It is the central government that has formulated counter-narcotic policies and strategies, applying laws and programs indiscriminately to all poppy cultivating provinces. This centralized approach has failed for two primary reasons. A uniform policy approach fails to recognize the different reasons and motivations that farmers in various provinces grow poppies, and is thereby unable to tailor counter policies effectively. Second, the center's orientation towards implementing policies, is to by-pass the local institutions and authorities, thereby failing to engage those most responsible and active in narcotics production. This thesis argues that the authority for the planning, management, and implementation of counter-narcotics efforts must be decentralized from the central government to the sub-national level or governor's level if Afghanistan is to effectively curb the illicit opium industry. In other words, a decentralized approach is the most effective method for tackling the diverse and decentralized Afghan opium industry.

This analyses and research is formulated in the following format. In Chapter Two, a historical background of Afghanistan's politics and government structure along with the

Afghanopium industry is discussed. Chapter Three examines in more detail the factors that have contributed to the expansion, cultivation, and production of the Afghan opium industry from historical times to post-2001. Chapter Four first analyzes current policies to counter narcotic's production, and then concludes by examining how these policies have failed to produce sufficient results.

Finally, Chapter Five is designated to the argument of the thesis. The chapter defines decentralization of power in general, and discusses its types and arrangements, and then applies a decentralized governmental structure to Afghanistan and examines the effectiveness of this arrangement on the Afghan opium industry. The Chapter ends with a conclusion.

Research Question, Methodology, and Significance:

The Research Question of this thesis is: How would the decentralization of power in Afghanistan affect opium poppy cultivation and production?

The methodology used in this research is of an inter-disciplinary qualitative nature, drawing from several disciplines, including Political Science, International Studies, Economics, and Agriculture. Primary and secondary literature including national, international, and non-governmental organizations' (NGO) studies and reports, peer reviewed journal articles and books, and news articles will be analyzed. The literature is drawn from national and International NGO's and governmental websites, academic database such Google Scholar, and Pro-Quest, international and local news sources, other legitimate sources of relevant literature and data, and interviews. This thesis will explore the successful cases of decentralized counter-narcotics initiatives, the diverse and decentralized nature of the Afghan opium cultivation and

production, and how a decentralized approach can establish better coordination and cooperation between various institutions involved in the war against opium in Afghanistan.

A wide variety of academic audience may be interested and enriched by this research, including political science, international and globalization studies, peace and conflict studies, business, history, and military and security studies. Policy makers, the Counter Narcotics Ministry of Afghanistan, the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Provincial Governors in Afghanistan, and other governmental and non-governmental agencies should also find this analysis useful in understanding the implications of this industry on the overall state building process in Afghanistan.

Chapter Two

Afghanistan: Political History

The Afghan highland, historically, has served as a crossroad and battleground for various empires; from Alexander the Great's rule until the early 18th century Moghul India and Persian Afsharid Dynasty. In 1747, Ahmad Shah Abdali, a Pashtun commander of the largest cavalry contingent of the Afsharid kingdom, established modern day Afghanistan. His empire extended from Kandahar, Afghanistan to Mashhad in northern Iran, to Peshawar, Kashmir, and Delhi in India, and to Bukhara in Central Asia.² The modern frontiers of Afghanistan, primarily demarcated at the end of the nineteenth century, connect three geographic and cultural regions: the Indian Subcontinent to the southeast, Central Asia to the north, and the Iranian Plateau in the west. A landlocked country, Afghanistan borders Pakistan, Iran, and the Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and shares a fifty-mile border with China.³

Afghanistan, once again, became a battleground between empires in the nineteenth-century's clash of the British India and Russian empires in Central Asia, known as "the Great Game". The Russian imperial movement toward Afghanistan and India persuaded the British strategic planners to adopt a "forward policy" toward Afghanistan in order to avoid Russian domination of Afghanistan and safeguard its position in the Indian subcontinent. Both empires, in part to justify their strategic and economic-driven expansions to their home audiences, explained their motives ideological - "to lift out the colonial nations from ignorance and civilize

² Tomsen, Peter, *The Wars of Afghanistan*, (USA, PublicAffairs, 2011)

³ Ewans, Marthin, *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics*, (UK, Curzen Press, 2001)

them”.⁴ Because of the “forward policy” of the British India Raj toward Afghanistan, three Anglo-Afghan wars took place.

The First Anglo–Afghan War lasted from 1839 to 1842. The second Anglo-Afghan war (1878-1880) was triggered by Amir Shir Ali Khan's refusal to accept a British mission in Kabul. In 1879, after the death of Amir Shir Ali Khan, his son, Amir Muhammad Yakub Khan, signed the Gandomak Treaty with Pierre Louis Napoleon Cavagnari representing the British India Empire. By signing the treaty, Afghans officially granted the control of their foreign policy to the British India Raj, and accepted the British Mission in Kabul.⁵

In 1919, Amanullah Khan ascended the Afghan throne following his father's assassination and declared Afghanistan's independence from Great Britain. In response to Britain's refusal to acknowledge Afghanistan's independence, Amanullah Khan declared war on British India. War-weary and preoccupied with WW1, Britain, in August 1919 signed the Treaty of Rawalpindi, recognizing Afghan independence and returning control of Afghan foreign policy. King Amanullah continued to rule Afghanistan until 1929. Despite Afghanistan's declaration of independence, it remained caught in a tug of war between Russia and England. Russia, whether under the late czars or Communists, has viewed Afghanistan traditionally as falling within its sphere of influence. From the British perspective, Afghanistan served as an effective buffer against Russia in safeguarding British interests in India.

In 1929, Nadir Khan, a commander in King Amanullah Khan's army, became the king of Afghanistan. He continued to rule Afghanistan until he was assassinated on November 8th, 1933. For the next forty years King Zahir ruled Afghanistan, bringing to the nation its longest

⁴ Tomsen, 2011

⁵ Tomsen, 2011

period of stability since the early 1800s. On July 17th, 1973, while King Mohammad Zahir was in Italy for medical treatment, Mohammad Dawood, his cousin and brother in-law, declared himself President in a bloodless coup. Dawood transformed Afghanistan from a monarchy to a republic and began to distance Afghanistan from the USSR and seek more aid from the West and Saudi Arabia.⁶

Over the next two years, the communists, who had supported his coup, gradually gained authority and offices, and systematically eliminated their political opponents. President Dawood concentrated more and more executive, legislative, and judicial powers in his own hands. In 1975 Dawood formed the National Revolutionary Party and outlawed all other parties, including the communists. Gradually Dawood decreased Afghanistan's dependence on the Soviet Union, dismissed communists from his cabinet, and returned Afghanistan to a policy of neutrality. He worked to gain the trust and friendship of the rest of the world by traveling to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, and Turkey. He sent envoys to Iran and China in search of aid and in 1974 and 1975 received visits from U.S. Secretary of State Henry.⁷ All these efforts prompted a fresh KGB attempt to reunite the communists in Kabul. In 1978, the Afghan communists assassinated Dawood and toppled his government, ending another illegal period of power in Afghan politics.

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), the party of Afghan communists that had overthrown President Dawood's government, soon faced a national rebellion, especially from the rural areas that had favored Dawood's reforms and hated those introduced

⁶ Goodson, P. Larry, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban*, (University of Washington Press, 2001).

⁷ Peterson, 2011 and Goodson, P. Larry, *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban*, (University of Washington Press, 2001)

by the communists. Among the most hated communist-imposed policies were “gender equality”, “land reforms”, and changing the Afghan flag into a red flag with a yellow seal similar to those of the Soviet Central Asian Republics. Of greatest concern was the belief that the Afghan communists would destroy Islam and impose Soviet atheism on the country. On December 27th, 1979, Russia realizing that the PDPA regime was in imminent danger of collapse sent approximately eighty thousand Soviet troops to Afghanistan to support the PDPA government. Afghanistan responded to the Russian invasion with a Jihad or holy war led by the Mujahideen or holy warriors. The USSR’s direct military intervention in Afghanistan transformed the Afghan resistance into a regional and even a global geopolitical struggle. The Soviet invasion was met with western intervention, turning Afghanistan into a pawn of the Cold War rivalry. By the time of the Soviets’ withdrawal in late 1989, Afghanistan had become a totally shattered and destroyed country.⁸

After the Soviet’s withdrawal in 1988-89, the Mujahideen controlled all of the country except the area around the capital, Kabul, and some cities that remained in the hands of the PDPA’s last President, Dr. Najibullah. With the Soviet withdrawal, the PDPA regime in Kabul had little support and in 1992 Kabul fell into Mujahideen control, ending the Jihad against the Soviets and its puppet government. Soviet withdrawal and the defeat of the internal communist party did not end a state of war for the Afghan people. Rather, an international war of defense against aggression morphed into an internal civil war among the Mujahideen who now bitterly fought one another for power.

⁸ Peterson, 2011, and Larry, 2001, p.53,

While engaged in a civil war, a new movement, the Taliban, emerged in 1994. As the people were sick of war, the Taliban provided the Afghan people with an antidote to the state of anarchy that had pervaded Afghanistan since 1979. The Taliban captured Kandahar in 1994, and two years later, won control of Kabul. The Taliban received at least initial support from ISI (the Pakistani spy agency), who hoped that the Taliban would open and protect Afghan roads from disruptive warlords, allowing Pakistan to connect with Central Asia.⁹ As the Taliban solidified their control over 80-90% of the country, Pakistan increased its support, hoping to turn Afghanistan into its own client regime. Except for recognition by Pakistan, S.A. and the U.A.E, the international community withheld assistance, focusing instead on the Taliban's record of human rights violations, including prohibitions against women working and attending school, support for al Qaeda, and intolerant policies toward religious and ethnic minorities.

In the immediate aftermath of the horrific attacks of September 9th, 2001 on the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon, the U.S. government's first target was Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda terrorist network, the alleged perpetrators behind the attack, and the Taliban, for harboring al Qaeda in Afghanistan. On October 7th, 2001 the United States and British aircraft started bombing targets in Afghanistan, marking the start of Operation Enduring Freedom. On December 22nd, same year, following the removal of the Taliban's regime, Hamid Karzai became the head of an interim power-sharing government.¹⁰

After the Taliban ouster in late 2001, the newly installed Afghan authorities were charged with restoring peace and rebuilding the war-torn country. On October 9th, 2004, for the

⁹ Favre, 2005, Rashid, Ahmed, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, (United States, Yale University Press, 2001)

¹⁰ Samuel, Charlie, *Americans at War: Timeline of the War on Terror*, (New York, Gareth Steven Publishing, 2012)

first time in its history, Afghanistan held democratic elections, electing Hamid Karzai to a five-year term as President. On August 20th, 2009, Afghan voters returned to the polls, electing Karzai to another five-year term.¹¹

Afghanistan: A Guide to Government

The new Afghan constitution established a unitary form of government, with all political authority vested in the capital, Kabul. Afghanistan has the following subnational units of government:

1. Wolayat (Province) each headed by the provincial governor which is appointed by the president through the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG). There are 34 provinces currently.
2. Woleswali (District); There are approximately 335 Woleswalis; each province containing 3 to 17 woleswali. The district chiefs are appointed by the president through the IDLG and consultation of provincial governor.
3. Sharwali Wolayat (Provincial Municipality); each province has a municipality. The Municipals are appointed by the president through the Ministry of Interior Affairs.
4. Sharwali Woleswali (District Municipality); each district has a municipality but some have none.

None of these levels of governments possess jurisdictional authority to enact policies, but delegated to implement only those laws, programs, and policies created by the central government.

¹¹ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan, Kabul, Afghanistan <http://www.iec.org.af/eng/>

Organizationally, the central government in Afghanistan comprises 30 ministries, two constitutional agencies (The Office of the President and the Supreme Court), eight independent bodies, and other central government agencies. Almost all high and mid-level officials of the subnational administration are appointed by the central government. The governor, district head (Woleswal), security commander, and other high level officials are appointed by the president while the rest of mid-level administrators are appointed by the relevant institutions in the center.¹²

The Afghan constitution also calls for a parliament comprising two houses; the Wolesi Jirga (House of the People) and Mishrano Jirga (House of the Elders). The Wolesi Jirga shall be an elected body through fair and free elections. The members of the Wolesi Jirga according to the constitution should not exceed two hundred and fifty members. They should be elected proportionately to the people of each constituency or province regulated by the election law with at least two female members from each province.

The Mishrano Jirga is to be elected or appointed as follows: each provincial council elects one member, amongst themselves, to send to Mishrano Jirga for a period of 4 years; from among the district level councils, one member is elected for a period of three years. The President appoints the remaining one third of the members from the experts and people of appropriate stature; including two representatives of the disabled and impaired, two representatives from the Kuchis (Nomads), and also the religious minority of the society- with

¹² Manning et al, 2004

50 percent of these to be women.¹³ Mishrano Jirga has 102 members. The term of the Afghan parliament is five years.¹⁴

Afghanistan has, at least in theory, an independent judiciary system. The Afghan judiciary comprises one Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal and Primary Courts whose organization and authority shall be regulated by law. The Supreme Court shall be the highest judicial organ, heading the judicial power of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The Supreme Court, according to the constitution, shall consist of nine members, appointed by the President with the approval of Wolesi Jirga. The members shall be initially appointed in the following manner: three members for a period of four years, three members for seven years, and three members for ten years. Later appointments shall be for period of ten years. Appointment of members for a second term shall not be permitted. The President shall appoint one of its members as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Afghan constitution also calls for the election of Provincial councils, which were held in 2009, and for the election of district councils and municipalities, which have not yet occurred due to various excuses by the Afghan government¹⁵. According to the constitution, there shall be a provincial council in every province. Members of the provincial councils according to law, shall be elected for four years by the residents of the province, proportionate to the population. The members of the provincial council shall be elected through free, general, secret as well as direct elections. The provincial council shall elect one of its members as President.

