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**The politics of drugs and conflict: the challenges of  
insurgency and state-building in Afghanistan**

**Dawood Azami**

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

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**THE POLITICS OF DRUGS AND CONFLICT:  
THE CHALLENGES OF INSURGENCY AND  
STATE-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN**

**DAWOOD AZAMI**

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER  
(LONDON) FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

2015

## **Statement of Authorship**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis, and that the material contained in the thesis is my own work. All sources used are referenced. I further declare that the material contained in this thesis have not been previously submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

Dawood Azami

March 2015

## **Acknowledgments**

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Finally, I am profoundly grateful to my family, whose loving support and belief in me during this study and throughout my life enabled me to realise my dreams. My greatest debt is to my parents, who made me a literate person and taught me the differences between good and bad.

## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all peace loving people of this conflict-stricken world as well as those who are trying to make the world a better place.

کله جنگ و ته هوس کا، چي آشتي مومي نذير  
که په صلح کي روزگار شي، څه حاجت د تبغ اوتير

Why seek war when harmony is at hand.

When life could be lived in peace, what is the need of swords & arrows?

[From a poem of Khushhal Khan Khattak (1613-1689), a legendary Pashto warrior poet, tribal chief and scholar. (English translation by the author of this thesis.)]

## Thesis Abstract

This thesis explores the dynamics of conflict by focusing on two aspects of the problem – (a), links between illicit drugs and conflict and (b), the mechanism and extent to which illicit drug production and trade weaken the state. The research question I have set out for this project is: “what is the impact of illicit drugs on conflict and how does access to drugs affect the strength and ideology of insurgent groups and hampers state-building?” Although Afghanistan is the main case study, in order to understand the phenomenon in a wider context, the study also explores the relationship between drugs economy and conflict through examples of insurgencies in other parts of the world – mainly the FARC in Colombia, PKK in Turkey and LTTE in Sri Lanka.

In addition, the thesis offers a unique empirical contribution. Based on first-hand knowledge from the field, this study is unusual in many ways as it critically analyses the impact of illicit drugs on conflict and governance and explores how the patron-client relations in the drug trade create and cement structural corruption. In order to produce a uniquely detailed picture of the conflict in Afghanistan and the overall impact of drugs, this study draws on an extensive field work and more than a hundred original interviews with several actors including insurgents, drug traders/smugglers, poppy farmers, local elders and politicians, government officials as well as experts. It explores, arguably, for the first time, the detailed mechanism and extent to which drug production and trafficking inhibit state-building and facilitate insurgency in Afghanistan. The study argues that the conflict in Afghanistan didn’t start because of drugs; it was the war that created a suitable environment for drug production which now plays a significant role in perpetuating and prolonging the violence. The study examines the Taliban’s evolving involvement in the drugs economy and discusses the insurgent group’s multiple sources of income. It also provides a comprehensive picture of the Taliban’s governance and organisational structure.

This research offers a multidisciplinary framework drawing together data from a number of areas of knowledge and sources and examines the nexus between drugs, insurgency and state-building by offering detailed and fresh information on the current state of overlapping fields such as International Relations, Political Economy, Political Anthropology and Development and State-Building. While focusing on the decades-long war in Afghanistan, the thesis attempts to provide an integrated and comprehensive framework for understanding the conflict in general. While discussing the conflicts’ causes and motivations, the existing literature is mostly focused on a few factors including greed, grievance, ethnic and social deprivation. Although these are all valuable and important contributions, the thesis argues that the conflict itself is a complex phenomenon and its understanding and analysis needs a comprehensive approach. Therefore, the thesis also examines other overlooked and overlapping factors including the role of foreign actors, nationalism, criminality and ideology in initiating and perpetuating the conflict. This study fills a conceptual lacuna in the field of conflict studies and devotes considerable attention to the problems of drugs and conflicts, the challenges of state-building and the complexities of insurgency by bringing together various dimensions and factors into one whole.

The thesis argues that in an increasingly perplexing and globalising world, conflicts are becoming more complicated involving a variety of actors at local, regional and international levels as well as a combination of a wide range of causes and motivations. While discussing the motivations and causes of conflicts including civil wars, this study suggests the “Hybrid Framework” of conflict to understand the nature of intra-state conflicts. The “Hybrid Framework” takes into account a variety of overlapping causes and motivations as well as the complex web of actors at different levels.

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABP	Afghan Border Police
ACU	Anti-corruption Unit
AD	Alternative Development
ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANCOP	Afghan National Civil Order of Police
ANF	Anti-Narcotics Force (Pakistan)
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
APPF	Afghan Public Protection Force
APRP	Afghan Peace and Reintegration Plan
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ARP	Afghanistan Reintegration Program
ASFF	Afghanistan Security Forces Fund
ATTA	Afghan Transit Trade Agreement
AUC	United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (a right-wing umbrella group)
AUP	Afghan Uniform Police
BMA	British Medical Association
BSA	Bilateral Security Agreement
CACI	Central Asia Counter -narcotics Initiative
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CNC	Crime and Narcotics Centre (US)
CNCE	Counter Narcotics Community Engagement
CND	Counter Narcotics Directorate (Afghanistan)
CNJC	Counter Narcotics Justice Centre (Afghanistan)
CNPA	Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan
CNT	Counter Narcotics Tribunal (Afghanistan)
DEA	Drug Enforcement Administration (US)
DOD CN	Department of Defense Drug Interdiction and Counter-Drug Activities fund
DOD	Department of Defense (US)
DOJ	Department of Justice (US)
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organisation
EIC	East India Company
ELN	<i>Ejército de Liberación Nacional</i> / National Liberation Army (Colombia)
ETA	<i>Euskadi Ta Askatasuna</i> / Basque Fatherland and Liberty (Spain, France)
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement (Turkestan is also spelled as Turkistan)
EU	European Union
EZLN	<i>Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional</i> (Zapatista National Liberation Army)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FARC	<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i> (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (US)
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (United Kingdom)
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organisation (US designation)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GDPR	Global Drug Prohibition Regime
GIROA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

GLE	Governor-Led Eradication (Afghanistan)
GNP	Gross National Product
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
GPI	Good Performers Initiative (Afghanistan counter-narcotics)
HIG	Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (Afghanistan)
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSM	Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICMP	Illicit Crop Monitoring Programme (UNODC)
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance (Afghanistan)
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
INCB	International Narcotics Control Board (United Nations)
INCLE	International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (US)
INCSR	International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (US State Department)
I-NGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INL	Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (US)
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IRA	Irish Republican Army
IS	Islamic State (also known by the acronyms ISIS and ISIL)
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (Afghanistan)
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan's main intelligence agency)
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami (Pakistan)
JuD	JuD (Jamaat-ud-Dawa) Pakistan
JUI	Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Pakistan)
KADEK	Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (Kurdish Separatists)
KFZ	Kandahar Food Zone
KGK	Kongra-Gel (Kurdish Separatists)
KLA	Kosovo Liberation Army
KMT	Kachin Independence Organisation (Myanmar/Burma)
LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Pakistan)
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba (Pakistan)
MCN	Ministry of Counter-Narcotics (Afghanistan)
MNLA	<i>Mouvement National pour la Libération de l'Azawad</i> (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)
MNLA	Malayan National Liberation Army
MOD	Ministry of Defence (Britain)
MOD	Ministry of Defense (Afghanistan)
MOE	Minister of Education (Afghanistan)
MOI	Ministry of Interior (Afghanistan)
MSF	<i>Médecins Sans Frontières</i> / Doctors Without Borders
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDCS	National Drugs Control Strategy (Afghanistan)
NDS	National Directorate of Security (Afghanistan's intelligence agency)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHS	National Health Service (United Kingdom)
NLC	National Logistics Cell (Pakistan)
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom (US-led operation in Afghanistan 2001-14)
OFAC	Office of Foreign Assets Control (US Department of the Treasury)

OIC	Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (formerly Organisation of the Islamic Conference)
PDPA	Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PKK	<i>Partya Kerkeren Kurdistan</i> / Kurdistan Workers Party
PLA	People's Liberation Army (China's armed forces)
PRMI	People's Resistance Movement of Iran (also known as Jundallah)
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Canadian Security Intelligence Service)
RNAIT-TF	Regional Narcotics & Analysis & Illicit Trafficking Task Force (Pentagon)
RUF	Revolutionary United Front (Sierra Leone)
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAGAL	Strengthening Afghan Governance and Alternative Livelihoods
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SDNT	Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers (US Department of the Treasury)
SIGAR	United States Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SL	<i>Sendero Luminoso</i> / Shining Path (Peru)
SSP	Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan
TIP	Turkestan Islamic Party
TIR	<i>Transports Internationaux Routiers</i> / International Road Transports
TOC	Transnational Organised Crime
TTP	Tahreek-e Taliban-e Pakistan
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Program
UNDCP	United Nations International Drug Control Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US/USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID	US Agency for International Development
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UWSA	United Wa State Army (Myanmar/Burma)
VDPA	Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (United Nations)
WFP	World Food Programme
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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## Glossary

<i>Afyun</i>	Opium
<i>Amir</i>	Leader, King, Ruler
<i>Amir-ul-Momineen</i>	Leader/Commander of the faithful (Title given to the leader of the Taliban in Afghanistan.)
<i>Ban/Bhang</i>	Cannabis seeds/drink made from cannabis and cannabis seeds
<i>Bang Khana</i>	Place for consuming bang or cannabis drink
<i>Barmah</i>	Deep well (usually drilled) used for irrigation
<i>Bawrai</i>	Deep well dugged/drilled for irrigation
<i>Chars</i>	Cannabis, Marijuana
<i>Farman</i>	Executive order or decree by a king/ruler/president
<i>Fasid</i>	Corrupt
<i>Fatwa</i>	Religious edict, ruling on Islamic law
<i>Ghair-e-sharaii</i>	Against the Sharia, not permissible in Islam
<i>Hakeem</i>	Traditional medicinal practitioners
<i>Haram</i>	Forbidden in religion
<i>Jangsalaar</i>	Warlord, Militia Leader
<i>Jihad</i>	Struggle, Striving (in the way of God), Holy war
<i>Karez</i>	Underground water channel, traditional underground aqueduct
<i>Khairaat</i>	Optional charity in Islam
<i>Khashkhaash</i>	Poppy Seeds
<i>Kuknar/Koknar</i>	Opium, Poppy Seeds
<i>Kuknar Khana</i>	Place for consuming a sherbet made from opium poppies
<i>Madrasah</i>	Religious school
<i>Masjid</i>	Mosque
<i>Millat</i>	Nation
<i>Milli</i>	National
<i>Mujahideen</i>	Islamic religious fighters/Holy warriors (plural of <i>Mujahid</i> )
<i>Mulla</i>	Religious scholar, prayer leader
<i>Sharia</i>	The body of Islamic law
<i>Tahreek</i>	Movement
<i>Taliban</i>	Religious students (plural of <i>Talib</i> in Pashto language)
<i>Taryak</i>	Opium
<i>Taryaki/Teriaki</i>	Opium taker
<i>Ulama/Ulema</i>	Scholars, recognised experts in Islamic sacred law and theology
<i>Ushr</i>	Compulsory tithe in Islam, one-tenth of the agriculture produce
<i>Zakat</i>	Islamic annual tax/tithe on money and other assets

## INTRODUCTION

Due to its geographical location and strategic significance, Afghanistan has frequently been a battlefield for major powers and a variety of invaders for several millennia. The breakup of society resulting from these foreign invasions and wars has, at times, also led to internal strife and civil wars. The recent history of Afghanistan shows that the country has been at the centre of various encounters and upheavals. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Afghanistan was at the heart of the Great Game between the two super powers -- British Empire and the Tsarist Russia. During the Cold War (1945-1991), the country became a main battlefield in the strategic competition between the US-led capitalist bloc and the communist USSR. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 made the country a main theatre of an international conflict which brought numerous regional and international actors together to fight against each other in the villages and valleys of this ancient land. Although the conflict in the country has taken many shapes and forms over the past few decades, the Soviet invasion marked the beginning of a long phase of violence which is still continuing. The conflict in Afghanistan transformed from an anti-Soviet resistance to a proxy battle between neighbouring countries and other regional players and, with the passage of time, became more complex involving dozens of local and international state and non-state actors. Only twelve years after the withdrawal of one super power -- USSR, the country was invaded by another superpower -- USA. Following the attacks on the US on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, Afghanistan was turned overnight into another international battlefield and became the main theatre of the US-led "War on Terror".

The wars and invasions are associated with many other major problems in the country, namely drugs and opium in particular. Opium had been cultivated in the region which later became known as Afghanistan for hundreds if not thousands of years. Traditional cultivation and use of opium, mainly for medicinal or recreational purposes, had been engrained in parts of the country for at least one thousand years. Nevertheless, drug production (primarily opium and cannabis) increased considerably in the period succeeding the onset of the ongoing conflict. The destruction of critical infrastructure and the collapse of state institutions as a result of these invasions and wars created a suitable environment for a flourishing drugs economy and made the country one of the biggest opium producers in the world. Following the Soviet invasion, a number of Afghan farmers switched to

opium poppies, as most of the agricultural infrastructure was destroyed in the fighting between the Soviet military and the Mujahideen<sup>1</sup> resistance fighters. A number of farmers, especially those who lived in areas where the government control was weak or absent, started cultivating opium poppies as it brought them more money than other traditional crops such as wheat, cotton and fruits. The Mujahideen, most of whom were local Afghan villagers, also found opium useful in order to get the much needed cash to survive and to buy weapons for their war against the Soviet occupation. In 1979, the year when the Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, less than 200 tons of opium was produced in the country. However, opium production continued to expand rapidly and reached 1,000 metric tons in 1988; while in 2007, Afghanistan produced 9,000 metric tons; record high and around 90% of world's opium at the time. Thus, within in less than two decades, Afghanistan went from a very minor producer of opium to become the biggest opium producer of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Although opium production brought more money to farmers and traders than other licit crops, it contributed to the complexity of the Afghan conflict by creating new actors such as drug traders and other criminal groups involved in drugs processing and trafficking. Drugs also played an important role in changing the internal power dynamics within the Afghan society. Following the defeat and withdrawal of Soviet forces in 1989 and the fall of the Soviet backed Kabul regime in 1992, drugs served as a major source of funding for those groups and individuals who fought against each other to preserve and expand their local power base. Many commanders associated with various factions that were involved in a violent power struggle in early 1990s relied heavily on drugs money. On the other hand, the new local powerful elites, who were in most cases the product of war, continued profiting from drugs to sustain their newly acquired power and prestige in the society.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mujahideen means religious fighters or holy warriors (plural of *Mujahid*). This was the name commonly used for the Afghan resistance fighters who fought against the occupying Soviet forces in the 1980s. As they were supported by the West, the term became very popular especially in the US where it was sometimes used as "Muj".

<sup>2</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem*. Vienna/New York. Available online at:

<[http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter\\_Narcotics/The\\_Opium\\_Economy\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_-\\_2003.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013]; Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *BBC News*, 26 February. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21548230>> [Accessed 25 Aug 2013]; UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2014). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014: Cultivation and Production*. November. Vienna: UNODC, p.12. Available online at: <<https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan-opium-survey-2014.pdf>> [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].

<sup>3</sup> Dorronsoro, Gilles, (2005). *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan: 1979 to Present*. (Translated from the French into English by John King). London: Hurst & Company; Giustozzi, Antonio, (2009). *Empires of Mud: War and Warlords of Afghanistan*. New York: Columbia University Press; Hodes, Cyrus and Sedra, Mark, (2007). *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*. IISS Adelphi Paper No. 391, London: Routledge.



The Taliban movement, which emerged in southern Afghanistan in 1994, also exploited the drugs economy in their violent campaign against those powerful warlords who were in charge of different parts of the country. In addition to donations from drug traders, it received millions of dollars annually by taxing opium just like other agricultural products. However, the Taliban, which captured Kabul in 1996 and most of the Afghan territory by the end of the decade, unexpectedly banned the cultivation of opium poppies in the summer of 2000. Although the Taliban's motivation behind the poppy ban is still debated and several possible reasons have been described by different scholars and experts, the ban itself was very effective and is termed as the one of the most successful drugs bans in history. However, since the removal of the Taliban regime as a result of the US-led invasion in late 2001, the group has reversed its poppy ban and, in some cases, even encourages drug production in areas of Afghanistan it controls. The Taliban receive tens of millions of dollars annually from taxing drug cultivation and trade. As part of an effort to win hearts and minds of the population, the Taliban also earn a political capital by defying the Afghan government and its international allies and protecting the livelihoods of poppy farmers. According to estimates, the Taliban get US\$100-400<sup>4</sup> million per year from taxing poppy farmers and drugs producers and traffickers in areas under their control.<sup>5</sup> The group has become a formidable challenge to the Afghan government and its foreign backers since it launched a well organised insurgency in 2003-04.

Generally, opium economy and insurgency have been mutually reinforcing. Narcotics finance insurgent groups; while their violence weakens the state institutions and government control and encourages more poppy cultivation and drug production and trade. Both of these problems have grown more severe in post-Taliban Afghanistan (2001 onwards) and pose a serious threat to the stability of Afghanistan and the wider region. However, it is not only the Taliban who are benefiting from the drug economy; the drug trade has become an important part of the overall war machine in the country. In particular, a number of local actors, who acquired an elite status during the war years, have been increasingly benefitting from the drug economy and use the drug money to maintain their power and authority in the society and polity of Afghanistan.

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<sup>4</sup> Given the clandestine nature of drugs, these estimates vary greatly. In addition, the Taliban's income from the drug trade has changed significantly over time. In mid and late 1990s, the group was getting less than a hundred million US dollars a year but with the expansion of the drugs economy, the Taliban's share also increased. See for more details Chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban's War Chest. *New York Times*. Article published on 18 October. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 05 June 2012]; Daily Outlook (2011). *IDLG Chief Opposes Forced Poppy Eradication*. Daily Outlook, Kabul, Afghanistan, 30 November. Available online at: <[http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post\\_id=2678](http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=2678)> [Accessed 06 June 2012]; Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *Op.cit*.

The discipline of Political Anthropology suggests that wars and the subsequent social and political upheavals generally result in the creation of a new socio-economic and political order with political agents, usually leaders, engaging in strategies to attain power and influence and control resources. Self-service is an important part of politics where political agents use skills and power to ensure political survival and social and economic well-being.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, leaders need financial resources to maintain and, if possible, increase their power. As Earle says, leaders who control financial means and provide rewards are accepted, but those who fail to do so lose authority. The desire to control the economy is a tendency common among leaders in all human societies as it gives “a direct and material power over the lives of people.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the discipline of Political Economy suggests that social and political power largely depends on the production, acquisition and distribution of economic resources.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the surge in drug production is, on one hand, a matter of survival for many farmers; on the other hand it is linked in many ways to power struggle as well as control over economic resources.

In Afghanistan, drugs are also creating an infrastructure of crime and corruption that thwarts the process of state-building and the growth of viable institutions. Many “warlords”<sup>9</sup> -- a product of the anti-Soviet resistance and the subsequent factional wars (1992-2001) -- also function as political leaders while exploiting criminal economy including the drug trade. They pose one of the biggest challenges to the Afghan state-building.<sup>10</sup> In most cases, these “warlords” acquired monopoly on what political anthropologists describe as the three main components of power -- control over the economy, war, and ideology.<sup>11</sup> Both the drug traders and “warlords” have infiltrated the government apparatus at the centre as well as regions and hamper the establishment of an accountable, transparent and efficient Afghan state.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kurtz, Donald V., (2001). *Political Anthropology: Power and Paradigms*. Oxford: Westview Press, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> Earle, Timothy, (1997). *How Chiefs Come to Power: The Political Economy in Prehistory*. California: Stanford University Press, p. 67.

<sup>8</sup> Lairson, Thomas D. and Skidmore, David, (2002). *Buy International Political Economy: The Struggle for Power and Wealth*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth. See also Clift, Ben, (2014). *Comparative Political Economy: States, Markets and Global Capitalism*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>9</sup> “Warlord” is a term popularised in Western literature and is generally used for former commanders and militia leaders in Afghanistan. The Pashto and Dari equivalent of the word is *Jangsalaar*. However, the ex-commanders themselves do not like to be called “warlords” believing the word has negative connotations.

<sup>10</sup> Hodes, Cyrus and Sedra, Mark, (2007). *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*. IISS Adelphi Paper No. 391, London: Routledge, p 12.

<sup>11</sup> Earle, Timothy, (1991). The Evolution of Chiefdoms. In: Earle, Timothy (ed.), *Chiefdoms: Power, Economy, and Ideology*. Cambridge University Press, p 9.

<sup>12</sup> Giustozzi, Antonio, (2009). *Empires of Mud: War and Warlords of Afghanistan*. Columbia University Press.

The drug economy is conventionally viewed as an index of state power, so that low capacity regimes are more likely to have a “drug problem” than high capacity regimes.<sup>13</sup> The post-Taliban Afghanistan is struggling to build a functioning state able to monopolise the use of legitimate means of coercion and develop the capacity to respond to the people’s political, security and economic needs. However, the drug trade has evolved into a serious threat to both the stability of the state and the social wellbeing of the population. The drug economy corrupts and infiltrates state institutions and a weak governance infrastructure usually results in increased drug production which in turn not only paves the way for more drugs but also strengthens the insurgency at the cost of a fragile weak state.

This study looks at the problem of conflict and the challenges of drugs and state-building with a special focus on Afghanistan. In doing so, it analyses the evolution and implications of drug production in a historical and comparative context and discusses the relationship between drugs economy and insurgency. Although Afghanistan is the main case study, it explores the issue through examples of other countries. Three insurgent groups -- FARC in Colombia, PKK in Turkey and LTTE in Sri Lanka – have been selected for this purpose and, in order to understand the phenomenon in a wider context, their links to drugs economy have been discussed in detail. The study also looks at the impact of drugs economy on institution building and explores the mechanism of how illicit drugs encourage “warlordism” and result in an informal alliance between drug traders, organised crime and corrupt officials.

Although this study covers the history of drugs production in Afghanistan and the wider region in general, its main reference period is from 1979 (the year the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan) to the end of 2014 (the year when the US-led ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) ended its combat mission in Afghanistan). The violence that erupted with the Soviet intervention paved the way for a large scale drug production and an entrenched drugs economy in the impoverished country.

This thesis attempts to answer a number of important questions related to conflict and drugs economy. For example, what is the relationship between illicit drugs and conflict? What is the nature and mechanism of different insurgent groups’ involvement in the drugs economy and how does this impact their insurgency? What are the dynamics of the Afghans conflict and what role does the drugs economy play in it? How does the conflict

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<sup>13</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2008). Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan. *International Peacekeeping*, **15** (3), 405-423. Available online at: <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13533310802058984>> [Accessed 7 Aug 2014].

in Afghanistan differ from or resemble to conflicts in other parts of the world? How much do the Taliban insurgents depend on and benefit from the drugs economy? What is the overall impact of illicit drugs economy on state institutions and society in general? How does the drug production and trafficking facilitate insurgency and inhibit state-building? These are all complex and inter-related questions and in order to explore them properly, I have adopted what I call the “Hybrid Framework” – a multi-dimensional and hybrid approach which combines different causes and factors and analyses the conflict as a complex web of multiple actors and overlapping motivations and interests. The thesis explores how the ‘Hybrid Framework’ helps us understand the intra-state conflict and the drugs-insurgency-weak state linkages.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is about conflict, illicit drugs and state-building and I have chosen Afghanistan as the main case study. The research question which I have set out for this project is: “what is the impact of illicit drugs on conflict and how does access to drugs affect the strength and ideology of insurgent groups and hampers state-building?” The key objectives of this research are: 1) To explore the conflict and its relationship with illicit drugs in general and in Afghanistan in particular and to explain how does access to drugs affects the strength and ideology of insurgent groups?; 2) To demonstrate the true nature of the Afghan conflict and to examine its various dimensions, causes, motivations and actors; and 3) To critically analyse the impact of illicit drugs on state institutions and explore the mechanism and extent to which the Taliban insurgents exploit the drug trade.

Afghanistan, described as NATO’s most important mission since the establishment of the alliance in 1949, is still one of the top military priorities for the US and its allies. The Afghan conflict has already become the longest war in American history and the longest war in the British living memory. Fixing Afghanistan has been a major challenge for the international community whose members have been engaged in the country since the US-led intervention of October 2001. The continued violence and chaos in the troubled country is having a spill-over effect and the drugs produced there are threatening the social fabric and political stability of many communities in the surrounding region and beyond. In fact, drug production and conflict are the two most serious problems the country has been facing for the past several decades.

Much has been written in recent years about the conflict in Afghanistan; particularly after the 2001 US-led invasion of the country. Dozens of books and thousands of research papers and media articles have been published as part of an effort to understand and explain different aspects of life in the country. Different authors have focused on different dimensions of the conflict applying various approaches and methodologies. Some writers have analysed the Afghan conflict from the US's national security perspective and its global "War on Terror."<sup>14</sup> A number of them have associated the conflict with militant Islam and Islamic fundamentalism<sup>15</sup> while others including Ahmed saw it as a conflict between the centre and the rural and tribal periphery.<sup>16</sup> Several writers attribute the continuation of the Afghan conflict and the Taliban's resurgence to the West's "wrong" approach and policies especially military decision making as well as a reaction towards the corruption and incompetence of the Afghan government.<sup>17</sup> Some have analysed the violence and insurgency in Afghanistan from a structural point of view, showing how a rising drug trade and poor performance undermined the Afghan government, and blaming the Americans for failing to provide the necessary support to the Afghan government, and neglecting insurgent sanctuaries across the border in Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, some writers see the Afghan conflict mainly as a proxy war with a view that the insurgents have been sheltered and supported by the Pakistan's security establishment.<sup>19</sup> Some scholars such as Barfield see the conflict as the manifestation of the tension between two different cultural outlooks and as a conflict between the old and new, local tradition and global norms, and conservatism and modernism.<sup>20</sup> While analysing the role political Islam, Roy

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<sup>14</sup> See, Woodward, Bob, (2002). *Bush at War*. New York: Simon & Schuster; Woodward, Bob, (2010). *Obama's Wars*. New York: Simon & Schuster; Coll, Steve, (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York: Penguin Group; Rubin, Barnett, (2013). *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*. New York: Oxford University Press; and Friedman, Norman, (2003). *Terrorism, Afghanistan, and America's New Way of War*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press.

<sup>15</sup> Rashid, Ahmad, (2010). *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. London: I.B. Tauris.

<sup>16</sup> Ahmed, Akbar, (2013). *The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror Became a Global War on Tribal Islam*. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press.

<sup>17</sup> Abbas, Hassan, (2014). *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier*. Wales: Gomer Press; and Rashid, Ahmed, (2009). *Descent into Chaos: The U.S. and the Disaster in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*. New York: Penguin Group.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, Seth G., (2010). *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*. New York: Norton & Company.

<sup>19</sup> Gall, Carlotta, (2014). *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*. New York: Harcourt Publishing Company; and Waldman, Matt, (2010). *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents*. Crisis States working papers series no.2, no. 18. Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science.

<sup>20</sup> Barfield, Thomas, (2012). *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

focuses on the theme of ethnicity as the chief determinant of identity.<sup>21</sup> Several other writers have pointed to ethnic and linguistic cleavages as the major cause of conflict in the country. Canfield<sup>22</sup>, Glatzer<sup>23</sup> and Rais<sup>24</sup>, among others, assess the impact of ethnic diversity and the role ethnicity plays in the Afghan conflict and analyse it from the perspective of ethnically-motivated aggression. Rubin has examined the situation in Afghanistan by applying the political economy approach and focused more on the internal dynamics of the conflict by analysing the acquisition and distribution of resources by the state.<sup>25</sup> A number of other writers, such as Gretchen<sup>26</sup>, Shanty<sup>27</sup>, Singh<sup>28</sup> and Mercille<sup>29</sup> have explored the conflict in Afghanistan from a “narco-terrorism” perspective and discussed the links between insurgency and drug economy.

Although the literature on the Afghan conflict in general has an important role in exploring its causes and motivation and promoting the understanding of the problem, it mostly focuses on individual elements and specific dimensions of the conflict while ignoring to analyse it as a whole. Much of the recent scholarship focusing on current conflict either fails to identify the main factors or undermines some while exaggerates others. Similarly, it either downplays or overplays the role of certain actors and factors in initiating and prolonging the conflict. Therefore, it falls short to draw a comprehensive picture of the situation. The other common shortcoming of most of the recent studies of Afghanistan is the fact that they generally overlook the role of outside actors as well as the importance of

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<sup>21</sup> Roy, Olivier, (1994). The New Political Elite in Afghanistan. In: Weiner, Myron and Banuazizi, Ali (eds): *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*. (pp. 72-100). New York: Syracuse University Press.

<sup>22</sup> Canfield, Robert (1994). Ethnic, Regional, and Sectarian Alignments in Afghanistan. In: Banuazizi, Ali and Weiner, Myron (eds): *The politics of social transformation in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, pp, 75-103.

<sup>23</sup> Glatzer, Bernt, (1998). Is Afghanistan on the Brink of Ethnic and Tribal Disintegration? In: Maley, William, (editor). *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*. London: Hurst & Co., 1998, pp. 167-181. Also available online at: <[http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/files/glatzer/glatzer\\_onthebrink.pdf](http://www.ag-afghanistan.de/files/glatzer/glatzer_onthebrink.pdf)> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>24</sup> Rais, Rasul Bux, (2008). *Recovering the Frontier State: War, Ethnicity, and State in Afghanistan*. Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books.

<sup>25</sup> Rubin, Barnett R. (2000). *The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan*. World Development, **28**, (10), pp. 1789-1803. Available online at: <<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.461.517&rep=rep1&type=pdf>> [Accessed 4 June 2014]; and Rubin, Barnett, (1995). *Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

<sup>26</sup> Peters, Gretchen, (2009). *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin Is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

<sup>27</sup> Shanty, Frank C., (2011). *The Nexus: International Terrorism and Drug Trafficking from Afghanistan*. California: Greenwood Publishing Group.

<sup>28</sup> Singh, Deepali Gaur, (2007). *Drugs production and trafficking in Afghanistan*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press 2007.

<sup>29</sup> Mercille, Julien, (2013). *Cruel Harvest: US intervention in the Afghan Drug Trade*. London: Pluto Press. See also Björnehed, Emma, (2004). Narco-Terrorism: The Merger of the War on Drugs and the War on Terror. *Global Crime*, **6**, (3-4): 305-324. August-November; Follis, Edward, and Century, Douglas, (2014). *The Dark Art: My Undercover Life in Global Narco-terrorism*. New York: Gotham Books.

geo-economic and geopolitical position of Afghanistan. In order to understand the conflict in Afghanistan, attention needs to be paid to all dynamics including local/national, regional and international as well as all the relevant actors and factors responsible for causing and perpetuating violence in the country.

The conflict in Afghanistan is one of the oldest and most complex in the world today. It is a mixture of several important issues including geo-politics, proxy, ideology, nationalism, ethnicity, tribalism, and criminal. In order to understand the conflict in general and specifically in Afghanistan, there is a need for an integrated and comprehensive approach and to bring together all the major themes and approaches in the scholarly literature. Applying only one or two or three approaches don't seem to be sufficient to understand and explain the country's decades old conflict.

In this thesis, first of all, I attempt to provide an integrated framework for understanding the conflict in general. The existing literature on conflict seems to be ignoring, exaggerating or undermining certain potential drivers of violent behaviour such as greed, grievance, creed, ethnic hatred and social deprivation. Greed has been particularly a dominant theme in the field of intra-state conflict for the past several years.<sup>30</sup> Although all these approaches are important contributions to understand and analyse internal conflicts, increasingly new schools of thought are emerging that emphasise the role of other factors such as foreign actors, ideology and political economy. This study fills a conceptual lacuna in the field of conflict studies and represents probably the first study that devotes considerable attention to the problems of drugs and conflict, the challenges of state-building and the complexities of insurgency by bringing various dimensions and factors into one whole. The thesis argues that in an increasingly globalising world, conflicts are becoming more and more complex involving a variety of actors at local, regional and international levels as well as a combination of different causes and motivations. While discussing a number of conflicts, this study suggests the – “Hybrid Framework”- to understand the nature, causes and motivations of conflict in general. The “Hybrid Framework” takes into account a variety of overlapping causes and motivations as well as the complex web of actors and interests at different levels.

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<sup>30</sup> For more discussion on the relevance of “greed” as the cause of conflict, see Collier, Paul, (2000). Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective. In: Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M., (editors), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. (pp. 91-111). London: Lynne Rienner Publishers; Collier, Paul., (2006). *Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy*. [Online]. Available at: <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~econpco/research/pdfs/EconomicCausesofCivilConflict-ImplicationsforPolicy.pdf>> [Accessed 13 Feb 2012].