¹³ Manning et al, 2004

¹⁴ The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Chapter 8, article 81-90,
<http://www.Afghanembassy.com.pl/cms/uploads/images/Constitution/The%20Constitution.pdf>

¹⁵ The excuses included security, logistic, and lack of resources

Afghanistan: Opium Industry's History

Historically, Afghanistan, like many cultures around the world, cultivated plants such as poppies, in sufficient quantities for domestic medicinal purposes. Literature indicates that poppy cultivation first appeared in Afghanistan approximately 2300 hundred years ago.

Whether Alexander the Great introduced the plant to Afghanistan and South Asia during his conquest of the region in 325-327 BC, or Arab conquerors in their drive through South Asia to India, or traders, is unknown.¹⁶

According to David Macdonald, the author of *Drugs in Afghanistan: Opium, Outlaws and the Scorpion Tales*, a 1905 British Indian Government report mentioned that opium poppy was one of the main autumn-planted- spring-harvested crops in Nangarhar province in the eastern part of Afghanistan.¹⁷ The *Imperial Gazetteer of British India*, in the same year, reported that opium was produced in the districts of Herat valley (now Herat province), Kabul, Kandahar, and Jalalabad (now the center of Nangarhar province), but not in large quantities.¹⁸

In 1923, British officials recorded that Afghanistan had harvested 75 tons of raw opium from approximately 4000 hectares of land, quite a significant amount given that the population of the country at the time was roughly 10 million.¹⁹ In 1924 at the Second Opium Conference, organized by the Permanent Central Board under the control of the League of Nations, Afghanistan reported poppy cultivation in Badakhshan, Herat, and Jalalabad (now Nangarhar)

¹⁶ Macdonald, *Drugs in Afghanistan: Opium, Outlaws and Scorpion Tales* (New York: Pluto Press, 2007) 59–60
Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy* (New York: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2009)

¹⁷ Macdonald, *Drugs in Afghanistan: Opium, Outlaws and Scorpion Tales*, 60

¹⁸ Imperial Gazetteer of India: Afghanistan and Nepal (Lahore, Sang-e-Meel Publication , 1999) P. 30

¹⁹ Dee Pak Lal, "Endangering the War on Terror by the War on Drugs," *World Economics* 9, no. 3 (July-September 2008): 2.

provinces.²⁰ Few reports or documents exist regarding the extent of poppy cultivation over the next fifty years. On the one hand, a UN report mentioned that a royal decree in 1945 prohibiting opium production had reduced production to 12 metric tons in 1956. On the other hand, some journalists have alleged that, following royal tradition, King Mohammad Zahir's family controlled the relatively scarce opium trade throughout the 1950s and 1960s.²¹

By the 1970s, however, Afghanistan was seen as a country where narcotics constituted a serious problem and the government was unable to control either the production or trafficking to neighboring countries.²² As the producer of 30% of the world's hashish, Kabul became known as the hashish capital of the world, drawing 5,000 to 6,000 Western "hippies" to its doorstep.²³

The growth of Afghanistan's opium industry to become the number one producer of illicit opium in the world is the result of more than three decades of persistent instability, which began in 1979 with the Soviet invasion and occupation. After 10 years of war against the Soviets, different factions of the Mujahideen continued to fight for power until 1994. Chita D. Mass, an expert on Afghan affairs and Senior Associate, Asia Division, at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, describes the growth of the drug industry of Afghanistan in four phases:

1: 1979-1989- In this early phase, drugs cultivation and production increased gradually. During this stage, the Mujahideen leaders, who used the revenues to finance their anti-Soviet Jihad (Holy war), were the primary beneficiaries.

²⁰ Macdonald, *Drugs in Afghanistan: Opium, Outlaws and Scorpion Tales*, 60

²¹ Alexander Cockburn & Jeffrey St. Clair, *Whiteout: the CIA, Drugs and the Press*, (London, Verso, 1999) P.262

²² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2003 "The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem" http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/afg_opium_economy_www.pdf

²³ Booth, *Cannabis: A History*, 289.

2: 1989-1996- In the second phase, the drug industry rose to become the mujahedeen's most important illicit source of income for financing their wars against one another. (Civil war period)

3: 1996-2001- In the third phase, though the country witnessed comparative stability, the Taliban used the drug industry as source of revenue, by officially taxing it. The Northern Alliance (portion of the former Mujahideen resisting the Taliban in northern Afghanistan), used the revenues from drug industry to maintain their powerful position in areas under their control (Taliban regime's rule). In the last quarter of 2000, the Taliban issued a decree, banning the cultivation and production of opium. Because of the ban, opium cultivation decreased from 82,172 hectares in 2000, to 7,606 hectares in 2001, a 91% decrease, and the lowest level of cultivation in recent history. Similarly, opium production decreased 94% from 3,278 tons in 2000 to 185 metric tons in 2001.²⁴

While the Taliban's ban, without a doubt, effectively reduced opium poppy cultivation and production, U.S. State Department experts regarded the ban's purpose with suspicion. Raphael F. Perl, in his 2001 Congressional Research Services' report to the Congress stated that: the true purpose behind the Taliban's ban was to reduce the global supply of opium, thereby driving up prices, and allowing the Taliban, (which the UN reported had stockpiled some 60% of their stock) to sell off these extensive stockpiles at a maximum profit.²⁵

4: 2002- to present day- In the fourth phase starting from 2002, the drug industry's profits continued as a source of income for former warlords and drug lords. The difference now is that drug profits had allowed the purchase of positions, power, and influence in the institutions of

²⁴ UNODC, "Annual Opium production survey 2001, Afghanistan"

²⁵ Raphael, F. Perl, "Taliban and the Drug Trade, Congressional Research Services' Report for Congress, 2001", <http://www.iwar.org.uk/news-archive/crs/6210.pdf> (accessed 21 January, 2012)

the new legally established government. Maas argues that starting in 2002 the drug industry flourished because of the combined presence of a powerful shadow economy and a weak state. Using United Nation's Office on Drug and Crimes (UNODC) statistics, the following two tables demonstrate the correlation between the nation's political experiences and opium production. Opium Production in the country depended on the poppy yield. The UNODC office produced figures from 1980 until 2011. I have divided the period into two phases, 1980-1999 and 2000-2011 for a better demonstration of the Afghan opium industry. These two periods differ in terms of political, economic, social, and security situation in Afghanistan. While the first period was characterized by Jihad, civil war, and anarchy, the second period from early 2002 is considered as an example of a highly internationalized state building process. The middle of the second period, starting from 2004, is the starting point for the war against illicit drugs. Since then, various Afghan government institutions with the help of international allies, have attempted to curb the Afghan illicit opium industry. However, so far no desirable results have been achieved in a sustainable manner on the national level. The Following figure demonstrates the production growth of Afghan opium in the first period, 1980-1999.

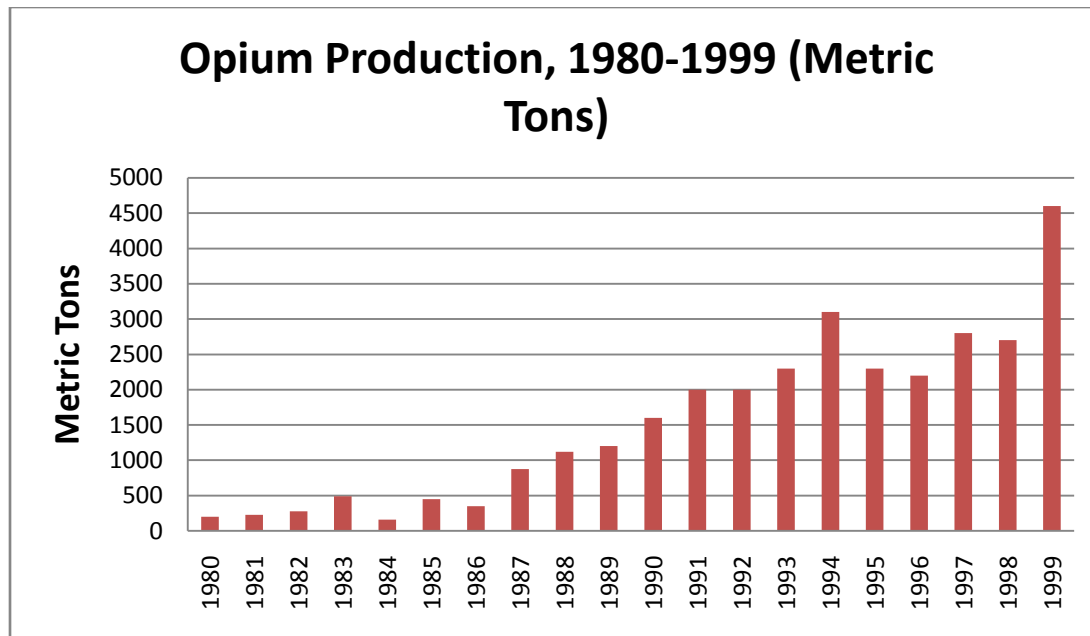


Figure 1: Opium Production, 1980-1999 (Metric Tons)

Although Afghanistan has been world's leading cultivator since 1991, its low yield meant that Myanmar (Burma) possessed the dubious distinction of leading producer until 2003. As discussed previously and in later chapters, a variety of factors contributed to the expansion of Afghan opium industry, including the Taliban's 2001 ban, which caused the price of opium to sky-rocket, leading to an increase in growth and production between 2001 -2003. In 2003, the same year that Afghanistan assumed its position as the leading producer of opium, the Afghan government created the National Drug Control Strategy to systematically fight against the illicit opium cultivation and production, and trafficking and consumption in Afghanistan. The following chart shows the amount of opium produced from 2001 until 2011 in Afghanistan.

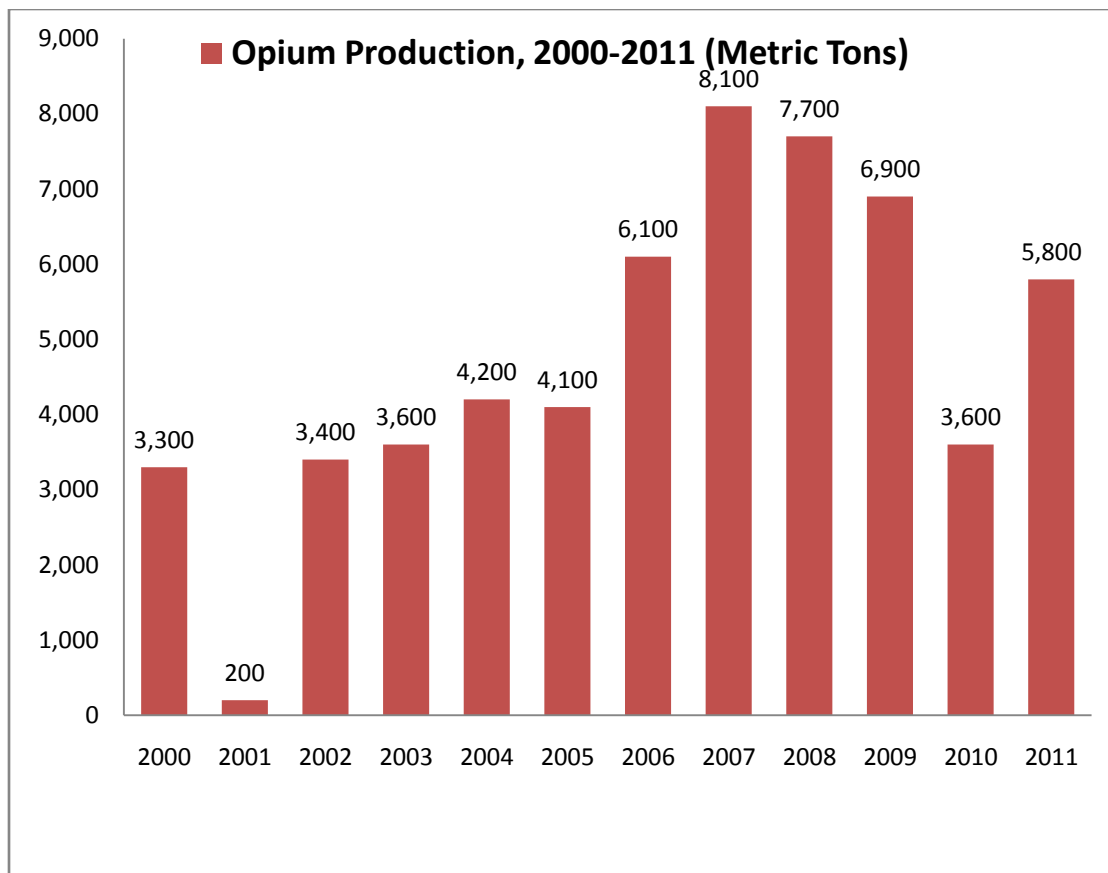


Figure 2: Opium Production, 2000-2011 (Metric Tons).

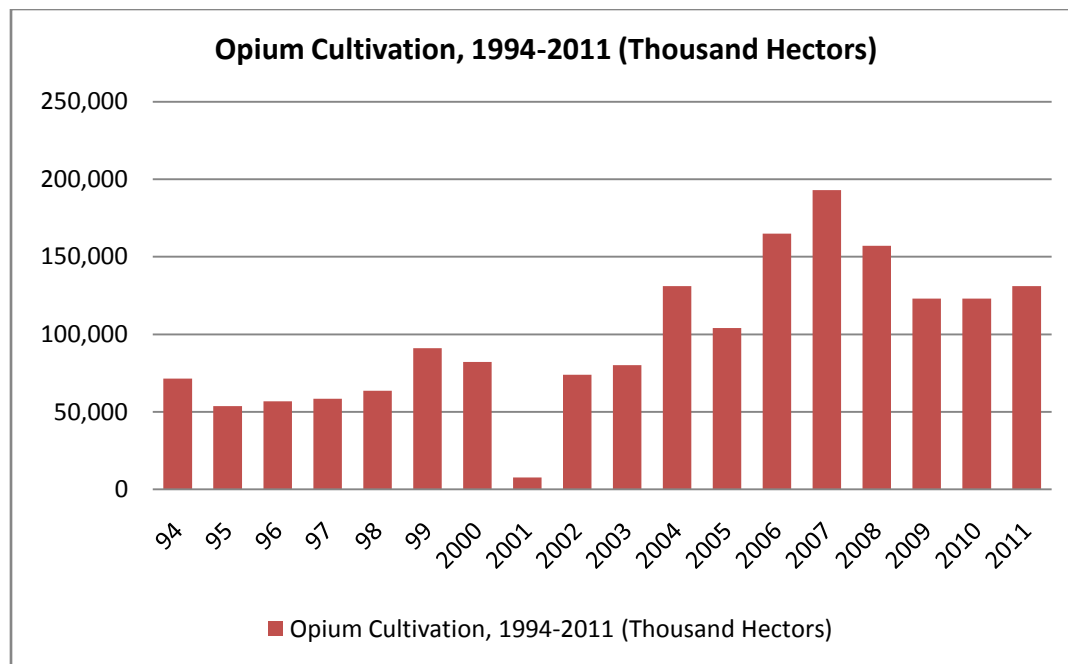


Figure 3: Opium Poppy Cultivation, 1994-2011 (Thousand Hectors)

The charts above indicate that Afghanistan since 1994 has gradually increased the cultivation of opium with the exception of 2001, the year of the Taliban’s ban. Since then, cultivation levels have varied with the highest levels occurring in 2006 -07 and slight decreases occurring in 2009-10 due to low global prices resulting from high supplies produced the previous two years. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, the growth of Afghan Opium Industry is not because of a single factor, but a combination of external and internal, political and economic factors.

Chapter Three

Factors Contributing to the Afghan Opium Industry

Afghanistan historically has produced opium for domestic medicinal usage, but has no cultural history of producing opium as a trade good. Afghanistan gradually became one of the leading producers of illicit opium and its derivative heroin and other illicit drugs after the Russian invasion, becoming the global leader in cultivation and production of opium in 2003. This trend of Afghan illicit opium growth is attributable to several domestic and international factors. War, poverty, climate conditions, lawlessness, lack of alternative legal livelihoods, and destruction of the agriculture sector are among the factors that contributed to the expansion of opium cultivation, production, and trafficking in Afghanistan. This chapter examines some of these important factors in detail.

External factors: Pre-2001

As previously noted, the Afghan people have cultivated opium for domestic medicinal use for several centuries. British records from India between 1905 and 1923 indicate that by this time, opium cultivation had increased sufficiently to allow its sale to neighboring nations – a trade rumored to be under the control of the Afghan royal family. The Shah's 1955 ban on the cultivation and use of opium in Iran provided a further incentive for the Afghan production and marketing of smuggled opium to Iran. Until the mid-1970s, opium produced in Afghanistan was almost entirely exported to Iran.²⁶

By the end of the 1900's, several external events, including the Soviet invasion into Afghanistan, the overthrow of the Shah in Iran, and Pakistan's ban on opium production, had

²⁶ Chouvy, Pierre-arnaud, *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of Poppy*, (USA, Harvard University Press, 2010), and Alexander Cockburn & Jeffrey St. Clair, *Whiteout: the CIA, Drugs and the Press*, (London, Verso, 1999)

resulted in the significant increase in Afghan opium production. The USSR invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 is probably the most important external factor that contributed to the expansion, cultivation, and production of opium in Afghanistan. As Citha D. Maass explains, the major commercial production of drugs in Afghanistan began with the anti-Soviet Jihad of 1979.²⁷

In Iran, the replacement of the Shah with a strict Islamic government ushered in stringent bans on opium production and narcotic use. The previous year, General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, the Pakistani military dictator, announced that production, consumption, and commerce of all intoxicants, opium included, were to be prohibited in Pakistan within one year (The Prohibition or Enforcement of Hadd act). The enforcement of this act resulted in a dramatic decline in Pakistan's opium poppy production- providing another market for Afghan produced opium.

In addition, a drought throughout Southeast Asia in the 1970s-80s further decreased the global supply of opium, providing additional incentives to Afghan producers and traders. Three shifts in the Asian market of opium increased the motivation for Afghan producer to fill the supply gap in the world market: the reduction of Turkish opium cultivation starting in 1974, geographic shift of opium production from the Golden Triangle (Burma, Laos, and Thailand) to the Golden Crescent in Central Asia (Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan) in the 1970s; and later, the successful counter-narcotics efforts within Iran and Pakistan. The latter had more direct impact

²⁷ Maass, 2011

on Afghanistan than the first two.²⁸ After the withdrawal of the USSR from Afghanistan in 1989, opium production increased significantly.

In the mid-1990s, the Taliban emerged in Afghanistan. The international community's response to the rise of the Taliban was to terminate all foreign aid, forcing the Taliban to pursue revenues from opium production. As Lee V. Barton argues in *Illegal Drugs and the Governmental Policies*, presented with a dysfunctional economic system and a lack of international aid, the Taliban, like their warlord predecessors, instituted a tax on opium to finance their operations.²⁹

External Factors Post-2001:

Since 2001, Afghanistan has become the premier example of internationalized state building. Armed forces of more than 40 countries have assisted the Afghan security sector, and foreign aid has become the principle source of revenue to rebuild the Afghan State and finance its operations.³⁰ Ironically, this international interest in Afghan nation-building led not to a decrease in opium production, but a dramatic increase. International involvement provided easier access to foreign markets and new actors in the supply chain. Over the last decade, Afghanistan has provided 90% of heroin to Western Europe and Russia, an amount reaching 120 tons annually. Afghan heroin also feeds a fast growing habit in neighboring nations of Western and Central Asia as well as elsewhere.³¹ Approximately 14% of heroin in the United States today comes from Afghanistan compared to 7% in 2001, a 200% increase since the US-

²⁸ Maass, 2011

²⁹ Barton, Lee V, *Illegal Drugs and Governmental Policies*, (Nova Science Publishers. Inc., 2007) P. 104

³⁰ Mason, *The Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Missing the Inaction*, ed. Whit Mason, (Cambridge University Press, 2010)

³¹ Ward, Christopher, Byrd, William, *Afghanistan's Opium Drug Economy (2004)*, World Bank Report, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Publications-Resources/20325060/AFOpium-Drug-Economy-WP.pdf.pdf> (accessed Feb. 8th, 2012)

Africa : Regions
Europe*: West, Central & East-Europe (except Russia)
Europe** South-East Europe
India : Countries
 19 : Metric tons
 ————— : Flows of opiates from/to countries or regions
 (not actual trafficking routes)

AFGHAN OPIATE TRADE MONITORING PROGRAMME, STAS/UNODC

³² Glaze, John A., *Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing U.S. Counter-Narcotics Strategy (2007)*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/files/pub804.pdf> (accessed Feb. 2nd, 2012)

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As the above map illustrates, there are many routes for moving opium from Afghanistan, but four of them stand out. Most of the Afghan opium trade flows to the outside through the Central Asia route. Corrupt officials on both sides of the border and the existence of strong drug mafias in the Central Asian Republics allow Afghan opium to enter international markets. Second and third to the Central Asian route, are the routes through Pakistan and Iran respectively. Running a distant fourth, is smuggling drugs on aircraft through Indian airspace.

Domestic Factors

Pre-2001:

The growth of Afghan opium production was not solely because of external factors. Internal Afghan factors contributed greatly to the accelerated growth rate. Historically, cultivation levels have fluctuated broadly; influenced by variety of domestic factors, including official policies and actions. As mentioned previously, the extent to which various governments throughout first half of the 20th century sought to control production is unclear. Some sources indicate that from 1905 until 1960s, ruling governments not only failed to institute policies to counter the narcotics trade, but supported and monopolized the trade.³⁴ A few sources note the existence of a 1945 decree prohibiting the cultivation and use of opium. Whether supported or maligned, by 1956, the total Afghan production of opium was only 12 tons. By the late 1970's and early 1980's, numerous sources agree that Afghanistan had gradually become a major producer of opium.³⁵

Domestically, a variety of factors including continued war, warlordism, poverty, destroyed economic and agricultural infrastructures, corruption, climate conditions, and

³⁴Alexander Cockburn & Jeffrey St. Clair, 1999, Imperial Gazetteer of India: Afghanistan and Nepal, 1999

³⁵ Macdonald 2007, Maass 2011, UNODC annual surveys 1994-2011,

markets development contributed to Afghanistan' elevated status as a primary producer and cultivator of opium. Discussed below are some of the major domestic factors that helped Afghanistan become a leading cultivator and producer of opium.

1: Persistent War

For the last quarter century, since the 1979 Soviet invasion, Afghanistan has found itself embroiled in defensive and civil wars. Closely correlated with the start of these wars is Afghanistan's rise to the world's leading producer and cultivator of opium. Afghanistan responded to the Russian invasion with a Jihad or holy war. Comprised of autonomous Jihadi commanders in control of various regions of Afghanistan, the Mujahideen possessed a reputation as fierce fighters, but fighters without sophisticated weaponry. Although receiving some aid from Western and Islamic states, the Mujahideen turned to opium production to purchase weapons and finance their militias.³⁶ Beginning with the Russian invasion, the wars in Afghanistan can be divided into three phases. Each phase contributed to the rise of Afghanistan as the leading opium producer.

1: First Phase, 1979-1989:

This period is characterized by the Russian invasion and the Afghan's response to the Soviet aggression with a Jihad (holy-war). The Russian invasion is the initiating factor that led Afghanistan to three decades of war and to a drastic increase of opium production. In 1979, Afghanistan produced 200 mt of opium, by 1985 production had almost doubled to 450 tons and by the time of the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, production had increased 3-fold to 1,200

³⁶ Favre, Raphy, " Exploring the Roots of Opium and Illicit Economy in Afghanistan (2005)", <http://aizon.org/Roots%20of%20Opium%20and%20Illicit%20Economy.pdf> (accessed Feb. 2nd , 2012)

tons.³⁷ During this period, the Mujahideen commanders, besides receiving aid from different states, turned to opium as a source of income to maintain their militias and war against the Russians.

Beginning in late 1985, the US government began supplying the Mujahideen with man-portable Stinger anti-aircraft missiles. Capable of taking down aircrafts, these missiles were responsible for slowly, but surely, forcing Soviet troops out of rural areas. As the Soviet troops withdrew, the Mujahideen exerted increased authority over these areas – an authority that extended to increasing opium production.³⁸

2: Second Phase, 1989-1996:

By the time of the Soviets' withdrawal in 1988-89, the Mujahideen controlled all of the country except the area around the capital, Kabul, and few cities which remained in the hands of the Afghan Communist regime in Kabul. With the Soviet withdrawal, the West no longer aided the mujahedeen, forcing the regional leaders to depend solely upon opium as a source of income.³⁹ In 1992, Kabul fell into Mujahideen control, and the Jihad against the Soviets and its puppet government ended.

Soviet withdrawal and the defeat of the internal Communist Party did not end a state of war for the Afghan people. Competing to fill the power vacuum, the Mujahideen engaged in a bitter civil war, fighting one another for control of territory and opium production. Again to pay for their weaponry and militia, the Mujahideen promoted opium cultivation. On average, opium production doubled between 1990 and 1996, reaching a high of 3,000 tons in 1994.

³⁷ UNODC, "Afghanistan Annual Survey of Opium (2008)", [http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/Afghanistan%20Opium%20Survey%202008.pdf) (accessed Feb. 2nd, 2012)

³⁸ Favre, 2005

³⁹ Maass, 2011

3: Final Phase, 1996-2001:

As the Mujahideen fought one another, the Taliban emerged in 1994. Sick of war, the Taliban provided the Afghan people with an antidote to the state of anarchy that had pervaded Afghanistan since 1979. In 1994, the Taliban captured Kandahar in 1994, and two years later, won control of Kabul.⁴⁰ By 2000, the Taliban controlled 80-90% of the state's territory.