Secondly, with a special focus on drugs, this study explores the role of natural resources in a conflict. Although there are various studies about the nexus between drugs and crime, there is a relatively lack of informed and detailed literature on the links between drugs and insurgencies and the impact of drugs economy on the nature, ideology and motivations of insurgent groups. In addition, there is also a need for a better understanding of how does the drug economy affect formal institutions and the state (un)building process? Although there is a substantial amount of academic and journalists literature on the problem of illicit drugs in Afghanistan, it usually looks at it from an external perspective. This study looks at it from the inside too though a wide range of original interviews with more than a hundred individuals and field research. In addition, most of the available literature on the problem of drugs and conflict in Afghanistan rarely goes beyond the media reports and relies heavily on the official information given by US/NATO and Afghan government. Many of such writings lack detailed field information and credible corroboration.<sup>31</sup> There is a lack of empirically-based evidence about the links between conflict and drugs in Afghanistan and the extent and mechanism of how the insurgents and other non-state actors benefit from the drug production and trade. My research examines the links between the Taliban and the drug trade and shows that their involvement is much deeper and complicated than what is usually known. I have also explored a sophisticated mechanism through which the Taliban exploit the drug production and trade to get both public support and financial resources. During the course of this study, I found out that the Taliban's involvement in the drugs has gradually grown over the past decade and they are increasingly relying on drugs income. In many cases, they have encouraged farmers to cultivate opium poppies in areas under their control and provide protection to their poppy fields from being eradicated by the government forces. In addition, my investigations have found the nature of infiltration of state institutions by the drug mafia and showed that the involvement of government officials in the drugs economy goes beyond what is usually described in popular and academic literature. In the appendices, I have given the English translation of several drugs related decrees issued by the Taliban when the group was ruling over Afghanistan (1996-2001). The decrees (*Farmans*) issued by the Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, show the Taliban's evolving relationship with the drug trade cultivation. It also demonstrates the complex relationship between drugs and insurgents and indicates the dilemma many insurgent groups face vis-à-vis illicit drugs. This is perhaps the first time that these Taliban decrees have been assembled and translated into English for the benefit

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<sup>31</sup> For example, see Singh, Deepali Gaur, (2007). *Drugs production and trafficking in Afghanistan*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press.; Shanty, Frank C., (2011). *The Nexus: International Terrorism and Drug Trafficking from Afghanistan*. California: Greenwood Publishing Group.



of scholars and the general public alike. In addition, the study also provides, a comprehensive picture of the organisational structure of the Taliban from its emergence in 1994 to the fall of their government in 2001 and the formation and structure of the Taliban insurgency and their “shadow government” (2001-2015).

Thirdly, in order to understand the phenomenon in a wider context, this study also explores and analyses the relationship between drugs economy and conflict in several other countries. Three examples have been selected for this comparative part of the study – Colombia’s Marxist rebel group, FARC; Turkey’s Kurdish separatist group, PKK; and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. As part of this comparative section of the study, the drugs links of these groups is analysed and the impact of drugs economy on their nature, strength and ideologies is examined in detail. This integrated comparative analysis facilitates understanding the role of drugs in the conflict in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Fourthly, this research, which relies upon insights from various field trips, offers a multidisciplinary framework drawing together data and information from a number of areas of knowledge and sources. It examines the nexus between drugs, insurgency and state-building by offering detailed and fresh information on the current state of overlapping fields, such as International Relations, Political Economy, Political Anthropology and Development and State-Building. My familiarity with the country and contacts enabled me to conduct field work and collect first-hand information about the dynamics of the conflict and the role the drugs play in it. In addition, it offers a unique empirical contribution as well as insight into the overall context in which the research is conducted. The study draws on more than a hundred original, and in many cases rare, interviews with the Taliban soldiers, drug smugglers, poppy farmers, local elders and the Afghan government and NGO officials to produce a uniquely detailed picture. In addition, it demonstrates the overall impact of drugs and explores the detailed mechanism and extent to which drug production and trafficking inhibits state-building and facilitates insurgency and criminality in Afghanistan. As far as I know, it is the first time that the mechanism of how the Taliban benefit from drug production and trade is explored in such details. It describes the Taliban’s involvement in different stages from cultivating opium poppies to opium production, processing and smuggling and explains the nature of the Taliban’s intervention in different stages of the drugs business.

The study also provides details of how the patronage network operates, how players bargain and how is this relationship complicated by the introduction and intervention of foreign actors such as international drug mafia and US/NATO. This study explores how

the patron-client relations in the drug trade create and cement structural corruption – a problem that has got worse in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. Although, most of Afghanistan has been covered as part of this study, I have selected Helmand province in southern Afghanistan as the main location for field research as it has been producing more opium than all the other 33 provinces combined. The province is also one of the main battlegrounds between the Taliban and the Afghan forces and their international backers.

The study will help greatly in a wider understanding of the problems of conflict and illicit drugs and the challenges of peace and state-building. The study's insights will advance the understanding of conflict in general and the politics and international relations of Afghanistan in particular. In addition, this will provide a meaningful context for recent trends and the future scenarios regarding illicit economies, their links with insurgencies and rebellions and the challenges of building and/or empowering viable and accountable states. Finally, the findings from this study have important implications for the prospects of conflict management and conflict resolution in Afghanistan as well as other parts of the world.

## **Research Methodology**

Research methodology is a “science of studying how research is done scientifically”.<sup>32</sup> There are various methods of research used in the realm of social sciences. Generally speaking, three main types of research methodologies are widely in use in undertaking a research project - qualitative, quantitative and a mixture of the two, called mixed research method. Quantitative and qualitative methods refer to the type of data being collected. Qualitative research relies mostly on non-numeric data, such as interviews and observations. In contrast, quantitative research employs numeric data such as scores and metrics.<sup>33</sup> The differences between the two approaches are mainly ones of style and specific technique.<sup>34</sup> Qualitative research method is non-numerical and more descriptive in nature and is concerned with qualitative phenomenon involving quality. As Kvale says, the word “quality refers to what kind, to the essential character of something”, while “quantity

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<sup>32</sup> Kothari, C.R., (2004). *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*, (2nd Edition), Delhi: New Age International Ltd., p. 8

<sup>33</sup> Bhattacharjee, Anol, (2012). *Social Science Research: Principles, Methods, and Practice*. p. 35 [Online] Available at: <[http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=oa\\_textbooks](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1002&context=oa_textbooks)> [Accessed 29 Aug 2013].

<sup>34</sup> King, Gary; Keohane, Robert O. and Verba, Sidney. Designing, (1994), *Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton University Press, p. 3

refers to how much, how large, the amount of something.”<sup>35</sup> Quantitative method involves numbers and digits in the form of tables, charts and graphs, while the latter is more descriptive and explanatory in nature.

This study has adopted a qualitative research methodology with descriptive, analytical, historical, comparative and empirical approaches. There is a strong rationale and compelling reasons behind choosing a qualitative approach. In contrast to quantitative questions that ask *why*, a qualitative study research question often starts with a *how* or a *what* so that initial forays into the topic describe what is going on. Second, the topic needs to be explored and there is a need to present a detailed view of the topic. The qualitative study research is needed because the existing wide-angle lens or the distant panoramic shot does not suffice to present answers to the problem, and the close-up view does not exist. In addition, in a qualitative study research, individuals are studied in their natural setting which involves field of study and gaining access to the main players.<sup>36</sup> In qualitative inquiry, it is the researcher who is an instrument of data collection. According to Denzin and Lincoln:

[Q]ualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, artefacts and cultural texts and productions, along with observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts - that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives.<sup>37</sup>

As Creswell says, a researcher undertakes qualitative research “in a natural setting” where s/he is “an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyses them inductively, focuses on the meaning of participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language.”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, bearing in mind the research objectives, I have chosen qualitative research methodology with descriptive and analytical approaches. There are two more reasons for this choice; (a) it may not be easy to quantify or measure the views and opinions of the interviewees regarding the drug production and conflict in Afghanistan and the link between the two, and (b) my research project requires

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<sup>35</sup> Kvale, Steinar, (1996). *InterViews - an Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage Publications, p. 67

<sup>36</sup> Creswell, John W., (2002). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 17-18

<sup>37</sup> Denzin, Norman K., and Lincoln, Yvonna, (2011). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In: Denzin, Norman K., and Lincoln, Yvonna (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 3-4

<sup>38</sup> Creswell, John W., (2002). *op.cit.* pp. 17-18

a detailed description and analysis of the impact of drugs on the conflict in Afghanistan. The project also requires examining various dimensions, motivations and actors of the Afghan conflict. Therefore, this research is not about the quantification but rather to describe, analyse and explain the views of various respondents. However, statistical data is utilised in several places in the thesis, mostly in the form of graphs and tables, for furthering the arguments.

Although this study mainly focuses on Afghanistan, it also involves “case study” research as part of the overall qualitative research. Case research “is an in-depth investigation of a problem in one or more real-life settings (case sites) over an extended period of time.”<sup>39</sup> However, along with the descriptive and analytical approaches, a comparative approach has also been applied vis-à-vis the impact of drugs production and trade on conflicts in other parts of the world. As part of this approach, three insurgent groups such as FARC in Colombia, LTTE in Sri Lanka and PKK in Turkey have been studied and investigated and their involvement in the drug trade is critically examined.

Data are collected and compiled in every piece of academic inquiry. Qualitative inquiry also involves field work to collect extensive data, and gain access, rapport, and an “insider” perspective. There are a number of methods of data collection including interviews, observations, scores and metrics. For this study, both primary data - those which are collected a fresh and for the first time and are original in nature – and secondary data - those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistical process - are used. In qualitative research, primary data is usually obtained through observation, direct communication with the respondents and/or through personal interviews.

In social sciences, interviews are one of the main primary data collection tools and techniques in qualitative research.<sup>40</sup> Although different types of interviews are usually used to conduct a qualitative research, this project carried out mainly four kinds of interviews in collecting primary data: 1), face to face interviews; 2), Skype based interviews; 3), electronic mail based interviews; and 4), telephone interviews.

There are several reasons for choosing four types of interviews instead of one. The people I planned to interview were/are not based in one city or even one country, therefore, it was

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<sup>39</sup> Bhattacharjee, Anol, (2012). *op.cit.* p. 40.

<sup>40</sup> Punch, Keith F., (2005). *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). London: Sage publication; and Bryman, Alan, (2004). *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press.

not possible for me to visit all those places and conduct face to face interviews due to time constrained, limited financial resources and, in some cases, possible danger due fighting and insecurity. Thus, reachable participants living in Afghanistan, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, United States and the United Kingdom were approached for face to face interviews. In certain parts of Afghanistan, some of the interviewees were not able to meet face to face and, sometimes, I was not able to meet those who live in very insecure areas of a few southern and eastern provinces. In such cases, I usually relied on telephone interviewees. Skype interviews were used as a tool for gathering the primary data when the interviewees had access to the internet while electronic mail was used where individuals were literate and were connected to the worldwide web. Individuals with no access to the internet were also interviewed on the telephone.

As Wimmer and Dominick say, questioning in qualitative research is flexible and there is no strict rule for developing a set of questions or a questionnaire.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, I used open-ended questions and the participants were allowed to respond without any restrictions. It was useful as such interviews usually provide an opportunity to the interviewer to get additional information. As part of this study, conducting interviews and gathering primary data were based on an open ended questionnaire consisting of 7 to 10 questions revolving around the research. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, interviews were mostly unstructured and were not following a rigid system of pre-determined questions. This offered me greater freedom to ask, in case of need, supplementary questions or at times omit certain questions when the situation required. In this method, I was able to change the order of my questions and include some aspects and exclude others. I found open-ended questions quite useful as they usually “generate unexpected insights not otherwise available from structured quantitative data alone”.<sup>42</sup> In addition, many of my interviewees such as poppy farmers, Taliban members and local elders were not willing to give a structured interview and follow a standard questionnaire. Therefore, interviews were mostly free-flowing. Interviewees were asked different questions depending on their role, background and area of interest and expertise.

It is also important to mention that while collecting primary data through interviews; it was difficult to fix the exact number of interviewees as it depended upon the interviewees’ responses as well as the time period that had been allocated for the fieldwork/interviews. However, I have captured the views and opinions of all the main stakeholders – including

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<sup>41</sup> Wimmer, Roger D., and Dominick, Joseph R., (2010). *Mass media Research: An Introduction*, (9<sup>th</sup> edition), Boston: Cengage Learning, Inc.

<sup>42</sup> Bhattacharjee, Anol, (2012). *op.cit.* p.41.

members of the insurgency and drug traffickers. Some of the traffickers had been captured and others were/are still at large. This makes the dissertation a more balanced and objective one. Over a period of several years, I conducted more than a hundred interviews with different stake holders and have categorised my research interviewees into the following groups as per their profession, background and expertise.<sup>43</sup> At least three individuals have been interviewed from each group.

1. Opium poppy farmers
2. Taliban members/commanders/Insurgents
3. Drug smugglers/traders
4. Local elders/local politicians
5. Afghan Government officials (retired and in service)
6. Foreign diplomats/foreign officials (retired and in service)/NGOs/UN officials
7. Academics/Journalists/Experts/Businessmen

During the course of this study, I had interactions and discussions with hundreds of people from different walks of life. Several of them were also interviewed informally to enrich the study and obtain first-hand information about the topic. Despite my assurances about confidentiality, my poppy farmers, villagers and even journalists and some local officials asked me not to record the interviews as they feared that this might harm them or their livelihoods and careers. In such cases, I simply took notes and later incorporated them in various parts of the thesis. I have made sure to protect the confidentiality of some of the participants' names, locations, and other data which might reveal their identity. In certain cases the subjects may want to remain anonymous. So, it is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to ensure appropriate precautions are taken in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants' names, locations, and other data. Given the sensitivity of the subject, and as requested by the University Ethics Sub- Committee, anonymity and confidentiality was offered to all participants. Before conducting the interview, every participant was assured about the confidentiality and prior approval was also taken from each individual for recording and/or note taking. During my fieldwork, several of them asked for anonymity or confidentiality.

Therefore, the interviewees who wanted to remain anonymous have been mentioned with their profession such as Farmer, Smuggler/Drug Trader, and Journalist etc. along with the names of the province/city of Afghanistan they reside in. As listed in the bibliography

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<sup>43</sup> See Bibliography for more details about the interviews and their categories.

section of this thesis, they have been given codes such as “B1, B2 and B3...” for businessmen; “D1, D2 and D3...” for Afghan diaspora members/labourers based in Gulf countries mainly in UAE and Qatar; “G1, G2, G3...” for government officials; “F1, F2, F3...” for farmers; “J1, J2, J3...” for local journalists; “P1, P2, P3...” for politicians; “S1, S2, S3...” for smugglers/drug traders; “T1, T2, T3...” for Taliban members/sympathisers /supporters; and “V1, V2, V3...” for local villagers including tribal elders.

Great care has been taken to analyse the responses of the interviewees as objectively as possible. For the maintenance of objectivity, different people on different side of the spectrum were asked questions about similar issues to corroborate facts and cross check the information in order to avoid subjectivity and biasness. All possible efforts have been made to enhance the credibility and authenticity of the project.

All of my interviewees were not able to speak English. Therefore, depending on the interviewees’ language capabilities and the circumstances, interviews were conducted in four languages i.e. Pashto, Dari/Persian, Urdu and English. Where applicable, before leaving for the fieldwork, prior mailing or telephonic contacts were established with the interviewees. As I speak all these languages, I conducted the interviews myself without the help of any interpreter and translated the relevant parts into English for this thesis.

As part of the primary data collection, I also applied the Observative Method, which involves the “investigator’s own direct observation.” I found this very useful as “the main advantage of this method is that subjective bias is eliminated” and “the information obtained under this method relates to what is currently happening.”<sup>44</sup>

The secondary data refers to the data which are already available and have already been collected and analysed by someone else. Secondary data may either be published data or unpublished data. Sources for secondary data can be classified as paper-based sources (books, journals, periodicals, abstracts, indexes, directories, research reports, conference papers, various publications of central/state/local governments, publications of foreign governments or of international bodies and their subsidiary organisations, market reports, annual reports, internal records of organisations, newspapers and magazines) and electronic sources (CD-ROMs, on-line databases, Internet, videos and broadcasts).

The main source of secondary data was libraries in and around London and Afghanistan. In addition, original source material in various languages including English, Pashto,

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<sup>44</sup> Kothari, C.R., (2004). *Op.cit.* p. 96

Dari/Persian and Urdu are used for this study such as information available from different governmental, non-governmental agencies; and the coverage of the issue in various media outlets, including television, radio, newspapers and the Internet.

I have been working for the BBC for 15 years mostly covering international news and current affairs. Afghanistan has been one of the areas of my expertise where I also served as the BBC World Service Bureau Chief and Editor in 2010 and 2011. Prior to formally starting this study, I had already conducted some field research mainly in Afghanistan but also in Turkey with the aim of writing a book on the topic. Although my trip to and field work in Turkey was not directly related to my current research topic, I collected information and material on the side-lines of my other research project titled “The Survival of Sufism in Turkey” which was part of the BBC Onassis Bursary Scheme. During the past decade, I have made several trips to Afghanistan and have been following the developments there very closely for a long time. Since I enrolled at the University for this study in 2011, I visited Afghanistan five times and collected information about the topic whenever there was an opportunity. Afghanistan is a conflict zone where a number of my interviewees live/lived and I was aware of the risks and hazards involved.

Although I had initially planned to focus more on the role of “warlords” and their links with the illicit drugs economy, I, in consultation with my directors of study, shifted the focus of the study towards the insurgency after I found out that warlords were not generally willing to talk to me about their links with the drug trade and that focusing too much on them might pose unnecessary risks. However, the role of warlords is still discussed in the thesis in the context of state-building and the patronage network. I had also planned to spend more time in the remote parts of Afghanistan but I didn’t stay for longer in one particular place due to the sensitivity of the research topic and the overall insecurity. Nevertheless, I am familiar with the country and have contacts there which helped me to move around, observe the situation closely and talk to as many people as I could. In addition, I speak many languages spoken in the region (Pashto, Dari/Persian, Urdu/Hindi) which made travelling and communicating with local people easier. In addition to the critical analysis of the existing literature, the ethnographic work in the form of mainly interviews further enriched the study and filled the gaps in a comprehensive understanding of the topic.



## Chapter Outline

This project revolves around conflict, illicit drug trade and state-building. Drug production and trafficking is a multidimensional phenomenon both in character and consequences. These problems cannot be viewed outside the context of contemporary economic, social and political developments. Although illicit drugs have some positive-sum aspects such as income generation and employment creation, they are directly and indirectly linked with conflict, money laundering, corruption, addiction, crime and insurgency. Afghanistan has been one of the biggest opium producers for the past three decades. Opium economy, crimes and insurgency are mutually reinforcing in the country where narcotics finance the insurgent groups; while their violence weakens the state institutions and government control and encourages poppy cultivation. Both problems have grown more severe in post-Taliban Afghanistan (2001 onwards) and pose a serious threat to the stability of Afghanistan and the wider region.

In this thesis, I attempt to provide an integrated framework for understanding the conflict in general and the conflict in Afghanistan in particular. In doing so, I explore the main causes and factors of conflict, analyse the impact of illicit drugs and the role of state and non-state actors. To begin with, I show what causes a conflict and what motivates groups of people to resort to violence and start an internal war. Overall, the thesis is divided into seven main chapters and an introduction and conclusion.

Chapter 1 analyses the literature concerning the study of civil conflict and internal social strife. It assesses a wide range of perspectives and theories that attempt to explain the causes and motivations of collective violent action and civil wars. By focusing on key themes developed as part of conflict studies, this chapter compares different approaches, reviews factors and mechanisms of intra-state conflicts and assesses the validity and relevance of these concepts in explaining and predicting social mobilisation. This chapter argues that although different models and formulations -- such as structural violence framework and greed-grievance model -- are useful in understanding the causes of conflicts, they have several shortcomings such as missing or downplaying some factors while overemphasizing others. While discussing the state centric approach, this chapter argues that in most cases, civil wars display a strong regional and international character and are therefore not a completely domestic phenomenon. The chapter explains that in an increasingly globalising world, conflicts are becoming more complex involving a number of actors and factors. The chapter concludes by suggesting the “Hybrid Framework” of

conflict which takes into account a variety of overlapping causes and motivations as well as the complex web of actors at local, regional and international levels.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the exploration of the dynamics of the conflict in Afghanistan and analyses it in the light of the “Hybrid Framework.” The chapter describes that a large body of writings on the conflict in Afghanistan has many limitations as it portrays it as either a terrorist/extremist problem or the product of “ethnic hatred” while largely ignores or downplays other factors. The chapter argues that as one of the world’s most protracted conflicts, the war in Afghanistan is the product of a complex web of local motives and interactions as well regional and international rivalries and interferences. This chapter demonstrates that, like many other so called civil wars, the conflict in Afghanistan displays a strong regional and international character and is, therefore, neither a completely domestic phenomenon nor solely based on greed. The chapter explains the internal motivational elements of the Afghan conflict such as ideology (anti-communist, anti-Western, Islamist, conservatism, nationalism etc.), greed (resources, power etc.) as well as a host of external factors (such as strategic, proxy, criminal etc.). It argues that the Afghan conflict is a mixture of a number of complex and overlapping causes and motivations involving multiple local and foreign actors competing for promoting their economic, political, ideological and strategic interests. This chapter concludes by analysing the role of natural resources, especially illicit drugs, in the conflict in Afghanistan and argues that it is not drugs that caused the conflict but the conflict itself created a suitable environment for drug production, processing and trade.

Chapter 3 discusses the question of profit versus ideology in the context of drugs and focuses on the impact of illicit drugs on the structure, strength, political goals and ideologies of insurgent groups. In doing so, the chapter examines the nature and evolution of political goals of several insurgent groups and their relationship with the drug trade. In the post WWII world, more than a hundred insurgent groups operating in different countries have somehow benefited financially from illicit drugs. Although majority of these groups have/had religious, nationalist or Marxist ideologies, the link between “holy warriors” and criminal groups, especially drug smugglers, has become a familiar theme. In many parts of the world, militant groups and organised crime live in symbiosis with each other. In order to understand the phenomenon in a wider context, this chapter examines the relationship between drugs economy and conflicts outside Afghanistan. Although, the chapter gives an overview of the problem, three mini-cases have been selected for this comparative part of the study -- Colombia’s Marxist rebel group, FARC (Fuerzas Armadas

Revolucionarias de Colombia); Turkey's Kurdish separatist group, PKK (Partya Kerkeren Kurdistan); and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka.

Chapter 4 provides a historical context of drug production with a special focus on Afghanistan and the surrounding countries. The chapter demonstrates that, historically, Afghanistan had not been a major opium producer and, unlike many other countries in the region, did not have an 'opium culture.' That chapter analyses how only during the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Afghanistan emerged as a major opium producer and, in a short span of time, became the biggest producer of opium in the world. The chapter also examines the trend of drug production, trade and consumption in the wider region and explores the impact of regional and international drugs economy on Afghanistan. This chapter concludes with a discussion about the links between conflict and drugs and argues that the large-scale opium production in Afghanistan is directly linked with the wars and upheavals starting with the 1979 Soviet invasion of the country.

Chapter 5 documents the links between illicit drugs and the Taliban in Afghanistan and provides a detailed mechanism of how the drug production and trade funds the insurgent group. It shows that although the opium industry had already been established before the emergence of the Taliban Movement in 1994, it grew faster under the Taliban regime (1996-2001). In 1999, when the Taliban were controlling almost 90% of Afghanistan's territory, the country produced a peak of over 4500 mt. of raw opium.<sup>45</sup> The chapter discusses why in the summer of 2000, the Taliban imposed a ban on poppy cultivation and how the strict ban resulted in an "almost total halt to opium growing in the 2001 season."<sup>46</sup> The chapter also explores why the Taliban reversed their position on opium since their regime was toppled as a result of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, the opium economy and the insurgency are mutually reinforcing; drugs finance the Taliban, while their violence encourages poppy cultivation and weakens the state control. This has led to the suggestions that the Taliban might be following the FARC's footsteps and that a "FARCification" of the Taliban is already underway. This chapter examines the Taliban's complicated and evolving relationship with drugs and discusses the role of the drug industry in funding the insurgency in Afghanistan. The chapter draws on field work and a large number of original interviews with the Taliban

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<sup>45</sup> Rubin, Barnett R., (2004). *Road to Ruin: Afghanistan's Booming Opium Industry*. Center on International Cooperation, New York University. Available online at: <<https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/kf/ROADTORUIN.PDF>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014]; UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. Op.cit; UNODC, (2014). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014*. Op.cit.

<sup>46</sup> BBC News, (2002). *Afghan Opium Problem 'Serious'*, 27 August. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/2218488.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2218488.stm)> [Accessed 20 March 2013]; UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. Op.cit.

members and fighters, drug smugglers, opium poppy farmers, local elders, politicians and government and NGO officials to produce a uniquely detailed picture of the Taliban's approach towards drugs and the overall impact of drugs on the insurgency. It details the Taliban's major sources of income and the impact of illicit drugs on their strength, motivation and ideology. The chapter also provides a comprehensive picture of the Taliban's governance and organisational structure from its emergence to the fall of the regime (1994-2001) as well as the post-Emirate insurgency and "shadow government" (2001-2015).

Chapter 6 explores the role illicit drugs play in conflict and impact institution (un)building with a special focus on Afghanistan. Based on first-hand information from field research, this chapter argues that opium economy, crimes and insurgency are mutually reinforcing in Afghanistan. Narcotics finance insurgents while their violence weakens government control and encourages poppy cultivation. Similarly, the drugs economy hampers institution building due to the complicity of corrupt officials. The chapter describes how the narcotics industry has helped in the production of a new elite class in Afghanistan which benefits from instability and conflict and has penetrated the state institutions mainly through patronage and corruption. The chapter looks at the mechanism of how the drug trade undermines governance, weakens state institutions and encourages insecurity and warlordism? Based mainly on anecdotal evidence and original interviews, the chapter argues that corrupt officials and warlords often play both sides -- the insurgents and the counterinsurgents -- and infiltrate state institutions by colonising part of the civil and security administration. While appreciating the political economy dynamics of drugs in Afghanistan, the chapter explores the mechanism and extent to which drug production and trafficking inhibit institution-building and facilitate insurgency in the country.

Chapter 7 assesses the impact of counter-narcotics campaign in Afghanistan since the US led-intervention in late 1002 and suggests several policy options. Between 2002 and 2014, the international community, especially the United States, spent around US\$10 billion to curb drug production, trade and trafficking in Afghanistan.<sup>47</sup> However, policies aimed at

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<sup>47</sup> In his report to the US Congress in October 2014, John Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, said that the US alone spent approximately \$7.8 billion on counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan from 2002 to June 2014. Other donors also spent a significant amount of money to tackle the drug problem in Afghanistan. See, SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), (2014c). *Quarterly Report to United States Congress*. 30<sup>th</sup> October. Virginia. Available online at: <<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-10-30qr.pdf>> [Accessed 02 Nov 2014]; See also, New York Times, (2014). Editorial: Afghanistan's Unending Addiction. 27 Oct. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/27/opinion/afghanistans-unending-addiction.html>> [Accessed 02 Nov 2014].

tackling the drug problem have not yielded the intended outcome. The chapter explores that despite expenditure of billions of dollars on counter-narcotics, the drug problem in Afghanistan only got bigger and the drugs economy still forms a significant portion of the country's GDP. This chapter also examines the role of relevant institutions, the tactics applied by the government and the causes of failure. The chapter concludes with a discussion about alternatives to opium production and analyses several possible policy options to tackle the drug problem in Afghanistan.

In the conclusion, I summarise the key findings of this study. The concluding part also has some discussion of the implications of the thesis findings for scholarship on Afghanistan and on research on the relationship between drugs, conflict and state failure and policy.

The appendices have, among other material, the English translation of several drug related decrees issued by the Taliban Supreme Leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, which demonstrate the Taliban's evolving policy towards drug production and trade.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Civil War and the Politics of Conflict: A Theoretical Framework**

This chapter reviews and analyses the literature concerning the study of civil conflict and internal social strife. By focusing on key themes and models developed as part of conflict studies, the chapter discusses factors and mechanisms of civil violence, compares different approaches and frameworks and assesses the validity of these concepts in explaining and predicting social mobilisation. This chapter points out that different models and formulations about the nature of conflict - such as structural violence framework and greed-grievance model - are useful in understanding different causes of conflict and the motivations of its actors but argues that these frameworks have their own shortcomings such as missing or downplaying some factors while overemphasising others. In addition to discussing the state centric approach, this chapter argues that in most cases, civil wars display a strong regional and international character and are therefore not a completely domestic phenomenon. While discussing a number of conflicts, this chapter concludes by suggesting a new approach of “Hybrid Framework” which takes into account the complex web of overlapping causes and motivations as well as a variety of actors at local, regional and international levels.

Violence and conflict have been part of human society for much of its history. Individuals, groups and states, all have used violence in different ways and for a variety of reasons and purposes. The capacity to inflict harm increased over time from the development of basic tools such as spears and arrows to weapons of mass destruction especially nuclear devices. In the First World War (1914-1918), a total of over 35 million people were killed, wounded or listed as missing. The Second World War (1939-1945) was more destructive still with deaths alone estimated to have exceeded 60 million, including 32 million civilians. This reduced the population of several countries including Germany, Poland and the Soviet Union by over 10 percent.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, intra-state violence and civil wars

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<sup>1</sup> Jacoby, Tim, (2008). *Understanding Conflict and Violence: Theoretical and Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 5.

have also claimed the lives of countless people throughout the world. Civil wars have particularly become deadlier since World War II claiming the lives of millions of civilians. According to a study, in the 1990s, over 90 percent of all war-related deaths occurred in internal conflicts.<sup>2</sup>

Although exploring and explaining the nature of inter-state and intra-state violent action is a daunting task, a number of scholars have engaged in studying conflict in its different forms. Social scientists in various parts of the world and in different times studied and analysed the dynamics of violence in order to understand its causes and motivations and predict and prevent its occurring. The oldest known military treatise dealing with managing conflicts and winning battles is said to be “*The Art of War*” written by Sun Tzu, an ancient Chinese military expert and strategist who lived circa 544–496 BC. While discussing the two sides of war, it states:

It is only one who is thoroughly acquainted with the evils of war that can thoroughly understand the profitable way of carrying it on. In war, then, let your great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns. The art of war is of vital importance to the State. It is a matter of life and death, a road either to safety or to ruin. Hence it is a subject of inquiry which can on no account be neglected.<sup>3</sup>

Scholars have not only discussed the destructive nature of war and violence, they have also explored the ways and means of how to carry out a violent campaign. Writing in his book on policies for kings and ministers called *Chanakya Neeti* (also known as *Neetishastra*), the “Indian Machiavelli”, Chanakya (c. 350-283 BC), says that “there is nothing wrong” in using violence. “Be good to the person who does good, return violence to a violent person; deal with wickedness with wicked person.”<sup>4</sup> Chanakya (who also known as Kautilya and Vishnugupta) was a political realist. In his other book called *Arthashastra* (Science of Polity), which is compared to Machiavelli’s “*The Prince*”, he gives a complex account of battlefield strategy and when and how to use violence.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Weinstein, Jeremy M., (2007). *Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.5. For a detailed history of insurgent and non-traditional warfare, see Boot, Max, (2013). *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*. New York: Liveright.

<sup>3</sup> Tzu, Sun, (1910). *The Art of War*. Translated from Chinese by Lionel Giles titled as “Sun Tzu The Art of War: The Oldest Military Treatise in the World”, Available online at: <<http://www.geocities.ws/tijeloum/virtualbook/suntzu.pdf>> [Accessed 09 Feb 2012].

<sup>4</sup> Chanakya/Kautilya (date unknown). *Chanakya Neeti* (also known as *Neetishastra*). Translated from Sanskrit by Bhatnagar, Rajeev B. Available online at: <<http://kural.in/Neeti/Chapters.asp?No=17>> [Accessed 16 Feb 2012].

<sup>5</sup> Chanakya/Kautilya, (1915). *Arthashastra: Book X, Relating to War*. Translated into English by Shamasastri, R. Bangalore: Government Press, 437-453. Available online at: <<http://www.sdstate.edu/projectsouthasia/upload/Book-X-Relating-to-War.pdf>> [Accessed 09 Feb 2012]

On the other side of the world, in European societies, many thinkers and scholars formulated their own ideas about the causes of war and the prevention of violent civil strife. “Stasis” -- civil war, or social unrest -- was the scourge of Greek political life and frequently disrupted peace and tranquillity in the society.<sup>6</sup> Berger estimates that during the fourth and fifth Century AD, Greek cities or poleis of Sicily and southern Italy underwent upheavals once every seven years, while in other parts of the Greek World the outbreaks of violence were even more frequent.<sup>7</sup>

Both Plato (427-347 BC) and his student Aristotle (384 -322 BC), concluded that such civil unrest had its roots in growing levels of factionalism within Athenian society. Aristotle, for instance, noted that civil discord and internal conflict may be the result of three fundamental causes. Writing about tensions in the Athenian society, he noted that much social conflict was a result of grievances caused by the combined effects of the fundamentally unequal nature of Athenian society, frustration with the perceived weakness and incompetence of the city’s leaders in responding to this inequality and the desire for wealth and privilege.<sup>8</sup> Aristotle, in his *Politics* (book 5), explained the causes of civil discord by saying that “We must comprehend (1) the psychological inclination to engage in stasis, (2) the end for which it is waged, and third (3) the “beginnings” that set into motion the political disturbances and stasis between citizens.”<sup>9</sup>

Comprehending the causes and impact of social unrest and civil conflicts has also made up a key element of modern social sciences. In recent history, numerous scholars have tried to understand the nature of conflictive behaviour and social mobilisation. Especially, there has been an explosion of academic interest in conflict studies since the Second World War. Civil war usually involves the use of force by opposition groups against the government or to capture power. However, there is no consensus in the literature about the causes and motivations of violent conflict. Scholars have interpreted the phenomenon in many different ways and have come up with a number of models and frameworks aimed at understanding and preventing conflicts. Some writers have come with the idea that violent conflict is inherent and an inevitable part of human interaction. Therefore, they argue that violence cannot be fully eradicated; it can only be obstructed. On the contrary, many other scholars approached the causes of violence from the perspective of human learning and

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<sup>6</sup> Kalimtzis, Kostas, (2000). *Aristotle on Political Enmity and Disease: An Inquiry into Stasis*. New York: State University of New York Press, p. xiii

<sup>7</sup> Berger, Shlomo, (1992). *Revolution and Society in Greek Sicily and Southern Italy*. Historia-Einzelschriften, Stuttgart: Steiner, p. 107

<sup>8</sup> Kalimtzis, Kostas, (2000). *op.cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Kalimtzis, Kostas, (2000). *op.cit.* p. 106



suggested that aggressive behaviour is socially learnt and environmentally acquired. In the following pages, I have discussed some of the key concepts developed as part of the scholarship about understanding violent conflicts and their causes and motivations.