Pressing internal reasons, such as warlordism and solidifying control of the rural areas, and external needs such as gaining international recognition complicated the Taliban's ability to establish a coherent opium policy. As the Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar stated after capturing Kandahar, his priorities were first to eliminate warlords, and second, to fight opium production and smuggling.⁴¹ As a result, production during the Taliban's first year remained stable. When the Taliban entered Kabul in 1996, the opportunity to fund governmental needs became obvious as "influential heroin smugglers offered to pay a "zakat" tax of 10% to the Taliban exchequer for permission to transport heroin out of the region. Not surprisingly, the capture of Kabul coincided with an increase in opium production. As the Taliban extended their control over the country, reaching to 80% to 90% of the country in 2000, opium production increased simultaneously, reaching its highest levels to date in 1999. The following year in July, Mullah Omar issued a decree banning opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan as un-Islamic. As a result of the ban, opium production and cultivation declined by almost 90% in 2001 compared to the year before.⁴²

⁴⁰ Maley, William, *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, (New York, NYU Press, 1998)

⁴¹ Favre, 2005

⁴² Favre, 2005

2: Destruction of Agricultural Infrastructure

Afghanistan is a nation of rural farmers. Eighty percent of the population lives in rural areas. Eighty to eighty-five percent of the population is engaged in farming or agricultural related activities in a country where only 12% of the land is arable. Agriculture, like all sectors, suffered heavily from the war.⁴³ In 1979 when Russia invaded the country, fierce resistance, particularly in rural areas, provoked harsh retaliation from the Soviet military. The Soviets torched farms, orchards, and harvests, bombed two-thirds of the villages, and destroyed one-quarter to one-third of the irrigation systems, farms, orchards, harvests, irrigation system, and canals. Live-stocks decreased by 77% between 1979 and 1989.⁴⁴ In addition to the Soviets' destruction of the countryside, Mujahideen fighters mined the Karez⁴⁵, resulting in the destruction of the underground aqueduct and above ground irrigation canals, causing severe disruption in water distribution. With the agricultural infrastructure destroyed, farmers had few choices for survival except cultivation of the opium poppy, a high-value crop that consumed little water.⁴⁶

Twenty-five years of war gradually altered Afghanistan's agricultural output. Between 1979 and 1983, the acreage of land devoted to wheat, rice, barely, cotton, corn, and other legal

⁴³ "Rebuilding Afghanistan's agriculture Sector, 2003" Asian Development Bank, http://www.adb.org/documents/Reports/Afghanistan/Agriculture/Rebuilding_Agriculture_Sector_AFG.pdf (accessed, Feb. 9th, 2012)

⁴⁴ Lal, Deepak, "Endangering the War on Terror by the War on Drugs", *World Economics Journal*, Vol.73, NO.9, 2008

⁴⁵ For information about Karez system of irrigation visit the page : <http://www.adkn.org/en/agriculture/article.asp?a=67>

⁴⁶ Nigel J. R. Allan, "Opium Production in Afghanistan and Pakistan," in *Dangerous Harvests: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes*, ed. Michael K. Steinberg, Joseph J. Hobbs and Kent Mathewson (NY: Oxford University Press, 2004)

crops declined drastically. In 1981, the average wheat acreage dropped to 50.9%, declining to 37.2% by 1982. Corn followed a similar trend. Cotton dropped to 40% in 1981 and to only 15.7 % by 1982.⁴⁷ By 1982, Afghanistan's rice production had decreased by 65%. By 1987, reports indicate that war had completely destroyed Afghanistan's agricultural infrastructure. Complicating the restoration of agriculture production was the virtual impossibility of access to improved seeds, fertilizer, and agricultural.⁴⁸ In addition, Afghanistan suffered a severe drought until late-2000s making opium poppies one of the few crops that could survive. To conclude, the devastation of agricultural sector of Afghanistan constitutes a major contributor to the expansion of opium cultivation.

3: Lack of State Control and Lawlessness

Afghanistan, a country established in 1747, encountered the European-centered state system in nineteenth century when Russia and Britain advanced through Central Asia and India. The Afghan rulers tried to maintain their independence by copying these empires' militaries and governmental models. Following two wars with the British, Afghanistan became a protectorate within the British Empire, serving as a buffer zone against Russia. To strengthen the Afghan state and stabilize India's northwest frontier, the British provided the ruling King, Amir Abdul Rahman Khan (1881-1901) with weapons and cash. The king, in turn, used the aid to establish the basic Afghan state structure that endured until the fall of President Najibullah in 1992.⁴⁹ From 1979 until 2001, Afghanistan has been constantly in conflict. Central governments during

⁴⁷Yusufi, Mohammad Qasim "Effects of the War on Agriculture," from *The Tragedy of Afghanistan: The Social, Cultural, and Political Impact of the Soviet Invasion*, (Routledge, 1988)

⁴⁸ Yusufi, 1988

⁴⁹ Rubin, Barnett R., *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (USA, Yale University Press, 2002)

this period were largely symbolic, unable to exercise authority outside of Kabul and the capitals of certain provinces. Autonomous warlords governed the rural areas where more than 90% of opium was cultivated and produced. The Taliban's rule was the only period during this time when the Afghan people experienced some stability. Without a secure government and no authority to prevent opium production, leaders and farmers alike cultivated opium as a source of income.

4: Climate Conditions:

During the first phase of war (1979-1989), Afghanistan lost one-third of its population due to conflict-initiated displacements. In addition to this loss, destruction of agricultural infrastructure, anarchy, poverty, severe drought, and destroyed irrigation system transformed Afghanistan into a favorable place for opium. Afghan farmers gradually turned toward opium poppy; a hardy, nearly drought-resistant crop with a low weight to profit ratio and a high market demand. Non-perishable, the produced opium does not require refrigeration or careful handling during transportation.⁵⁰ With a shorter growing cycle than wheat and other crops, farmers could re-cultivate the land with livestock fodder such as maize following the opium harvest. Poppy straws, the dried stalks left following the opium's extraction, served as home-heating, saving some farmers nearly a quarter of their annual income that would have otherwise spent on home-heating costs. Thus, climate condition was another major driving force behind the Afghan opium industry growth.

⁵⁰ Lal, 2008

Post-2001 Era

Despite the international community and Afghan governmental efforts, opium cultivation and production increased dramatically following the Taliban's demise. Since 2002 Afghanistan has contributed more than 90% of the world's illicit drugs. The factors contributing to the increase of Afghan opium production post-2001 are discussed below.

1: Insecurity

The Asia Foundation's annual surveys show that Afghans consider insecurity as the number one major problem facing their country.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime states that insecurity is directly linked to the production and cultivation of opium in Afghanistan.⁵² In 2002, the UNODC survey reported that almost 95% of opium cultivation and production was concentrated in five provinces, Helmand, Nangarhar, Urozgan, Kandahar, and Badakhshan. From the above five provinces, the first four are located in the most insecure parts of Afghanistan.⁵³ In 2011, the UNODC office again found that 95% of the cultivation and production of opium took place in nine provinces in the south and west, the top insecure provinces in the country. Helmand, the most insecure Afghan province since 2001, accounted for 48% of the country's total opium cultivation in 2011, compared to 53% in 2010, 57% in 2009, 66% in 2008, 53% in 2007, 42% in 2006, 25% in 2005, 23% in 2004 and 19% in 2003. Opium production in the province increased by 57%, reaching 3,044 mt- equivalent to 52% of the total 2011 production in Afghanistan. Helmand, Kandahar, Urozgan and Zabol

⁵¹ "Annual Survey of the Afghan People (2006-2011", Asia Foundation, <http://asiafoundation.org/index.php>

⁵² "Afghanistan: Annual Survey of the Opium (2007), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan-Opium-Survey-2007.pdf>

⁵³ UNODC, 2002

provinces are considered provinces where security conditions are classified as high or of extreme risk by the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS).⁵⁴

2: Poverty

After the fall of the Taliban, one of the new government's main goals was the development and implementation of a national development strategy to guide Afghanistan's economic revival. This strategy known as, "The Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS) was presented to the international community as a vision for 2020 in Afghanistan.⁵⁵ During the period of 2002-2007, Afghanistan experienced real growth rates ranging from 14 to 26% with an average growth rate of 16%, growth rates well above the average real growth rates of other post-conflict, landlocked countries. GDP per capita increased 53% during this time, rising from approximately \$200 U.S. to \$306 U.S.⁵⁶ As demonstrated by the graphs below, domestic revenues rose 500% in 2006/2007 when compared with 2002/03.

⁵⁴ UNODC, 2011

⁵⁵ "Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: Poverty Reduction Progress Paper (2008)", International Monetary Fund (IMF), <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2008/cr08153.pdf> (accessed Feb. 11th, 2012)

⁵⁶ IMF, 2008

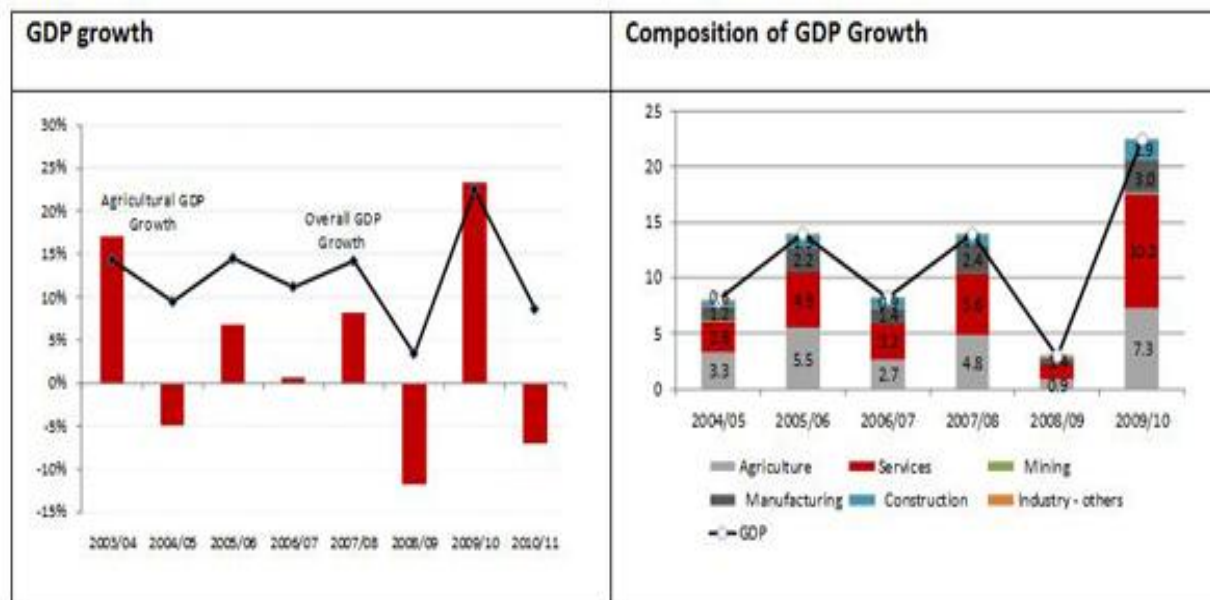


Figure 4: Afghanistan GDP and GDP composition, 2004-2009

While the growth in the Afghanistan economy has been impressive, it is important to note that a large percentage of this growth results from the significant amount of foreign aid coming into the country.⁵⁷ Despite the overall economic growth and macroeconomic stability post 9-11 in Afghanistan, poverty still remains one of the biggest problems. By any means, including average per capita income, life expectancy, or broader indexes like the U.N. Human Development Index (HDI), Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. In terms of the Human Development (HDI), Afghanistan ranked 169th out of 174 countries in 1996, 155 in 2010, and 172 in 2011.⁵⁸ In 2010, Afghanistan was ranked 155th and in 2011 it was ranked 172nd on HDI.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ "Afghanistan's Recent Economic Development (2011)", World Bank, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/EXTSARREGTOPMACECOGR/O/0,contentMDK:20592478~menuPK:579404~pagePK:34004173~piPK:34003707~theSitePK:579398,00.html> (accessed Feb. 11th, 2012)

⁵⁸ World Bank, 2005

⁵⁹ UNDP, "Human Development Index (2010-11), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/trends/> (accessed Feb. 11th, 2012)

Based on the National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/8, a nationally representative multi-purpose survey, the poverty rate in Afghanistan was 36% in 2007/08. Approximately 7-8 million out of roughly 30 million Afghans live in poverty.⁶⁰ The survey does not provide a definition of poverty in Afghanistan. However, the survey indicates that the average per-capita monthly consumption expenditure of poor Afghans is only 950 Afs, but the corresponding figure for non-poor is still less than 2,100 Afs. The survey produces the following figures:

Poverty measure:	Urban	Rural	Kuchi (nomads)	
National				
Poverty head count rate:	29.1	36.4	54.3	36.0
Poverty gap index:	6.2	7.9	14.0	7.9
Squared poverty gap index:	2.0	2.6	5.2	2.6

According to the survey, the richest quintile of the population has a share of 39 percent of total consumption; the poorest quintile has only 9 percent. Noticeably, the average consumption level of the second – non-poor – quintile is only a little above the poverty threshold of 1,255 Afs (50AFS=\$1), suggesting that a significant proportion of these are vulnerable to falling below the poverty line. Provincial-level poverty estimates show that more

⁶⁰ "National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment 2007/8"
http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/documents/afgh_brochure_summary_en.pdf (accessed Feb. 11th, 2012)

than half the population is poor in 8 out of the 34 provinces.⁶¹ Taking the level of poverty into consideration, it is not unexpected that people turned to poppy cultivation as a source of income. The UNODC annual survey states that the majority of the Afghan farmers, when asked their reasons for cultivating opium, mentioned poverty as the primary reason. It is important to note that the surveys further found that almost 90% of Afghan farmers responded that if alternative livelihoods existed that would let them out of poverty, they would not grow poppies.⁶²

3: Lack of Alternative Livelihoods and Climate Condition

"We know it's bad to grow poppy but we have to do it. There are no jobs and wheat is worthless. If the government gives us food and jobs then we will stop doing this," a farmer in the eastern part of Afghanistan told a news agency.⁶³ Rural areas lack most of the basic services; have no functioning infrastructure, and scarce income-generating activities.