### 1.1 Structural Violence

Johan Galtung, a renowned peace and conflict studies scholar, described violence as a structural phenomenon and called it a social construct. Galtung was the first to articulate the notion of “structural violence” in 1969 in his paper published in the *Journal of Peace Research*. He provided a key conceptual advance and a theoretical framework in which conflict and violence at all levels of society (i.e. individuals, communities, etc.) could be analysed and understood. He conceived violence as “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is.”<sup>10</sup> According to this concept, violence is the action that inhibits an individual or group from realising full potential. Galtung equates structural violence with social injustice, exploitation and the denial of rights and needs such as economic well-being, education, dignity by people who might not be directly violent.

The structural violence theory explores how political, economic and cultural structures result in the occurrence of “avoidable” violence. Galtung saw violence as a result of an unequal distribution of resources and not as a direct act of any decision or action made by a particular person. He posits the notion that behavioral violence represents a significant symptom of underlying structural violence. Structural violence exists when some groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc. have and/or assumed to have more access to goods, resources, and opportunities than other groups, classes, genders, nationalities, etc. These tendencies may be overt such as apartheid or more subtle such as traditions or tendency to award some groups privileges over another. It can take many forms including institutionalised racism and sexism.

According to structural violence theory, the cause of violence is the unequal advantage built into the very social, political and economic systems that govern societies, states and the world. Galtung clarifies these notions by saying that “when one husband beats his wife there is a clear case of personal violence, but when one million husbands keep one million

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<sup>10</sup> Galtung, Johan, (1969). Violence, Peace, and Peace Research, *Journal of Peace Research*, **6** (3), pp. 167-191

wives in ignorance there is structural violence.”<sup>11</sup> According to Galtung, violence can take many forms. It may be psychological as well as physical; it may be visible and direct and/or invisible and indirect. The notion of structural violence may thus range from the use of physical force to verbal violence such as humiliation or put downs, and threats to others’ interests and values to impairment of fundamental human needs or life which makes it impossible or difficult for people to meet their needs or achieve their full potential.

According to Galtung, features of structural violence are accompanied by cultural violence, which makes structures of exploitation “look, even feel, right - or at least not wrong.” Galtung defines cultural violence “as any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form”.<sup>12</sup> Cultural and structural violence causes direct violence and direct violence reinforce structural and cultural violence. Direct violence, physical and/or verbal, is visible as behaviour. However, this action does not come out of nowhere; its roots are cultural and structural. Cultural violence is the prevailing attitudes and beliefs that surround us in daily life about the power and necessity of violence.

The structural violence model has been applied to understand the nature or causes of violence and conflict in a society, state or at international level. The following violence triangle and a violence strata image, based on Galtung’s work, sum up relations between direct, structural and cultural violence.<sup>13</sup>



Figure 1.1: Galtung’s Violence Triangle<sup>14</sup>

Although the structural violence theory provides an interesting framework to understand the causes of “avoidable violence”, human experience has shown that political, economic

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Galtung, Johan, (1990). Cultural Violence, *Journal of Peace Research*, **27** (3), 291–305.

<sup>13</sup> Galtung, Johan, (Not Dated). *Structural/Cultural/Direct Violence*. [Online]: <<http://www.turning-the-tide.org/files/Structural%20Cultural%20Direct%20Violence%20Hand-out.pdf>> [Accessed 10 Feb 2012].

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

and cultural structures do not always result in violence. A number of communities have lived in peace for a long time despite the apparent structures that inhibit individuals or groups from realising full potential. The other major drawback of this theory is its oversight of the role of foreign actors in inciting or causing violence through various means and ways including interference and invasions.

## 1.2 Relative Deprivation

It was Aristotle who noted over 2000 years ago that social conflict in the Athenian society was a result of grievances caused by inequality and of the inability of leaders to deal with this problem.<sup>15</sup> The impact of grievances as the causes of conflict has been discussed by social scientists ever since. Frustration resulting from disparities and deprivation is singled out as one of the main causes motivating individuals and groups to take action and launch a rebellion.

Relative deprivation is an old concept. In recent history, both Marx and de Tocqueville found it more relevant to understand and analyse civil conflicts and social mobilisations. The concept is fundamental to Marx's notion of alienation and immiseration (emiseration) for a social revolution which suggests that progressive degradation of industrial working class would finally lead automatically to revolution. Marx also noted that improvement in living conditions and general development may still give birth to social tension if inequality and the gap between rich and poor existed: "Our desires and pleasures spring from society; we measure them, therefore, by society and not by the objects which serve for their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature."<sup>16</sup>

Relative deprivation was also a vital revolutionary factor for de Tocqueville (1805-1859) when he analysed the causes of specific upheavals, most notably the French Revolution of 1789. He noted that relaxation of an oppressive regime and partial reforms engenders expectations in the public that further reforms are on the way.<sup>17</sup> Writing in his book, *The Old Regime and the (French) Revolution*, de Tocqueville asserted that failure to deliver reforms becomes intolerable which in turn explodes: "Evils which are patiently endured when they seem inevitable, become intolerable when once the idea of escape from them is

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<sup>15</sup> Kalimtzis, Kostas, (2000). *op.cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Avineri, Shlomo (1968). *The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 80

<sup>17</sup> Gurney, Joan Neff and Tierney, Kathleen J., (1982). Relative Deprivation and Social Movements: A Critical Look at Twenty Years of Theory and Research. In: *The Sociological Quarterly*, January, **23**, (1), 33–47

suggested. The very redress of grievances throws a new light on those which are left untouched, and adds fresh poignancy to their smart: if the pain be less, the patient's sensibility is greater.”<sup>18</sup>

Within the grievances framework, a number of experts on various aspects of conflictive behaviour have focused on the relationship between deprivation and collective violence. The relative deprivation theory suggests that a psychic state of resentment, frustration and perceived injustice is the essential cause of rebellion and other forms civil militant action. While explaining the concept, Jacoby writes that “Individuals’ lack of personal fulfilment, both material and non-material, and the growing realisation of others’ wants, as perceived within their reference group (or a combination of the two), can be a motivational factor in various forms of conflictive behaviour.”<sup>19</sup>

Relative deprivation is a simple concept based on the idea that people rebel in response to perceived injustice and, as Rule says, it “may be the most appealing” among all the theories of civil violence and “hard to dismiss”.<sup>20</sup> Robin Willimas has called the basic concept of relative deprivation as “deceptively simple” adding that “persons may feel that they are deprived of some desired state or thing, in comparison with some standard, or with the real or imagined condition of other people”.<sup>21</sup>

After World War II, the concept of relative deprivation became more popular and more and more social scientists took a renewed interest in the concept. Since then, various scholars have explored the linkages between grievance formation and conflictive behaviour and drew conclusions that impatience with the frustration of economic and/or political needs causes collective action. In 1960s, James C. Davies contended that revolutions (both failed and successful) were the result of popular dissatisfaction generated by a “prolonged period of rising expectations and rising gratification” followed by a short period of sharp reversal, during which the gap between expectations and gratifications quickly widens and becomes intolerable. In his well-known study, *Toward a Theory of Revolution*, Davies discussed three revolutionary events: Dorr's Rebellion in early 19th century Rhode Island, the Russian revolution of 1917 and the Egyptian revolution of 1952.

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<sup>18</sup> De Tocqueville, Alexis (1856). *The Old Regime and the Revolution*. Translated into English by John Bonner. New York, p. 214. Available online at: <http://www.archive.org/stream/oldregimeandrev00tocqgoog#page/n6/mode/2up> [Accessed 12 Feb 2012]

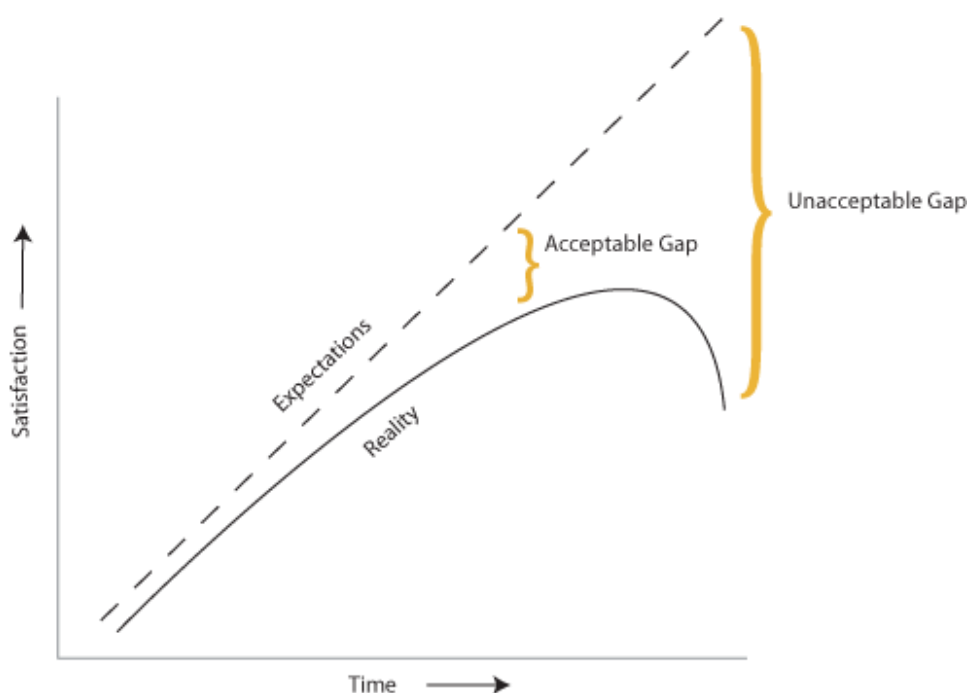
<sup>19</sup> Jacoby, Tim, (2008). *Understanding Conflict and Violence*. op.cit. p. 104

<sup>20</sup> Rule, James B., (1988). *Theories of Civil Violence*. California: University of California Press, p. 203

<sup>21</sup> Williams, Robert (1975). Relative Deprivation. In: Coser, Lewis A. (ed.), *The Idea of Social Structure: Papers in Honor of Robert K. Merton*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, p. 355

Revolutions are most likely to occur when a prolonged period of objective economic and social development is followed by a short period of sharp reversal. People then subjectively fear the ground gained with great effort will be quite lost; their mood becomes revolutionary.<sup>22</sup>

Davies is known for his so-called “J-Curve” theory which seeks to explain the rise of collective actions in terms of rising individual expectations and falling levels of perceived well-being. In a later study (1979), he offered a similar analysis of the US civil war, the Nazi revolution of 1933, and the rebellions of African Americans in the 1960s. In all instances he identified the link between economic growth and a sudden reversal in fortunes.<sup>23</sup>



**Figure 1.2:** The Davies J-Curve<sup>24</sup>

However, the concept of directly connecting frustration with revolt can be questioned on the grounds that that frustrated people in general do not always intend to launch a violent

<sup>22</sup> Davies, James C., (1962). Toward a Theory of Revolution. *American Sociological Review*, **27**, (1): 5-19, February.

<sup>23</sup> Davies, James C. (1979). The J-Curve of Rising and Declining Satisfaction as a Cause of Revolution and Rebellion. In: Graham, Hugh D. and Gurr, Ted R (eds.), *Violence in America: Historical & Comparative Perspectives*. California: Sage Publications.

<sup>24</sup> Mucha, Thomas, (2010). *Peasant revolution 2.0*. [Online]. Available online at: <<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/commerce/090206/peasant-revolution-20>> [Accessed 13 Feb 2012].

collective action. Inequality and other major grievances – such as political repression, and ethnic and religious divisions - do not lead to violent conflicts all the times. According to Collier, grievances “simply cannot usually be the cause of such a distinctive phenomenon as violent conflict. They may well generate intense political conflict, but such conflict does not usually escalate to violent conflict.”<sup>25</sup> Giving an economic perspective on the causes of civil war, Collier says that “objective measures of social grievance “have had little systematic effect on risk.” He points out that “civil wars occur where rebel organisations are financially viable” and able to raise revenue. He concludes that inequality is not the cause of violence but it is the conflict which “actively needs to create” divisions.<sup>26</sup>

Several other critics have also raised questions about the links between deprivation and violence. As Jacoby says, deprivation would mean “to label any individual or group that, perhaps deliberately and contentedly, does not possess ‘sufficient’ material good as inclined to behave aggressively and therefore a potential threat to the established order.”<sup>27</sup> Similarly, Bandura argues that empirically the “vast majority of the disadvantaged do not engage in disruptive public protest.”<sup>28</sup> After analysing the concept, Rule concludes that “deprivation is neither necessary nor sufficient for aggression to occur; it influences violence only to the extent that it influences more general political attitudes”.<sup>29</sup>

### 1.3 Resource mobilisation

The challenge to the grievances paradigm emerged in the form of resource mobilisation theory which emphasises the importance of material improvement as the incentive for taking part in a civil militant action. As Aristotle said that, in addition to the unequal nature of the Athenian society and frustration with the weakness of administrators, the other main cause of conflict was the desire to get wealth and privileges, resource mobilisation theorists argue that people resort to violence because they pursue their own interests after assessing the costs and benefits of their action.<sup>30</sup> The primary objective in this case is enrichment and material gains.

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<sup>25</sup> Collier, Paul, (2006). *Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy*. p. 22. [Online]. Available at: <<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~econpco/research/pdfs/EconomicCausesofCivilConflict-ImplicationsforPolicy.pdf>> [Accessed 13 Feb 2012].

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.* p.13

<sup>27</sup> Jacoby, Tim, (2008). *op.cit.* p. 119

<sup>28</sup> Bandura, Albert, (1973). *Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, p. 169

<sup>29</sup> Rule, James B., (1988). *op.cit.* p. 250

<sup>30</sup> Kalimtzis, Kostas, (2000). *op.cit.*

According to Rule, collective action may be defensive or offensive, but the aim is “to do better in the ongoing fight for collective advantage, or to avoid doing worse.”<sup>31</sup> Motivated by predation of rents from primary commodity exports, “greed-rebellion” subjects to an economic calculus of costs and a military survival constraint.<sup>32</sup> Proponents of this concept argue that grievances (such as inequality, political repression, and ethnic and religious divisions) provide little or no explanatory power in predicting rebellion.<sup>33</sup> These scholars argue that collective violence results from competition for scarce resources with other groups.<sup>34</sup>

The centrality of economic agenda to civil wars got momentum in the mid-1990s. David Keen was one of the first political scientists who stressed the importance of political economy of conflict. He noted that war is “a way of creating an alternative system of profit, power and even protection”.<sup>35</sup> However, it was Paul Collier who had more influence on the scholarship on the subject of economic agendas in civil wars. In their analyses of factors responsible for the outbreak and duration of civil war, Collier and his colleague, Anke Hoeffler, presented a “greed versus grievance” model which extrapolates issues of motivation and causation of intra-state conflicts. Collier and Hoeffler say that the availability of financial resources, especially natural resources results in the outbreaks of civil wars and social unrest.<sup>36</sup> Collier emphasizes the importance of greed rather than grievance and argues that “even where the rationale at the top of the [rebel] organisation is essentially greed, the actual discourse may be entirely dominated by grievances.”<sup>37</sup> He says that “while objective grievances do not generate violent conflict, violent conflict generates subjective grievances”<sup>38</sup> and argues that groups initially motivated by grievance may become dependent upon primary commodity predation for survival, thus transforming itself into a greed-rebellion. Conversely, greed-rebellions need to manufacture subjective grievance for military cohesion and may find an objective grievance an effective basis for generating it.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, Collier and Hoeffler have suggested a synthesis of the two by saying that greed and grievance can co-habit which they call “an integrated greed-

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<sup>31</sup> Rule, James B., (1988). *op.cit.* p. 221

<sup>32</sup> Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke, (2001). *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 2355, Washington DC.

<sup>33</sup> Collier, Paul, (2006). *op.cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Jacoby, Tim, (2008). *op.cit.* p. 126

<sup>35</sup> Keen, David, (1998). *The economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*. IISS Adelphi Paper No., 320. London: Oxford University Press, p. 11

<sup>36</sup> Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke, (2001). *op.cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Collier, Paul, (2000). Doing Well Out of War: An Economic Perspective. In: Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M., (editors), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. (pp. 91-111). London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

<sup>38</sup> Collier, Paul, (2006). *Op.cit.* p.23

<sup>39</sup> Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke, (2001). *op.cit.*

grievance model” and “combine both sets of variables as causes of initial, as well as subsequent conflicts.”<sup>40</sup>

Natural resources, mainly minerals, drugs, timber, oil, diamonds, and gold, have been identified as the main cause of internal conflict and social violence. It is argued that resource dependent countries are not only more prone to violence but also suffer from economic underperformance and governance failure. According to Le Billon, natural resources can both influence the course of conflicts and serve to shape the type of armed conflict. In addition to foreign intervention, he has identified four main categories of armed conflict: coup d'état, warlordism, secession and rioting/peasant rebellion. The resource curse thesis, therefore, states that many rebellions and civil militant conflicts appear to be linked to the struggle for capturing resources.<sup>41</sup>

According to the “resource curse” thesis, control over resources can not only motivate people to resort to violent conflict, their availability can also increase its destructiveness. Economic motives and the dynamic of profiteering from violence have been an important part of a number of conflicts from the ancient times to modern period. This theory highlights the importance of natural resources as a major or even the main cause of intra-state conflicts. However, the fact that not all resource rich countries have civil wars points to the limitation of this theory. There are a number of resource rich countries - such as Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Botswana, Australia, Russia and Norway - that have been immune from the sort of internal conflicts that the resource mobilisation theory focuses on. In addition, there are a number of countries that didn't have lootable natural resources but experienced conflicts, for example, Somalia and Afghanistan. Therefore, the resource based model doesn't explain the motivations and causes of several conflicts and falls short to adequately answer the question that why all resource rich countries have not experienced conflicts.

However, one argument that needs to be made in the greed-grievance debate is the fact that greed does not always cause wars but helps to perpetuate them. In the Post-Cold War period, more attention has been paid to resource based conflicts which are mainly associated with failed or failing states. From Liberia and Sierra Leone to Cambodia and Burma, the politics of control over resources has played a significant in both financing and

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<sup>40</sup> Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke, (2001). *op.cit.*

<sup>41</sup> Le Billon, Philippe, (2005). *Fuelling War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflict*. IISS Adelphi Paper No., 373. Oxon: Routledge



motivating rebellions.<sup>42</sup> The following table illustrates some of the countries where different natural resources have played a role in perpetuation violence.

Country	Resources
Afghanistan	drugs, gems, timber
Pakistan	timber, gems, drugs
Colombia	drugs, oil
DR Congo	diamonds, gold
Angola	diamonds
Nigeria	oil
Sudan	oil
Liberia	timber, diamonds
Burma	timber
Indonesia	oil, copper, gold
Cambodia	gems, timber
Philippines	timber
Sierra Leone	diamonds
Rwanda	coffee
El Salvador	coffee
Sri Lanka	Limestone, graphite, gems, mineral sands

**Table 1.1** – Countries and their natural resources used by rebellious movements

The value of natural resources and the ease to exploit them can affect the strength and longevity of a rebellious group and by extension of a conflict. The process of how different rebellious groups benefit from and in many cases depend on natural resources is well documented. It was due to their significance in financing rebel groups in Angola and Sierra Leone that diamonds were called a “guerrilla’s best friend.”<sup>43</sup> Rebel groups in other parts of the world have benefited from other resources available to them. In addition to timber, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia and the Karen in Burma (Myanmar) benefited from sapphires and rubies in early 1990s, while gold helped sustain Laurent Kabila’s rebel movement in the former Zaire (now known as Congo). Charles Taylor is estimated to have made more than US\$400 million per year from the trade in natural resources - mainly

<sup>42</sup> Alao, Abiodun and Olonisakin, Funmi, (2013). Economic Fragility and Political Fluidity: Explaining Natural Resources and Conflict. In: Adebajo, Adekeye and Chandra, Lekha Sriram, (editors). *Managing Armed Conflicts in the 21st Century*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. 23-36.

<sup>43</sup> Honigsbaum, Mark and Gordon, Chris, (1999). Diamonds Are a Guerrilla’s Best Friend. *The Guardian*, 13 June 1999. Available online at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/1999/jun/13/markhonigsbaum.theobserver> [Accessed 5 June 2012]; Robinson, Simon (2000). A Guerrilla’s Best Friend. *Time Magazine*, 3 July. Available online at: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2050522,00.html> [Accessed 5 June 2012].

diamonds and timber - during the conflict in Liberia between 1992 and 1996.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, he is said to have received between 100-187 million annually from timber.<sup>45</sup> Although gold, coffee and wildlife products and timber were all sources of its funding; diamonds provided the majority of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA's) funding. UNITA was controlling some 70 percent of the diamond production in Angola in the mid-1990s. In the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, UNITA obtained revenues of estimated US\$3.72 billion from diamond sales.<sup>46</sup> The left wing guerrilla group in Colombia, FARC, earns between \$100 million and \$600 million annually from the illegal drug trade mainly through "taxing" drug producers or drug trafficking cartels that operate in their areas of influence, or selling coca base or processed cocaine to the traffickers.<sup>47</sup> In addition to drugs, kidnapping was one of the biggest sources of income for FARC and ELN. The two Colombian left wing groups netted an estimated US\$1.5 billion in ransom between 1991 and 1999.<sup>48</sup>

In Afghanistan, during the internal war of the 1990s, the main military commander of the anti-Taliban United Front (commonly known as Northern Alliance) secured between \$40-60m per year from the sale of emeralds, lapis lazuli and other precious stones.<sup>49</sup> The Taliban, both before and after the US-led invasion have been benefiting from both drugs and minerals including precious stones. The Afghan insurgent group, Taliban, allegedly secured between US\$155-400 million a year from opium through an elaborate system of taxing different stages of opium and heroin production including cultivation, processing

<sup>44</sup> USAID, (2007). *Economic Growth and Conflict*. Available online at: <[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/conflict/focus\\_areas/economics.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/focus_areas/economics.html)> Last updated 8 June 2007. [Accessed 6 June 2012].

<sup>45</sup> Renner, Michael. (2002). *The Anatomy of Resource Wars*. Worldwatch Institute Paper No. 162. Available online at: <<http://www.worldwatch.org/system/files/EWP162.pdf>> [Accessed 6 June 2012].

<sup>46</sup> Global Witness, (1998). *A Rough Trade: The Role of Companies and Governments in the Angolan Conflict*. London. Available online at: <[http://www.globalwitness.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/A\\_Rough\\_Trade.pdf](http://www.globalwitness.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/A_Rough_Trade.pdf)> [Accessed 6 June 2012].

<sup>47</sup> Hanson, Stephanie, (2009). *FARC, ELN: Colombia's Left-Wing Guerrillas*. Council on Foreign Relations, USA. Available online at: <<http://www.cfr.org/colombia/farc-eln-colombias-left-wing-guerrillas/p9272>> [Accessed 6 June 2012]; UNRIC (United Nations Regional Information Centre for Western Europe), (2012). *The Guerrilla Groups in Colombia*. Available online at: <<http://www.unric.org/en/colombia/27013-the-guerrilla-groups-in-colombia>> [Accessed 06 June 2012]. ; International Crisis Group (ICG), (2005). *War on Drugs in Colombia*. Latin America Report No. 11. 27 Jan. p.19. [Online]: <[http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/latin-america/colombia/11\\_war\\_and\\_drugs\\_in\\_colombia.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/latin-america/colombia/11_war_and_drugs_in_colombia.pdf)> [Accessed 20 March 2013]; Semana, (1997). *La Version Alemana*, 17 Feb. [Online]: <<http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/la-version-alemana/31641-3>> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

<sup>48</sup> Pax Christi-Netherlands, (2001). *The Kidnap Industry in Colombia - Our Business?* Pax Christi-Netherlands, Utrecht, Netherlands. Available online at: <[www.ikvpaxchristi.nl/catalogus/uploaded\\_file.aspx?id=167](http://www.ikvpaxchristi.nl/catalogus/uploaded_file.aspx?id=167)> [Accessed 8 June 2012]

<sup>49</sup> Chipaux, Françoise, (1999). Des mines d'émeraude pour financer la résistance du Commandant Massoud. *Le Monde*, 18 July. Available online at: <<http://membres.multimania.fr/afghanainfo/LeM1817992.htm>> [Accessed 06 June 2012]. See also Rubin, Barnett R. (2000). *The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan*. World Development, 28, (10), pp. 1789-1803. Available online at: <<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.461.517&rep=rep1&type=pdf>> [Accessed 4 June 2014].

and shipment.<sup>50</sup> In addition, local warlords and corrupt officials also receive huge sums of money from the trade in illicit drugs in Afghanistan.<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, Pakistani Taliban insurgents, in their quest for resources to sustain and fund their militancy, heavily relied on timber extraction, mining and selling precious stones, including fine quality emeralds. They also employed other methods such as kidnapping for ransom, befriending drug and timber mafia and harbouring criminals as income-generating schemes.<sup>52</sup>

Controlling and taxing the agriculture sector and cattle markets has also been a source of income for several rebel groups. In Somalia, competition for controlling the plantation and transportations of bananas resulted in skirmishes between different armed groups. In 1990s, in several parts of Afghanistan, the issue of taxation of agricultural land and agricultural products provided enough excuse for several local commanders to engage in fighting. Similarly, Charles Taylor of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) taxed companies operating in rubber plantations. Ellis in his book about the Liberian civilian war between 1989 and 1997 writes that “as far as possible, factions avoided fighting other armed groups”, and that “simulated attacks, designed solely to facilitate looting, were a common tactic, particularly in frontlines areas.”<sup>53</sup>

Another factor that affects the activity of an insurgent group and the characteristics of a conflict is whether the resource exploited by the belligerents is legal or illegal. As compared to governments that are usually concerned with their international reputation and obligations, rebel groups find it easier to engage in the production and smuggling of illegal resources such as narcotics. Rebel groups have been found involved in the smuggling and trafficking of mainly illegal commodities and substances especially in countries where lootable natural resources don't exist or the belligerents don't have access or the ability to

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<sup>50</sup> Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban's War Chest. *New York Times*. Article published on 18 October. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 05 June 2012]; See also Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *BBC News*, 26 February. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21548230>> [Accessed 25 Aug 2013].

<sup>51</sup> Daily Outlook (2011). *IDLG Chief Opposes Forced Poppy Eradication*. Daily Outlook, Kabul, Afghanistan, 30 November. Available online at: <[http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post\\_id=2678](http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=2678)> [Accessed 06 June 2012].

<sup>52</sup> Yusufzai, Ashfaq, (2012). Pakistan's Forests Fall Victim to the Taliban. *The Guardian*, 17 January. Available online at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/jan/17/pakistan-forests-taliban>> [Accessed 05 June 2012]; Roul, Animesh, (2009). Gems, Timber and Jiziya: Pakistan's Taliban Harness Resources to Fund Jihad. *The James Town Foundation, Terrorism Monitor*, 1, (11), 30 April. Available online at: <[http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=34928&cHash=39d6075765](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=34928&cHash=39d6075765)> [Accessed 05 June 2012]; The Economic Times, (2009). *Taliban Funded by \$800 mn Gems, Marbles Trade*. India, 11 May. Available online at: <[http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2009-05-11/news/27646932\\_1\\_marble-mines-sufi-muhammad](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2009-05-11/news/27646932_1_marble-mines-sufi-muhammad)> [Accessed 05 June 2012].

<sup>53</sup> Ellis, Stephen (2007). *The Mask of Anarchy*, New York: New York University Press, p. 145

exploit them. For example, the Kurdish separatists (PKK) and the Sri Lankan Tamil Tigers (LTTE) had been reportedly involved in the trafficking of drugs produced elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> Table 1.2 lists some of the rebel groups with the resources they exploit and the amount of money they receive from them on an annual basis.

Combatant Group	Resource	Period	Estimated Revenue
UNITA (Angola)	diamonds	1992-2001	\$4,000m total
RUF (Sierra Leone)	diamonds	1990s	\$25 - 125m/year
Charles Taylor (Liberia)	timber, Diamonds	Late 1990s	\$100- 187m/year
Taliban (Afghanistan)	Opium	2002-2012	\$50 - 200m/year
Northern Alliance <sup>55</sup> (Afghanistan)	Lapis lazuli, emeralds	Mid-1990s–2001	\$60m/year
Khmer Rouge (Cambodia)	Timber	Mid-1990s	\$120 -240m/year
FARC (Colombia)	Cocaine, Opium	Late 90s early 00s	\$500 - 600m/year
Taliban (Pakistan) (TTP)	timber, gemstones, marble, drugs	2008-2012	\$50-150m/year
Shining Path (Peru)	Coca	1980s	\$20-\$40m/year <sup>56</sup>

**Table 1.2** – A selection of combatant groups and their estimated revenue from natural resources<sup>57</sup>

Similarly, rebel movements in certain countries simply extract money from legitimate sector in a number of ways ranging from theft and looting to extortion and receiving

<sup>54</sup> Steinberg, Michael K.; Hobbs, Joseph J. and Mathewson, Kent (editors), (2004). *Dangerous Harvest: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 77. See also Galeotti, Mark, (2008). Turkish Organised Crime: Heroin Trafficking and Money Laundering Operations. In: Shanty, Frank G. and Mishra, Patit Paban (editors), *Organized Crime: From Trafficking to Terrorism*, Volume 1, (pp.162-165). (Quote from p. 163). California: ABC-CLIO Inc. Peiris, G. H., (2001). *Secessionist War and Terrorism in Sri Lanka*. Published by South Asia Terrorism Portal. [Online]. Available online at: <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/books/global/peiris.htm>> [Accessed 05 June 2012]; Solomon, John and Tan, B.C., (2007). Feeding the Tiger: How Sri Lankan Insurgents Fund Their War. *Jane's Intelligence Review*, August. [Online]: <<http://www.c-cft.org/publication/pdf/FeedingtheTiger.pdf>> [Accessed 5 June 2013].

<sup>55</sup> The official name of Northern Alliance was the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (*Jabha-yi Muttahid-i Islāmi-yi Millī barā-yi Nijāt-i Afghānistān*). It was an anti-Taliban military alliance of several factions and local commanders formed after the Taliban took over Kabul in 1996. It was mainly based in the Northern provinces from where its members resisted the Taliban rule.

<sup>56</sup> McClintock, Cynthia, (2005). The Evolution of Internal War in Peru: The Conjunction of Need, Creed, and Organizational Finance. In: Arnson, Cynthia J. and Zartman, I. William (editors), *Rethinking the Economics of Civil War: The intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, p. 62.

<sup>57</sup> The sources of the estimated revenues of the groups mentioned in the Table 1.2 have already been explained in the preceding three pages.

money for safe passage in areas under the rebels' control. A 2010 Congressional report about Pentagon contracts worth more than \$2 billion to supply American military bases in Afghanistan found that tens of millions of dollars were paid to warlords, corrupt public officials and the Taliban to ensure safe passage for the supply of trucks. An estimated \$1.6 million to \$2 million per week were reportedly paid to the insurgents as protection money.<sup>58</sup> In Colombia, in order to keep the oil flowing, the oil sector is believed to be paying around \$100m annually in protection to guerrilla and paramilitary groups.<sup>59</sup>

Even in areas where government has some control, certain rebel groups and organised criminal networks try to exploit the situation for their own advantage. In such circumstances, rebels, criminal groups, corrupt government officials and businesses collude with each other for financial gains. Security and border officials usually allow traffickers and smugglers to operate in exchange for bribes. In such cases, the continuation of conflict itself becomes an instrument of enterprise for the so called 'conflict entrepreneurs' which, among others, include rebels, traders and corrupt officials who use instability as a tool for amassing significant economic power.<sup>60</sup> It is at this stage when a conflict becomes more complex and makes its resolution even more difficult.

Conflicts usually create war economies where beneficiaries become more interested in prolonging the conflict than helping to resolve it. Rebel factions usually employ resources to buy weapons and to acquire and maintain power. As Mats Berdal and David M. Malone say, economic interests bring different and sometimes opposite groups closer even in a conflict environment. They argue that "understanding the source of violence requires an understanding of "the economics underpinning it". While giving the example of the brutal war in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, they conclude that "unlikely alliances emerged on the ground that were not exclusively motivated by the desire to defeat the main enemy" because "petrol barons" and various middlemen benefited hugely from the war economy throughout the war zone. Similarly, they add that in mid 1990s, "many Khmer Rouge commanders, Cambodian government officials and Thai army officers were more

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<sup>58</sup> DeYoung, Karen, (2010). U.S. Indirectly Paying Afghan Warlords as Part of Security Contract. *Washington Post*, 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Available online at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/21/AR2010062104628.html>> [Accessed 05 June 2012].

<sup>59</sup> Le Billon, Philippe, (2005). *op.cit.*

<sup>60</sup> For more details on conflict resolution see, Bercovitch, Jacob; Kremenjuk, Victor and Zartman, William, (editors), (2009). *The SAGE Handbook of Conflict Resolution*. London: Sage.

concerned about enriching themselves through illegal logging activity and trading in gems than they were about bringing war to an end”.<sup>61</sup>

The war in Afghanistan has also created a suitable environment for armed groups and individuals to benefit from the war economy. The weakness of central government meant that regional powerful warlords had the freedom to extract resources including timber, minerals and precious stones (such as rubies, lapis lazuli, and emerald) and smuggle drugs and ancient artefacts; thus enriching themselves and buying loyalties. The conflict has also provided numerous opportunities for bureaucratic corruption.

The greed model explains a very important aspect of internal violent conflicts. However, it has been criticised for being incapable of predicting all conflicts and rebellions. As Arnson notes, neither greed nor the existence of lootable resources was the cause of a number of conflicts. Greed, as she puts it, was a product or later stage of wars started for other reasons.<sup>62</sup> The on-going conflict in Afghanistan has many elements, actors and motivations. Therefore, it cannot be explained by the greed theory alone, whose proponents argue that civil wars are usually caused by economic and not by socio-political factors.<sup>63</sup> Historical and empirical research shows that the conflict in Afghanistan was not initiated as a result of economic incentives. As in the case of a number of conflicts in other parts of the world, the incentives for self-enrichment created by access to natural and financial resources were neither the primary nor sole cause of the Afghan conflict.<sup>64</sup>

Evidence suggests that the main insurgent groups in the conflict in Afghanistan -- the Taliban and Hezb-e Islami – as a whole are not driven by an economic agenda. Both are hierarchical organisations with their finances controlled by the centre which leaves little room for personal corruption. Although it has been observed that some Taliban members became rich through donations and drug money, the group’s finance and control system remains central. As described in detail in Chapter Five, after the Taliban regime was

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<sup>61</sup> Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M., (2000). Introduction. In: Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M., (editors), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. London: Lynne Rienner publishers, pp. 1-15.

<sup>62</sup> Arnson, Cynthia J., (2005). The Political Economy of War: Situating the Debate. In: Arnson, Cynthia J. and Zartman, I. William (editors), *Rethinking the Economics of Civil War: The intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, p. 11

<sup>63</sup> Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke, (2001). *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 2355, Washington DC.

<sup>64</sup> Ballentine, Karen and Nitzschke, Heiko, (2003). Beyond Greed and Grievance: Policy Lessons from Studies in the Political Economy of Armed Conflict. *International Peace Academy Policy Report*, p. 1. Available online at:

<[http://www.worldpolicy.org/sites/default/files/imported/projects/arms/study/bak05\\_1.pdf](http://www.worldpolicy.org/sites/default/files/imported/projects/arms/study/bak05_1.pdf)> [Accessed 22 Aug 2013].



toppled, they established several commissions which are equivalent to ministries and are responsible for specific tasks. The Taliban's financial affairs are run and controlled by their *Economic/Financial Commission (Iqtisaadi/Mali Kumisyun)* which is responsible for the collection and distribution of funds from a variety of sources.

In many "resource based conflicts", the motivation of elites seems to be overstated. It is true that the presence of primary commodities can further complicate the nature of conflict where individuals and groups, afraid of losing their autonomous position, generally tend to obstruct a political settlement. But the presence of resources doesn't always have only an internal dimension. In many cases, the external and international dimension is stronger than its domestic dimension as foreign powers usually interfere in resource rich countries to exploit them for their own benefits. As Winston Churchill said, "God put the West's oil under Middle Eastern feet", certain resources and their demand in the outside world might also pave the way for external powers' interference while seeking raw material as part of their overall national interests.<sup>65</sup>

In addition, the greed model doesn't fit most freedom struggles as it downplays the ideological and political components in a collective violent action. Among other writers, Jeffery Herbst, has questioned the plausibility of the greed concept asking that did Nelson Mandela spent nearly three decades in prison "to steal from gold and diamond mines?"<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the Indian National Congress's struggle for independence and the uprising by the Pashtoons<sup>67</sup>/Afghans against British Colonialists in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was not about greed.<sup>68</sup> The history of religious struggles in general, in which religious leaders usually reject the tendencies of greed, also points to the shortcoming of the greed model.

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<sup>65</sup> Jacoby, Tim, (2008). *op.cit.* p. 135

<sup>66</sup> Jacoby, Tim, (2008). *op.cit.* p. 140

<sup>67</sup> *Pashtoon* is also spelled as *Pashtun* and *Pushtun*. I have chosen to spell it as *Pashtoon* because their language, *Pashto*, is generally spelled with an "o" at the end. *Pashtoon* is also used predominantly in the Western press. Pashtoons or ethnic Afghans constitute the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and the second largest in Pakistan. The alternate title for the Pashtoon is *Pakhtun* or *Pukhtun* (in eastern dialect). See Encyclopaedia Britannica, (Not Dated). *Pashtun*. [Online]: <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/445546/Pashtun>> [Accessed 20 Feb 2015]; British Library, (Not Dated). *Afghanistan: Glossary*. [Online]: <<http://www.bl.uk/reshelp/findhelppregion/asia/afghanistan/afghanistancollection/afghanglossary/afghanglossary.html>> [Accessed 20 Feb 2015].

<sup>68</sup> The Khudai Khidmatgar (also known as the Red Shirts) Movement which was based in the North-West of what was British India and fought non-violently against the British rule offers one of the best examples in this regard. See for more details Gandhi, Rajmohan, (2008). *Ghaffar Khan: Nonviolent Badshah of the Pakhtuns*. New Delhi: Penguin.

## 1.4 Ethnic Hatreds and Identity Politics

Some writers view civil wars as primordial ethnic confrontations and argue that “ancient ethnic hatreds” are the root cause of intra-state conflict, especially in Africa and Asia.<sup>69</sup> While calling the ethnic conflict as “a force shaping human affairs”, Horowitz argues that “ethnicity is at the centre of politics” in many countries and “a potent source of challenges to the cohesion of states and of international tension.”<sup>70</sup> A number of countries with ethnic and religious heterogeneity such as Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Rwanda, and Sri Lanka experienced political mobilization along ethnic lines. Ethnicity has played an important role to incite people and to commit violence in various parts of the world. The so called conflict entrepreneurs particularly used this card to motivate their followers to wage wars, and bolster their power and privileges as the leaders of those particular ethnic groups. As Fearson notes, “ethnicity is politicised when political coalitions are organised along ethnic lines, or when access to political or economic benefits depends on ethnicity”.<sup>71</sup>

Local actors and leaders of different groups usually try to get the maximum out of the chaos resulting from state failure or weakening of central government power. By adapting themselves to war economy, “war enterprises” and warlords usually base their policies on nepotism, tribalism, ethnocentrism, and corruption and try to exercise their political and economic politics autonomously. As Donald Kurtz says in his book *Political Anthropology*, a robust economy is a key stone to a leader’s legitimacy that meets the needs of their political community. This, he adds, is a much cheaper option to govern, enhance claim to authority and exert control than coercion which risks the loss of support.<sup>72</sup>

In a number of contemporary intra-state wars, civilians have been recruited into unpaid or underpaid armies or militias. Some of these recruitments were on ethnic lines and, in other cases, a combination of fear, need and greed created a willingness among the civilian populations to join the conflict. Forced conscription is also part of most of such conflicts. Keen, while explaining the situation in Sierra Leon, notes that those fleeing violence in a conflict, “often faced the stark choice between joining the ranks of the destitute and

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<sup>69</sup> See a detailed survey of the interaction of race, ethnicity, nationalism in Cordell, Karl and Wolf, Stefan, (Editors), (2013). *Routledge Handbook of Ethnic Conflict*. Oxon: Routledge; See also Wolf, Stefan, (2006). *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press (who discusses why do nationalism and ethnicity has the power to motivate groups fight against each other).

<sup>70</sup> Horowitz, Donald L., (2000). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Second Edition, California: University of California Press, p. xv.

<sup>71</sup> Fearson, James D., (2006). Ethnic Mobilization and Ethnic Violence. In: Weingast, Barry R. and Wittman, Donald A., (editors). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 853.

<sup>72</sup> Kurtz, Donald V., (2001). *Op.cit.* pp. 61-62.



starving, or joining an armed band”.<sup>73</sup> It demonstrates that all called ethnic wars or those individuals who participate in them are not always driven by ethnic hatreds. Therefore, too much emphasis on economic dimension and “ethnic hatreds” of civil wars might not help to understand the true nature of the conflict and find a resolution.

In addition, the “ancient ethnic hatreds” analysis as the cause of war has many other shortcomings as it doesn’t explain the pre-war peaceful history of the “hostile peoples”. Historical and empirical evidence shows that there is no essential connection between ethnicity and conflict. Relations between different ethnic groups have been in fact peaceful and cooperative.<sup>74</sup> There are numerous examples of different ethnic groups living peacefully with each other for a long time. The “ethnic hatreds” analysis also fails to explain the violence taking place within a particular ethnic group. As Turton argues, the “ethnic hatreds” school ignores the fact that in most cases “ethnic sentiment is often the result rather than the cause of war”.<sup>75</sup> Analysing the role of external actors in exploiting divisions on ethnic lines, Turton concludes that in times of war and hardship, nationalism and ethnicity become “the most effective means available of gaining and/or keeping a political following”.<sup>76</sup>

As several other conflicts, the conflict in Afghanistan has also been portrayed by many writers as either terrorist/extremist problem or an ethnic problem. Afghanistan is a land of ancient cultures and civilizations and it is also the home of one of the world’s most intractable wars and conflicts. The ongoing violence between different actors with competing interest has turned the country into one of the most dangerous places on the earth and caused immeasurable devastation and human suffering. Although a large body of writing exists on the conflict in Afghanistan, it has many limitations as the role of a number of key factors and actors has been largely ignored especially the role of foreign actors in starting and fuelling the conflict. Several writers have portrayed the conflict in Afghanistan as a primordial conflict based on mutual distrust between different ethnic groups and violence spanning over many centuries. But the ground reality tells a different story. Most of Afghanistan’s long history has been one of ethnic pluralism and co-existence. For much of its recent history, especially the decades before the 1979 Soviet

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<sup>73</sup> Keen, David, (2000). Incentives and Disincentives for Violence. In: Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M. (editors), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 19-41.

<sup>74</sup> Hutchinson, John and Smith, Anthony D., (Editors), (1996). *Ethnicity (Oxford Readers)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>75</sup> Turton, David, (1997). Introduction: War and Ethnicity. In: Turton, David (editor), *War and Ethnicity: Global Connections and Local Violence*, New York: University of Rochester Press, p. 15.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

invasion, the country was one of the most peaceful countries in the region. Multilateralism was common and assimilation of different tribal, linguistic and ethnic groups resulted in the creation of a shared Afghan identity. There has been a lot of inter-mixture between different ethnic and linguistic groups especially between the two major groups, Pashtoons and Tajiks. The two major languages, Pashto and Dari (Afghan Persian) have been both official languages and in the new constitution approved in 2004, other smaller languages have also been recognized as official languages of the country.

During the 1980s, all the Mujahideen factions fighting against the Soviet forces were not based on ethnicity and all of them were ethnically mixed. Even in the internal factional fighting in Kabul in 1990s, the groups from both opposite alliances were mixed, representing different ethnic groups whose leaders changed sides frequently. Although ethnic card was used by some commanders, mostly at local levels in order to motivate their followers, factional leaders and warlords didn't publically use a language that would indicate any hatred for other groups.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, major differences within each ethnic group and the intra ethnic violence/conflicts and killings have received relatively little attention. There are major differences within each ethnic group. The Taliban, whose members are mostly from the majority Pashtoons, killed more Pashtoons than members of other ethnic groups. Similarly, violence within other ethnic groups has also occurred from time to time which shows that ethnic divisions alone do not explain the conflict in the country. In addition, the degree of assimilation and integration is higher in Afghanistan than other countries in the region, especially its two neighbours, Iran and Pakistan. As opposed to Iran and Pakistan, Afghanistan never had and still doesn't have an ethnic or religious separatist movement.

Mary Kaldor, the author of *New and Old Wars* offered a new way of understanding wars, in which the actors are both global and local, and public and private who use terror tactics and asymmetrical warfare with an informal criminalised economy to fuel their violent campaign. Against the assumptions that most of the post-Cold War conflicts are mainly 'civil' wars produced by 'ethnic conflict', or greed, Kaldor describes "New Wars" as a mixture of wars, and demonstrates that conflicts including the one in Bosnia-Herzegovina are political in nature involving state power and 'private' actors, with political elites reproducing their power through 'identity politics'. While appreciative of the dangers

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<sup>77</sup> Siddique, Abubakar, (2012). *Afghanistan's Ethnic Divides*. Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (Centro de Estudios y Documentación Internacionales de Barcelona – CIDOB), Barcelona. Available online at: <[http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/stap\\_rp/policy\\_research\\_papers/afghanistan\\_s\\_ethnic\\_divides](http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/stap_rp/policy_research_papers/afghanistan_s_ethnic_divides)> [Accessed 26 Oct 2012].

posed by failed states, she argues that ‘new wars’ could be understood in the context of globalisation and the rise of non-state actors. As opposed to revolutionary wars, the politics of ‘new wars’ is based on identity rather than ideology. Moreover, the illegal side-effects of old war are central in “new wars”, in which the main victims are civilian populations and control is achieved through ethnic cleansing, mass murder, forced migration, population displacement and purging territories.

Although Mary Kaldor’s “new wars” model presents another understanding of contemporary violent conflicts and their complexities, it falls short to properly explain a number of current conflicts. The term “new” itself can be misleading as the features – such as ‘hearts and minds’ vs. ‘fear and hatred’ -- of “new wars” are not really new and can be observed in old wars as well. However, the more controversial part of Kaldor’s analysis is about labels of ethnicity and culture which play a prominent role in her ‘new wars’ theory. She says that identity politics, “the claim to power on the basis of particular identity – be it national, clan, religious or linguistic”, behind the conflict is a main feature of ‘new wars’. “All wars” she adds “involve a clash of identities”.<sup>78</sup>

Identity politics has been part of human society since time immemorial. Clan, tribal, ethnic, national, regional, linguistic, sectarian and religious identities have been used and abused throughout human history. Even though ethnic groups play an important role in several conflicts in Africa and Asia where many violent rebellions have been connected to ethnic separation, many other wars don’t fall under this category. For example, Somalia, which has experienced turmoil for decades, doesn’t have different ethnic groups and all the tribes and clans belong to the same ethnic group. Similarly in Afghanistan, the conflict is not based on purely ethnic lines and even during the so called civil war in 1990s, different alliances and factions had a mixed membership. Ethnic diversities and cultural identities and differences are not always the main reasons behind violent conflicts. In a number of conflicts, several other factors, such as ideology, grievances and greed play more important role than ethnicity and culture.

Kaldor’s assertion that the world is progressively becoming bloodier and more violent is also criticised on the grounds that it was the twentieth century which was the most violent and bloodiest on record. Compared to the past, the world today is comparatively safer and peaceful. As Pinker and Goldstein have argued in their separate books, there has been a

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<sup>78</sup> Kaldor, Mary, (2006). *New & Old Wars*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 7.

general decline in armed conflicts and we are living in the most peaceful time in history.<sup>79</sup> Kaldor's conclusion about the higher ratio of civilian to military casualties in 'new wars' as compared to 'old wars' is also contested. One major reason that more civilians are killed in wars today is because there are very few inter-state wars with regular armies facing each other. In recent decades, most violent conflicts have been intra-state including those where proxies are used by foreign state actors to increase their influence or weaken their neighbours.

William Zartman gets beyond a single factor explanation of internal conflicts and groups different elements in his "need, creed, and greed" formulation. In this framework basic needs, identity, and resources are the stakes of conflict or as grievances, rights, and greed as the motivations of conflict. According to Zartman, grievances caused by political repression and economic deprivation ("need"), generalized belief and identity feelings especially discrimination based on beliefs and identities ("creed") and personal or factional ambitions of private gain ("greed") combine to produce conflicts. Zartman says that the nature of conflict depends on "how these factors relate to each other in causing and sustaining conflict, and how, not whether, conflict is related to these three factors" and concludes that the "need feed creed and creed feed greed."<sup>80</sup> Zartman's formulation is interesting as it recognises the multiplicity of factors that cause a conflict or motivate its participants. However, he doesn't appreciate the role of external actors and factors in causing or prolonging an internal conflict.

## 1.5 Transnational Dimensions of Civil Wars

Transnational factors are also vital in both initiating and perpetuating the conflict. In a number of cases, foreign interferences and interventions have not only caused conflicts; they have also made them more complex and prolonged.<sup>81</sup> In the post-Cold War world, a number of scholars and theorists have associated conflict with "empire" and "imperialism" and the struggles around capital accumulation. Writing about this theme, Marxist political scholars, David Harvey and Alex Callinicos, combine a theory of imperialism with a

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<sup>79</sup> Pinker, Steven, (2012). *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. New York: Penguin Books; Goldstein, Joshua. S., (2011). *Winning the War on War: The Surprising Decline in Armed Conflict Worldwide*. New York: Dutton.

<sup>80</sup> Zartman, I. William, (2005). Need, Creed, and Greed in Intrastate Conflict. In: Arnson, Cynthia J. and Zartman, I. William (editors), *Rethinking the Economics of Civil War: The intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, pp. 262, 257, 284.

<sup>81</sup> Checkel, Jeffrey T., (editor), (2013). *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

theory of a capitalist state.<sup>82</sup> Harvey in his concept of “two logics” of power -- the ‘territorial’ and the ‘capitalist’ -- points to “outright antagonism” between the state and capitalism, especially in the context of globalisation and “new imperialism” and states. In his book, *The New Imperialism*, Harvey combines economic and geopolitical nature of imperialism.

The fundamental point is to see the territorial and the capitalist logics of power as distinct from each other. Yet it is also undeniable that the two logics intertwine in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. The literature on imperialism and empire too often assumes an easy accord between them: that political-economic processes are guided by the strategies of state and empire and that states and empires always operate out of capitalistic motivations.<sup>83</sup>

Similarly, Callinicos, in his book, *Imperialism and Global Political Economy*, draws on Harvey’s idea of two logics of imperialism and explores the significance of forms of imperialism. While emphasizing that imperialism is not just an economic structure, Callinicos argues that it has both economic and geopolitical drivers. According to him, some wars and interventions may not have an immediate economic pay-off but may be part of a large, international competition in which rivals manoeuvre in order to dominate resources at the expense of their rivals.<sup>84</sup>

The transnational aspect of intra-state wars and conflict is often overlooked in scholarly literature and has not been addressed adequately. Literature on internal conflicts is mainly focusing on country-specific factors or processes within the boundaries of individual states. Countries don’t live in isolation and regimes usually have a tendency of meddling in each other’s affairs especially in a bad neighbourhood where serious disputes between states, including border disputes, remain unresolved. It is for this reason that, while challenging the “closed polity” approach to the study of civil war, Gleditsch argues that “it is inappropriate to treat civil war as a fully domestic phenomenon” and concludes that a number of contemporary civil wars display a strong transnational character “where actors, resources, and events span national boundaries.” These transnational factors and linkages, he says, “influence the risk of violent civil conflict.”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Veltmeyer, Henry (editor), (2010). *Imperialism, Crisis and Class Struggle: The Enduring Verities and Contemporary Face of Capitalism*. The Netherlands: Brill.

<sup>83</sup> Harvey, David, (2003). *The New Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p 29.

<sup>84</sup> Callinicos, Alex, (2009). *Imperialism and Global Political Economy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>85</sup> Gleditsch, Kristian Skrede, (2007). Transnational Dimensions of Civil War. *Journal of Peace Research*, 44, (3), 293-309, May. Also Available online at: <<http://weber.ucsd.edu/~kgledits/papers/transnational.pdf>> [Accessed 8 June 2012].

It is often the case that countries in a “hostile neighbourhood” don’t want a strong neighbour. A weaker neighbour is in the strategic interest of the predatory state or an expansionist state. In addition to political and strategic interests, regional actors also often have economic incentives in an intra-state war in their neighbourhood as they profit from the resources of the state in turmoil. As Mwanasali notes that the war in Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) – formerly known as Zaire -- enabled neighbouring countries such as Rwanda and Uganda to become major exporters of raw materials, including gold or cobalt, which they do not naturally possess. He explains how “timber, palm oil, coffee, elephant tusks, and precious minerals,” looted from Zaire (Congo) and exported through the black market, became “a main source of foreign exchange for Zaire’s resource-deprived neighbours.”<sup>86</sup> Kennes has reached more or less the same conclusion about the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo by saying that the “Congo war cannot be simply characterized as grown out of greed.” In addition to grievances, Kennes highlights the international involvement and the role the neighbouring states played in the conflict in Congo.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, during the 1980s, 1990s and even 2000s, most of Afghanistan’s products, especially carpets, minerals, precious stones, dry and fresh fruits, handicrafts and even ancient artefacts, were exported via Pakistan and Iran with a mostly “made in Pakistan” or “made in Iran” labels.

It is not only the neighbouring countries and actors whose actions cause or perpetuate a civil war; the role of other international actors and global powers also has a major impact on the nature and conduct of an intra-state conflict. In some cases, domestic factors combine with transnational factors making the conflict not only more complicated but also potentially deadlier. While analysing the conflict in Colombia, Chernick acknowledges the role resources play in sustaining and expanding the conflict. However, he concludes that the Colombian case doesn’t support the idea that the struggle over access to resources is the main cause of the conflict. He adds that “other factors – such as grievances, ideology, leadership, military strategy and international factors – are also key” to explain the origins or the duration of the war.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Mwanasali, Musifiky, (2000). The View from Below. In: Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M., (editors), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 137-153

<sup>87</sup> Kennes, Erik, (2005). The Democratic Republic of the Congo: Structure of Greed, Networks of Need. In: Arnson, Cynthia J. and Zartman, I. William (editors), *Rethinking the Economics of Civil War: The intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, pp. 146-151

<sup>88</sup> Chernic, Mare, (2005). Economic Resources and Internal Armed Conflict: Lessons From the Colombian Case. In: Arnson, Cynthia J. and Zartman, I. William (editors), *Rethinking the Economics of Civil War: The intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, pp. 204-5

While discussing LTTE's (The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) separatist conflict in Sri Lanka, Bandarage also highlights the importance of moving "beyond psychologically based interpretations confined to ideology and consciousness and narrow views which see it as wither a terrorist or an ethnic problem" and argues that it is necessary to examine other factors as well as the local and regional ethnoclass segments and international hegemonic interests.<sup>89</sup> While examining the role of domestic, regional and international actors in the Sri Lankan conflict, Bandarage suggests another framework that he calls "multipolar model" in which he takes into account the inherent unity between groups as well as the socio-economic inequalities and hierarchies at local, regional and international level. Bandarage calls LTTE's (commonly known as the Tamil Tigers) violent campaign in Sri Lanka, as "a complex political-economic a conflict perpetuated by the confluences of factors."<sup>90</sup>

The "multipolar model" offers a different perspective on intra-state conflicts and recognises the multiplicity of factors. However, its main focus is on the Tamil Tigers' conflict in Sri Lanka where the role of international actors was comparatively weak. Except for the initial Indian support for the LTTE, the group didn't enjoy support from other state actors and was mainly supported by the Tamil diaspora, especially in Western countries. Norway's role was important but not as a supporter of one of the local parties but as a mediator to resolve the conflict. As it will be explained over the next pages, the "multipolar model" also ignores the hybridity, homogeneity and commonality of motivations and factors in a conflict and allocates a standalone role to different actors.

## **1.6 Hybrid Framework: Multiple Actors and Overlapping Factors**

All the models and frameworks described above have their benefits and help in understanding the complex nature of conflict and recognising its causes and motivations. However, the role of ethnic and religious identity (grievance) or the political economy of conflict (need) do not appear to be the whole story when it comes to the causes of civil wars or internal armed conflicts. Similarly, it is not always the only cause of conflict. As Farrell and Schmitt notes, "the greed versus grievance debate is useful for clarifying the various potential drivers" of such conflicts but adopting the position that they are

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<sup>89</sup> Bandarage, Asoka, (2009). *The Separatist Conflict in Sri Lanka: Terrorism, Ethnicity, Political Economy*, Oxon: Routledge, p. 28.

<sup>90</sup> Bandarage, Asoka, (2009). *Op.cit.* pp. 7-8.

“primarily driven by ethnic difference or economic conditions seems unnecessarily limiting.”<sup>91</sup>

Human society is very complex and dynamic. There are several conflict drivers and nearly all intra-state conflicts “encompass many modes of violence”.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, the models and frameworks discussed here are useful but they have their own shortcomings. Some of these frameworks ignore or downplay the role of some aspects or cause while others overplay their role and importance. Similarly, some models ignore the role of foreign actors in intra-state conflicts and simply describe them as purely domestic conflicts or manifestations of greed; while others portray such problems as either terrorist/extremist or ethnic.

In addition, the existing literature on intra-state conflicts and scholarly discourses regarding civil wars have largely ignored or, at least, underestimated the role of external actors, especially regional and international state actors. Foreign actors often play a crucial role in a variety of forms ranging from interference and intervention to providing patronage to the local actors of an intra-state conflict. Similarly, divisions are part of every human society. Every community and country, regardless of its level of integration or ethnic composition, has a number of visible and easily identifiable characteristics that point to differences and divisions. Divisions not only exist within every state; ethnic groups, tribes and even extended families have certain differences. The severity of these divisions and differences could become one of several identities for certain groups. However, the history of conflicts in many parts of the world shows that such divisions can be exploited by local and foreign players for their own interests. Those regions of the world are usually more prone to exploitation if there are longstanding unresolved disputes. It is in such places where foreign actors wait for the right opportunity to exploit these divisions in various ways including by providing patronage to their favourite local actors. The ease and degree of exploitation depend on a number of factors such as the level of fragmentation and divisions in a particular society, the commonality of interests between the local and foreign actors and the degree of willingness of different local actors to serve the interests of a foreign actor.

Social cohesion usually suffers as a result of foreign interventions and interferences. It is mostly at this stage of relative fragmentation when local groups look for external support and foreign actors find an opportunity to find proxies. A number of countries have

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<sup>91</sup> Farrell, Theo and Schmitt, Olivier, (2012). *The Causes, Character and Conduct of Armed Conflict, and the Effects on Civilian Populations, 1990-2010*. UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), p. 5. Available online at: <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/4f8c3fcc2.html>> [Accessed 21 Oct 2015].

<sup>92</sup> Farrell, Theo and Schmitt, Olivier, (2012). *op.cit.* p. 7.



repeatedly found themselves in this situation, especially in parts of the world where governments are not committed to the principles of good neighbourhood. For example, Ethiopia, having an old territorial dispute with Somalia, supported certain actors in Somalia and eventually physically intervened by sending its troops to the country to beat the Islamist-led insurgency of the “Islamic Courts”.<sup>93</sup> Similarly, Namibian troops entered Angola to help defeat the rebel group UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola); Saudi Arabia led a bombing campaign against the Shia Houthi rebels in Yemen and Iran supported the Shia militias in Iraq and Syria against the Sunni insurgents.<sup>94</sup>

In Afghanistan too, the problem has been primarily a centuries old international one which started as a power struggle between the two super powers of the time. It emanates from the original “Great Game” - the geopolitical struggle for dominance between the British and Russian Empires in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - with Afghanistan as their chosen battleground.<sup>95</sup> In a way, the “Great Game” never ended; it just took new forms with the addition of new external powers and actors continuously intervening and interfering in the country to promote their own interests. The emerging powers have been pitting against each other for influence and control over this resources rich and strategically important part of the world. We witnessed that in the three Anglo-Afghan wars (1839-42; 1878-80; 1919). Later on, the competition between Communist and Capitalist blocs also manifested in many forms in Afghanistan as both sides wanted to gain more influence in the strategically located country. The Soviet invasion of the country in 1979 and the resistance by the Afghan Mujahideen who were supported by the West once again made it as a main battlefield for major world powers. When the resistance against the invading Soviets and the Communist leaning regime in Kabul got momentum, the Afghan Mujahideen (resistance fighters) were actively supported by a wide range of foreign governments including pre-dominantly Christian Western countries, Muslim and Arab countries and even China and Japan. Although the players and actors changed with the passage of time, the “game” in Afghanistan continued. The latest version of the Great

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<sup>93</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), (2008). *Somalia: To Move Beyond the Failed State*. Africa Report No. 147. Brussels: International Crisis Group.

<sup>94</sup> BBC News, (2015a). Tikrit: Iran key in fight to wrest city from IS. *BBC Newsonline*, 3 March. [Online]: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-31705600>> [Accessed 29 March 2015].; BBC News, (2015b). General Qasem Soleimani: Iran’s Rising Star. *BBC Newsonline*, 6 March. [Online]: <<http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-27883162>> [Accessed 29 March 2015].; BBC News, (2015c). Yemen Crisis: Houthi Rebels are Iran Stooges, says Hadi. *BBC Newsonline*, 29 March. [Online]: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-32098607>> [Accessed 29 March 2015].

<sup>95</sup> Hopkirk, Peter, (1990). *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Dalrymple, William, (2013a). *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, 1839-42*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Game can be seen in the US-led intervention in Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington.

Although conventional Western public opinion saw the conflict in post-9/11 Afghanistan as a struggle between NATO and extremist Islamic militants, foreign interference and intervention is once again a major part of the ongoing conflict in which regional and international politics and rivalries are entwined at multiple levels. There are many permutations of power geo-politics at regional and international levels. Pakistan's rivalry with India, Iran's conflict with the US, competition with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and many other regional rivalries between state and non-state actors are all at work simultaneously. Each foreign actor is engaged in a direct or indirect interference in a variety of ways including supporting their favourite proxies. At local level, the presence of foreign forces not only complicates the nature of conflict, it also motivates a number of people to engage in fighting what they see as occupation and portray their resistance as a nationalist and freedom struggle. The presence of US-led forces in the country also perpetuates violence as some regional powers see their presence and proximity as a threat to their security and long term national interests. This provides them with an excuse to support the militants who are fighting against the Afghan government and its foreign allies. As Newberg has notes, the regional and international dimensions of the conflict in Afghanistan are of vital importance: "No matter how trenchant the local disputes that ignited and nurtured them; none could be sustained without active political and economic involvement from neighbouring states, foreign donors, and non-state actors in the region and beyond."<sup>96</sup>

It is in this context that narrow state centric approaches and looking only to the internal dynamics of intra-state conflicts are of limited analytical value. The conflict in Afghanistan as well as numerous other intra-state conflicts can only be understood within a broader global context. External states can not only cause or encourage a conflict; they can also play a crucial role in prolonging and sustaining it. As Cunningham says, the involvement of certain external actors in an intra-state conflict makes them "veto players" and "can prevent the war from ending" by "constraining the ability of the internal combatants to make independent decisions".<sup>97</sup> In such circumstances, the term "civil war" in its traditional sense also becomes misleading. As many "civil wars" in other parts of the world,

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<sup>96</sup> Newberg, Paula R. (2005). Surviving State Failure: Internal War and Regional Conflict in Afghanistan's Neighborhood. In: Arnson, Cynthia J. and Zartman, I. William (editors), *Rethinking the Economics of Civil War: The intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Press, pp. 206-233

<sup>97</sup> Cunningham, David E., (2011). *Barriers to Peace in Civil War*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 40-41.

the cause of the Afghan conflict is not entirely internal. Civil wars, as King notes, “are never entirely internal in character”.<sup>98</sup>

In addition, colonial legacies and “unnatural borders” and “artificial boundaries” that separate and divide the same ethnic groups, tribes and even extended families -- such as Somalis who are divided in four countries, i.e. Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya -- also created a suitable environment for a violent conflict and prepared ground for foreign interference. The frontiers created by European nations in their colonial period in Asia and Africa have left legacies of bitterness for the independent nations. Dozens of countries in Asia and Africa have been haunted by several long political and military conflicts over state borders such as the Somali-Ethiopian, the Somali-Kenyan and Eritrean-Ethiopian skirmishes and wars.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, former colonial powers still have significant political and economic influence and in many cases play an active role by supporting local actors and thus impacting the internal dynamics of a conflict in their former colonies.

Like several other conflicts, the conflict in Afghanistan is the product of a complex web of local motivations and interactions as well regional and international rivalries and interferences that set the stage for political changes at both local and regional level. The conflict in Afghanistan has a number of internal elements as its motivating factors such as ideology (anti-communist, anti-Western, anti-occupation, Islamist, nationalist), greed (resources, power), need (poverty, unemployment), and organised crime (drug mafia, corrupt officials etc.). In addition, several regional and international factors are also partly responsible for both initiating and perpetuating the conflict. The Afghan conflict in general is a mixture of a number of complex and overlapping causes and motivations involving multiple local and foreign actors competing for promoting their economic, political, ideological and strategic interests.

The occurrence of civil militant action depends on the convergence of different conditions, rather than what Tilly called a “one sure-fire cause”.<sup>100</sup> In an increasingly globalising world, conflicts are becoming more and more complex involving a variety of actors at local, regional and international levels as well as a combination of different motivations. Therefore, I have suggested the “Hybrid Framework” which takes into account a variety of

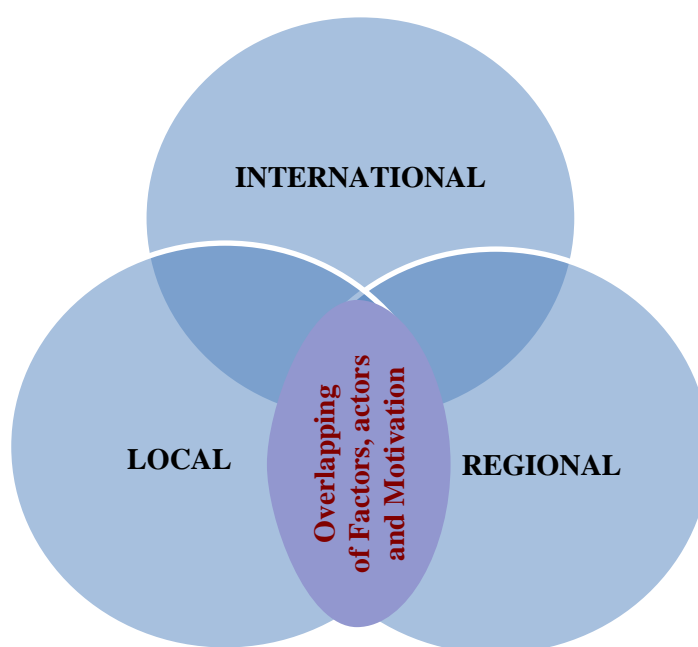
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<sup>98</sup> King, Charles, (1997). *Ending Civil Wars*. IISS Adelphi Paper No. 308. London: Oxford University Press.

<sup>99</sup> Feyissa, Dereje and Hoehne, Markus V., (2008). *Resourcing State Borders and Borderlands in the Horn of Africa*. Working Paper No. 107, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Germany.