There is a lack of reliable data about the employment ratio in Afghanistan and what does exist is often contradictory. For example, the CIA estimated that in 2005, 40% of the Afghan labor force (15 million) was unemployed, a figure that had decreased to 35% in 2008.⁶⁴ The productivity of the agriculture sector is hampered by water shortages, caused by rain

⁶¹ "Afghanistan Economic Update 2010", World Bank, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/AFGHANISTANEXTN/Resources/305984-1264608805475/Afghanistan_Spring_Brief_April.pdf (accessed Feb. 11th, 2012)

⁶² "Afghanistan- Survey of Opium (2008, 2007, 2005, 2004, 2003)", United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, <http://www.unodc.org/Afghanistan/en/publications-and-reports/surveys.html> (accessed Feb. 11th, 2012)

⁶³ "In-depth: Bitter-Sweet Harvest: Afghanistan's New War" IRIN (Humanitarian News and Analysis) News agency, <http://www.irinnews.org/InDepthMain.aspx?InDepthId=21&ReportId=63020> (accessed, Feb. 12th, 2012)

⁶⁴ Afghanistan: Country Profile, CIA The World Fact-Book, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html> (accessed Feb. 12th, 2012)

shortfalls and destroyed irrigation systems, lack of credit, little mechanization, insufficient outreach of agricultural and veterinary extension services, and poor accessibility of markets and communities.⁶⁵ Opium poppy on the other hand is a drought-resistant crop with shorter grow-cycles, labor intensive, multi-use, non-perishable, and easily handled and transported - a crop that fits well into the climatic conditions of rural Afghanistan.

According to the UNODC opium surveys of the country, lack of alternative livelihoods is amongst the important reasons farmer cited for planting opium poppy.⁶⁶ High prices of Opium and comparatively very low prices of other licit crops lead farmers to cultivate opium for generating income. The UNODC's "Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey (ORSA) in the country shows the following prices for opium and other licit crop in 2010 and 2011. The prices are measured in \$U.S. per KG.

Crop Name	ORSA 2010	ORSA 2011	% Differences
Dry Opium	69	281	306%
Fresh Opium	61	216	251%
Wheat	0.26	0.38	31%
Rice	0.89	0.88	-1%
Maize	0.24	0.34	2%

Table 1: Village level prices of dry opium and food grains in February 2010 and March 2011

Both surveys confirmed a strong link between agricultural assistance and poppy cultivation.⁶⁷

Villages, which had not received agricultural assistance, were more likely to grow poppy than the villages that had received agricultural subsidies. And as the UNODC reports indicated,

⁶⁵ NRVA, 2007/8

⁶⁶ UNODC, 2008

⁶⁷ ORAS, 2011

among those villages surveyed, only 36% had received agricultural assistances in terms of seeds, fertilizer, and irrigation facilities in 2010.

4: Corruption and Lack of Law enforcement

According to the Transparency International Organization (TIO), Afghanistan has one of the most highly corrupt governments in the world. Including Afghanistan in its study of corruption for the first time in 2007, TIO has subsequently ranked Afghanistan as: 172nd of 179 countries in 2007; 176th of 180 in 2008; 179th of 180 in 2009; 176th of 178 in 2010, and 180th of 182 in 2011.⁶⁸ Corruption and erosion of the rule of law are the two other consequences of opium money in Afghanistan. According to the 2010 UNODC study of corruption in Afghanistan, it is almost impossible to obtain a public service in Afghanistan without paying a bribe. In a 12-month period, according to the report, Afghans paid approximately \$2.5 billion in bribes – an amount equivalent to almost one quarter of Afghanistan' GDP. Not surprisingly, the study found that corruption is one of the main reasons that Afghans distrust their government.⁶⁹

Corruption is closely associated with the opium trade. High and low ranking government officials are involved in the opium trade.⁷⁰ Farmers bribe the police and counter-narcotics eradication forces not to eradicate their opium. Drug traffickers, on the other hand,

⁶⁸ Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index, http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi (accessed Feb. 12th, 2012)

⁶⁹ "Corruption in Afghanistan: Bribery as Reported by Victims (2010)" UNODC, http://www.unodc.org/documents/Afghanistan/Anti-Corruption/Corruption_in_Afghanistan_Bribery_Reported_by_Victims_2010-Eng.pdf (accessed Feb. 12th, 2012)

⁷⁰ Glaze, 2007

pay the law enforcement personnel to ignore or, in some cases, protect their movements. For many former warlords, now drug lords, the opium trade has brought huge financial benefits and power. In some provinces, drug lords promote opium cultivation by bribing or influencing local officials through money or political pressure from the center. “Encounters with corruption are so pervasive in the lives of Afghan people that corruption may literally determine whether parents can afford food and clothing, whether a child is admitted to school, and whether a family can enjoy the protection of law enforcement actors”⁷¹ Widespread corruption in Afghanistan facilitates the opium production. Warlordism seriously undermines the national government’s operations through exercise of informal power. The power of the warlords and the opium-related corruption weaken the national and local governments. Because of this weakness, the enforcement of law becomes difficult.⁷² The corruption is also what makes counter narcotics campaigns difficult to execute successfully.⁷³

To conclude, opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan are not the result of a single or a few factors, but result from a series of interrelated and interdependent factors that together create a vicious cycle. To break this cycle a highly coordinated, specific, and relevant set of efforts, policies, and programs is required. It is a struggle for the long-term and one that requires patience, honesty, and commitment.

⁷¹ UNODC, 2010

⁷² Byrd, William A., “Responding to Afghanistan’s Opium Economy Challenge: Lessons and Policy Implications from a Development Perspective”, The World Bank, [https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:d67uEerFLyWJ:dc170.4shared.com/download/3YeWDMQL/Byrd208.pdf+Byrd,+W.+\(2008\).+Responding+to+Afghanistan’s+Opium+Economy+Challenge:+Lessons+and+Policy+Implications+from+a+Development+Perspective,+The+World+Bank&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgSIwaEPxgg52FwcJsWInflv19HLwoPuCpsulqOCK-x0R6Q33IfdjdVtDCxQ2KEqX95kR4uqbLPGkzYTv5DYYd2_ZLH2CYXeWFrC3L4lYAzOq5V83nHtP88kGZyN21Jlq6OPKi&sig=AHIEtbTLI2Qd-tZucp-O3dvwpVbo4-J2Uw&pli=1](https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:d67uEerFLyWJ:dc170.4shared.com/download/3YeWDMQL/Byrd208.pdf+Byrd,+W.+(2008).+Responding+to+Afghanistan’s+Opium+Economy+Challenge:+Lessons+and+Policy+Implications+from+a+Development+Perspective,+The+World+Bank&hl=en&gl=us&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESgSIwaEPxgg52FwcJsWInflv19HLwoPuCpsulqOCK-x0R6Q33IfdjdVtDCxQ2KEqX95kR4uqbLPGkzYTv5DYYd2_ZLH2CYXeWFrC3L4lYAzOq5V83nHtP88kGZyN21Jlq6OPKi&sig=AHIEtbTLI2Qd-tZucp-O3dvwpVbo4-J2Uw&pli=1) (accessed Feb.12th, 2012)

⁷³ Glaze, 2007

Chapter Four

Current Policies

States affected by illicit drugs have invested in counter-narcotics initiatives for the last several decades. Afghanistan, being the largest producer of illicit drugs, has been among those states. Since the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001, the Afghan government and its international allies have implemented a number of policies to fight the growing problem of illicit drugs. To date, none of the strategies tried have proven successful. This chapter analyzes Afghanistan's existing counter-narcotics strategies and the reasons for their failures.

1: Afghanistan's National Drug Control Strategy:

In 2003, the Afghan government formulated the nation's first National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS).⁷⁴ The strategy's stated overall goal is to "Secure a sustainable decrease in cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs with a view to complete and sustainable elimination." As explained in the government's 2006 report *National Drug Control Strategy*, this goal reflects the Afghan constitution and Law on Narcotics which states that the cultivation, production, trafficking, and consumption of illicit drugs, including opium are illegal activities. Pursuant to the stated goal, the government intends to eliminate all aspects of the opium economy, including cultivation, production, and trafficking through the eradication of illicit crops and the prosecution of all those involved in the drug chain.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Afghanistan's Ministry of Counter Narcotic (MCN), the body charged with coordinating, monitoring, and evaluating "law enforcement efforts against illegal drugs use and trafficking, including collecting and publishing all written procedures and regulations required under this law." Besides MCN, other Afghan institution involved in counter-narcotics efforts includes but not limited to Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI), Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Defense (MoD), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), Ministry of Haj and Awqaf (MHA), and National Directorate of Security (NDS).

⁷⁵ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, *National Drug Control Strategy: An Update Five- Year Strategy for Tackling the Illicit Drug Problem, 2006*, (Kabul, Afghanistan, 2006)

To accomplish this, the government's National Drug Control Strategy lists four priorities:

1. Disruption of the drugs trade by targeting the traffickers and their backers, and the elimination of the drugs trade bases
2. Diversification and strengthening rural legal livelihood
3. Reduction of the illicit drugs demand and treatment of problem drugs users
4. Strengthening state institution in the center and in provincial level vital to the counternarcotic strategy.

The NDCS has further articulated eight “pillars”, or areas of additional governmental efforts necessary for successfully attaining these priorities:

1- Public Awareness, 2- International and Regional Cooperation, 3-Alternative Livelihoods, 4- Demand Reduction, 5- Law Enforcement, 6- Criminal Justice, 7- Eradication, and 8- Institution Building⁷⁶

These goals, as stated on paper, appear well-considered. But as the last several years have demonstrated and as stated at the beginning of the thesis, the primary failure of Afghanistan's counter narcotic policy can be summarized as one of over-centralization. As the following sections explain, the central government's failure to consult with sub-national authorities and to integrate an understanding of the reasons for opium cultivation and production within each local area, has led to “a one size fits all” set of strategies. The central government's decision not to include the local authorities in designing and implementing programs and sanctions has further compounded this problem. A lack of local involvement and coordination has seriously undermined any hope of effectively combatting Afghanistan's drug

⁷⁶ Ibid.

problem. Overshadowing these difficulties is a lack of agreement between the Afghan government and the international community regarding how to approach Afghan counter narcotic policy. As discussed below, some of the major policies applied in line with the NDCS are as follow.

1: Eradication

Eradication, or crop destruction by force, is a strategy or tool used in a number of countries, such as Colombia, Pakistan, Thailand, Burma, and others, to fight illicit drugs. While eradication has had positive effects in some places, in others, the effects have proven to be short-lived positive outcomes or simply to cause a shift of production to neighboring districts, provinces, and countries. In Afghanistan, eradication as a strategy has been counterproductive.⁷⁷ “Eradication will not work in Afghanistan; it will only create social conflicts. It will be another war against drugs. And who in this country (referring to Afghanistan) needs another war?” this has been the assessment of Leo Brandenburg, Project for alternative livelihood team leader in Jalalabad city, Afghanistan.

The eradication efforts are part of the Afghan NDCS which is supported by the international community. The Central Eradication Poppy Monitoring (CEPM) cell in Ministry of Counter Narcotic is the institution which provides information on eradication targets. This cell is co-funded by the British government. According to Peter Holland, head of the UK Government’s Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit (ADIDU): “The area that we are particularly focusing on is providing targeted information to make sure that any eradication is carried out in areas where

⁷⁷ Muhammad Ali, “Afghanistan’s Opium Production: Counting Things and Things that count”, (MA Researched Paper, Institute of Social Studies 2008), <http://oaithesis.eur.nl/ir/repub/asset/7188/Muhammad%20Ali%20IPED.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2012)

alternative livelihoods already exist, so it is targeting those we describe as the greedy, not the needy. We also support UNODC and the government of Afghanistan to verify that eradication has taken place.” The Eradication efforts which are carried by the Afghan government are in collaboration with the US- Controlled Central Poppy Eradication force (CCPEF), US’s Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA), and Afghan National Police (ANP). Local governor-led forces and other institutions are involved too.

The US and NATO counter narcotics strategies in the Post-Taliban era have evolved from ignoring the drug issue to an all-out emphasis on eradication. In 2002, the US decided that engaging in counter-narcotics efforts would divert it from its main mission, chasing Al-Qaeda and Taliban. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, initially the anti-drugs efforts were assigned to Britain, police and judicial reforms were assigned to Germany and Italy respectively. The British efforts to curb drugs from Afghanistan had no significant results.⁷⁸ Eradication efforts of opium fields in Afghanistan have included both ground eradication and aerial spraying. Neither has proven effective. In the initial phase of eradication in 2002, local power holders destroyed the crop of their local rivals while leaving the lands of those who were loyal to them. This display of double-standard and failure to deliver alternative livelihood to the farmers whose crops were eradicated, challenged the credibility of the strategy and sparked the anger of local farmers. Successive eradication efforts continued to be ineffective due to the government’s persistent inability to fulfill promises to the farmers to provide realistic alternative livelihoods. Rather than achieving progress, the government strategy created disappointment, distrust, and

⁷⁸ Jelsma, Martin et al, “ Losing Ground: Drug Control and War in Afghanistan-2006”, <http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/files/download/200702281633543041.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2012)

resentment.⁷⁹ The policies in regard to counter-narcotics are formulated in the center. Areas are targeted by the central government. Thus, the results are always undesirable because of the lack of understanding of the central authorities of the complex nature of opium cultivation and production in rural Afghanistan. According to Gulab Mangal, the governor of Helmand province, the selection of areas for targeted eradication by the center is one of the major failures of eradication policy. He believes local authorities have a better understanding of the opium production and cultivation in the region and they should be the leading forces behind selecting areas for targeted eradication, not the center.⁸⁰

According to the UNODC, another obstacle to the eradication strategy is the presence of insecurity and insurgents in many parts of the country. “ in 2008, security incidents associated with eradication activities in Hilmand, Kandahar, Hirat, Nimroz, Kapisa, Kabul and Nangarhar provinces included shooting and mine explosions resulting in the death of at least 78 people, most of whom were policemen. This is an increase of about 75% compared to the 19 deaths in 2007. The major incidents were in Nangarhar and Nimroz provinces”.⁸¹ The UNODC records that in 2011, 20 persons (13 police and 7 farmers) were killed and 45 persons (40 police and 5 farmers/tractor driver) were injured during the eradication operations.⁸²

With the decentralization of power to sub-national level, the security incidents would decrease. Local authorities possess a far better understanding of the specific actors and areas involved in insecure areas. The ability to obtain information from local people on the movements of the Taliban and drug smugglers, or anti-government groups would provide

⁷⁹ Jelsma et al, 2006

⁸⁰ Mangal, Gulab, Governor of Helmand Province,-Afghanistan, in discussion with the author, March 14th, 2012

⁸¹ UNODC, 2008

⁸² UNODC, 2011

knowledge of when and where to promote eradication efforts, thereby reducing casualties. Most importantly, the sub-national level governments, unlike the central, can better coordinate the eradication campaigns with district shura of elders to gain their support.