<sup>100</sup> Tilly, Charles, (1973). *Revolutions and Collective Violence*. University of Michigan, p. 6. Available online at: <<http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/bitstream/2027.42/50863/1/83.pdf>> [Accessed 17 Feb 2012].

overlapping causes and motivations as well as the complex web of factors and actors at local, regional and international levels. Most intra-state conflicts are multi-dimensional in nature where, in addition to local actors, the role of foreign actors, both regional and international, is of paramount importance in both causing and prolonging the conflict. In most cases, the efforts and interest of several actors coincides which ultimately makes them allies and collaborators. In the “Hybrid Framework”, the overlapping of goals and motivations of different actors is vital because the commonality of purpose brings them together as partners. The following diagram demonstrates the interplay between and overlapping of interests of local, regional and international actors and factors in an intra-state conflict.




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**Figure 1.3:** Hybrid Framework of Violent Conflict: Combination and overlapping of different causes, actors and factors.

## 1.7 Conclusion

Violence has been part of human society since time immemorial. In order to understand, prevent and resolve this destructive phenomenon, scholars have tried to explore its nature, causes and motivation. More than two millennia ago, Aristotle noted that the conflict in Athens was the result of the unequal nature of society, frustration at the incompetence of its rulers’ and the desire for acquiring wealth and privilege. Many other scholars, both

before and after Aristotle, have shared their insights and suggested theories, models and frameworks aimed at explaining and analysing violent conflicts. As the understanding of human society, psychology and behaviour increased, more elements related to violence became part of social sciences in general and conflict studies in particular.

Following World War II, scholars in different parts of the world have paid more attention to understand conflictive behaviour and its causes. Depending on their scholarly background and social and political tendencies, various scholars have identified several factors linked with the initiation of violent conflicts. Some scholars have called violence as innate and consider it a part of human nature while others consider it a socially acquired phenomenon. Scholars, such as Johan Galtung, articulated the notion of ‘structural violence’ and conceived violence as “the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual”. The structural violence theory explores how political, economic and cultural structures result in the occurrence of avoidable violence. On the other hand, the relative deprivation theory is based on the concept of grievances and says that violence is the result of deprivation and inequality. It argues that frustration of economic and/or political needs causes collective violent action. Conversely, the greed-model stresses the importance of resources and material gains, both as an instigator and an objective, and argues that material gain and remuneration drives social mobilisation.

However, empirical and historical evidence show that these approaches do not adequately appreciate the dynamics of all types of societies. Although there appears to be a link and continuity between different scholarly approaches, there is no “one size fits all model”. Conflicts have a number of different dynamics and no single cause can explain all of types of collective violence as they are as complicated and contingent as the human psyche and society.

In an increasingly globalising world, conflicts are becoming more and more complex involving a variety of actors at local, regional and international levels as well as a combination of different motivations. Therefore, I have suggested what I call the “Hybrid Framework” of civil war which takes into account a variety of overlapping causes and motivations as well as the complex web of factors and actors at local, regional and international levels. Based on the idea that conflict has multiple drivers, the “Hybrid Framework” takes into account the role of multiple actors (international, regional and local) and overlapping factors (need, greed and creed) in causing and perpetuating a conflict.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The Conflict in Afghanistan: Actors and Factors**

This chapter applies the “Hybrid Framework” to an inductive analysis of the conflict in Afghanistan. While assessing the Afghan conflict, it demonstrates that intra-state conflicts have various internal and external dynamics and involves several actors and motivations including ideology, greed and proxy. The chapter argues that the war in Afghanistan, one of the most protracted and complicated conflicts in the world, is not a completely domestic phenomenon as it displays a strong regional and international character. It is the product of a complex web of local motives and as well multiple regional and international rivalries and interests. This chapter examines different aspects of the conflict in the country and assess the role of major local, regional and international actors and factors responsible for initiating and prolonging the conflict. The chapter concludes by analysing the role of natural resources, especially drugs, in the Afghan conflict and argues that it is not drugs that caused the conflict but the war created a suitable environment for the drug production and trade and other illegal activities that are contributing to the perpetuation of violence.

Due to its geographical location and strategic importance, historians and political scientists have variously described Afghanistan as “a Land Bridge”, “Roof of the World”, “Door of India (the Indian sub-continent)”, “Silk Route”, “Eastern Door of the Islamic World”, “Melting Pot of Civilizations”, “Hub of Civilizations”, “Highway for the International Commerce” and “the Heart of Asia” among others. Geographically, the country links Western, Southern and Central Asia. The famous British historian Arnold Toynbee called the country as “The Roundabout of the Ancient World”<sup>1</sup> while Norchi describes it as historically “a land on everyone’s way to someplace else.”<sup>2</sup> Afghanistan’s sensitive geography has frequently made it a battlefield of major powers and invaders for millennia.

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<sup>1</sup> Blood, Peter R., (editor), (2007). Afghanistan: Past and Present. Los Angeles: Indo-European Publishing; Gurewitsch, Matthew, (2008). He Found Himself in a World Of Intrigue and Adventure. *Wall Street Journal*, 22 May. [Online]: <<http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB121140882654612255>> [Accessed 23 Sep 2012].

<sup>2</sup> Norchi, Charles H., (1996). *Blowback from Afghanistan: The Historical Roots*. CIAO Working Paper, Colombia University Press, February 1996. Available online at: <<http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/noc01/>> [Accessed 23 Sep 2012].

The country repeatedly paid a very heavy price in both blood and treasure as millions of its inhabitants were killed and infrastructure destroyed. At times, the breakup of society resulting from numerous foreign invasions and wars also led to internal strife and collective violence.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 2.1: Map of Afghanistan and the surrounding countries.<sup>4</sup>

The recent history of Afghanistan shows that the country has been at the centre of multiple external encounters rivalries. In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Afghanistan was the main theatre of the

<sup>3</sup> Ghubar, Mir Ghulam Muhammad, (1999). *Afghanistan in the Course of History* (original title in Dari/Persian, '*Afghanistan Dar Masir-e-Tarikh*'). Virginia: American Sapaidi; See also, Dupree, Louis, (1973). *Afghanistan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Gregorian, Vartan, (1969). *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946*. Stanford: Stanford University Press; Habibi, Allama Abdul Hai, (1967). *A short History of Afghanistan* (Original title in Dari/Persian, '*Taarikh-e Mukhtasar-e Afghanistan*'). Kabul: Anjuman-e Tarikh; Shah, Iqbal Ali, (1938). *Modern Afghanistan*. London: Sampson Low, Marston; Ahmad, Jamal-ud-din and Aziz, Muhammad Abdul, (1936). *Afghanistan: A Brief Survey*. Kabul: Dar-ut-Talif.

<sup>4</sup> Source: World Atlas. [Online]: <<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/afghreg.htm>> [Accessed 24 March 2015].

Great Game between the two superpowers of the time -- Britain and the Tsarist Russia. During the Cold War, the country became a major battlefield in the proxy war between the capitalist West and communist Soviet Union (USSR). More recently, after the attacks on the US on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, the Afghanistan was turned overnight into the main theatre of the US-led “War on Terror”. Within three decades, the two superpowers – USSR and the United States – invaded Afghanistan making it an international battlefield and involving dozens of regional and international actors.

However, before the communist coup and the Soviet invasion of the country, Afghanistan remained peaceful during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. In 1973, while King Zahir Shah -- who ruled over a peaceful and neutral Afghanistan for 40 years -- was on a trip to Italy, his cousin and former prime minister (1953-1963), Mohammad Daoud Khan, staged a bloodless coup and put an end to monarchy in Afghanistan. Daoud remained president of the Republic for just five years until 27<sup>th</sup> April 1978 when the Afghan leftists in the military surrounded the presidential palace in the capital Kabul killing him with all of his family members. The Marxist military officers immediately handed over power to the Soviet backed Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) which was divided into two main factions -- *Khalq* (people) and *Parcham* (Flag). The PDPA proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan (DRA) and Noor Muhammad Taraki (the head of the *Khalq* faction of PDPA) became the President. A few months later, on 14<sup>th</sup> September, his deputy, Hafizullah Amin, declared himself the new president after the killing of his predecessor as part of an internal power struggle. Amin remained on his post until the Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan on 27<sup>th</sup> December 1979, who killed him and installed Babrak Karmal, leader of the *Parcham* faction of the PDPA, as the new ruler of the country.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, the anti-communist resistance by various Mujahideen groups intensified in most of the country, especially rural areas. Dozens of countries including the US and its Western allies, China, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Iran started supplying money and arms to the Afghan Mujahideen guerrilla fighters. In 1986, Babrak Karmal was replaced by

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<sup>5</sup> Arnold, Anthony, (1983). *Afghanistan's Two-Party Communism: Parcham and Khalq*. Hoover Institution Press: Stanford University; Ghaus, Abdul Samad, (1988). *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insiders Account*. Virginia: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers; Zarmalwal, Ghulam Mohammad, (2004). *Afghanistan Till the Last Afghan*, (Pashto book titled as *Afghanistan Tar Wrusti Afghana*). 2<sup>nd</sup> Volume. Peshawar: Danish Publishing Society; Kakar, M. Hassan, (1995). *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*. Berkeley: University of California Press.



Najibullah as the new head of the Soviet-backed regime in Kabul. Faced with a tough resistance and mounting casualties in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union eventually decided to leave the country and completed the withdrawal of its troops in February 1989. However, after the retreat, Moscow continued supporting the Kabul regime both militarily and financially. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia maintained the flow of aid to the government in Kabul, albeit on a minor scale. Najibullah thus managed to stay in power for another three years until the Mujahideen slowly expanded their control and eventually captured Kabul in April 1992.<sup>6</sup>

However, soon after the Mujahideen victory, a bloody war for the control of Kabul started between different factions supported by external powers. The factional war, which was centred on Kabul, killed tens of thousands of people and destroyed much of the capital. In the fall of 1994, the Taliban Movement emerged in the south of the country, expanded their control with a rapid speed and captured Kabul in September 1996. The Taliban, marched with a slogan of Islamic Sharia, peace and justice, gradually defeated most of their enemies and, by the end of the decade, established its rule over 90% of Afghanistan's territory.

The attacks on the US on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 linked the Taliban and Afghanistan to international politics and security. The US accused the Al-Qaeda network, whose leadership was based in the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, for the attacks on New York and Washington. On 7<sup>th</sup> October 2001, as part of its military campaign called "Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)", the US-led forces launched strikes against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan which refused to hand over Osama bin Laden, head of Al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, different Afghan groups participated in a UN sponsored conference in Bonn, Germany, and, on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2001, announced a road map to establish democratic institutions in Afghanistan starting with the formation of an interim government under the leadership of Hamid Karzai.

Following the toppling of the Taliban regime in Kabul, the international community's gradually increased its involvement in Afghanistan and supported the new Afghan government both militarily and financially. Expectations were high and Afghans in general hoped that peace will prevail and their country will now become a hub for cooperation and trade. However, the Taliban soon resurfaced as an insurgency and started fighting the Afghan government and its US-led international allies in 2003-2004. The Taliban

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<sup>6</sup> Kakar, M. Hassan, (1995). *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

insurgency has changed the dynamics of the Afghan conflict which started with the communist coup in April 1978. Once again, the country has become a competing ground for both regional and international powers. As Rubin notes, “this time virtually every major international and regional actor decided to become involved in Afghanistan with no restraining rules of the game.”<sup>7</sup> The country has once again become a battlefield where several regional and international conflicts are being fought.

It is in this context that a number of recent popular works on Afghanistan, especially media reports, start the history of the Afghan conflict from 9/11; some go a bit further and begin it with the emergence of the Taliban Movement in 1994 while others go as far as the 1979 Soviet invasion of the country. On the other hand, some commentators portray it as a primordial conflict based on mutual distrust between different ethnic groups while others see religious extremism and terrorism at the heart of the problem.<sup>8</sup> Although these factors play their role in making things worse, the Afghan conflict is primarily the product of a complex web of regional and international rivalries and interferences as well as local motives and interactions. The role of foreign actors, both regional and international, is highly significant in both causing and prolonging this multi-dimensional conflict.

The conflict in the country involves a range of issues ranging from strategic and proxy to greed and criminality. It also brings together a number of state and non-state actors at local, regional and international level. Depending on their nature, goals and motivations, these actors have either overlapping and/or competing interests. Understanding and resolving the Afghan conflict requires a thorough appraisal of its multiple actors and their objectives. As discussed in Chapter 1 in detail, conflict in general have multiple drivers and the existing models and frameworks aimed at understanding conflicts have shortcomings and miss one or more important elements of a given conflict. The “Hybrid Framework” I have proposed takes into account a variety of overlapping causes and motivations. Therefore, it seems more suitable to analyse the Afghan conflict in the light of the “Hybrid Framework” which takes into consideration the complex web of actors and factors at local, regional and international levels.

Like many other conflicts, the Afghan conflict is not a completely domestic phenomenon as it displays a strong regional and international character. It is the outcome of a mixture of several complex and overlapping causes and motivations involving multiple local and

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<sup>7</sup> Rubin, Barnett R., (2009). The Transformation of the Afghan State. In: Thier, J. Alexander (editor), *The Future of Afghanistan*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Griffiths, John C., (2001). *Afghanistan: A History of Conflict*. London: Carlton Books Ltd., p. 87; Jalalzai, Musa Khan, (1996). *Sectarianism and Ethnic Violence in Afghanistan*. Lahore: Vanguard, pp. 145-149.

foreign actors who compete for promoting their own economic, political, ideological and strategic interests. The conflict in Afghanistan has a numerous internal, regional and global dimensions making it complex and prolonged, difficult to understand and hard to resolve. Although most of these issues and interests overlap, I have divided them into four main categories to highlight the role of different actors and factors responsible for initiating and prolonging the conflict in Afghanistan.

## **2.1 International Dynamics of the Afghan Conflict:**

The conflict in Afghanistan has a very strong external dimension. The past few decades has gradually made the country a theatre of several regional and international conflicts including India-Pakistan, Afghanistan-Pakistan, Iran-Pakistan, US-Iran, Sunni-Shia, Iran-Saudi Arabia, China-India, Russia-NATO, and US-Al-Qaeda conflicts. The country has also become a haven for international militants and a hub for global drug mafia and other transnational criminal groups. It is mainly due to its strategic location that several international actors have been part of the Afghan conflict either directly or indirectly. A number of international issues and rivalries are also linked with Afghanistan thus making it one of the most protracted and complex conflicts in the world.

### **2.1.1 Strategic: From Great Game to Cold War**

The problem in Afghanistan has been mainly a centuries old international one. The conflict in the country stems from the original “Great Game” -- the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century geopolitical struggle for dominance in Central Asia between the British and Russian Empires with Afghanistan as their chosen battleground.<sup>9</sup> The Great Game never ended, at least for Afghanistan; it just took new forms and involved different external players. For at least two centuries, a host of foreign powers and actors have been continuously intervening and interfering in the country to pursue and promote their economic and strategic interests. The emerging powers of the time have been pitting against each other for influence and control over this resources rich and strategically important part of the world. The superpowers’ desire to dominate manifested in the three Anglo-Afghan wars in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and again in the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The latest version of

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<sup>9</sup> Hopkirk, Peter, (1990). *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also Dalrymple, William, (2013a). *Return of a King: The Battle for Afghanistan, 1839-42*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing; Ghubar, Mir Ghulam Muhammad, (1999). *Afghanistan in the Course of History op.cit*; Dupree, Louis, (1973). *Afghanistan. op.cit*; Gregorian, Vartan, (1969). *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan. op.cit*; Habibi, Allama Abdul Hai, (1967). *A short History of Afghanistan. op.cit*.

the “Great Game” started with the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. In all of these three main phases, the world powers of the time chose to fight against each other in the valleys and villages of Afghanistan.

Although Afghanistan was never colonised, colonial legacies in the region including “artificial boundaries” that separate and divide ethnic groups, tribes and even extended families also created tensions and prepared ground external interferences. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Russian armies were trying to expand their control over Central Asian territories while the British military was engaged in the struggling to conquer northern India. The armies of both superpowers of the time were fast converging towards Afghanistan which in itself was a regional empire, stretching from Oxus to the Indus River.<sup>10</sup> The following cartoon published in the Punch Magazine in 1878 illustrates the fierce rivalry game being played between the British Empire and the Tsarist Russia in Afghanistan by depicting the Afghan ruler, Amir Sher Ali Khan, standing between the Russian bear and the British lion. Although both powers were pretending to be the friends of Afghanistan, their aim was to gain influence and dominate a strategically located country.

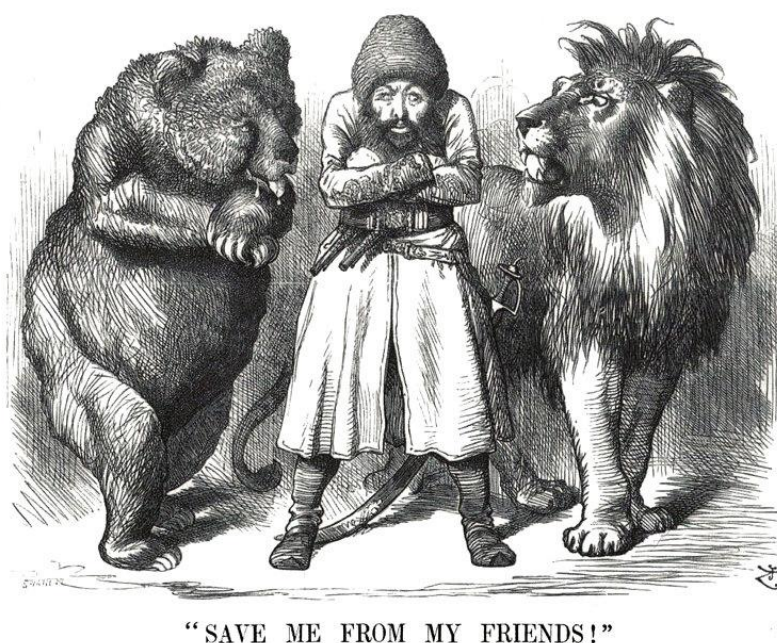


Figure 2.2: “Save Me From My Friends!” The Great Game in Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Reshtia, Sayed Qassem, (1990). *Between Two Giants: Political History of Afghanistan in the Nineteen Century*. Lahore, p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Punch Magazine. Available online at: <<http://punch.photoshelter.com/gallery-image/Victorian-Cartoons-Punch-Selection-See-Galleries-for-Complete-Set/G0000r6tq2MSSnzA/I0000XVOrVmIDeRE>> [Accessed 03 March 2015].

As part of this confrontation between the “Two Giants”, Britain invaded Afghanistan twice in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century from its Indian colony. The first invasion, in 1839, was aimed at securing Afghanistan’s support in stopping the Russian advance towards India. The second British invasion of Afghanistan in 1878 was intended to physically control parts of the Afghan territory and “separate the strategically important points in eastern and north-eastern Afghanistan from the rest of the country.”<sup>12</sup>

As a result of the great powers’ rivalry, Afghanistan was crushed and eventually dismembered. Although Afghanistan emerged victorious from the British wars, they made it considerably weak. Seizing the opportunity in 1893, the British Empire forced the Afghan King, Amir Abdur Rahman, to give up a big chunk of Afghanistan’s territory and included it in the British India. The Durand Line -- named after the British administrator, Sir Mortimer Durand -- cuts through the Pashtoon people’s homeland and ignores tribal, ethnic or cultural realities.<sup>13</sup> That territory became part of Pakistan when the British left the Indian Subcontinent in 1947 and India and Pakistan emerged as two independent countries. The partition of the Indian Subcontinent angered many Afghans as it didn’t offer “self-determination” to Pashtoons who had been separated from Afghanistan around fifty years earlier.<sup>14</sup>

The Durand Line was drawn in a manner which made the defences of the British India easier as the Raj and later Pakistan held most of the main strategic heights and passes. The strategy proved its effectiveness when the West backed Afghan Mujahideen fighters launched attacks from their sanctuaries on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line during their war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1980s.<sup>15</sup> According to Brigadier Mohammed Yousaf, who was the head of the Afghan Desk in Pakistan’s main spy agency, ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), in early 1980s, the logic behind the demarcation of border between Afghanistan and the Raj was to give every strategic advantage to British India. He adds that “all the dominating heights belonged to Pakistan, and we had good reason to

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<sup>12</sup> Reshtia, Sayed Qassem, (1990). *Between Two Giants. op.cit.* p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> Yousaf, Mohammad and Adkin, Mark, (2001). *The Bear Trap: Afghanistan’s Untold Story*. Barnsley: Leo Cooper, p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Reshtia, Sayed Qassem, (1990). *Between Two Giants. op.cit.*; See also, Ghaus, Abdul Samad, (1988). *The Fall of Afghanistan: An Insiders Account. op.cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Yousaf, Mohammad and Adkin, Mark, (2001). *op.cit.* See also Tomsen, Peter, (2011). *The Wars of Afghanistan: Messianic Terrorism, Tribal Conflicts, and the Failures of Great Powers*. New York: PublicAffairs. See also Coll, Steve, (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York: Penguin Group.

thank the colonial administrator, Durand, who had so long ago drawn his line with such tactical insight.”<sup>16</sup>

Most of the Afghan Mujahideen were based in Pakistan where they received foreign financial and military aid through the Pakistani intermediaries. The leaders of the Afghan Mujahideen factions were mainly based in Peshawar, North-West Pakistan, but they also had offices in the southern city of Quetta. The close proximity of these two cities to Afghanistan and the porous nature of the border between the two countries made it easier to plan and launch attacks from the Pakistani side and to transport weapons and other logistics to Afghanistan. As Mohammad Yousaf, a key Pakistani military and intelligence official in 1980s, and Adkin notes, “the Durand Line was to the Mujahideen what the Amu River was to the Soviets. Here Commanders came to collect their supplies, here the trucks from Peshawar and Quetta were off-loaded, and here the pack trains of animals assembled and loaded up.”<sup>17</sup>

The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan proved to be a turning point in the history of the region.<sup>18</sup> Although the Afghans were already fighting against the Soviet occupation on their own, the resistance of the Afghan people once again brought new and more powerful actors to the region. In order to counter the Soviet influence and remove the “Red Manace” from Afghanistan and the wider region, the American CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) launched the biggest covert-military aid programme in its history to help the anti-communist guerrillas in Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not only an immediate threat to neighbouring Pakistan; it also threatened the West’s interest in the wider region. Therefore, Pakistan’s main spy agency, ISI, became one of the CIA’s main partner agencies and the two worked closely to stop the Soviet’s expansion towards warm waters of the Indian Sea.<sup>20</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor of the US President, Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), and many other high ranking US officials saw this as a golden opportunity to “make the Russians bleed”. The US and its allies supplied weapons and money to the Afghan Mujahideen .

In 1998, Brzezinski acknowledged that the US’s support for the Afghan Mujahideen had started in the early months of 1989 -- a few months after the communist coup in Kabul

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<sup>16</sup> Yousaf, Mohammad and Adkin, Mark, (2001). *op.cit.* p. 132

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 108

<sup>18</sup> Braithwaite, Rodric, (2011). *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-89*. London: Profile Books.

<sup>19</sup> Coll, Steve, (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York: Penguin Group.

<sup>20</sup> Arnold, Anthony, (1985). *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. (Revised Edition). Hoover Institution Press: Stanford University.

(April 1988) and six months before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (December 1989).<sup>21</sup> In his State of the Union speech of 31 January, 1980, Jimmy Carter asserted:

“The destruction of the independence of Afghanistan government and the occupation by the Soviet Union has altered the strategic situation in that part of the world in a very ominous fashion. It has brought the Soviet Union within striking distance of the Indian Ocean and even the Persian Gulf. It has eliminated a buffer between the Soviet Union and Pakistan, and presented a new threat to Iran. These two countries are now far more vulnerable to Soviet political intimidation. If that intimidation were to prove effective, the Soviet Union might well control an area of vital strategic and economic significance to the survival of Western Europe, the Far East and ultimately the United States. It is clear that the entire subcontinent of Asia and especially Pakistan is threatened”.<sup>22</sup>

The US’s Afghan policy became more aggressive when Ronald Reagan became president in 1981. In April 1984, President Reagan signed the National Security Decision Directive 166, which sought to expel Soviet forces from Afghanistan “by all means available.”<sup>23</sup> In 1980s, countries from all religious and regions of the world became part of the war in Afghanistan. The entire Western Christian world led by the US, along with the communist China, Jewish Israel, the Middle Eastern Muslim countries and many others such as Japan and South Korea supported the Afghan Mujahideen to fight the Soviet Union. These countries also renewed their economic and military assistance to Pakistan which boosted its economy and sagging prestige and enhanced its military power.<sup>24</sup>

### **2.1.2 International Jihadist<sup>25</sup>**

On top of the dozens of state actors, numerous non-state actors, especially militant and criminal groups, have also been involved in the conflict in Afghanistan. The anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan in 1980s attracted tens of thousands of fighters from various Muslim countries stretching from North Africa to the Middle East and Central Asia to East Asia. According to high ranking Pakistani military officials, upto forty thousand foreign militants, mostly Arabs, were trained in Pakistani military camps to fight in Afghanistan

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<sup>21</sup> Maley, William, (2009). *The Afghanistan Wars*. (Second Edition). London: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> Carter, President Jimmy, (1980). *State of the Union Speech*, 31 January.

<sup>23</sup> Ahmad, Eqbal and Barnet, Richard J., (1988). Bloody Games. *The New Yorker*, 11 April. Available online at: <[http://www.bitsonline.net/eqbal/articles\\_by\\_eqbal\\_view2.asp](http://www.bitsonline.net/eqbal/articles_by_eqbal_view2.asp)> [Accessed 23 Sep 2012].

<sup>24</sup> Coll, Steve, (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York: Penguin Group.

<sup>25</sup> *Jihadi* or *Jihadist* is usually referred to, more so in the Western media, a Muslim who advocates or participates in a jihad. *Jihad* is an Arabic word which means “struggle” or “effort”, or “to strive”, or “to exert”, “to fight”, depending on the context. In the West, the word is generally understood to mean “holy war”, or “the struggle to defend Islam”- one of its several meanings. The Arabic word for Jihadist is *Mujahid* – person who is involved in jihad.

against the Soviets.<sup>26</sup> In around a decade, from early 1980s to early 1990s, Muslim militants from 43 Muslim countries went to participate in the Jihad.<sup>27</sup> These Jihadis, most of whom had radical views on politics and society, first went to Pakistan and then crossed the border to Afghanistan to help fight the “Evil Communist.” A big number of them stayed in Pakistan and worked with millions of Afghan refugees who had been displaced by war.

Although the Arabs didn’t have a central role in the Afghan resistance, it was a good opportunity for them to get military training and fighting experience. According to Milton Bearden, the former CIA station chief in Pakistan, “the idea that the Afghans somehow needed fighters from outside their culture was deeply flawed and ignored basic historical and cultural facts”.<sup>28</sup> The presence of foreign militants, many of whom were wealthy Arabs, was mostly felt in the financial sector as they possessed the means to help the Afghan refugees and Mujahideen factions and fronts. Meanwhile, many Arab NGOs and state funded humanitarian organisations propagated ideologies, creeds and beliefs that were alien to the traditional Afghan society. In refugee camps and madrassas (religious schools) in Pakistan, they preached the Salafi/Wahabi version of Islam which is critical of manifestations of both Sufism and tribalism and nationalism in Afghanistan. These groups and individuals partially succeeded to indoctrinate and convert some Afghans from their orthodox Hanafis beliefs to Wahabism. According to Rubin, “whatever belief, faith, code, and ethics the Afghans had in Afghanistan was shattered by gold and guns in Pakistan”.<sup>29</sup>

New terms, such as “Afghan Arabs” were coined to describe volunteer “jihadis” from the Arab countries. They associated themselves with different factions of the Afghan resistance headquartered in Pakistan and joined various Afghan commanders inside Afghanistan to fight.<sup>30</sup> Osama bin Laden, the Saudi born millionaire, was one of those Arab fighters who went to Pakistan and then to Afghanistan in the 1980s and helped in recruiting and financing foreign Jihadis.<sup>31</sup> In 1988, he created Al-Qaeda in the Pakistani

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<sup>26</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2004). *Afghan Jihad and Islamic Militancy*. A series of three radio documentaries for the BBC Pashto (entitled *Afghan Jihad aw Islami Aorpaki*). London: BBC World Service. See also Geo TV Channel, (2009). “Colonel Imam Interview in Jawab Deyh.” The interviewed in Urdu on Pakistan TV Channel, Geo, was aired in September 2009 and is available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKESRQTklpI> [Accessed 23 Sep 2012].

<sup>27</sup> Rashid, Ahmed, (2010). *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. (Revised and reprint edition). London: I.B. Tauris, p. 130

<sup>28</sup> Marwat, Fazal-ur-Rahim Khan and Toru, Parvez Khan, (2005). *From Muhajir to Mujahid: Politics of War Through Aid, A Case Study of Afghan Refugees in NWFP*. Peshawar: University of Peshawar, p. 139

<sup>29</sup> Rubin, Barnett, (1995). *Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 223- 224.

<sup>30</sup> Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*. London: Hurst and Company, pp. 50-55.

<sup>31</sup> Hamid, Mustafa and Farrall, Leah, (2015). *The Arabs at War in Afghanistan*. London: Hurst Publishers.



town of Peshawar and used the cover of the war in Afghanistan to transform his organisation into a global network. Bin Laden left Afghanistan and Pakistan after the defeat of the Soviet Union and went back to his country, Saudi Arabia. However, he soon started criticising the Kingdom's foreign policy especially after the Saudi government allocated military bases to US forces as part of the international coalition against Saddam Hussain's Iraq. Bin Laden had to go into exile to Sudan after the Saudi royal family became intolerant towards his views and activities.

In need of a safe haven, Osama bin Laden returned to Afghanistan along with members of his family and a few close associates in May 1996. They travelled in a chartered plane that took up from Sudan's capital, Khartoum, and landed in the UAE for refuelling before flying to Jalalabad, the centre of Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan. The "guests" were received by some of his old Afghan friends that he had made during the anti-Soviet Jihad in 1980s. He was later joined by more foreign jihadis.

Bin Laden's return to Afghanistan was sponsored by the Mujahideen leaders with whom he had long lasting friendship. According to Steele, bin Laden's "plane was chartered by the Rabbani's government"<sup>32</sup> as the government in Kabul was still led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani. Contrary to the popular myth, bin Laden was not invited by the Taliban who, at the time, were in control of only a few southern provinces of the country. Taliban came face to face with Osama bin Laden after they captured the eastern province of Nangarhar in September 1996. The Taliban leadership, including the Supreme Leader of the Movement, Mullah Muhammad Omar, didn't know much about bin Laden and his aims and objectives.<sup>33</sup> In the winter of 1996, a few months after the Taliban captured Nangarhar and Kabul, bin Laden went to the Taliban's stronghold, Kandahar, for his first meeting with Mullah Omar.<sup>34</sup> According to former Taliban officials, bin Laden was more interested in the Middle Eastern affairs and mostly talked about the traditional hospitality of the Afghans, Islamic brotherhood and the anti-American sentiments among Muslims, especially the Arabs. These officials add that the Taliban inherited Osama bin Laden and a number of other issues associated with him.<sup>35</sup> Based on the traditional Afghan hospitality

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<sup>32</sup> Steele, Jonathan, (2011). *Ghosts of Afghanistan: Hard Truths and Foreign Myths*. Berkley: Counterpoint, p. 193.

<sup>33</sup> Interviews with former Taliban officials, (T1, T3, T5). Nov., 2011 and Nov., 2013.

<sup>34</sup> See for more details, Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*. London: Hurst and Company, pp. 134-44; Zaeef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *My Life with the Taliban*. (Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (editors). London: Hurst and Company.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef (a founding member of the Taliban and former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan), Kabul, Nov., 2011; Interview with Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, Taliban government's foreign minister, Nov. 2013. Kabul, Afghanistan. See also Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad,

and hoping for his financial support, the Taliban allowed him to stay in the country.<sup>36</sup> Bin Laden and his foreign militants soon became part of the Afghan conflict when he asked them to support the Taliban in their war against “corruption and warlordism.”

By the end of 1990s, a few thousand individuals from dozens of different countries were living in the Taliban held territories. A number of them didn't have anywhere else to go as they were considered fugitives in their own countries. Some of these foreigners were militants while others were there to receive military training in order to start a revolution in other Muslim lands. Members of a number of militant organisations were based in Afghanistan. They included several Pakistani militant groups, separatists in the Indian controlled Kashmir, Al-Qaeda, Islamic activists and fighters from China's Xinjiang region (such as East Turkestan Islamic Movement or ETIM), Chechen separatists from Russia, members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Iranian Sunni Muslims activists who felt intimidated by the Shia dominated Iran. Some of the foreign militants had their own training camps while others were fighting alongside the Taliban. Mawlawi Mutawakkil, the former Taliban Foreign Minister, suggests that apparently they were supporting the Taliban but their main goal might have been learning military tactics and getting fighting experience.<sup>37</sup> Foreign militant groups tried to influence the Afghan Taliban Movement to get support for their own goals and, in the meantime, internationalised the conflict in Afghanistan by linking it to militant struggles in the region and beyond.

After the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, most of the foreign militants were either killed or captured. The remaining fled to Pakistan where they joined the local militants there and starting fighting back against the new Afghan government and its international allies.<sup>38</sup> As the number of foreign forces decreased by the end of 2014, hundreds and possibly thousands of foreign militants returned to Afghanistan to fight the Afghan security forces. These foreign militants include Chechens, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Uighurs and Pakistanis. In addition, in January 2015, the Islamic State group (IS/ISIS/ISIL) headquartered in Syria and Iraq, announced the establishment of its branch in “Khorasan”, an old name for Afghanistan and the surrounding parts of Pakistan, Iran and Central Asia. It was the first time that IS officially spread outside the Arab world. The emergence of IS

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(2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban*. (The book is in Pashto language and titled '*Afghanistan aw Taliban*'). Kabul: Maiwand Publishing House.

<sup>36</sup> Roberts, Jeffery J., (2003). *The Origins of Conflict in Afghanistan*. Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, p. 147.

<sup>37</sup> Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban*. (The book is in Pashto language and titled '*Afghanistan aw Taliban*'). Kabul: Maiwand Publishing House, p. 44.

<sup>38</sup> Bergen, Peter and Tiedemann, Katherine, (2013). *Talibanistan: Negotiating the Borders Between Terror, Politics, and Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press.

or “Daesh”, as it is known by its Arabic acronym, in Afghanistan and Pakistan is changing the dynamics of militancy in the region, home to a number of local and foreign militant groups motivated by a variety of regional and international agendas.

### **2.1.3 United States and its “War on Terror”**

The US left Afghanistan after the Soviet Union was defeated in 1989. However, a decade later, it became involved again in the country in a different role.<sup>39</sup> The US led invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 took place following the 9/11 attacks on the US which blamed Al-Qaeda for it, the leadership of which was based in the Taliban controlled Afghanistan. Overnight, Afghanistan was turned into a different theatre of war and became NATO’s biggest mission in its entire history. The US went to Afghanistan with the policy objective of destroying Al-Qaeda and punishing all those states and non-state actors that harbour or support terrorists, including the Taliban and other militant organisations. Following the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, the number of US-led troops stationed in Afghanistan gradually increased reaching its peak in 2010 with around one hundred thousand US troops and around fifty thousand from other members of the Coalition, including UK, Germany and France. The Coalition’s stated aims included the fight against Al-Qaeda, Taliban and other insurgent groups and to stabilise the country to a degree that it wouldn’t pose a threat to the US and its allies.<sup>40</sup> Although the US and its allies ended their combat mission in Afghanistan by the end of 2014, thousands of US and NATO soldiers are still based in the country as part of their new mission called “Resolute Support.”

### **2.1.4 China and its Regional and Global Ambitions**

The existing literature regarding the Sino-Afghan relations is limited. Although the 2011 Adelphi Book, *Afghanistan to 2015 and Beyond*, says that Chinese interest in Afghanistan and direct communication between the two countries have been non-existent during the

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<sup>39</sup> Tomsen, Peter, (2011). *op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> For details about different aspects of the US led war in Afghanistan see: Gall, Carlotta, (2014). *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*. New York: Harcourt Publishing Company; Gopal, Anand, (2014). *No Good Men Among the Living: America, the Taliban, and the War through Afghan Eyes*. New York: Metropolitan Books; Smith, Graeme, (2013). *The Dogs Are Eating Them Now: Our War in Afghanistan*. Knopf Canada; Woodward, Bob, (2002). *Bush at War*. New York: Simon & Schuster; Woodward, Bob, (2010). *Obama’s Wars*. New York: Simon & Schuster; Friedman, Norman, (2003). *Terrorism, Afghanistan, and America’s New Way of War*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press; Zaeef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *My Life with the Taliban*. *op.cit.*; Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*. London: Hurst and Company.

past 100 years,<sup>41</sup> relations between the two neighbours go back around two thousand years. For centuries, Chinese monks and merchants travelled to what is now Afghanistan for religious and business reasons. Since the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, monks travelled through the Silk Road to visit Buddhist monasteries and other religious sites in Afghanistan, which was one of the biggest centres of Buddhism at the time. The Silk Road was also used for trade which stretched across Afghanistan and connected much of the Asia. In recent years, the Sino-Afghan relations have been mostly friendly and based on the principle of non-interference. In 1963, the People's Republic of China and the Kingdom of Afghanistan signed a boundary treaty which settled China's territorial dispute over the Afghan-controlled Wakhan on the border between the north-east Badakhshan province of Afghanistan and the Xinjiang Region in China. The two countries now share a 92 kilometre long border.

During the rule of King Zahir Shah in Afghanistan (1933-1973), Kabul and Beijing had neutral relations with each other. As a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Afghanistan also enjoyed friendly relations with the Soviet Union. After the founding of the People's Republic under Mao Zedong in 1949, China and the Soviet Union enjoyed a very cordial relationship. However, as the strategic competition between China and the Soviet Union intensified in 1960s and 1970s, both countries tried to import their own version of communism to other countries in the region, including Afghanistan. As opposed to the two pro-Soviet communists groups in Afghanistan -- *Khalq* (People) and *Parcham* (Flag) -- the Maoists in Afghanistan formed their own group called *Shola-e-Javed* (also spelt *Shola-e-Javid/Jawid*) meaning 'Eternal Flame'.<sup>42</sup>

China also reportedly has links with another small but very vocal Afghan group, RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan). The group, founded in 1977, later distanced itself from Maoist rhetoric, at least in the public, and focused more on women rights.<sup>43</sup> After the pro-Soviet communist takeover in Kabul, the group's leadership

<sup>41</sup> Le, Miere, Christian; Li, Gary and Inkster, Nigel, (2011). China. In: Dodge, Toby and Redman, Nicholas (editors), *Afghanistan to 2015 and Beyond*. International Institute for International Studies (IISS), Adelphi book 425-26. London: Routledge, p. 219.

<sup>42</sup> Zarmalwal, Ghulam Mohammad, (2004). *Afghanistan Till the Last Afghan*. 2<sup>nd</sup> vol. *op.cit.* pp. 114-115. See also Alexander, Robert J., (1999). *International Maoism in the Developing World*. Westport, CT: Praeger, pp. 201-210; Arnold, Anthony, (1985). *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. *Op.cit*; Pons, Silvio, (2014). *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism 1917-1991*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. See also a website attributed to Shola-e Javid/Jawid, the "Communist (Maoist) Party of Afghanistan" at: <<http://www.sholajawid.org/index.html>> [Accessed 23 Feb. 2015];

<sup>43</sup> Mann, Carol, (2005). Models and Realities of Afghan Womanhood: A Retrospective and Prospects. Paper prepared for the Gender Equality and Development Section, Social and Human Sciences Sector. Paris: UNESCO, pp.6-7. Available online at: <<http://www.global-sisterhood-network.org/content/view/709/76/>> [Accessed 4 Oct 2012].

and most of its activists migrated to Pakistan and “became directly involved in the war of resistance.”<sup>44</sup> It established its own refugee camps equipped with healthcare centres and schools and hostels for boys and girls in different parts of Pakistan. RAWA calls itself a secular, independent political/social organisation of Afghan women fighting for human rights, social justice and “the establishment of a government based on democratic and secular values in Afghanistan”.<sup>45</sup>

By 1960, strains in the Sino-Soviet alliance gradually began to emerge mainly over questions of ideology and security. During the 1960s, the dispute between the two communist countries deepened and spread to include territorial issues with Moscow beginning the process of a military build-up along the border with China. Meanwhile, the 1978 coup by the pro-Soviet communists in Afghanistan and the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979 heightened China’s awareness of the threat of Soviet encirclement and further strained its relations with the Soviet Union. China demanded the unconditional withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Afghan Mujahideen’s resistance against the Soviet forces provided Beijing with a great opportunity. In order to curtail the Soviet influence in South and South-West Asia, the communist China chose Afghanistan as a battlefield to fight its rival communist power, the Soviet Union. China was also concerned about Soviet Union’s close relationship with its other regional rival, India. On the other hand, Beijing’s close ties with India’s arch-rival Pakistan impacted China’s Afghan policy. Pakistan played an important role in normalising China’s relations with the US thus forming a Pakistan-China-US Triangle against the Soviet Union. The bond between the three countries became stronger after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

With American cooperation and assistance, China responded by supporting the Afghan Mujahideen. Until the mid-1980s, most of China’s training centres for the Afghan rebels were located in Pakistan, where the Mujahideen had established their sanctuaries. Foreign media also covered China’s heavy involvement in the Afghan resistance and reported the presence of Chinese instructors in the refugee and training camps of the Afghan Maoist group, Shola-e-Javed, in Pakistan.<sup>46</sup> Later on, training camps for the Afghan rebels were also established in China’s Xinjiang region (bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan), in which

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<sup>44</sup> RAWA (Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan), (Not Dated). Official Website. <<http://www.rawa.org/rawa.html>> [Accessed 4 Oct 2012].

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Daily Telegraph, (1980). London, 5 January.

“China trained several thousand Mujahideen in camps near Kashgar and Khotan.”<sup>47</sup> The People’s Liberation Army (PLA) personnel “provided training, arms, organisation, financial support and military advisers to the Mujahideen resistance throughout nearly the entire Soviet military presence in Afghanistan”.<sup>48</sup>

In addition, China sold large quantities of arms to Afghan Mujahideen in deals negotiated by the CIA station in Beijing in exchange for tens of millions of dollars annually which “cemented a growing secret anti-Soviet collaboration between the CIA and Chinese intelligence”.<sup>49</sup> The weapons mostly included rocket-propelled grenade-launchers and assault rifles. The Chinese copy of the original Soviet light rifle, AK47 -- popularly known as Kalashnikov after its founder -- was supplied to Mujahideen in their hundreds of thousands; though the Mujahideen preferred the original Russian for its better performance. Weapons were transported to Pakistan via the Karakorum Highway which connects Pakistan and China. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, relations between China and the US have become “less collaborative as the strategic glue that bound their interests melted away.”<sup>50</sup> Competition between the two powers for more influence in the strategic and resource rich Central Asia intensified.

In recent years, one of China’s major concerns has been the militant and separatist activities by some of its Uighur Muslims, a Turkic ethnic group who live primarily in China’s western Xinjiang region bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan. Beijing fears that the expansion of Islamic militancy into Xinjiang will have a destabilising effect on the rest of the country. Hundreds, if not thousands, of Uighur Muslims from China have lived in both Afghanistan and Pakistan for decades. Many of them were enrolled in Pakistani madrassas during the 1980s while several of them fought alongside the Afghan Mujahideen against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan.<sup>51</sup> After the Mujahideen’s victory in Afghanistan, some Uighurs stayed in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In 1989, the year Soviet Union completed its troops’ withdrawal from Afghanistan; Uighur militants formed the *East Turkestan Islamic Movement* (ETIM) with the aim of establishing an Islamic government in China’s Xinjiang region. During the Taliban rule (1996-2001), several Uighurs were present in the Taliban controlled areas of Afghanistan, a situation which antagonised China.

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<sup>47</sup> Starr, S. Frederick, (Editor), (2004). *Xinjiang: China’s Muslim Borderland*. New York: M.E. Sharpe. 157-158.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Coll, Steve, (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York: Penguin Group, p. 66

<sup>50</sup> Le, Miere, Christian; Li, Gary and Inkster, Nigel, (2011). *op.cit.* p. 220

<sup>51</sup> Haider, Ziad, (2005). *Sino-Pakistan Relations and Xinjiang’s Uighurs: Politics, Trade, and Islam along the Karakoram Highway*. *Asian Survey*, **45**, (4), July/August. Available online at: <http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/XINJIANG.pdf> [Accessed 29 Sep. 2012].

Although China didn't recognise the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it had close contacts with the group. According to the former Taliban ambassador to Islamabad, the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan was "the only one to maintain a good relationship with the [Afghan] embassy and [the Taliban ruled] Afghanistan."<sup>52</sup> The Chinese ambassador to Pakistan also became the first ambassador from a non-Muslim country to travel to Kandahar to meet the Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar who "assured him that Afghanistan never had any interest or wish to interfere in China's domestic issues."<sup>53</sup>

In 2000, the name of *East Turkestan Islamic Movement* (ETIM) was changed to the *Turkestan Islamic Party* (TIP) which aims to counter what it sees as Beijing's repressive policies; especially its transmigration policies of moving Han Chinese to Xinjiang which resulted in Uighur population becoming a minority in the province. After the fall of the Taliban regime as a result of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the remaining Uighurs moved back to Pakistan where they joined other militants and established sanctuaries to reportedly plan attacks in Xinjiang.

Over the past few years, Beijing's strategic and economic interests have grown in Afghanistan and the surrounding countries. Afghanistan is important for an increasingly ambitious China for several reasons such as securing its Western border, ensuring access to natural resources and countering India's regional influence. Traditionally, Beijing has formulated its Afghan policy through the prism of its relationship with one of its closest allies, Pakistan. Beijing and Islamabad value one another as a strategic hedge against the threat from their joint rival and neighbour, India. Pakistan and India have a border dispute and fought three wars and several low-level conflicts since their independence from Britain in 1947. Meanwhile, India and China have a territorial dispute of their own which culminated in a short border war in 1962.<sup>54</sup>

Pakistan views China as its security patron and a guarantor against external threats. Highlighting Pakistan's special relationship with China, Haqqani says that "for China, Pakistan is a low-cost secondary deterrent to India", while "for Pakistan, China is a high-value guarantor of security against India."<sup>55</sup> According to Afridi and Bajoria, despite Pakistani security establishment's links with certain militant groups, China has been a main supplier of arms to Islamabad and helped the later in building several weapon

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<sup>52</sup> Zaef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *op.cit.* p. 135

<sup>53</sup> *ibid.* p. 135.

<sup>54</sup> Small, Andrew, (2015). *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics*. London: Hurst Publishers.

<sup>55</sup> Afridi, Jamal and Bajoria, Jayshree, (2010). *China-Pakistan Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 6 July. Available online at: <<http://www.cfr.org/china/china-pakistan-relations/p10070>> [Accessed 29 Sep. 2012].



factories. China's assistance to Pakistan extends to nuclear and missile technology and weapons designs. Collaboration between the two neighbours also includes personnel training, joint military exercises and intelligence sharing.<sup>56</sup>

Although Beijing declared full support for the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan and the US led war against Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, the long term presence of US/NATO forces in its neighbourhood is a cause of concern for Chinese strategic thinkers and policy-makers. China is suspicious of the US's long term strategic goals and military bases in the region. Some members of Chinese military see "Afghanistan as a central link in a C-shaped land encirclement of China by the US."<sup>57</sup> China, along with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, is a founding member of the mutual security organisation Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), established in 2001. In order to counter the US hegemony in the region, "China wants to construct a regional architecture in Central and East Asia which offers it the most favourable peripheral environment and minimises the risk of strategic encirclement by the US."<sup>58</sup> The perceived threat from the US's military presence in the region has brought China even closer with its traditional ally, Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan considers Beijing a more reliable ally than Washington, with Pakistani officials calling China their "all-weather friend" and labelling the US as a "fair-weather friend."

Beijing has avoided pursuing policies in Afghanistan that would irritate the Pakistani government. Afghan and US officials have encouraged China to persuade or pressurise Pakistan to take action against the Afghan Taliban and deny them sanctuaries on its soil.<sup>59</sup> In early 2015, Chinese officials acknowledged that they have contacts with the Taliban and wanted to play a supportive role in the Afghan Peace Process.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, China and the Afghan government in Kabul have shown willingness to increase cooperation and expand their economic and military ties. The resource-hungry China is one the first countries which signed economic agreements to invest billions of dollars in Afghanistan's mineral resources.

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Le, Miere, Christian; Li, Gary and Inkster, Nigel, (2011). *op.cit.* p. 224.

<sup>58</sup> Le, Miere, Christian; Li, Gary and Inkster, Nigel, (2011). *op.cit.* p. 223.

<sup>59</sup> Swaine, Michael D., and Ng, Tiffany P., (2010). China. In: Tellis, Ashley J., Mukharji, Aroop (Editors), *Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?* Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, pp. 61-69.

<sup>60</sup> Gandahara, RFE/RL, (2015). China Ready To Mediate Stalled Afghan Peace Negotiations. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 13 Feb. [Online]: <<http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/china-afghanistan-taliban/26845280.html>> [Accessed 20 Feb 2015].

Deutsche Welle (DW), (2015). Can China help with Afghanistan's peace process?, 18 Feb. [Online]: <<http://www.dw.de/can-china-help-with-afghanistans-peace-process/a-18265401>> [Accessed 20 Feb 2015].



### 2.1.5 Russia-US Relations and the Afghan Theatre

Russia's relations with Afghanistan have three main phases. Its involvement in Afghan affairs goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was engaged in a geopolitical rivalry with the British Empire, popularly known as "the Great Game".<sup>61</sup> The Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and its traumatic experience, commonly called as "the Afghan Syndrome",<sup>62</sup> and its aftermath comprises Moscow's second major interaction with Afghanistan. Moscow's policy is mainly based on the experience of post-Soviet Russia in its Republics of Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingushetia where Islamist separatist movements have been fighting for independence since the fall of USSR. In 1990's, the Taliban in Afghanistan was the only regime in the world that had officially recognised the government of the Chechen separatists. Several Chechens had sought refuge in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule (1996-2001). On the other hand, Russia was a principal supporter of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance and gave it logistical, financial and political support. Russia's Afghan policy is also aimed at dealing with the threats and challenges emerged after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. The presence of Islamist militant groups in Central Asia (such as IS/ISIL, Al-Qaeda, IMU, ETIM and the Taliban) poses a major security threat to Russia and its allies. In the meantime, Moscow continues to maintain links with leaders of the former Northern Alliance and several other local Afghan actors.

Although Russia supports the US-led war in Afghanistan, it opposes a permanent US/NATO deployment in Afghanistan. Russia doesn't want to see the long term presence of NATO in former Soviet territories and on its borders. Moscow aspires to soft dominance over Central Asia and has been anxious about the expansion of both militancy and NATO in the region. On the other hand, as Oksana says, "Russia was often interpreted as hoping to see the Alliance tied down in Afghanistan for years, and thus unable to intervene in regions of greater importance to Russia".<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Hopkirk, Peter, (1990). *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>62</sup> See for more details of the consequences of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and their comparison with the Vietnam War; Sarin, Oleg Leonidovich and Dvoretzky, Col. Lev, (1993). *The Afghan Syndrome: The Soviet Union's Vietnam*. Novato, CA: Presidio. See also Braithwaite, Rodric, (2011). *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan, 1979-89*. London: Profile Books; Coll, Steve, (2004). *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*. New York: Penguin Group; Arnold, Anthony, (1985). *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*. (Revised Edition). Hoover Institution Press: Stanford University; Maley, William, (2009). *The Afghanistan Wars*. (Second Edition). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

<sup>63</sup> Antonenko, Oksana, (2011). The Central Asian States and Russia. In: Dodge, Toby and Redman, Nicholas (editors), *Afghanistan to 2015 and Beyond*. International Institute for International Studies (IISS), Adelphi Book 425-26. London: Routledge, p. 206

## 2.2 Regional Dynamics of the Afghan Conflict:

Afghanistan has also been at the centre of a number of regional conflicts and rivalries. Following the collapse of state in Afghanistan as a result of years of wars and destruction, several neighbouring and regional countries exported their strife to the war torn country. Regional players not only tried to increase their influence in a weakened Afghanistan, they also chose to harm each other in the Afghan battlefields. Following are a few regional conflicts and rivalries that are linked to the conflict in Afghanistan.

### 2.2.1 Afghanistan-Pakistan Tension

Afghanistan and Pakistan are connected by various ties including historical, cultural, linguistic, religious and economic. Both neighbours are Islamic republics and part of a number of regional organisations such as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation) and OIC (Organisation of Islamic Countries). However, relations between the two neighbours have been tense since the creation of Pakistan in 1947 mainly “over the right of self-determination of the people of Afghan origin in the territories which had been forcibly separated by Britain in the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>64</sup> and made part of the British Raj in India. Following the division “British India” into independent India and Pakistan in 1947, the land and population of historical Afghanistan were included in Pakistan. Afghanistan raised the issue of its lost territories and population at the time of the British withdrawal from the Indian sub-continent and later with the authorities of the newly created state of Pakistan.<sup>65</sup>

However, the border issue still remains disputed until this day as the two countries have different interpretations of the Durand Line agreement and its status. Since the creation of Afghanistan has not formally recognised the Line as its international boundary with Pakistan, there hasn’t been any agreement between the two countries to formalise its status.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, Pakistan, while desiring that Afghanistan ratifies the agreement, has always insisted that Durand Line is a “non-issue” and calls it an

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<sup>64</sup> Reshtia, Sayed Qassem, (1990). *Between Two Giants. op.cit.* p. 424.

<sup>65</sup> Kakar, M. Hassan, (2011). *Pashtoon, Afghan, Afghanistan* (Pashto book titled as *Pashtoon, Afghan, Afghanistan*). Peshawar: Danish Publishing Society. See also Zarmalwal, Ghulam Mohammad, (2004). *Afghanistan Till the Last Afghan. 2<sup>nd</sup> vol. op.cit.*

<sup>66</sup> Rubin Barnett R. and Siddique. Abubakar, (2006). *Resolving the Pakistan- Afghanistan Stalemate*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace (USIP). Available online at: <http://www.usip.org/publications/resolving-the-pakistan-afghanistan-stalemate>>. [Accessed 08 Aug 2012].

international recognised border.<sup>67</sup> So, the seeds of tension sown more than a century ago still haunt the region.

Paradoxically, Afghanistan's relations were warm with secular India, the Muslim Pakistan's arch rival. The Afghanistan-Pakistan dispute and the Indo-Afghan alliance left Pakistan more insecure especially after the cessation of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh.<sup>68</sup> Although Afghanistan was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM),<sup>69</sup> Pakistan was a member of the two US-backed regional military alliances; SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization), which were an extension of the Western military arrangement to contain the Soviet Union.<sup>70</sup>

A combination of internal and external factors prompted Pakistan's establishment to use Islam as a tool to create a new national identity and integrate its diverse ethnic groups. Pakistan -- home to different and diverse ethnic groups including Pashtoons, Punjabis, Sindhis and Balochis -- was built on weak social, historical and political structures. As Hussain says, the country "appeared to be an artificial construct at independence."<sup>71</sup> Therefore, Islam was used as a binding factor and a unifying force and, in the meantime, religious nationalism was promoted to weaken ethnic nationalist identities, counter popular nationalist and leftist movements and demands for provincial autonomy.

The Durand Line divides ethnic Pashtoons who comprise the biggest ethnic group in Afghanistan and the second biggest in Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan also actively supported Islamists in Afghanistan to weaken Pashtoon/Afghan nationalism and put pressure on the government in Kabul. As Ahmad and Barnett say, Pakistan's support for the guerrilla movement of Afghan Islamists was "an expression of this long-standing border dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan" and "to harass the Kabul government" led by a fervent Afghan nationalist, Mohammad Daoud.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Khan, Azmat Hayat, (2000). *The Durand Line: Its Geostrategic Importance*. (Effendi, M.Y., editor). Peshawar: Area Study Centre, University of Peshawar and Hans Seidel Foundations.

<sup>68</sup> Shah, Mehtab Ali, (1997). *The Foreign Policy of Pakistan: Ethnic Impacts on Diplomacy 1971-1994*. London: I.B.Tauris.

<sup>69</sup> Wakman, Mohammad Amin, (1985). *Afghanistan, Non-alignment and the Super Powers*. New Delhi: Radiant Publishers.

<sup>70</sup> Kakar, M. Hassan, (1995). *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979-1982*. p. 9. Berkeley: University of California Press.

<sup>71</sup> Hussain, Rizwan, (2005). *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan*. London: Ashgate Publishing Press, p. 61.

<sup>72</sup> Ahmad, Eqbal and Barnett, Richard J., (1988). *op.cit.*

An antecedents of the current turmoil in Afghanistan arose in the beginning of 1973 when members of the small nascent Islamist opposition movement took refuge in Pakistan at the invitation of the Pakistani establishment at a time when tensions between Kabul and Islamabad were running high over Afghanistan's renewed interest in the Pashtoonistan issue -- creating an autonomous or semi-autonomous entity comprising of Pashtoon inhabited areas in Pakistan. For many Pashtoons living in Afghanistan and Pakistan, "Pashtoonistan" is the idea of a historic homeland that was divided by the British Empire in 1893.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the ethnic Baloch insurgency in Pakistan in 1970s spilled over its borders to include Afghanistan and the Shah's regime in Iran. While thousands of nationalist Balochis migrated to Afghanistan where they received a warm welcome, the Shah of Iran supported Pakistan in crushing the Baloch rebellion in the latter's Balochistan province which borders both Iran and Afghanistan.<sup>74</sup>

Pashtoon nationalism was already a major political and social force in pre-partition India, especially in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) where resistance against British colonialism was based mainly on ethnicity rather than religion. Political movements and tribal groups in NWFP and Balochistan provinces of Pakistan stressed their kinship ties with their brethren in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Pakistan viewed Afghanistan's support for the Pashtoon irredentism as a threat to its territorial integrity.<sup>75</sup>

Since its inception, Pakistan used Islamist ideology and actively pursued a foreign policy, especially vis-à-vis Afghanistan and India, rooted in religious idiom. The "Islamisation" of Pakistan and its foreign policy led to the state favouring radical Islamist groups and other non-state actors. The strategy of deploying religion as a foreign policy tool became more aggressive in 1970s, especially after the 1973 palace coup in Kabul against King Zahir Shah by his cousin Mohammad Daoud Khan. President Daoud was pursuing a nationalist and secular approach and was a strong supporter of the right of self-determination of ethnic Pashtoons and Balochis inside Pakistan.<sup>76</sup>

Contrary to the popular notion that Pakistan started helping the Afghan Mujahideen after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the relationship between Islamabad and

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<sup>73</sup> Siddique, Abubakar, (2014). *The Pashtun Question. The Unresolved Key to the Future of Pakistan and Afghanistan*. London: Hurst Publishers.

<sup>74</sup> Cordovez, Diego and Harrison, Selig S., (1995). *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*. New York: Oxford University Press. See also Mukherjee, Dilip, (1975). Afghanistan under Daoud: Relations with Neighboring States. *Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, (4): pp. 301-312, April.

<sup>75</sup> Hussain, Rizwan, (2005). *op.cit.*

<sup>76</sup> Taj, Farhat, (2011). *Taliban and Anti-Taliban*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, p.58. See also Weinbaum, Marvin G., (1994). *Pakistan and Afghanistan: Resistance and Reconstruction*. Oxford: Westview Press.

Afghan Islamists was built many years earlier at the time when the supposedly secular minded Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was Prime Minister of Pakistan (1973-1977). Pakistan began training and providing logistical and financial support to “Afghan proxies” at least five years before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>77</sup>

In view of the changed situation in Afghanistan, Pakistan’s Frontier Corps, a federal paramilitary force commanded by a senior officer from the army with the rank of Major General, “was dragged into regional as well as local political battles at the behest of the state.”<sup>78</sup> In October 1973, the Pakistani Prime Minister, Zulfikar Bhutto, tasked Major General (Retd) Naseerullah Khan Babar, the Inspector General of Frontier Corps in North-West Frontier Province (now called Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa/Pashtoonkhwa),<sup>79</sup> to set up training camps for Afghan Islamists inside Pakistani territory. In March 1976, Prime Minister Bhutto appointed General Babar as the governor of North-West Frontier Province asking him to “organise the nascent Afghan resistance” in order “to convey a message to Sardar Daoud”,<sup>80</sup> the new Afghan president. Pakistan welcomed these Afghan Islamists, whose explicit aim was to overthrow the regime in Kabul, and gave them protection and military training. As Weinbaum says, within a year of Daoud’s takeover (1973), the “collusion of the Islamabad government with enemies of the Daoud government was unmistakable.”<sup>81</sup>

These “proxies” were sheltered in Pakistan with an immediate aim to destabilise Afghanistan. A few months later, in August 1975, with the help of some Afghan Islamists, an operation was initiated in Afghanistan’s Panjsher Valley in which, according to General Babar “the Afghans suffered heavily in men and equipment” and “was a total success” for Pakistan.<sup>82</sup> On the part of Pakistan, it was a powerful signal to the Kabul government. However, the planned uprising against the government in Kabul in 1975 is generally viewed as a failure as it didn’t cause a lot of disturbance. In addition, the initiative didn’t

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<sup>77</sup> Taj, Farhat, (2011). *Taliban and Anti-Taliban*. *op.cit.*; Amin, A.H., (2001). *Interview with Major General (retired) Naseerullah Babar*. Defence Journal, April. Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Available online at: <http://www.defencejournal.com/2001/apr/babar.htm> [Accessed 17 September 2012].

<sup>78</sup> Abbas, Hassan, (2007). *Transforming Pakistan’s Frontier Corps*. Jamestown, Terrorism Monitor, 5, (6). Available online at: [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=1056&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=182&no\\_cache=1](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/gta/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1056&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=182&no_cache=1) [Accessed 21 Sep. 2012].

<sup>79</sup> In 2010, the name of the province was officially changed to Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

<sup>80</sup> Amin, A.H., (2001). *Interview with Major General (retired) Naseerullah Babar*. *op.cit.*

<sup>81</sup> Weinbaum, Marvin G., (1994). *Pakistan and Afghanistan: Resistance and Reconstruction*. Oxford: Westview Press, pp. 4-5.

<sup>82</sup> Amin, A.H., (2001). *op.cit.*

have public support and the activists were either arrested or barely escaped imprisonment.<sup>83</sup>

Some dissident Afghan Islamists considered President Daoud “a dangerous modernist, even a Communist”.<sup>84</sup> General Babar publically acknowledged that Afghan Islamists including Burhanuddin Rabbani, Habib-ur-Rahman, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Ahmad Shah Massoud were among “a host of others”, who went to Pakistan in 1973 and were enlisted and trained as Frontier Corps personnel.<sup>85</sup> Taj notes that at the time, “Pakistan cultivated more than one thousand disgruntled”<sup>86</sup> Afghans who had Islamist tendencies with some fleeing to Pakistan after participating in the 1974 anti-government rioting in Kabul.<sup>87</sup> However, Griffin says that 5,000 Islamists underwent military training in Pakistan.<sup>88</sup> According to Coll, the exiled Islamists offered the Pakistani military “a way to pursue influence in Afghanistan”.<sup>89</sup>

These “proxies” were sheltered and trained in Pakistan to destabilise Afghanistan and put pressure on the new Afghan regime. Camps were established in the Tribal Areas on the Pakistan side of the Durand Line that border Afghanistan’s Paktia, Paktika and Logar provinces.<sup>90</sup> They were enlisted in Pakistan’s paramilitary Frontier Corps in order to hide their identities. According to General Babar, Pakistan gave them “basic infantry weapons” and an SSG (Pakistani military’s Special Services Group) team gave them “specialised training in how to conduct guerrilla warfare”. He adds that “it was a top secret affair” and only a handful top officials such as General Babar, Prime Minister Bhutto, Aziz Ahmad<sup>91</sup> and the then Army Chief, General Tikka Khan, were in the picture. Other officials and institutions such as foreign ministry were not privy to this secret mission.<sup>92</sup>

A couple of months after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, General Babar revealed in an interview with the New York Times that “we wanted to build up a leadership to

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<sup>83</sup> Roy, Olivier, (1990). *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*. Second edition. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, pp. 75-76.

<sup>84</sup> Ahmad, Eqbal and Barnett, Richard J., (1988). *op.cit.*

<sup>85</sup> Amin, A.H., (2001). *op.cit.*

<sup>86</sup> Taj, Farhat, (2011). *Taliban and Anti-Taliban*. *op.cit.* p. 58

<sup>87</sup> Kamm, Henry, (1989). Pakistan Officials Tell of Ordering Afghan Rebel Push. *New York Times*, 23 April. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1989/04/23/world/pakistan-officials-tell-of-ordering-afghan-rebel-push.html?src=pm>> [Accessed 03 Oct 2012].

<sup>88</sup> Griffin, Michael, (1988). *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Taliban Movement in Afghanistan*. London: Pluto Press, p. 17

<sup>89</sup> Coll, Steve, (2004). *op.cit.* p. 114

<sup>90</sup> Hussain, Rizwan, (2005). *op.cit.* p. 79

<sup>91</sup> Aziz Ahmed was one of Bhutto’s closest confidantes and served him as Minister of State for Defence and Foreign Affairs and finally as Foreign Minister for a few months, before Bhutto’s government was toppled in General Zia’s military coup of 1977. He also served as Pakistan’s ambassador to Washington and played a key role in bringing the two countries closer.

<sup>92</sup> Amin, A.H., (2001). *op.cit.*

influence events” inside Afghanistan. He also claimed that the US knew about this covert operation and had been financing such potential leaders since 1973. He also added that the US had taken Gulbuddin Hekmatyar “under its umbrella” months before the Soviet intervention in December 1979.<sup>93</sup>

Taj notes that “the cultivation of religious forces” and using them for foreign policy objectives was “an ideal opportunity in the strategic calculus of the ironically secular Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto led Pakistan.”<sup>94</sup> Islamabad had hoped that by supporting these Afghan proxies, it will not only get rid of its “Pashtoonistan problem” but it will also provide it with a “strategic depth” in the event of a conflict with India. As Hussain says, it was Bhutto’s “forward policy” in Afghanistan to destabilise the country by assisting and organising the disparate Islamic groups who were opposed to the secularly oriented regime of President Daoud, did not back Kabul’s policy on the territorial dispute with Pakistan and were opposed to Afghanistan’s friendly relations with India.<sup>95</sup> Roy has reached the same conclusion by saying that “Pakistan’s support was not ideological but strategical: the Afghan Islamists were opposed to a nationalist ideology and the claim made at Kabul concerning Pashtoonistan, and they rejected the traditional Kabul-New Delhi coalition in the name of Muslim solidarity. They were, therefore, the best defenders of Pakistan’s integrity.”<sup>96</sup> The establishment of the base for Afghan Islamists in Pakistan in 1970s was also aimed at countering the growing influence of the Soviet Union. Both the US and Pakistan feared that it would be “a step towards the fulfilment of Peter the Great’s will” of 1777 to reach the warm waters of Indian Ocean.<sup>97</sup>

Following the communist coup in Afghanistan in 1978 and the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979, “these assets proved very valuable” for Pakistan as well as the West.<sup>98</sup> In the subsequent years, Pakistan used these “proxies” as a strategic tool to achieve its foreign policy goals in Afghanistan and the wider region. Individuals trained by Pakistan in 1970s – such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Ahmad Shah Massoud, Burhanuddin Rabbani, Mawlawi Yunus Khalis -- later rose to prominence and were made leaders of the Afghan Jihad (resistance) to the communist rule and Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Kamm, Henry, (1989). Pakistan Officials Tell of Ordering Afghan Rebel Push. *op.cit.*

<sup>94</sup> Taj, Farhat, (2011). *op.cit.* p. 58

<sup>95</sup> Hussain, Rizwan, (2005). *op.cit.* p. 79

<sup>96</sup> Roy, Olivier, (1990). *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 76.