With the current over-centralized approach of the central government, the eradication campaign is unsuccessful. The comparison between poppy cultivation and eradication from 2002 to 2011 is well illustrated in the following chart.

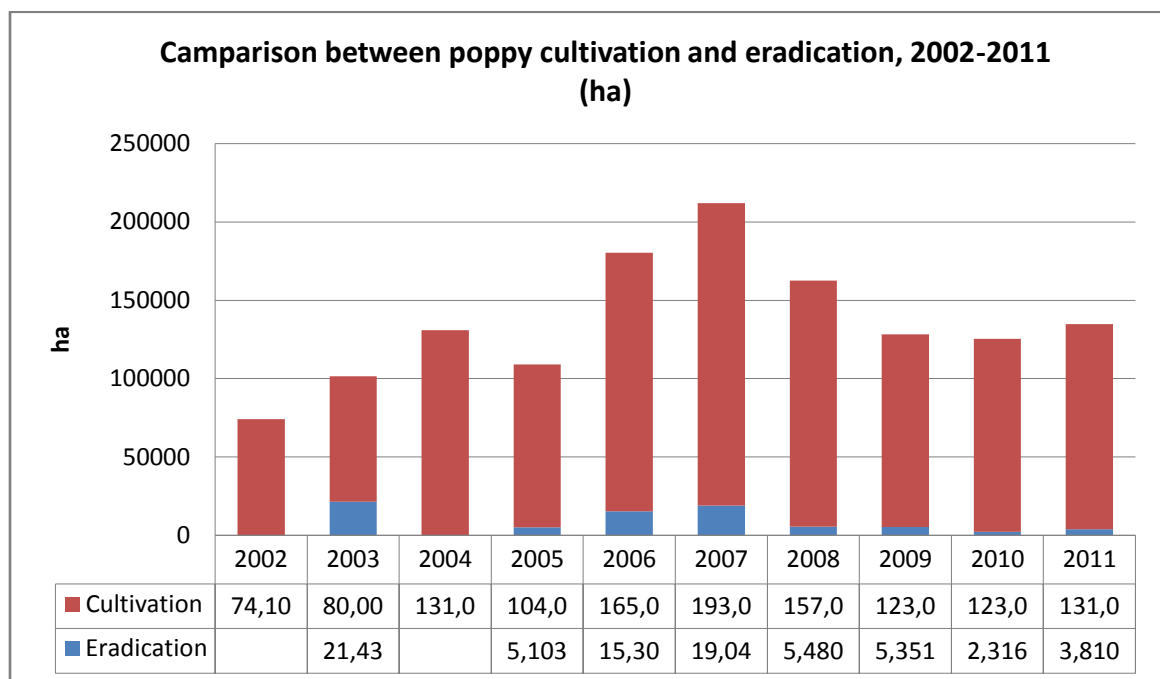


Figure 5: Comparison between opium poppy cultivation and eradication, 2002-2011

As the chart demonstrates despite the prioritization of eradication as a counter-narcotics strategy, the policy had little effect. (According to the UNODC surveys, no figures were collect in 2002 and 2004.).⁸³In fact, opium production increased in regions where eradication efforts were implemented. The eradication had best results in places where the

⁸³ UNODC, Annual Surveys of Opium in Afghanistan, 2002-2011

farmers had the chance of alternative livelihoods. Eradication can be successful only if accompanied by supplementary policies such as provision of alternative livelihoods and agricultural subsidies. The prioritization of areas for eradication should be decided by the sub-national institutions for better results.

2: Alternative Livelihoods

Alternative livelihood is another critical counter-narcotics approach in Afghanistan. In the words of Afghan counter narcotics minister, Zarar Ahmad Moqbil, the alternative livelihood program “ aims of providing alternative livelihood programs against poppy cultivation, improving agriculture economy and preventing farmers from resurgence.”⁸⁴ This approach has been an important part of the overall counter-narcotics strategy of the Afghanistan government and its international allies since the very first efforts against illicit drugs production in Afghanistan. Although it has been considered the most useful tool to prevent farmers from cultivating opium, the experts question it. According to Mansfield and Pain, “there are unrealistic expectations of how and when alternative livelihoods can be developed, and the concept remains a virtual one as the results of this approach are yet to be seen. The push by authorities for a sharp decline in opium-cultivated area is in danger of establishing a *quid pro quo*, with an expectation of funding for alternative livelihoods on the basis of achievements in decreasing opium poppy area. This puts the cart before the horse”.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “ Message from his Excellency the Minister of Counter Narcotics”, <http://mcn.gov.af/en/page/1847> (accessed, March 3, 2012)

⁸⁵ Mansfield, David, Pain, Adam, “Alternative Livelihoods: Substance or Slogan?-2005”, <http://dspace.cigilibrary.org/jspui/bitstream/123456789/9806/1/Alternative%20Livelihoods%20Substance%20or%20Slogan%202005.pdf?1> (accessed March 3, 2012)

The duo believes that there is confusion in understanding whether “Alternative livelihoods” is a means or the goal. So far, it has been considered as means for achieving national drug control strategy. It is assumed that by enhancing licit livelihood opportunities, cultivation of opium poppy will automatically contract. Theoretically it should be so, but practice and evidence from the field contradict it. The alternative livelihoods projects don’t provide enough income for the farmers to stop cultivating opium.⁸⁶ Ali Ahmad Jalali, the former Interior Minister of Afghanistan, argues that from a purely economic perspective, there is no true alternative crop for Afghan farmers. On the other hand, wheat, the favorite substitute of foreign aid agencies to Afghan farmers, is not a viable source of income for farmers. The income from one hector cultivated opium is around \$4,500 US dollars while the income from wheat cultivated in the same amount of land is only \$500 US dollars. Farmers argue that wheat cannot provide sufficient income for them to lift their families out of poverty. Besides, the wheat imported from Pakistan is cheaper than produced domestically.⁸⁷

Another problem lies in confusion over the timing of providing, alternative livelihoods, i.e., whether alternative livelihoods should be provided before or after the eradication of opium crops. Since the reasons for cultivating opium differ in different regions of the country, alternative livelihood might work as agricultural subsidies in some regions, but not in others. It is therefore crucial to match the policies with the needs of the cultivators. This can only occur if local institutions and authorities have the authority to act accordingly – a power that they do not presently possess. As Mansfield has noted, too often the resource rich people of the

⁸⁶ Mansfield and Pain, 2005

⁸⁷ Jalali, Ali Ahmad et al, “ Combating Opium in Afghanistan, 2006”, http://scholar.googleusercontent.com/scholar?q=cache:GITI9ALL2QwJ:scholar.google.com/+Jalali+Opium+i n+Afghanistan&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5 (accessed, 3rd March, 2012)

community who are less dependable on opium as a source of income received assistance while the poorest community members who are entirely dependent on opium benefited little from the alternative livelihoods projects.⁸⁸ Without an understanding of the cultivators motives, and the authority on the local level to implement the alternative livelihoods activities as needed, this policy as now administered by the central government, will continue to fail.

3: Interdiction and Law Enforcement

Interdiction of the opiates trade is also a top priority of the Afghan NDCS. The Afghan government argues that since traffickers are the backbones of the Afghan opium trade, it is more prudent to focus on them than the poor farmers who have little choice but to cultivate opium to feed their families. The US government supports the interdiction policy in Afghanistan financially and technically. The National Interdiction Unit (NIU) was established as an elite element of the CNPA. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) of the US government supports the unit with provision of adviser and technical expertise. According to the State Department, the NIU, in 2008, was capable of conducting its own operations.⁸⁹ The US government directly targeted those traffickers and opium traders who contribute to the insurgency in Afghanistan. The U.S. Department of Justice has indicted four high-value Afghan narco-traffickers with ties to the Taliban-led insurgency: Khan Mohammad, Haji Bashir Noorzai, Mohammad Essa, and Haji Baz Mohammad.

⁸⁸ Mansfield and Pain, 2005

⁸⁹ Blanchard, Christopher M., *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, (US, Diane Publishing Co., 2009)

According to the NDCS, “Over the past year or so Afghan Special Narcotics Force (ASNF) and CN Police of Afghanistan’s (CNPA) operations have led to an increase in seizures and the CN Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) has, since May 2005, convicted over 150 traffickers”.⁹⁰ However, interdiction in today’s Afghanistan is very difficult for a variety of reasons. One of the main reasons that interdiction fails in countries producing illicit drugs is the involvement of government officials. This too, is the most important reason that interdiction fails in Afghanistan and why the amount seized within and at the borders is insignificant.⁹¹

In regard to law enforcement, the prosecution of drug traders is beyond the capacity of Afghanistan’s current judicial system. The judicial system is weak, corrupt, ill equipped and trained, and unable to prosecute the drugs traders. Beside the above policies, some experts proposed alternative strategy of “Legalization of Afghan Opium” which has not been applied yet due to the rejection of the Afghan government and its international allies.

4: Legalization of Afghan Illicit Drugs

Some experts, most notably the Sensil Council, an international policy think-tank, headquartered in London, have suggested that legalization of narcotics production in Afghanistan is the solution to the current illicit drug industry of this country. The proponents of this theory propose a variety of options, from providing cheap narcotics to Third World countries to buying the opium poppy crops and then destroying them.⁹² On the other hand, the majority of the analysts reject the legalization of Afghan illicit drugs production for various reasons. According to Fredrec Grare, scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International

⁹⁰ NDCS, 2006

⁹¹ Muhammad Ali, 2008

⁹² Jalali et al, 2006

Peace, the Senlis proposals would, on the contrary, speed up the transformation of Afghanistan into a narco-economy, by legitimizing the position of drug lords who holds power in Afghanistan. The Sensil proposals also fail to address the basic concern of the Afghan government and its international allies, the trafficking problem.⁹³

More importantly, Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy argues that the licensing of the illicit opium supply will not bring economic development to Afghanistan and its opium farmers for the simple fact that there is no demand for legal narcotics. Four countries, China, India, Japan, and South Korea, currently meet the world's need for opium poppies used in legal medications.⁹⁴ Countries currently involved in legal production of opium for pharmaceutical use are Australia, Austria, China, the Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Japan, India, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, Macedonia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom. On a practical level, no viable market exists for the tremendous amount of illicit drugs produced in Afghanistan.

Perhaps most importantly, and as Ali Ahmad Jalali argues, such a proposal demonstrates a lack of understanding of the Afghan opium industry and political situation. The Afghan government is incapable of controlling production. It is beyond the capacity of the current Afghan government to control a dual system of opium production, featuring both licit and illicit production. Existing corruption would further undermine the proposal as bribed officials would determine who could and could not grow the product legally.

⁹³ Grare, Frederic, "Anatomy or Fallacy: The Sensil Council and Narcotics in Afghanistan, 2008", http://scholar.googleusercontent.com/scholar?q=cache:x9RjJVuLglMJ:scholar.google.com/+Senlis+Council+Feasibility+of+Opium+Licensing+in+Afghanistan&hl=en&as_sdt=0.5 (accessed March 4, 2012)

⁹⁴ Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, "Licensing Afghanistan's Opium: Solution or Fallacy?" *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, vol. 2 (2), 2008, http://cria-online.org/3_6.html (accessed on March 4, 2012)

Who do counter-narcotics policies fail?

In general, drug control policies fail for two reasons. First, they fail because of the profit paradox. The drugs industry is a huge profit generating industry. Drug mafias, traffickers, cultivators and producers earn billions of dollars annually. When a government intercepts illicit drugs, prices of drugs increase. Governments assume that by increasing the cost of drugs through interdiction, fewer people will use drugs- a sort of demand reduction strategy. The flaw of this assumption is that with an increase in prices, more people are drawn into the drug business due to high profits.⁹⁵

The second reason behind the failure of drug control policies is the hydra effect factor. Hydra effect implies that the drug industry has the ability of self-reproduction. Every time a government eliminates one source of drug production, processing, and smuggling, the traders will find an alternative supply. The removal of one drug cartel or syndicate creates a vacuum soon filled by a new group, eager to claim a share of the lucrative market.⁹⁶ However, admittedly, if production moves outside Afghanistan that still would be good for Afghanistan.