<sup>97</sup> Amin, A.H., (2001). *op.cit.*

<sup>98</sup> Abbas, Hassan, (2007). *Transforming Pakistan’s Frontier Corps. op.cit.*

<sup>99</sup> Girardet, Edward, (1985). *Afghanistan: The Soviet War.* Oxford: Croom Helm. See also Marwat, Fazal-ur-Rahim Khan and Toru, Parvez Khan, (2005). *From Muhajir to Mujahid. op.cit.*

Shortly before the 1978 communist coup in Afghanistan and the Soviet invasion in the following year, the Pakistani army chief, General Zia-ul-Haq, had already seized power in a coup by overthrowing the elected Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This was a period when Pakistan was under a lot of external pressure and was isolated internationally. The country's relations with the US were tense for a number of reasons including Pakistan's secret nuclear program and the imposition of sanctions by the Carter administration in 1978 and again in 1979, the execution of Prime Minister Bhutto in April 1979, and the ransacking of the US Embassy in Islamabad in November 1979. In addition, Pakistan's economy was in a shamble, and its military lacked modern and sufficient weapons and equipment.

It is in this context that Marwat says that the "Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was not less than a blessing in disguise for Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorial regime, a chance of to extract itself from the quagmire of internal and external problems".<sup>100</sup> The entire Western world, led by the US came to the support of Pakistan where the leadership of the Afghan Mujahideen was based. The situation in Afghanistan also helped General Zia domestically. As Hussain notes, Pakistan's greater involvement in the internal affairs of Afghanistan was also related to the internal political dynamics of the country by providing the martial law regime of General Zia-ul-Haq respite from internal opposition and diverted public's attention from the domestic turmoil.<sup>101</sup> General Zia, who was isolated internationally by staging a coup against an elected government and hanging Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in a "politically motivated case", skilfully used the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the communist threat to the wider region to his own benefit in order to achieve several objectives. General Zia consolidated his "position internally by stamping out the democratic opposition" while Pakistani military in general got the much needed and long awaited support from the US.<sup>102</sup>

During the Jihad years, Islamabad invested heavily in individuals and groups that were radical and side-lined nationalists in the resistance. According to Ahmad and Barnett say, General Zia "used the weapons flow to build up the Islamic elements of the Afghan resistance - at the expense of the more moderate and secular elements."<sup>103</sup> The Director General of Pakistan's main intelligence agency ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), General Akhtar Abdur Rahman, and his team "tended to freeze out traditional Afghan royalty and

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<sup>100</sup> Marwat, Fazal-ur-Rahim Khan and Toru, Parvez Khan, (2005). *op.cit.* p. 6.

<sup>101</sup> Hussain, Rizwan, (2005). *op.cit.* p. 61.

<sup>102</sup> Hussain, Rizwan, (2005). *op.cit.* p. 61.

<sup>103</sup> Ahmad, Eqbal and Barnett, Richard J., (1988). *op.cit.*



tribal leaders, depriving them of weapons”<sup>104</sup> and favoured the radical Islamists many of whom had links with Muslim Brotherhood. The policy of side-lining the nationalists and other moderates engaged in the resistance “not only agreed with Zia’s faith but it weakened the Afghan rebels most likely to stir up Pashtoon nationalism inside Pakistani territory”.<sup>105</sup> Building on the initiative launched by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, General Zia further consolidated the Afghan resistance on religious lines. According to Ahmad and Barnett:

“[F]or fifteen years, two very different Pakistani governments - the civilian government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the military regime of Zia-ul-Haq - have used the Afghan resistance first as a way of exerting pressure on Kabul, then as a means to strengthen the often wavering American commitment to Pakistan. The more the United States involved itself in the Afghan cause, the more Pakistan would emerge as the indispensable staging area for the fight against Communism, and the more secure the flow of American aid to Pakistan would be”.<sup>106</sup>

Shortly before his death in a plane crash in August 1988, General Zia explained his designs for Afghanistan and the region and stated that his goal had been “to destroy the Communist infrastructure, install a client regime, and bring about a ‘strategic alignment’ in South Asia”.<sup>107</sup> In an interview with a US scholar, Selig Harrison, he declared that: “We have earned the right to have a friendly regime there. We took risks as a frontline state, and we won’t permit it to be like it was before, with Indian and Soviet influence there and claim on our territory. It will be a real Islamic state, parts of a Pan-Islamic revival that will one day win over the Muslims in the Soviet Union”.<sup>108</sup>

Pakistan’s policy of supporting the Islamists continued under Benazir Bhutto who became Prime Minister of Pakistan after the death of General Zia. Benazir Bhutto was helped by some of those who worked with her father, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. General Naseerullah Babar --the then Inspector General Frontier Corps and governor in North-West Frontier province of Pakistan and a confident of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto -- also served as one of her close aides. He was “a man in whom she placed particular trust in military and Afghan matters”. According to Babar, “Ms. Bhutto had a strong inclination to support the military’s Afghan policy because it evolved under her father’s rule”.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Coll, Steve, (2004). *op.cit.* p. 67.

<sup>105</sup> Coll, Steve, (2004). *op.cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>106</sup> Ahmad, Egbal and Barnett, Richard J., (1988). *op.cit.*

<sup>107</sup> Cordovez, Diego and Harrison, Selig S., (1995). *op.cit.*, p. 92

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> Kamm, Henry, (1989). *op.cit.*

A year after the collapse of the communist regime in Kabul, Babar became the federal interior minister in Benazir Bhutto's second government (1993-95) and tried to shape events in Afghanistan through his old ties and contacts. He is also known for galvanizing and supporting the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan which emerged in Kandahar in 1994. The Taliban captured a number of cities and towns in a quick succession and eventually capturing around 90% of Afghanistan's territory. Pakistan was the first and one of the only three countries (Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) that officially recognized the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Although the Taliban leaders in general call launch of the Taliban Movement an entirely Afghan phenomenon and reject the assertion that its launch was supported by Pakistani military establishment as part of its efforts to install a client regime in Kabul,<sup>110</sup> Pakistan's links with the Afghan Taliban have now become an open secret.<sup>111</sup> Even though, many Afghans appreciated the Taliban's effort to bring peace and removing the corrupt and predatory warlords, they objected to their closeness to and, in some cases, dependence on Pakistan.<sup>112</sup>

### 2.2.2 The India-Pakistan Rivalry

The strategic competition between India and Pakistan has also engulfed Afghanistan. Since their independence in 1947, the two regional arch rivals have been vying for influence in Kabul. Although Afghanistan-Pakistan relations remained tense mainly over the issue of Durand Line and Pashtoonistan, Kabul usually enjoyed cordial relations with New Delhi. In addition, Afghanistan and Pakistan were in two different camps during the Cold War. Afghanistan, along with India, was a founding member of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) while Pakistan joined the US-led coalitions aimed at countering the Soviet Union. As Newell says, it was Afghanistan's search for more trade and transportation arrangements as well as diplomatic support against Pakistan that led to even closer

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<sup>110</sup> Zaef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *My Life with the Taliban*. London: Hurst and Company.

<sup>111</sup> Boone, Jon, (2015). Musharraf: Pakistan and India's Backing for 'Proxies' in Afghanistan Must Stop. *Guardian*, Friday 13 February. Available online at: <[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban?CMP=share_btn_tw)> [Accessed 13 Feb 2015]; Gall, Carlotta, (2014). *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*. New York: Harcourt Publishing Company; and Waldman, Matt, (2010). *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents*. Crisis States working papers series no.2, no. 18. Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science; Abbas, Hassan, (2014). *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier*. Wales: Gomer Press. See also Rashid, Ahmad, (2010). *Taliban. op.cit.*

<sup>112</sup> Some of my interviews pointed to the US's role in supporting the creation of an exclusively Sunni Taliban Movement to counter the regional influence of Shia Iran and, in the meantime, stabilise Afghanistan through Taliban for reaching and extracting the natural resources, especially oil and gas, of Central Asia. See for more details, Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *op.cit.*; Zaef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *op.cit.*; Rashid, Ahmed, (2010). *op.cit.*; Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *op.cit.*

relations with India and the Soviet Union in 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, Pakistan was India's arch enemy and the two had a border dispute of their own over Kashmir.<sup>113</sup>

When the Soviet backed communists ceased power in a coup in 1978, India also extended its hand of friendship to the new regime in Kabul. On the other hand, Pakistan as well as Western and most Muslim countries became hostile to the new government in Afghanistan and supported the Afghan Mujahideen leaders who were mostly based in Pakistan. After the the victory of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan in 1992, Pakistan gained unprecedented influence in Afghanistan. The emergence of the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan in 1994 and their close ties with Pakistan presented another security challenge to India. While the Taliban had a symbiotic relationship with Pakistan; India, along with Russia and Iran, supported the anti-Taliban groups called the Northern Alliance.

Traditionally, India has been supporting the central government in Kabul with the exception of the Taliban.<sup>114</sup> When the Taliban regime fell as a result of the US-led invasion in December 2001, most of the Northern Alliance leaders took prominent positions in the new government in Kabul. India to revived its friendship with the Kabul government and restored the influence it had lost during the Mujahideen and the Taliban rule, mostly at the expense of Pakistan. India became one of the biggest donors of aid for the reconstruction of post-Taliban Afghanistan. In addition to its embassy in Kabul, India opened consulates in major Afghan cities of Kandahar (south), Herat (West), Jalalabad (East) and Mazar-e-Sharif (North); thus expanding its reach and influence in the country. However, this annoyed Islamabad with Pakistani officials publically expressing their concern over the increased Indian presence in Afghanistan. Pakistani security establishment sees India's increasing presence in Afghanistan as part of an effort to encircle Pakistan. Islamabad also fears of a possible Afghan-Indian alliance which it thinks might result in two front wars on its Eastern and Western borders. Meanwhile, Islamabad accused Delhi of supporting ethnic Baloch separatists in Pakistan's southern Balochistan province.<sup>115</sup>

On the other hand, despite Pakistan's assurances to the international community that it was a US ally in the "War on Terror", Islamabad's close ties with the Afghan Taliban have been exposed by high ranking Pakistani and Western officials. In September 2011, Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was the first high ranking

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<sup>113</sup> Newell, Richard, (1974). Foreign Relations. In: Dupree, Louis and Albert, Linette, (editors), *Afghanistan in the 1970s*. New York: Praeger Publishers, p. 87.

<sup>114</sup> Dixit, J. N., (2000). *An Afghan Diary: Zahir Shah to Taliban*. Delhi: Konark.

<sup>115</sup> Mukhopadhaya, Gautam, (2010). India. In: Tellis, Ashley J., Mukharji, Aroop (Editors), *Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?* Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment For International Peace, pp. 27-37.

US official who directly linked Pakistan's main intelligence agency (ISI) with the Taliban saying that it supported the insurgent as a way to extend Pakistani influence in Afghanistan.<sup>116</sup> More importantly, General Pervez Musharraf, who was Pakistan's president and army chief (1999-2008), publically admitted in several interviews in 2014 and 2015 that his country supported the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan and justified the move as an effort to counter the Indian influence. He added that Pakistani intelligence agencies "cultivated" the Taliban after 2001 because the Afghan government was dominated by officials who favoured India and revealed that "Pakistan had its own proxies, India had its proxies."<sup>117</sup>

Traditionally, Pakistan has linked the Afghan issue with its relations with India. On the other hand, India wants to ensure that a Pakistani client and radically Islamist regime with links to the military-jihadi nexus in Pakistan doesn't return to Kabul. The India-Pakistan rivalry and their "proxy war" has been one of the main factors behind the conflict in Afghanistan, especially since 1990s.<sup>118</sup> Once again, there is an overlapping of interests and matching of motivations in the India-Pakistan rivalry in Afghanistan. Pakistan supports the Afghan Taliban to counter India's influence in Afghanistan while the Taliban receive Pakistan's support to achieve its goal of weakening the Afghan government and eventually capturing the state. On the other hand, India supports the anti-Taliban factions in Afghanistan, who, in turn, find a commonality between their interests and those of India's.

### **2.2.3 Central Asian Countries and Their Role and Interests in Afghanistan**

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, several new countries emerged as Afghanistan's neighbours in Central Asia. Since then, Afghanistan shares its northern border with three Central Asian countries -- Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Inspired by both the defeat and withdrawal of Soviet forces in Afghanistan in 1989 and the fall of USSR two years later, a number of Central Asian Muslims wanted to establish an Islamic system in their countries. Some of them resorted to militancy aiming to overthrow

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<sup>116</sup> Bumiller, Elisabeth and Perlez, Jane, (2011). Pakistan's Spy Agency Is Tied to Attack on U.S. Embassy. *New York Times*, 22 Sep. Available online at <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/world/asia/mullen-asserts-pakistani-role-in-attack-on-us-embassy.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/23/world/asia/mullen-asserts-pakistani-role-in-attack-on-us-embassy.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 20 March 2013]. See also BBC News, (2011). Pakistan 'backed Haqqani attack on Kabul' - Mike Mullen. *BBC News*, 22 Sep. 2011. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-15024344>> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

<sup>117</sup> Boone, Jon, (2015). Musharraf: Pakistan and India's Backing for 'Proxies' in Afghanistan Must Stop. *Guardian*, Friday 13 February. Available online at: <[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban?CMP=share_btn_tw)> [Accessed 13 Feb 2015].

<sup>118</sup> Dalrymple, William, (2013b). *A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India*. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press. Available online at: <<http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>> [Accessed 15 Dec 2014].

their secular governments ruled by the former communist elite. Faced with prosecution, a number of Islamist and political activists, mainly from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, fled to Afghanistan from where they planned to hit back at their regimes.

However, when the Taliban emerged in Afghanistan in mid 1990s and established their control over most of the country's territory, Central Asian Islamists reorganised themselves. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was founded in 1998 in northern Afghanistan with the aim establishing an Islamic government in Uzbekistan. The group also attracted new recruits including separatist Islamists from Chechnya and ethnic Uighurs from Xinjiang region in Western China. These militants, who were mostly based in northern Afghanistan, close to their own homelands, actively participated in Afghanistan's factional war and fought alongside the Taliban against those Afghan groups that were opposed to the Taliban rule. After the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2011, most of the Central Asian militants fled to Pakistan where they established sanctuaries mainly in the tribal areas of North and South Waziristan.<sup>119</sup> Over the next few years, they re-organised themselves and established close ties with Pakistani militant groups and Al-Qaeda. The Central Asian militants regularly attacked Afghan and NATO forces across the border in Afghanistan.<sup>120</sup>

It is not only Central Asia militants, who are involved in the conflict in Afghanistan. Central Asian countries, especially Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, became players and supported factions from their own ethnic groups during the factional war in Afghanistan in 1990s. Having a sizable population of ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens, Afghanistan shares a few ethnic groups with its Central Asian neighbours. During the war between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan provided significant support to anti-Taliban groups and commanders. In addition, after the Taliban captured most of Afghanistan, a number of these commanders fled to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and were operating from their bases and sanctuaries in the host countries. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan supported the central government in Kabul and helped in the US led war against Taliban and Al-Qaeda.<sup>121</sup> However, the two countries

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<sup>119</sup> BBC News, (2014). Pakistan's 'fanatical' Uzbek militants. *BBC News*, 11 June 2014. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-27801257>> [Accessed 16 Aug 2014].

<sup>120</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2010c). Hire and Fire: Al-Qaeda Sets Sights on Taliban Recruits. *BBC News*, 13 October. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11444334>> [Accessed 26 Oct 2012].

<sup>121</sup> Tanrisever, Oktay F. (2013). *Afghanistan and Central Asia: NATO's Role in Regional Security Since 9/11*. Amsterdam: IOS Press.

have used their ethnic and political ties to remain relevant and retain influence in Afghanistan.<sup>122</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Iran-Saudi Competition for Regional Dominance

Iran is one of the major players in Afghanistan and enjoys substantial political, economic and cultural leverage in Afghanistan.<sup>123</sup> Its Afghan policy has usually been a by-product of its rivalries with other regional and international powers. Iran, a Shia powerhouse, and Saudi Arabia have been using Afghanistan in their competition for the leadership of the Islamic world. In addition, Iran has tried to prevent the dominance of a radical Sunni power in Afghanistan with hostility to Shias which would check the Iranian influence.<sup>124</sup>

During the Afghan Jihad in 1980s, several Afghan Shia Mujahideen factions were based there and organised their war against the Soviet troops from their Iranian sanctuaries. Iran was also engaged in a bitter rivalry with Pakistan and its ally Saudi Arabia in 1990s for regional dominance. It conducted a bitter proxy war on Afghan soil in 1990s, first by supporting the alliance which included its co-religionists, the Shia Hazaras, against the alliance backed by the Sunni Saudi Arabia and its ally Pakistan. After the fall of the Communist regime in 1992, Iran supported the government led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani while Pakistan and Saudi Arabia stood behind Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who fought against the government in an effort to capture power.

After the emergence of the Taliban in 1994, Iran gave generous support to Northern Alliance and hosted its leaders while Taliban were helped by Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Tehran, together with India and Russia, provided military, financial and political support to Northern Alliance which was fighting the Pakistan and Saudi backed Sunni Taliban. In the wake of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance and its patron Iran helped the US to overthrow the Taliban regime and collaborated in the process of forging a

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<sup>122</sup> Kassenova, Nargis, (2014). *Relations between Afghanistan and Central Asian states after 2014: Incentives, Constraints and Prospects*. SIPRI, Sweden. Available online at:

<http://books.sipri.org/files/misc/SIPRI14wcaNK.pdf> [Accessed 16 Dec. 2014].

<sup>123</sup> Nader, Alireza; Scotten, Ali G.; Rahmani, Ahmad Idrees; Stewart, Robert and Mahnad, Leila, (2014). *Iran's Influence in Afghanistan: Implications for the U.S. Drawdown*. Washington D.C. Rand Corporation.

<sup>124</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2012a). *Afghanistan and Iran: Two Close Neighbours or Historical Rivals?* A series of three radio documentaries for the BBC's Pashto Service (entitled in Pashto as "Afghanistan aw Iran: Dwah Nizhday Gawandiyaan Ka Taarikhi Siyalaan?"). May, BBC Pashto, <[www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)>. Available online at: First Programme, <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/multimedia/2012/05/120526\\_ss-afghan-iran-relation-p1.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/multimedia/2012/05/120526_ss-afghan-iran-relation-p1.shtml)>; Second programme, <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/multimedia/2012/05/120527\\_im\\_afghan-iran-relation-p2-azami.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/multimedia/2012/05/120527_im_afghan-iran-relation-p2-azami.shtml)>; Third programme, <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/multimedia/2012/05/120530\\_im\\_afghanistan\\_iran\\_relations\\_pgm3.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/multimedia/2012/05/120530_im_afghanistan_iran_relations_pgm3.shtml)>. [Accessed 05 Aug 2013].

new government in post-Taliban Afghanistan.<sup>125</sup> However, the honeymoon between Tehran and Washington ended very soon after the Bush administration rebuffed Iran's overtures and called it a state sponsor of terrorism and part of the "Axis of Evil" along with North Korea and Libya.<sup>126</sup> Although Tehran vocally backed the central government in Afghanistan led by Hamid Karzai, it maintained its relations with the leaders and commander of the former Northern Alliance. Cultivating good relations with different Afghan factions and individuals has been part of Iran's strategy to counter Saudi and Pakistani attempts to displace it from the Afghan scene.<sup>127</sup>

Traditionally, Iran's policy towards Afghanistan has been based on its geo-strategic interests aiming to expand its influence and become a regional hegemon. It applies several strategies, tools and tactics to achieve its objectives. Iran promotes its soft power especially in the realms of media and education. Over the past few years, Iran has exported millions of books to Afghanistan to influence public opinion, spread Persian culture and increase support for the Islamic Republic. It has also built in roads in the Afghan media and established close ties with a several Afghan media outlets both in the capital Kabul and provinces. Its state radio has special transmissions in Pashto and Dari (Afghan Persian) targeted at the Afghan population.<sup>128</sup> The country is also using religious rhetoric to gain the trust and good will of Afghans in general. Culturally, it tries to extend its influence on Afghanistan's Dari/Persian speaking ethnic groups mainly Tajiks as well as, Hazaras, who are predominantly Shia Muslims.<sup>129</sup>

Although Iran took a sigh of relief after the US-led coalitions toppled Tehran's two main regional rivals -- Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the presence of foreign forces in the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and Iraq as well as the Gulf increased Iran's fears of encirclement. Tehran is concerned about the perceived breaches of its sovereignty and meddling in its internal affairs by the US and other Western powers. Tehran openly opposes the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan and wants to

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<sup>125</sup> Saghafi-Ameri, Nasser, (2011). Prospects for peace and stability in Afghanistan. SIPRI, Sweden. pp. 10-11. Available online at: <<http://www.sipri.org/research/security/afghanistan/afghanistan-regional-dialogue-1/publications-1/ARD01.pdf>> [Accessed 16 Dec 2014].

<sup>126</sup> BBC Television, (2009). *Iran and the West*. A series of three TV programmes broadcast in July 2009. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00htnkq/episodes/guide>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2014].

<sup>127</sup> Boone, Jon, (2010). WikiLeaks: Afghan MPs and religious scholars 'on Iran payroll'. *Guardian*, 2 December. Available online at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/02/afghan-mps-scholars-iran-payroll>> [Accessed 16 Dec 2014].

<sup>128</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2012a). *Afghanistan and Iran: Two Close Neighbours or Historical Rivals?* op.cit.

<sup>129</sup> Milani, Mohsen M., (2006). Iran's Policy Towards Afghanistan. *Middle East Journal*, **60**, (2): 235-256, Spring. Available online at: <[http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1106&context=gia\\_facpub](http://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1106&context=gia_facpub)> [Accessed 16 Dec 2014].



ensure that US/NATO does not use the Afghan territory against Iran. Iran is also suspicious of foreign powers inciting unrest on its soil by supporting its Sunni minority. It accuses the US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for backing the religiously Sunni and ethnically Baloch militant group, Jundallah, which has carried out several attacks inside Iran.

Although Iran's relations with the Taliban were extremely tense and, unlike Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, didn't recognise the Taliban regime, its view of the Taliban changed when they were removed from power. After the international pressure increased on Iran due to its nuclear programme, Tehran began establishing links with the insurgents in Afghanistan to warn of the consequences of West's possible attack. According to Afghan officials, Iran started training camps for the Taliban and gave them financial and logistical support including arms from 2010.<sup>130</sup> At several occasions, the US and NATO officials accused Iran of supplying weapons to the Afghan Taliban.<sup>131</sup> Several delegations of the Afghan Taliban visited Iran between 2010 and 2015. Some of these visits were made public but a number of others were kept secret by both sides. The Afghan government officials and the Taliban sources say that Iran increased its cooperation with the Afghan Taliban in 2014 and 2015 when it was faced with a new threat – the emergence of the vehemently anti-Shia group, Islamic State (IS/ISIL), in Afghanistan. Although Iran was already engaged in countering the Islamic State group in Iraq, it needed the cooperation of the Taliban in Afghanistan to tackle the threat of IS/ISIS in order to secure its eastern border.<sup>132</sup>

Iran's links with the Taliban seem to be tactical not strategic and ideological<sup>133</sup>. However, there is an overlapping of interest and motivations of the two sides. Both actors are against the presence of the US/NATO forces in Afghanistan and, more recently, against the emergence of Islamic State group (IS/ISIL) in Afghanistan. The relationship serves the interests of both the Taliban and Tehran. Taliban get support from elements in another

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<sup>130</sup> Interviews with Afghan officials and individuals close to Taliban, (G1, G2, G5, T1, T2, T3). Nov 2001 and Nov. 2013. Several Afghan officials have also publically stated that elements in Iran have been supporting the insurgent. A US diplomatic cable released by Wikileaks also details Iranian help with the Afghan insurgents fighting the US led NATO forces and the Afghan government. See for details, Tisdall, Simon, (2010). Afghanistan War Logs: Iran's Covert Operation in Afghanistan. The Guardian, 25 July. Available online at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jul/25/iran-backing-taliban-alqaida-afghanistan>> [Accessed 26 Oct 2012].

<sup>131</sup> Kugelman, Michael, (2014). The Iran Factor in Afghanistan. Foreign Policy, July 10. Available online at: <<http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/07/10/the-iran-factor-in-afghanistan/>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2014]. See also Milani, Mohsen M., (2011). Iran's Alleged Ties to the Taliban. PBS, 10 August. Available online at: <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2011/08/irans-alleged-ties-to-the-taliban.html>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2014]; BBC News, (2008c). Arming the Taleban. 18 September. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/7623496.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7623496.stm)> [Accessed 6 Nov. 2014].

<sup>132</sup> Interviews with Afghan officials and individuals close to the Taliban (G1, G7 and T6). Oct. 2014.

<sup>133</sup> Iran is a Shia power-house while Taliban are a Sunni group with traditionally close ties with Pakistan as well as Iran's regional arch-rival, Saudi Arabia. When the Taliban were in power in Afghanistan (1996-2001), the Taliban and Iran accused each other of interference and of supporting each other's enemies.



regional actor and an important neighbour of Afghanistan. On the other hand, the Taliban try to neutralise the IS/ISIL group in Afghanistan which threatens Iran. In addition, Iran can also exploit its links with the Taliban to put pressure on the US as well as the Afghan government.

Tehran's support for the insurgents in Afghanistan is restraint as the former avoids an overt or direct confrontation with the US-led coalition. In the meantime, a degree of synergy exists between the goals of Iran and the US in Afghanistan. Both are interested in stability (albeit on their own terms) and the reduction of opium for which Iran is a major consumption market). In addition, both want to prevent the dominance and expansion of IS/ISIL and Al-Qaeda linked radical groups in Afghanistan.

Iran's relations with the central government in Kabul have been warm and friendly. However, Iran now and then creates a "controlled chaos" for the Afghan government and its international allies perhaps to highlight its relevance and gain leverage. At several occasions over the past ten years, it started expelling Afghan refugees living in Iran which put a lot of pressure on the Afghan government and its Western allies. In other instances, it imposed a brief oil embargo on Afghanistan; increased restrictions on the joint border with Afghanistan and made visa issuance to Afghans more difficult. In addition, Iran doesn't seem to be keen on the construction of the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline that bypasses Iran and undermines the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline. Continued instability in Afghanistan has been one of the main hurdles in starting the work on the multi-billion TAPI project. Although Iran doesn't have any border dispute with Afghanistan, the issue of access to water that flows to Iran from the Afghan rivers is still unresolved. A stable and strong Afghanistan might mean less water for Iran which has the potential of creating tension between the two neighbours.

### **2.3 Local Dynamics of the Afghan Conflict:**

On top of the international and regional factors, several factors within Afghanistan contribute to the conflict in the country including militancy, illicit drug economy, organised crime and warlordism. Local actors of the Afghan conflict have a wide range of motivations such as financial gains and control over territory, people and resources (greed), poverty (need) and ideology/Islamism, nationalism, ethnicity and tribalism (creed). In some cases in what appears to be a creed motivation, there is a strong element of proxy and

patronage as they enjoy varying degrees of external support. Highlighting the role of foreign actors, Rubin says that “every group in the population has been mobilized militarily and politically and enjoys some patronage from foreign powers or movements”.<sup>134</sup>

### 2.3.1 Ethnicity and Tribalism

Internationally, it is the “ethnic problem” in Afghanistan that has received more attention with many commentators calling the conflict in the country as a manifestation of “ethnic hatreds”. A number of studies frame the conflict in an ethnic discourse and portray it as an outcome of the age old “ethnic tension.” Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic country with the Pashtoons making up the largest ethnic group followed by Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks. In addition, there are several other smaller ethnic groups living in different parts of the country.<sup>135</sup>

Some writers have made sweeping statements without properly exploring various dynamics of the conflict. The conflict in the country, especially the factional war in Kabul after the fall of the communist regime in 1992 is viewed by many as a clash between different ethnic groups. Writing about the fighting between different Mujahideen factions in the capital in 1990s, a commentator notes that “the line was drawn between Pushtoons and non-Pashtoons for the battle of Kabul”.<sup>136</sup> Another writer concluded in 1996 that “the Tajiks are totally against the Pashtoons”.<sup>137</sup> The same author noted that “a power game converted into an ethnic war”<sup>138</sup> and added that “the ethnic war in Afghanistan has left the country in a state of anarchy”.<sup>139</sup> Such writers usually reduce ideological, proxy, greed and various other factors to only communal aspect of some commanders and politicians.

The founding father of modern Afghanistan, Ahmad Shah Abdali/Durrani) was an ethnic Pashtoon who was elected King in the southern city of Kandahar in 1747 and ruled over today’s Afghanistan and parts of its neighbouring countries.<sup>140</sup> The Durrani dynasty continued ruling over Afghanistan for nearly 250 years up until the April 1978 communist coup and the subsequent invasion by the Soviet Union.

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<sup>134</sup> Rubin, Barnett R., (2009). *op.cit.* p.17.

<sup>135</sup> The national anthem of Afghanistan recognizes 14 ethnic groups in the country: Pashtoons, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Balochis, Brahuis, Arabs, Nooristanis, Pamiris, Gujars, Qizilbash, Aimaq and Pashai.

<sup>136</sup> Hussain, Hamid, (2003). *Op.cit.*

<sup>137</sup> Jalalzai, Musa Khan, (1996). *Sectarianism and Ethnic Violence in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 145.

<sup>138</sup> *ibid.* p. 149

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.* p. 149

<sup>140</sup> Singh, Ganda, (1959). *Ahmad Shah Durrani: Father of Modern Afghanistan.* Bombay: Asia Publishing House.



**Figure 2.3:** Map of the Afghan Empire under Ahmad Shah Durrani (1747-1772)<sup>141</sup>

The Afghan society was a good example of ethnic pluralism and co-existence before upheavals of the late 1970s. For several decades before that, Afghanistan remained as one of the most peaceful countries in the world. Assimilation of different linguistic, ethnic and tribal groups created a shared Afghan identity. Inter-mixture between various groups has been a common feature all over the country. The two major languages, Pashto and Dari (Afghan Persian) had been official languages. The 2004 Constitution also gave the status of official languages to other smaller languages.

Historically, Pashtoons enjoyed political and military dominance in the country. However, with the Soviet invasion, the social and economic fabric of the Afghan society began to break down. Even the ideologically communist Peoples Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which took power in the 1978 coup, couldn't remain immune from these social fractures. Although there were members of all ethnic groups in both factions of the PDPA (*Khalq* and *Parcham*), ethnic tensions were evident among some of the PDPA leaders who

<sup>141</sup> Wikimedia Commons, (2007). Limites de l'Empire Afghan sous Ahmad Shah Durrani 23-12-2007. Available at <<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Afgempdur.jpg>> [Accessed 28 Sep 2012].

have been accused of “cultivating ethnic conflict to advance their own political objectives.”<sup>142</sup>

The Pashtoon-dominated *Khalq* faction of the PDPA, which ruled over the country from April 1978-December 1979, adopted measures to promote minority languages and cultures and also recognised Uzbeki, Turkmeni, Balochi and Nooristani as official languages. In the meantime, it also took steps to promote Pashto language and culture. However, these policies were reversed after the December 1979 Soviet invasion, which brought the mainly non-Pashtoon *Parcham* faction into power.<sup>143</sup> Babrak Karmal, the leader of the Parcham faction, was installed as the president and remained on the post until 1986. Karmal has been accused of deliberate attempts to transform the ideological struggle into an ethnic one. According to Ahady, in order “to perpetuate his own and his faction’s relevance to Afghan politics, he attempted a new alliance based on ethnic affiliations” involving “non-Pashtoon resistance commanders and non-Pashtoon communist military officers and bureaucrats.”<sup>144</sup>

The rise of some ethnic minorities resulted in a sense of alienation among a number of Pashtoons who felt that they were losing clout and that their share of power in the state institutions had been gradually reduced. Pashtoons’ decline in state institutions continued during the 1980s. The representation of ethnic Pashtoons was further reduced when the Soviet backed regime in Kabul fell in 1992 at the hands of the Mujahideen and a coalition of mainly ethnic minorities took over the capital and occupied most of the important positions including the presidency and the important ministries of defence and the interior.

However, the alliance between mainly non-Pashtoon ethnic groups collapsed in less than a year. The ethnic Hazara leader, Abdul Ali Mazari, who was previously of the government, started fighting against the forces of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the defence minister, and President Burhanuddin Rabbani, both ethnic Tajiks. The ethnic Uzbek, General Abdul Rashid Dostum, also abandoned the Tajik dominated governing coalition. Both Dostum and Mazari joined an ethnic Pashtoon and leader of Hezb-e-Islami (Islamic Party), Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and fought jointly against the forces of ethnic Tajiks, Massoud and Rabbani, who were controlling most of the government buildings in the capital. During the Mujahideen regime (1992-1996), local commanders and warlords frequently shifted

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<sup>142</sup> Ahady, Anwar-ul-Haq, (1995). The Decline of the Pashtoons in Afghanistan. *Asian Survey*, **35**, (7): 621-634, July. Available online at: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/2645419.pdf?acceptTC=true>> [Accessed 28 Sep 2012].

<sup>143</sup> Siddique, Abubakar, (2012). *Afghanistan’s Ethnic Divides*. Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (Centro de Estudios y Documentación Internacionales de Barcelona – CIDOB), Barcelona. Available online at: <[http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/stap\\_rp/policy\\_research\\_papers/afghanistan\\_s\\_ethnic\\_divides](http://www.cidob.org/en/publications/stap_rp/policy_research_papers/afghanistan_s_ethnic_divides)> [Accessed 26 Oct 2012].