It is also important to understand the role that drugs play within a country's economy and political system. Some governments rely on the drug trade to indirectly increase their revenues, causing government officials to disregard pressure to prosecute drug traffickers. For example, 20 percent of the working force in Bolivia is illegally involved in drug production and trafficking, resulting in 70% of the gross national product (GDP) of the country. If this market is eliminated, widespread unemployment and violence will ensue. It is not surprising then, that the Bolivian government will not assist the US efforts to completely eliminate the drug

⁹⁵Bertram, Eva et al, *Drug War Politics: The Price of Denial*. (London: University of California Press, 1995)

⁹⁶ Bertram et al, 1995

industry.⁹⁷ In Afghanistan, UNODC estimated that 2.3 billion Afghans or 14% of the population are involved in opium cultivation and production. In 2004, the opium economy was worth \$2.8 billion US dollars, or 60% of the \$4.5 billion legal economy.⁹⁸

The failure of counter-narcotics strategies in Afghanistan can be attributed to various reasons. The nature of opium industry in Afghanistan is very complex. Each policy's failure, as discussed above, is caused by various factors. The most important of these, as this thesis argues, is the Afghan government's over-centralized approach to counter narcotics. Additional failures include a lack of coordination among the Afghan institutions responsible for drug control, a lack of agreement and coordination between the Afghan government and its international allies regarding drug policies, insufficient resources for Afghan counter-narcotics forces, widespread drugs related corruption, and the corrupt judicial system. Some of the important flaws listed above can be fixed by changing to a decentralized approach in the war against narcotics in Afghanistan. There are no silver-bullets, however, to tackle the Afghan opium problem. It is a long term process that needs a stronger commitment.

⁹⁷ Bertram et al, 1995

⁹⁸ UNODC, 2004

Chapter Five

Way forward

The complex nature of the Afghan illicit drug industry makes it unrealistic to claim there can be a silver bullet or a few changes to obtain short-term sustainable reduction. It will be, as stated earlier, a long-term, complex, and difficult struggle. The policies employed to curb illicit opium and other illicit drugs in Afghanistan are the policies mostly used as counter-narcotics strategies in different parts of the world. The effectiveness of these policies depends on the approach and structure of implementation. Neither eradication and alternative livelihoods, nor interdiction and law enforcement policies can achieve desirable results alone but, must be implemented simultaneously. The most important key to a successful implementation of these policies is to decentralize the approach by transferring the decision-making power over counter-narcotics efforts to the sub-national level where local authorities with their understanding of the complex nature of factors on the ground can best target and implement various measures more effectively.

Given the Afghan government's centralized approach, the central agencies, such as the MCN, Mol, CNPA, NIU, Counter Narcotics Special Force (CNSF) and other institutions responsible for formulating, coordinating, supervising, and implementing policies have sought little input or advice from sub-national governments. The result has been a failure of success in controlling the Afghan drug problem. Subsequently, this thesis argues that decentralizing the authority over drug policies is necessary to achieve a reduction in the cultivation and production of illicit drugs. Local governing bodies must be given more power in counter-narcotics efforts with governors at the provincial level taking the lead.

To support this argument, this chapter addresses three main questions. First, what is meant by “decentralization of power”? Second, how should decentralization of power be defined in the Afghan context? Finally, why will the change to a decentralization of power over counter narcotic policies achieve more positive results in Afghanistan’s war against illicit drugs?

1: Decentralization of power

There are many definitions for “decentralization of power”. Two common definitions that capture the meaning as used in this thesis are as follows. The decentralization of power is the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and resource utilization and allocation from central government to (a) field units of central government ministries or agencies; (b) subordinate units or level of central governments; (c) semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations; (d) area-wide regional or functional authorities.⁹⁹ Another useful definition is; any act by which a central government formally cedes power to actors and institutions at lower levels in political and administrative territorial hierarchy.¹⁰⁰ The common theme in both definitions is a decentralization of power includes the transfer of power and resources away from the central government.¹⁰¹

The use of decentralizing power as a tool or strategy of more effective governing appeared in the 1980s. Dull economies and inefficient central bureaucracies led researchers to search for alternatives, especially as governing solutions for problems in developing countries. There were domestic pressures for decentralization too. Local politician and civil society actors

⁹⁹ Ahmed, A. Elsaeger, and Mbwapbo, Jonathan Stephen, “ Does decentralization have a positive impact on the use of natural resources?, 2004”, http://www.zef.de/fileadmin/downloads/forum/docprog/Termpapers/2004_3c_Mbwambo_Ahmed.pdf (accessed March 12, 2012)

¹⁰⁰ Ahmed and Mbwapbo, 2004

¹⁰¹ Schneider, Aaron, “ Decentralization: Conceptualization and Measurement, 2003”, <http://www.springerlink.com/index/3LY77R6XCA0G9AK4.pdf> (accessed, March 12, 2012)

sought to gain power and resources as a means of obtaining support from local allies or meeting demands for democratization.¹⁰²

The movement in recent decades towards decentralizing governmental authority is grounded in the belief that doing so will increase government responsiveness and accountability to citizens in general, and will improve government flexibility to address the diverse needs of specific groups. This thesis argues that as the reasons for opium production and cultivation in Afghanistan are highly diverse, with farmers in different provinces cultivating opium for different reasons, only a decentralized approach will work. Approaches to combatting opium production must have the flexibility to address the various reasons and causes. In addition, decentralization can reduce corruption through enhanced oversight and provide a greater checks and balances in government institutions. This in turn makes governments more accountable, providing greater legitimacy. Governments that are viewed as more responsible and accountable imbue their citizens with a greater sense of citizen ownership of their government.¹⁰³

Opponents, on the other hand, argue that decentralization of power increases the risks of ethnic and civil strife. They believe loosening the authority of the central government will trigger demands for greater autonomy rather than building stronger senses of ownership. Critics believe that decentralized authority accentuate differences between regions and fosters demand for particularized services by minority groups. Decentralization of power, according to

¹⁰² Schneider, 2003

¹⁰³ Ahmed and Mbwambo, 2004

critics, encourages local politicians to take hardline position in defense of regional priorities over national interests.¹⁰⁴

The decentralization literature has identified three major types of power sharing arrangements between center and sub-national governments – devolution, de-concentration, and delegation.

1. **Devolution:** is the creation of increased reliance upon sub-national tiers of elected government, with some degree of political autonomy, which is substantially outside the direct control of the central government, yet subject to general policies and laws such as those regarding to civil rights and rule of law. This is considered the most expansive form of decentralization of power.
2. **De-concentration:** is the transfer of power to an administrative unit of the central government at the field or regional office level. Local official are typically not elected, but appointed by the central government. This is considered a limited type of decentralization as the central government still retains control of resources and priorities. This type of decentralization exists in a very weak form in Afghanistan
3. **Delegation:** is the transfer of managerial responsibility for a specifically defined function outside the usual central government structure. Depending on how implemented, delegation could represent widely different aims. It could be the aim to build the capacity of local government officials in preparation for a move toward devolution. In this sense, it would be a starting point for decentralization. However, it could also be

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed and Mbwambo, 2004

that the central government would maintain the status quo, while claiming to be sharing governance with sub-national governance.

Decentralization of power typically proceeds along three dimension of central-local power sharing- Political, Fiscal, and Administrative.

1. **Political:** political decentralization is the transfer of political authority to the local level through the establishment of elected local government, electoral reform, political party reform, authorization of participatory processes, and other reforms. There is no political decentralization of power in Afghanistan. Almost all sub-national governments are appointed by the center.
2. **Fiscal:** fiscal decentralization is the transfer of financial authority to the sub-national tiers of the government. It includes reducing conditions of the inter-governmental transfer of resources and giving local jurisdictions greater authority to generate their own revenues. Sub-national levels of institutions in Afghanistan have no fiscal autonomy. Their budget is determined by the center through line ministries.
3. **Administrative:** administrative decentralization is the full or partial transfer of functional responsibilities to the local tiers of government.¹⁰⁵ This is the form of decentralization in Afghanistan, with the powers of the local administrations determined by the center. The bureaucrats are appointed by the center. Local institutions are not accountable to the provincial governor but to the line ministries in Kabul. The result of this structure is weak coordination, ineffective delivery of services by the local authorities, and a long and corrupt bureaucracy.

¹⁰⁵ Ahmed and Mbwambo, 2004, and Schneider, 2003

Countries around the globe, depending upon their needs and policies, have adopted differing decentralization arrangements. The effectiveness of decentralization of power depends of the pre-existing conditions of the state. Societies respond to decentralization of power differently. No type of decentralization of power can generate the same results in all societies.

2: Decentralization of power in Afghanistan

For the purpose of this thesis, decentralization of power in Afghanistan is defined as: *the transfer of decision-making power from the center in regard to counter-narcotics planning, implementing, and management to sub-national level- governors.* As discussed, Afghanistan possesses one of the most highly centralized governmental structures in existence. This view is supported by Manning et al in *A Guide to Government in Afghanistan*, who write that although the current decentralization of power in Afghanistan comes closest to the de-concentration arrangement of administrative dimension,¹⁰⁶ even on this scale, the formal control of Kabul over day-to-day administrative decisions appears highly centralized.

Manning et al, do suggest that once provincial and district councils elections are held as provided for in the 2004 constitution, Afghanistan may become closer to a “delegation” model over the time¹⁰⁷. This argument is not persuasive for two important reasons. Even once elected, neither the provincial and district level councils will possess executive powers, nor does the central power have plans to transfer such authority to the councils. According to the Afghan constitution, those councils are *advisory*, possessing only the authority to advise the provincial administrations on certain issues. They are to remain advisory boards without

¹⁰⁶ Nick Manning et al, *A Guide to Government in Afghanistan*, (World Bank Publications, April 2004)

¹⁰⁷ Manning et al, 2004

executive powers.¹⁰⁸The following table explains the center-local formal relationship in Afghanistan.

Formal Local-Central relationship in Afghanistan				
	Administrative Arrangements		Fiscal Arrangements'	
	Structure	Personnel	Structure	Personnel
Province	The departmental structure mirrors the ministry structure in Kabul-although not all ministries have corresponding departments.	The governors approves junior staff appointments and transfers (staff of grade 6 and below and agir staff at grade 3 and below), the relevant ministries approve the staff of from grade 3-5, and senior staff (grade 2 and above) are appointed by the president.	All tax and customs level are set by central government statute. All revenues are collected on behalf of Kabul. Subsequent fiscal transfers to the province are made as per line department budget allocations. Actual cash transfers reflect the difference.	The "ordinary" and development budget allocations for the provinces are the sum total of the administrative decisions made by the various Kabul ministries concerning the allocations to their provincial departments
District	The structure mirrors the departmental structure in the province- although not all departments have corresponding units in districts.	The governors approves junior staff appointments and transfers (staff of grade 6 and all agir staff), the relevant ministries approves staff from grade 3-6) and the senior staff such as Woleswal and judges are appointed by the president.	Districts collect minor business taxes; rates are reviewed by a review committee of district and provincial representatives every three year. Revenues are remitted to the province.	The "ordinary" and development budget allocations for the districts are the sum total of the administrative decisions made by the various provincial departments concerning the allocations to their districts sub-departments.
Provincial municipality	The municipality structure (departments and number of staff) is set by the Ministry of Interior, with agreement of governor.	The governors approves junior staff appointments and transfers (staff of grade 6 and below and agir staff at grade 3 and below), the relevant ministries approve the staff of from grade 3-5, and senior staff (grade 2 and above) are appointed by the president.	All taxes and fee rates are set in Kabul. Revenues remain in the municipality and fund all municipality expenditure.	The "ordinary" and development budget allocations for the provincial municipality are processed by the municipality and approved by the Ministry of Interior (Municipalities General Presidency) with the agreement of governor.

¹⁰⁸ The Constitution of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Chapter 8, article 131, <http://www.Afghanembassy.com.pl/cms/uploads/images/Constitution/The%20Constitution.pdf>

Rural Municipality	The structure is set by the Ministry of Interior with the agreement of Provincial municipality and governor.	These are district staff, there the governor approves junior staff appointments and transfers (staff from grade 6 and below and all agir staff), the relevant ministries approve the staff of from grade 3-5, and senior staff (grade 2 and above) are appointed by the president.	All taxes and fee rates are set in Kabul. Revenues remain in the municipality and fund all municipality expenditure	No formal budgetary allocations are made apart from salary payments. Development budget expenditures are agreed ad hoc and administered by the municipality.
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Table 2: Central-Local Administrations Relationships in Afghanistan¹⁰⁹

As the chart above clearly illustrates, the central government is in absolute control of day-to-day decision making for all tiers of government in Afghanistan. The central government appoints all officials from governor to the mid-level authorities. More importantly, each provincial ministerial department answers not to the local governor, but to the central ministry. To improve counter narcotic effectiveness, each governor, the highest level of sub-national authority, should wield direct authority over the war against drugs. Similarly, local institutions should be answerable to their respective governors, and be given responsibility for coordinating, planning and implementing local drug policies.

The Afghan Constitution grants the President the authority to appoint all governors, considered presidential representative at the provincial level. Although given the authority to coordinate all provincial institutions, governors in fact may not appoint or dismiss staff without approval of the central government. This arrangement frustrates the efficient implementation of drug policies and must be changed to provide governors with concrete authority in this area.

¹⁰⁹ Manning et al, 2004

3: Why decentralization of power?

As discussed in Chapter three and four, the Afghan opium industry is highly decentralized and diverse, with 90 to 98% of cultivation and production of opium taking place in rural areas and more than 90 percent occurring at the district and village levels. The argument that an effective and sustainable reduction of cultivation and production of opium in Afghanistan requires a decentralize approach, is supported by the following sub-arguments.

1: Successful Cases

As the following discussion shows, the only effective reductions of opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan has occurred in the two provinces of Nangarhar and Balkh, located in eastern and northern Afghanistan respectively. What sets these two provinces apart is that strategies were both formulated and implemented at the provincial or governor's level. Even more useful to the analysis is the fact that Nangarhar is located in an insecure part of the country, while Balkh is located in a comparatively stable part.

(A)-Nangarhar: In 2003 and 2004, according to the UNODC surveys, Nangarhar province was the largest producer of opium in Afghanistan, contributing 23% and 24% of the total production in 2003 and 2004 respectively. Almost every district in the province cultivated opium poppy. In 2005, the UNODC declared Nangarhar province an almost "poppy free" province, a term used for provinces cultivating less than 100 hectors of opium poppy. In 2005, Nangarhar cultivated only 1,093 hector of land compared to 28,213 hector in 2004 – a 96% decrease. The credit for this drastic decrease in poppy production, according to UNODC, goes to the governor of the province. With a weak central government in power, the governor initiated his own efforts to curb poppy production in his province. When asked why they did not grow poppies, the

majority of farmers responded: the governor's promise to eradicate our fields, threats of law enforcement and imprisonment, and the governor's promise to provide alternative legal livelihoods and agricultural subsidies. As a part of his policy, the governor, before the 2004-5 growing season, informed the district authorities that they would be held responsible for the level of opium poppy cultivation in their areas. The district level authorities, on their part, called the tribal elders and the shura (elders' council) from each village to the district center and informed them that they should not cultivate poppy in their areas. A complete decentralized approach was initiated. Hence, because of the governor's open hands in initiating his own policy, the province experienced this dramatic decrease. Until today, Nangarhar because of this one solid action remains amongst the lowest cultivating provinces.¹¹⁰

(B)- Balkh: Another successful case is the Balkh province in northern Afghanistan. Balkh from 2004 until 2006 was amongst the top 5 opium poppy cultivating provinces. In 2005 Balkh cultivated 8,342 hectares of opium and in 2006 7,100 hectares of land. In 2007, the UNODC recorded zero hectares of cultivation, a 100 percent decrease compared to 2007. The reports attributed the success to the effective leadership and incentives of provincial authorities, especially the governor that led farmers to turn their back on opium. The report ended with the recommendation that other provinces adopt policies similar to those of Balkh province. The Balkh provincial governor, another *de facto*¹¹¹ powerful governor and former Mujahideen commander, policies were based on successful pre-cultivating campaign, eradication,

¹¹⁰ UNODC

¹¹¹I used the term *de facto* powerful governor in the sense that some governors because of their past strong political and military status have more powers, of course illegal, than their other counterparts in the country.

interdiction, law enforcement, and alternative livelihood provision.¹¹² Because of this effective decentralized approach, this province remains poppy free today. The success achieved in these two provinces supports the argument that transferring authority to the governors in the war against drugs in Afghanistan increases the chances for sustainable reduction of illicit drugs.

2: The decentralized and diverse nature of Afghan opium Industry

Given the diverse nature of the Afghan opium industry, a successful opium reduction program must incorporate differentiated approaches that are designed to accommodate a variety of factors including population needs, climatic conditions, level of agricultural infrastructure, and political realities. While programs initiated at the governors' level achieved drastic reductions in Nangarhar and Balkh provinces, the 96% reduction between 2006 and 2008 in the Badakhshan province resulted from a severe two-year drought. In areas where farmers had no access to irrigation and were dependent on rain, poppies were the only possible crop and the only way that people had to feed their families. But, in villages where irrigation was available, the UNODC reported, no opium cultivation was observed. The fact that villages which had irrigation facility did not grow opium poppy demonstrates that when provided with agricultural assistance such as irrigation, fertilized seeds, and other help, , people will turn their back on opium.

Kunduz, as the map above indicates, is a northern province and a major contributor of opium in 2004-2006, was declared poppy free in 2007. The achievement of this status was not due to eradication, interdiction, or drought, but to the provision of alternative agricultural subsidies. Kunduz is the leading example of a province where farmers willingly changed from

¹¹² UNODC

poppy production to the cultivation of vegetables, fruit, and cotton. For such a diverse and decentralized face of the Afghan opium industry, the current highly centralized approach can never be effective.

Given the ability of provincial governors to understand the problems of their regions more accurately, the authority to craft appropriate and effective policies and implementation programs must be transferred to the provincial levels. As Governor Gulab Mangal of Helmand province, the largest opium producing province, has stressed, the center should not tie our hands. We must be free to formulate policies in accordance with the realities that we have. Applying blanket eradication and alternative livelihoods situations programs that do not take into account the various needs of villages and families is not only a waste of effort, but also a waste of scarce resources. He further argues that while eradication in one village may be appropriate, another village may benefit more from an alternative livelihood program.¹¹³

On the other hand, an Afghan expert in a personal discussion with the author, argues that the problem lies not in the approach but in the willingness, honesty, and transparency of the authorities in the war against drugs. Highly critical of the government, he believes that current institutions involved in counter-narcotics efforts, including MCN, MIA, Provincial governors, security commanders, and many other high and low level personnel and institutions, are promoting the cultivation and production of opium rather than curbing it. He argues that the power, be it in center or sub-national level, will change nothing unless the authorities involved in narcotics trade change themselves for the better. When asked about the solution, he suggests that the international forces and countries should take more active part in counter-

¹¹³ Gulab Mangal, 2012

narcotics efforts. The international forces should help in prosecuting high level Afghan government officials, which according to him are involved in drugs trade. For him, currently, almost all counter-narcotics institutions and personnel starting from the ministerial level to provincial governors and field level policeman are involved in this trade. In his words “How can we expect the police force currently fighting against drugs to be effective, while 20% of the force is narcotics addicts?”¹¹⁴ While I do agree that there is corruption involved and serious steps should be taken to fight it, I do not agree with his generalized statements about the problem.

Taking into account the diversity and decentralization of opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan, the centralistic approach of the government will not help the situation. Current central government’s institutions are incapable of effectively addressing the problem from the center. In simple words, it is beyond the capability of the central government to address this issue. The center needs to involve the sub-national units more actively with proper authority. The policies formulated and implemented by the center are not only ineffective, but counter-productive. Thus, the approach should be decentralized and powers should be transferred from center to sub-national level in this regard to respond effectively to the problem.

3: Coordination and cooperation

Several institutions of the Afghan government and its international allies are involved in the war against illicit drugs in Afghanistan. Afghan institutional departments include: MCN Mol, MoD, CNPA, Ministry of Agriculture, ANA, ANP, and etc. Most of these institutions have

¹¹⁴ Saeedi, Ahmad, interview by author, written record, March 14th, 2012.

agencies represented at the provincial and even district levels. International agencies include DEA (US), UNODC, Department of State (US), Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit (ADIDU) of Britain, etc. These institutions vary from ministerial level to departmental, NGOs, and institutions of foreign governments. The level further goes from central to provincial and even district level. For the most part, each institution and agency possesses its own set of regulations, responsibilities, and framework, with little cooperation and coordination among any of the various institutions either vertically or horizontally. The Law on Narcotics, signed by the president Karzai on 17th December, 2005, delegates primary responsibility to supervise, manage, and monitor counter narcotics efforts to the Ministry of Counter Narcotics. Other important governmental agencies also possess responsibilities over counter narcotic efforts leading to a confusion of responsibilities, authority, and conflicting agendas. Included among these agencies are the Narcotics deputy ministerial office of the Ministry of Interior Affairs,¹¹⁵ and several agencies within the police forces including the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan and the Counter Narcotics Special forces (police), and specific eradication police units.

The same bureaucratic problems of competing agendas, policies, and programs and lack of coordination and cooperation encountered at the central level are mirrored on the provincial level. As the Helmand governor says, the level of coordination that he has in his province is not available in central institutions. The greater the bureaucratic confusion, the more opportunity exists for corruption. An example of this, according to the Helmand provincial governor, is

¹¹⁵ "The creation of Governance Ministry", Afghan paper News, <http://www.Afghanpaper.com/nbody.php?id=33883>, (accessed March 18, 2012)

their six year long wait for a \$1 million grant from the United States in recognition of their successes in overall stabilization of the province.¹¹⁶

Afghanistan has 34 provinces and majority of them cultivate and produce opium. It is beyond the capacity of the central government with so many institutions and no cooperation and coordination to curb the illicit drugs. Hence, the transfer of power to sub-national level would decrease the size of administrative structure in general. Thus, a better and effective decentralized approach would make it easier to achieve better coordination and cooperation if the sub-national level departments of the line ministries are responsible to the governor, not the center in regard to counter-narcotics efforts. Each provincial governor will have better coordination with the soldiers of each NATO member country based in their province-another positive achievement of decentralized approach.

To conclude, with the huge size, decentralized nature, and diverse face of Afghan opium industry, there is a fundamental need to change the current centralistic approach. A decade is enough time for this current approach to have proven its effectiveness. It is the time to switch to a better, effective, and realistic decentralized approach in order to achieve desirable sustainable reduction and see Afghanistan opium free.

¹¹⁶ Gulab Mangal, 2012

Conclusion

Poppy cultivation and production, trafficking and consumption of opium are legitimate threats and challenges to numerous interests. In the first place, to Afghanistan the opium industry is a destabilizing, dangerous, and highly corrupting illicit trade that undermines the developing foundation for democratization, development, and state rebuilding. For The US and international community involved in Afghanistan, the opium trade is an important factor in fueling and extending insurgency. The various policies applied to date have produced not positive results. As mentioned earlier, these policies have been used successfully in many countries. Their failure in Afghanistan lies in the government's approach to implementing the policies. It's highly centralized and opposite to the decentralized, diverse, and complex nature of the Afghan opium industry. The decentralized approach proposed in this thesis, relies on flexibility and is the best fit to effectively fight the current anti-drugs war. The approach is line with the long-term goal of development and democratization in the diverse and highly heterogeneous society and geography of Afghanistan.

At the general level, as supplementary recommendations and critical to the success of approach and the war against illicit opium industry of Afghanistan, the Afghan government and its international allies should seriously consider the following points.

1: Security is the pre-condition for any strategy and approach to be successful. For improving security the following points are recommended:

- Increased military presence in insecure areas with the Afghan security forces in lead to avoid undesirable mistakes that could spark mass anger and strikes.

- Major roads and highways, critical to the opium trade and connecting farmers to the markets, must be secured by specialized patrolling forces
- Increased military presence on Afghanistan-Central Asia, and Afghanistan-Pakistan borders with a vigilant eye on opium traders and traffickers
- Afghan and international security forces in each province should be mobilized to disrupt trafficking networks in addition to their counter-insurgency mission.
- Avoid cultural and religious insensitivity to local tradition by letting Afghan security forces lead raids and operations
- Provide employment for the unemployed bulk of the youths, a highly vulnerable segment of the population recruited by insurgents because of poverty and unemployment.

2:Corruption is another major obstacle in the war against drugs. Drug-related corruption is as wide spread as any other corruption. Though corruption is as huge of a problem as the drug industry itself and out of the scope of this thesis to address, the following points are recommended:

- Punishing the corrupt and rewarding the honest officials is a must.
- Rehabilitating the judicial system is crucial to a successful implementation of the punishing and rewarding principle.
- Increasing the security forces' salaries is certainly helpful, especially forces directly involved in counter-narcotics efforts.

- Involving the international community to pressure the Afghan government in prosecuting high level authorities involved in corruption, especially drug-related corruption.
- Establishment of a highly trained anti-corruption force, civil and military, in the structure of the government.
- In the general context, the growth of the licit economy is a crucial part in combatting corruption.

3:Rule of law is another major contributor in tackling the illicit opium cultivation and production. Central and sub-national levels of law enforcement bodies are incapable, corrupt, and weak to enforce the law. Some recommendations for overcoming the rule of law issue, especially in regard to counter-narcotics are as follow:

- The international community, especially the US should become more directly involved in prosecuting traffickers and traders, while simultaneously building Afghan judicial system.
- Increasing Afghan-international community partnership for justice sector reforms. Increasing assistance and training of prosecutors, especially in counter-narcotics investigating, prosecuting, and interdicting personnel.
- Removing and prosecuting high level authorities of the law enforcement bodies incapable of law enforcement and involved in breaking law.
- Establishing a civil service academy to recruit highly educated youths in the civil administrations.
- Establishing a highly transparent and effective approach for recruiting police and Army.

- Increases in salary and the overall licit economic growth is yet again a crucial part of Rule of law.

4: There are no short-term silver bullets. Afghanistan has had two decades of being highly active in the cultivation and production of illicit opium. For millions of people it's the only source of income to feed their families. Changing to a licit income source will take time. Pressing for quick-fix strategies is not only useless, but counterproductive. It is a long-term struggle that needs strong commitment, sufficient resources, and active international involvement.

Implementing these highly critical, supportive, tactical, and strategic recommendations along with the decentralized approach will ensure that Afghan counter-narcotics efforts will be balanced with the counter-insurgency mission and democratization process. Utilizing this approach should ensure that Afghanistan will be transformed into a poppy free country or in the worst-case, a country where illicit production of opium and its derivatives will not constitute a major threat and challenge.

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