<sup>144</sup> Ahady, Anwar-ul-Haq, (1995). *Op.cit.*

alliances for various reasons including money and weapons. However, they usually justified the move and claimed that they did so to protect the interests of their own ethnic communities. However, “their struggle ultimately centred on individual survival and power grabs while often using ethnicity as a convenient cover and a powerful mobilizing tool.”<sup>145</sup>

When the US invaded Afghanistan in 2001, it used the Northern Alliance’s ground forces to fight against the Taliban and allowed them to enter and capture Kabul after the departure of the Taliban forces from the capital. Once again, it was the alliance of the mainly non-Pashtoons which began to dominate the political scene of Afghanistan. The UN and US sponsored conference about the future political set up of post-Taliban Afghanistan in Bonn, Germany, gave the anti-Taliban non-Pashtoon groups a dominant role in the new government. Although Hamid Karzai, a Pashtoon, was chosen as the new president, most key ministries (such as defense, interior and foreign ministries) were given to non-Pashtoons, especially the Tajiks. As the US allies against the Taliban, the Northern Alliance leaders were generally empowered with money, weapons and political positions in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. The dominant presence of Northern Alliance members was evident in almost all government sectors, especially the security institutions. This created a sense of neglect and loss among a number of Pashtoons. It was a factor that created a distance between the new Afghan government and some people, especially in the Pashtoon areas of the country. The insurgents also benefited from the sense of political alienation that was evident in a number of Pashtoons.

Although ethnicity has been used as a military-political peg by some leaders, its impact remained limited in the overall conflict in the country. As Hussain says, “despite prolonged civil war and sharpening of ethnic boundaries, still a large number of Afghans call themselves Afghans”.<sup>146</sup> As opposed to its two neighbours, Iran and Pakistan, where different ethnic and religious groups have been struggling for independence and/or cessation and suffer from violent ethnic conflicts, Afghanistan never had any separatist movement. The campaign by members of different ethnic groups is mainly about gaining more political power in the centre.

In addition, several commentators equate Pashtoons in general with the Taliban while others reduce the whole conflict to a war between Pashtoons and non Pashtoons. However, they ignore rivalries that exist among several non-Pashtoon groups. Meanwhile, Pashtoons

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<sup>145</sup> Siddique, Abubakar, (2012). *Op.cit.*

<sup>146</sup> Hussain, Hamid, (2003). *Ethnic Factor in Afghanistan*. Defence Journal, March 2003. Rawalpindi, Pakistan. Available online at: <<http://www.defencejournal.com/2003/mar/ethnic.htm>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2012].

and other ethnic groups in the country have been wrongly projected as homogenous categories on their own. The intra-ethnic differences and divisions that exist in all ethnic groups have again been largely ignored. Several commanders from the same ethnic groups fought against each other for various reasons including factional and political differences and territorial control. Many Pashtoon commanders fought against other Pashtoon commanders in different parts of the country. For example, two powerful commanders in southern Helmand province -- Mulla Naseem Akhundzadah and Rais Abdul Wahid – who were members of the same Pashtoon sub-tribe, fought bitterly for years which resulted in the killing of thousands of people from both sides. The situation was the same among other ethnic groups. Similarly, a number of Tajik and Uzbek commanders clashed with commanders of the same ethnic groups. Tajik Mujahideen commanders from Hezb-e Islami led by a Pashtoon, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, and Jamiat-e Islami led by a Tajik Burhanuddin Rabbani frequently fought against each other even during the Soviet occupation (1979-1989). Such rivalries indicate that alliances and factions were not formed along the ethnic lines alone. Several other factors such as political and ideological affiliations, financial benefits, political power, patronage and even acquaintances played important role in the formation of an alliance, faction or front.

In general, the Mujahideen factions fighting the Soviet forces in 1980s were ethnically mixed, except the Iran based Shia Hazara groups which had almost exclusively Hazara members. The two major factions, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islami and Burhanuddin Rabbani's Jamiat-e Islami, were some of the most mixed groups having members from almost all ethnic groups. During the factional war that followed the fall of the communist regime in 1992, the warring factions in Kabul were also mixed. President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his defence minister, Ahmad Shah Massoud, were both Tajik. However, dozens of other commanders as well as Rasool Sayyaf, the head of Itihad-e Islami faction, were non Tajiks and were part of the government. On the other hand, the opposition was also mixed. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the main leader of the opposition was a Pashtoon, while his major allies included General Dostum, an Uzbek, and Abdul Ali Mazari, a Hazara Shia. They all fought together against the government. In addition, the two sides also recruited and mobilised fighters from other parts of the country who belonged to all ethnic groups. When the ethnic Pashtoon Gulbuddin Hekmatyar finally reconciled with the government, the person he recommended from his faction for the post of Prime Minister was Ustad Farid, a Tajik from north of the country. Moreover, many Mujahideen leaders and prominent commanders remained neutral during this factional fighting. Ismael Khan a Tajik from Herat, Haji Abdul Qadeer, a Pashtoon from Nangarhar,

Jalaluddin Haqqani, a Pashtoon from Khost and dozens of others from all ethnic groups refused to take part in the power struggle. In addition, the factional war was confined to Kabul and the rest of the country didn't follow the same pattern of violence. Commanders and ordinary Afghans from different ethnicities and factions generally remained peaceful.

Although the Taliban Movement was dominated by Pashtoons, it did not represent a particular ethnicity. Thousands of people from other ethnic groups of Afghanistan also joined the Taliban with some of them appointed as governors and ministers in their government. As Barnett Rubin argues, Taliban represented a social group rather than an ethnic groups as it consisted of "the privately educated, rural *ulama* and their students affiliated to the Deobandi movement."<sup>147</sup> In addition, the Taliban fought against both Pashtoons and non-Pashtoons. All those who opposed them were regarded as enemies regardless of their ethnicity. In fact, the first opposition to the Taliban came from the Pashtoon commanders in Kandahar, the birth place of the Taliban Movement. Out of the six main commanders in the province, the group was supported by one of them, Mullah Naqib who was a commander of the Jamiat-e Islami faction led by the then President, Burhanuddin Rabbani, a Tajik from north-eastern Badakhshan province. In addition, the Tajik led central government in Kabul was one of the first and major supporters of the Taliban. On the other hand, hundreds of Pashtoon commanders including leaders of Mujahideen factions – such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Abdul Rab Rasool Sayyaf, fought against the Taliban. Although several Hazara leaders -- such as Mohammad Muhaqiq, Abdul Karim Khalili -- opposed the Taliban, a number of ethnic Hazara and Shia commanders in central Afghanistan's Ghazni, Bamiyan and Urozgan provinces joined the Taliban. Mohammad Akbari, the head of his own Hazara faction was even a high ranking official in the Taliban government.<sup>148</sup>

After the emergence of the Taliban Movement in Kandahar in 1994, many local commanders fled and joined the anti-Taliban factions. Although most of these commanders

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<sup>147</sup> Rubin, Barnett R. (2000). *The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan*. World Development, **28**, (10): 1789-1803. Available online at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.461.517&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed 5 Oct 2012].

<sup>148</sup> Zaef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *My Life with the Taliban*. op.cit.; Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*. London: Hurst and Company; Muzdah, Waheed, (2002). *Afghanistan and the Five Year Rule of the Taliban*, (original title in Dari/Persian, 'Afghanistan wa Panj Saal Sulta-e Taliban'). Kabul: Maiwand; Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban*. (The book is in Pashto language and titled 'Afghanistan aw Taliban'). Kabul: Maiwand Publishing House. Interview with Mullah Abdul Salam Zaef (a founding member of the Taliban and former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan), Kabul, Nov., 2011; Interview with Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, Taliban government's foreign minister, Nov. 2013. Kabul, Afghanistan; Interview with P1, (Politician). Kabul, Oct 2014; Interview with P5 (Politician), Kabul, Oct 2014.

were ethnic Pashtoons, they fought back against the pre-dominantly Pashtoon Taliban as part of the Northern Alliance, which was led by non-Pashtoons. Even in the internal factional wars of the 1990s, the role of foreign actors was as evident as ever. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE, the only three countries that had recognised the Taliban regime, supported the Taliban; while Russia, Iran and India were backing the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance which was led by mainly non-Pashtoon ethnic groups such as Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks.

The Taliban, after the fall of their regime, seems to be careful about using ethno-nationalist language. Their slogans have been rooted in Afghan nationalism and Islam and usually warn against ethnic tensions and conflict and use terms *milli* (national) and *millat* (nation) in their statements. However, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the leader of the second biggest insurgent group in Afghanistan, Hezb-e-Islami (Islamic Party), has recently adopted an unprecedentedly ethno-nationalistic tone apparently to tap into Pashtoon fears that they are being marginalized by the US and some of its Afghan allies. In one of his Eid (Muslim religious festival) messages posted on his party's website on 8 August 2013, Hekmatyar described the Pashtoons as the "victimized absolute majority." He also warned that the departing Americans were planning to partition Afghanistan with the help of some ethnic "minorities" to perpetuate civil war in order to make up for their defeat.<sup>149</sup>

After the fall of the Taliban regime, the country has been ruled by a government consisting of all ethnic groups. However, some commentators including Griffiths concluded that bringing together "such volatile and contentious elements" was a futile exercise and suggested that the long term solution of Afghanistan may be a break up.<sup>150</sup> Although such portrayal of the conflict in Afghanistan is common in the media, several Western officials and academicians believe this narrative to be the truth.<sup>151</sup> As Dorronsoro notes, "the employment of the category of 'ethnic warfare' to describe the Afghan conflict is far from being neutral, and is in itself an ideological position."<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Hekmatyar, Gulbuddin, (2013). *Eid al-Fitr Message*. Published on 08 August on his party's website: <<http://dailyshahadat.com/hikmatyar-story.php?id=951>> [Accessed 13 Sep 2013].

<sup>150</sup> Griffiths, John C., (2001). *Afghanistan: A History of Conflict*. *Op.cit.*, p. 87.

<sup>151</sup> See for a discussion of race and ethnicity, Wolf, Stefan, (2006). *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press; Horowitz, Donald L., (2000). *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Second Edition, California: University of California Press; Fearson, James D., (2006). *Ethnic Mobilization and Ethnic Violence*. In: Weingast, Barry R. and Wittman, Donald A., (editors). *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>152</sup> Dorronsoro, Gilles, (2005). *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan: 1979 to Present*. (Translated from the French into English by John King). London: Hurst & Company, p. 15



Ethnicity and ethnic grievances have contributed to the Afghan conflict at different stages and levels.<sup>153</sup> At times, some commanders and politicians have used ethno-nationalist rhetoric to mobilise their followers and galvanise support.<sup>154</sup> Meanwhile, other factors such as tribal and provincial/regional were also used for the same purpose. Following the state collapse, different people sought the help of their immediate relatives and clan members as well as tribes and ethnic groups. Therefore, “ethnicity is not the cause of the conflict, but the consequence of political and military mobilisation.”<sup>155</sup>

The Soviet invasion and the internal war paved way for the politics of patronage with foreign backers supporting different militia commanders who led groups belonging to certain ethnic groups. Many commanders exploited ethnicity, especially during the intensive phases of conflict. However, economic and political factors played a more important role. Several commanders and warlords used ethnicity to mobilise people when they felt they were losing support. It is in this context that Schetter says that “in spite of the ethnicisation of the war, an ethnicisation of the masses is nowhere to be found”.<sup>156</sup> Therefore, despite occasional tensions, “Afghans do have a sense of nationhood” and “shared history.”<sup>157</sup>

### 2.3.2 Nationalism and Ideology

The insurgency in Afghanistan is driven by a mixture of different and overlapping motivations including nationalism and ideology. Although the Taliban Movement was widely seen as an ethnic Pashtoon phenomenon due its predominant Pashtoon membership at the time of its launch in 1994, its emergence “was not purely a question of ethnicity. Ordinary Afghans, weary of the prevailing lawlessness in many parts of the country” welcomed the Taliban for “stamping out corruption, restoring peace and allowing commerce to flourish again”.<sup>158</sup> Following the 2001 US-led invasion of Afghanistan and the removal of the Taliban regime, the group re-emerged in 2003-04 as an insurgency and has been exploiting the presence of the foreign troops in Afghanistan. They encourage their

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<sup>153</sup> Martin, Mike, (2014). *An Intimate War: An Oral History of the Helmand Conflict*. London: Hurst & Co Publishers; Barfield, Thomas, (2012). *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press

<sup>154</sup> See for a discussion on the impact of war on ethnicity and ethnic tensions, Turton, David, (1997). Introduction: War and Ethnicity. In: Turton, David (editor), *War and Ethnicity: Global Connections and Local Violence*, New York: University of Rochester Press, p. 15.

<sup>155</sup> Schetter, Conrad, (2001). *Die Schimäre der Ethnie in Afghanistan, (The Chimera of Ethnicity in Afghanistan)*. Die Neue Zürcher Zeitung, October 26. Available online at: <<http://www.nzz.ch/aktuell/startseite/article7QTQF-1.491208>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2012].

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Siddique, Abubakar, (2012). *Op.cit.*

<sup>158</sup> BBC News, (2000b). *Analysis: Who are the Taleban?*, 20 December. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/144382.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/144382.stm)> [Accessed 5 Oct 2012].

followers and ordinary Afghans to wage jihad or holy war against what they call “infidel invaders” and “foreign occupation”.<sup>159</sup> The Taliban present themselves as the victim of foreign aggression and invoke nationalist and Islamic ideals to keep the resistance alive.<sup>160</sup>

Some NATO and Afghan officials have also suggested that majority of the unemployed youth join the Taliban for hard cash thus calling them as “ten-dollar-a-day-Taliban”.<sup>161</sup> They argue that the Taliban pay their fighters on a daily basis in order to motivate them to fight against the Afghan and NATO forces.<sup>162</sup> Although unemployment pushed a number of Afghans to join the insurgency, “resource distribution was not a key element of Taliban remobilization”.<sup>163</sup> It is hard to believe that the Taliban take these big risks such as committing a suicide attacks, which needs a strong conviction, for “ten dollars.” The Taliban literature and statements as well my field work indicates that the bulk of Taliban fighters, especially mid-level commanders and foot soldiers, are motivated by a mixture of nationalism and ideology.<sup>164</sup> The Taliban members brand themselves as liberation fighters who strive to expel the “invaders” and free the country and its people from the yoke of occupation. They have always portrayed themselves “as nationalist actors upholding the undeniable Islamic right to self-defence” and insist “that their intent and ambitions are entirely Afghan-centric.”<sup>165</sup> They channel nationalist sentiments within an Islamic framework and try to maximise the impact of their resistance by unifying religious and nationalist slogans.

In their statements, the Taliban repeatedly mention country, nation and Islam. They frequently refer to two things: a), Afghanistan has never been occupied by foreigners and it is the duty of every Afghan to free their country from foreign occupation, and b),

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<sup>159</sup> For details of Taliban statements, commentaries, speeches, interviews and battlefield reports see the Taliban’s official website with material in five languages including English, Pashto, Dari/Persian, Urdu and Arabic at: <<http://shahamat.info/>>.

<sup>160</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2010b). Taliban harness power of the web. *BBC News*, 17 July. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/8570742.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8570742.stm)> [Accessed 5 Oct 2014]. See also Azami, Dawood, (2012b). Taliban poetry and the lone fighter. *BBC News*, 10 July. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17905361>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2014].

<sup>161</sup> Fergusson, James, (2010). *Taliban: The True Story of the World’s Most Feared Guerrilla Fighters*. London: Random House, p.160. See also Johnson, Robert, (2011). *The Afghan Way of War: How and Why They Fight*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 278.

<sup>162</sup> Morarjee, Rachel, (2006). Taliban Goes for Cash Over Ideology. *Financial Times*, London, 26 July. Available online at: <<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c3b3fa7a-1c06-11db-a555-0000779e2340.html#axzz2enbH1Uey>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2012].

<sup>163</sup> Checkel, Jeffrey T., (2013). *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.105.

<sup>164</sup> Author’s own observations and interviews with Taliban members/sympathisers (T1, T2, T3, T4) as well as Afghan and NATO officials and villagers (V1, V3 and V4), Nov, 2011, Nov. 2012, Nov. 2013. See also the Taliban official website at: <<http://shahamat.info/>>.

<sup>165</sup> Brahimi, Alia, (2010). *The Taliban’s Evolving Ideology*. LSE Global Governance Working Paper. Available Online at: <<http://www.lse.ac.uk/globalGovernance/publications/workingPapers/WP022010.pdf>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2012].

Afghanistan is a Muslim country invaded by foreign infidels; therefore, it is religiously obligatory to free the Muslim land and establish a government system based on Afghan and Islamic traditions.<sup>166</sup> For example, in a statement issued in August 2013 to mark the anniversary of Afghanistan's victory over Britain in the third Anglo-Afghan war (1919), the Taliban referred to the valour and bravery of Afghan people and said that "Britain, with all its power and empire made three failed attempts to digest Afghanistan, but, with the help of God, today's Britain and America can never implement its colonial plans in Afghanistan."<sup>167</sup> In addition, the Taliban cleverly exploit the principles of Pashtoonwali – the unwritten traditional code of life of Pashtoons which, among other values, stresses honour and revenge. They invoke the Pashtoon tribal traditions to mobilise the population and achieve its support. The Taliban also get support from a number of those Pashtoons who think they have been "alienated" and did not get their share in the government in Kabul in post-Taliban Afghanistan.<sup>168</sup>

### 2.3.3 Criminality, Greed and Need

There is a strong criminal element in the conflict in Afghanistan mainly involving the trafficking of drugs, smuggling of artefacts and excavations of minerals. Instability and fighting creates a suitable environment for these illegal activities to continue and flourish. Therefore, it has been seen in many parts of the country that drug traders and others involved in illegal activities cooperate with the insurgents as they have share interest in keeping the state institution weak. The production and trafficking of drug production link a number of regional and international cartel and mafia groups. Drugs mafia from regional countries such as Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Central Asian states and Russia are involved in the Afghan drug trade at different stages. There are hundreds of cartels and groups in each region involved in the trafficking of drugs from one country to another. In late 2013, officials from Russia's Federal Drug Control Service (FSKN) revealed that "almost 1,900 organised criminal groups and 150 major drug cartels in Central Asia [were] trafficking illicit drugs from Afghanistan to Russia" while about 100,000 drug "mules" were used to

<sup>166</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2009). Taliban slick propaganda confronts US. *BBC News*, 3 August. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/8176259.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8176259.stm)> [Accessed 5 Oct 2014]. See also the Taliban's official website at: <<http://shahamat.info/>>.

<sup>167</sup> Taliban's Independence Day Statement (in Pashto), (2013). "له انگریزانو څخه د هیواد د خپلواکۍ د څلورنوییمې کلیزې" (Statement of the Islamic Emirate at the occasion of the 94<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independence from the English). Published on the Taliban's official website on 18 Aug. Available here: <<http://shahamat.info/index.php/paighamooona/36945--له-انگریزانو-څخه-د-هیواد-د-خپلواکۍ-د-څلورنوییمې-کلیزې-په-مناسبت-د-اسلامی-امارت-اعلامیه>> [Accessed 13 Sep 2012].

<sup>168</sup> Checkel, Jeffrey T., (2013). *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*. Op.cit, p.106.

transport the narcotics.<sup>169</sup> Russia is not only one of the main conduits of Afghan drugs, it is also a major drug consuming markets with an estimated 8.5 million people, or almost six percent of the total population, addicted to drugs.<sup>170</sup> In addition, European drug traffickers as well as Italy's mafia are also active in the Afghan drug trade.<sup>171</sup> Meanwhile, corrupt government officials in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries have a financial incentive in the continuation of drug production as they benefit from the illicit economy mainly in the form of bribes. According to Afghanistan's Second Vice-President, Mohammad Karim Khalili, several Afghan officials support the drug trade and smuggle narcotics in police vehicles in order to avoid detection.<sup>172</sup>

In addition, the looting of antiquities and smuggling of ancient artifacts, often called "Blood Antiquities", have gone hand-in-hand with warfare in many parts of the world. Like drugs, it is also a multi-billion dollar trade and involves international criminal groups.<sup>173</sup> The looting of archaeological sites has been one of the most profitable activities for organised crime groups in Afghanistan. Numerous historical sites scattered throughout the country have been systematically targeted by criminal groups over the past few decades.<sup>174</sup> As in the case of drugs, the factors behind looting of Afghanistan's archaeological treasures are mainly financial that often motivate people to illegally dig up objects while the logistical forces that facilitate the illicit export of antiquities are the conflict, lawlessness and weak state institutions.<sup>175</sup> Therefore, smugglers involved in Afghanistan's illicit antiquities trade often have a symbiotic relationship with warlords, corrupt officials and insurgents. Their ultimate goals might be different but they have a shared interest in keeping the flames of war alive as it enables them to continue their activities with impunity.

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<sup>169</sup> Sputniknews, (2013a). 1,900 Gangs Smuggling Afghan Drugs to Russia – Anti-Narcotics Agency. Article published on 13 September. Available online at: <<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20130913/183405336.html>> [Accessed 13 December 1014].

<sup>170</sup> Sputniknews, (2013b). Over 8 Mln Russians Are Drug Addicts – Govt. Report. Article published on 17 September. Available online at: <<http://sputniknews.com/russia/20130917/183511725/Over-8-Mln-Russians-Are-Drug-Addicts--Govt-Report.html>> [Accessed 13 December 1014].

<sup>171</sup> BBC News, (2013a). Italy's Mafia Makes 'Less Profit Than Believed'. *BBC Newsonline*, 16 Jan. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-21042897>> [Accessed 13 Sep 2013].

<sup>172</sup> Afghan Ariana TV, (2013). *Afghan Vice-President Accuses Government Officials of Drug-Smuggling*. 12<sup>th</sup> March. Available online at: <<http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-322309725/afghan-vice-president-accuses.html>> [Accessed 13 Sep 2012].

<sup>173</sup> Alderman, Kimberly, (2012). Honor Amongst Thieves: Organised Crime and the Illicit Antiquities Trade. *Indiana Law Review*, 45, (3). Available online at: <<http://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/ILR/pdf/vol45p601.pdf>> [Accessed 13 Sep 2012].

<sup>174</sup> Wendle, John, (2013). Who's Stealing Afghanistan's Cultural Treasures? *National Geographic*, 1<sup>st</sup> August. Available online at: <<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/whos-stealing-afghanistan-cultural-treasures/>> [Accessed 13 Sep 2012].

<sup>175</sup> The Heritagist, (2012). *Afghanistan's Looted Heritage and the Evolving Illicit Trade in Antiquities*. [Online]: <<http://www.theheritagist.com/2013/08/afghanistans-looted-heritage-and.html>> [Accessed 13 Sep 2012].

Afghanistan, with its long and adventurous history, is a land of ancient cultures and civilizations. Over the past three decades, tens of thousands of ancient artefacts have been smuggled from Afghanistan to markets in regional countries as well as Europe, US and East Asia. Due to weak state institutions and lack of government capacity to enforce law and order, it is “easy to illegally export ancient artefacts, and Afghanistan’s rich and diverse cultural heritage.”<sup>176</sup> The continuity of “war has been a boon for both looters and smugglers”<sup>177</sup> as it makes combating illicit antiquities trafficking difficult if not impossible. In many parts of the country, especially in areas outside the government’s control, looters find it easier to plunder the country’s historical sites and steal valuable objects.

Poverty is another important factor in the conflict in Afghanistan. The decades long conflict has devastated the country’s economy resulting in the loss of livelihoods of millions Afghans. Therefore, a number of people are driven to conflict simply by need. During the course of my fieldwork, many people told me that they joined different factions out of desperation as that was the only job available to them in order to survive and feed their families. When the state collapsed, different people in various parts of the country allied themselves with different factions and warlords to protect themselves in a turbulent time and ensure their livelihoods. For a number of people neutrality was not option as they feared that their superior commanders or other predatory actors might harm them unless they joined a group.

It also a fact that many people are driven by greed whether they are involved in the drug trade or are part of the organised crime, insurgency or government. Their main motivation is to get richer and more powerful and the conflict brings them enough opportunities to realize their dream. Greed seems to be a major factor in the Afghan conflict mainly at certain leadership levels as it is that group of people which is benefitting the most from conflict and insecurity. That is why, some local actors found the “spoils” of war and chaos irresistible. They exploit local population and resources for their own benefit and contribute to lawlessness and exacerbate disorder in order to maximize their wealth and power.

As described above, there are dozens of actors involved at international, regional and local levels in the conflict in Afghanistan. Although the number of actors, their role and the

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<sup>176</sup> Aljazeera, (2010). *Blood Antiquities: Is the murky trade in stolen antiquities helping to fund the Taliban?* Article published on 29 August. Available online at: <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2010/02/20102106037986197.html> [Accessed 13 Sep 2012].

<sup>177</sup> Wendle, John, (2013). Who’s Stealing Afghanistan’s Cultural Treasures? *Op.cit.*

degree of their involvement has evolved over time, the multiplicity of actors has made the conflict prolonged and multi-dimensional and multi-motivational. Following is a summary of the actors directly and indirectly associated with the complex situation of Afghanistan.

### International Actors in the conflict in Afghanistan

State actors	Non-state actors	International Organisations	International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs)
Around fifty countries including all five permanent members of the UN Security Council and all member countries of NATO.	Militant networks such as Al-Qaeda, and Islamic State (IS/ISIS/ISIL), International drug mafia, criminal networks, human trafficking networks, Trans-national corporations, Diasporas	UN (and its Agencies such as UNHCR, UNDP, UNODC, WFP, FAO, UNESCO), ILO, IOM, NATO, EU, OIC, IOM	Amnesty International, MSF (Doctors Without Borders), Oxfam, HRW (Human Rights Watch), Emergency etc.

### Regional Actors in the conflict in Afghanistan

State actors	Non-state actors	Regional Organisations
Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, India, Turkey, UAE, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, China.	TTP (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan), SSP (Sipah-e-Sahaba) Pakistan, LeJ (Lashkar-e-Jhangvi) Pakistan, LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba) Pakistan, JuD (Jamaat-ud-Dawa) Pakistan, JI (Jamaat-e-Islami) Pakistan, JUI (Jamiat-e Ulema-e-Islam) Pakistan, Jundallah (Iran, Pakistan) IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan), ETIM (East Turkestan Islamic Movement) Al Quds force of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, Co-ethnic/tribal groups in neighbouring countries, Regional drug mafia, Transnational criminal networks, Businesses/corporations, smuggling groups.	OIC, SAARC, ECO, SCO

### Local Actors in the conflict in Afghanistan

Government	Militant Groups	Other Actors
Government institutions and officials.	Afghan Taliban (including the Haqqani Network), Hizb-e Islami (Hekmatyar), Fidayi Mahaz, IS/ISIS/ISIL (Islamic State) etc.	Warlords and private militias, Religious leaders, Tribal elders, Ethnic leaders/groups, Tribes and intra-ethnic groups, Political parties, Businesses/corporations, Drug traders/traffickers, Human traffickers, Criminal groups (kidnapping gangs, organised crime groups etc.) NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations)

**Table 2.1:** State and non-state actors involved in Afghanistan.



## 2.4 Natural Resources and the Afghan Conflict:

Having hundreds of mineral fields containing lithium, copper, gold, precious and semi-precious stones among others, Afghanistan's natural resources make it one of the richest mining countries in the world. Its untapped mineral wealth is believed to be worth around three trillion dollars.<sup>178</sup> In December 2013, President Hamid Karzai claimed Afghanistan's mineral deposits are actually worth \$30 trillion.<sup>179</sup> The conflict and collapse of state institutions prepared grounds for illegal and unauthorised excavation and exploitation of the country's natural resources. Illegal armed groups and regional warlords could easily extract natural resources such as timber, precious stones – such as rubies, lapis lazuli, emerald – and other minerals to enrich themselves and buy loyalties. They also found the freedom to trade drugs and steal and smuggle ancient artefacts. Meanwhile, the conflict provided ample opportunities for bureaucratic corruption which resulted in further weakening of the already weak state institutions.

During the factional war in Afghanistan in 1990s, all sides exploited natural resources available to them. The anti-Taliban faction, United Front popularly known as Northern Alliance, which was led by its main military commander, Ahmed Shah Massoud, benefitted from both minerals and drugs. However, according to Rubin, Massoud's "main income" came from the gem trade<sup>180</sup> and, in the 1990s, received between US\$40-60 million annually from the sale of precious stones such as emeralds and lapis lazuli.<sup>181</sup> Rubin adds that Massoud "taxed trade in lapis lazuli and emeralds, collecting *ushr* [tax] from mine owners and *zakat* from traders. In 1997, however, Massoud established a monopoly in purchase of the gems and in 1999 signed an agreement with a Polish firm, Inter Commerce, to market them".<sup>182</sup> His aides estimated that "the new joint venture could make as much as \$200 million in annual income".<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Guardian, (2010). Afghan mineral deposits worth \$3tn, says mining official. *Guardian*, 18 June. Available online at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jun/18/afghanistan-mineral-deposits>> [Accessed 23 Sep 2012]. Risen, James, (2010a). U.S. Identifies Vast Mineral Riches in Afghanistan. *New York Times*, 13 June. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/14/world/asia/14minerals.html>> [Accessed 23 Sep 2012].

<sup>179</sup> Mehrotra, Kartikay, (2013). Karzai Woos India Inc. as Delay on U.S. Pact Deters Billions. *Bloomberg*, 16 December. Available online at: <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-12-15/karzai-tells-investors-u-s-will-meet-his-security-pact-demands>> [Accessed 20 Sep 2014].

<sup>180</sup> Rubin, Barnett R., (2013). *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 63.

<sup>181</sup> Chipaux, Françoise, (1999). Des mines d'émeraude pour financer la résistance du Commandant Massoud. *Le Monde*, 18 July. Available online at: <<http://membres.multimania.fr/afghanainfo/LeM1817992.htm>>. [Accessed 06 June 2012]. See also Rubin, Barnett R., (2013). *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*. *Op.cit*, p. 63.

<sup>182</sup> Rubin, Barnett R., (2013). *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*. *Op.cit*, p. 63.

Lack of security and weak state institutions resulted in the expansion of illegal extraction of mines. The looting of minerals and precious stones including rubies, lapis lazuli, chromite, aquamarine, emerald, fluorite, garnet, kunzite, gold, marble and sapphire continues today. Taliban commanders, criminal groups, corrupt officials and other local powerful actors are involved in the plunder of a number of mines in several provinces including Kabul, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, Panjsher and Kunar. Minerals have become an important source of income for the Taliban insurgents who use the money to buy weapons and pay their fighters. In addition, local villagers from these mineral rich provinces told me during my field work in 2012 and 2013, that a number of ordinary people also mine these sites unprofessionally to earn a living.<sup>184</sup> According to government officials, by the end of 2013, more than 1400 small and large mines in Afghanistan were extracted and traded illegally mostly by local “influential figures” and mining companies linked to powerful individuals and “warlords”.<sup>185</sup>

#### 2.4.1 Drugs and Conflict

Although traditional production of opium for medicine and recreation existed in a limited fashion before the conflict, Afghanistan was at peace and didn’t experience any drug related conflict. However, drug production (mainly opium and cannabis) grew rapidly in the period succeeding the onset of the conflict that started in late 1970s. In 1979, the year when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, less than 200 tons of opium was produced in the country. Opium production continued to expand and reached 1000 metric tons in 1988. In 2007, the country produced around 9,000 mt of opium; record high and around 90% of the world’s opium in that year.<sup>186</sup>

The initiation of the conflict in Afghanistan is not linked to the drugs. On the contrary, it was the war that prepared grounds for a flourishing drugs economy and provided a suitable environment for a large scale drug production and trafficking. Global patterns of drug

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*Op.cit.*; Chipaux, Françoise, (1999). Des mines d’emeraude pour financer la résistance du Commandant Massoud. *Op.cit.*

<sup>183</sup> Rubin, Barnett R., (2013). *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*. *Op.cit.*, p. 63.

*Op.cit.*

<sup>184</sup> Interviews with villagers, tribal elders and officials in Kabul, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, Panjsher and Kunar provinces, (V1, V2, V3, V4, G4), Nov 2011, Nov. 2012 and Nov 2013.

<sup>185</sup> Tolo News, (2013). *Illegal Mining in Afghanistan at an All-Time High*. Afghanistan’s Tolo TV Channel’s website. Last updated on Wednesday, 17 July, 10:02. Available online at:

<<http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/11241-illegal-mining-in-afghanistan-scales-a-new-high-1400-mines-extracted-illegally>> [Accessed 1 Jan 2014].

<sup>186</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *BBC News*, 26 February. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21548230>> [Accessed 25 Aug 2013]; Rhode, David, (2007). Second Record Level for Afghan Opium Crop. *New York Times*, 28 August. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/28/world/asia/28afghan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/28/world/asia/28afghan.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 15 Sep 2012].



cultivation indicate that it tends to migrate toward conflict areas.<sup>187</sup> The situation in Colombia was similar to Afghanistan where large scale drug production occurred after the conflict. The Marxist rebel group, FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), established in 1966 as an ideological movement, didn't have any links to drugs and wasn't motivated to control the narcotics business. The South American country became a major drug producer several years after it was plagued by the armed conflict.<sup>188</sup>

Although the conflict in Afghanistan evolved and some of its actors changed with the passage of time, drugs and other natural resources played an important role in financing armed groups and individual warlords. From 1979-1989, the anti-Soviet Mujahideen factions received generous financial support from Arab and Western countries. However, some of them were also involved in the drug trade to finance their resistance. Nearly all groups benefitted from the drugs economy during the factional war in 1990s as their external financial support decreased after the withdrawal of Soviet forces. From 1995 to 2001, the country faced a mainly bipolar confrontation between the Taliban and the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan commonly known as the Northern Alliance. Both sides benefitted heavily from natural resources including drugs. As Mass says, "the drug industry served as a source of fiscal revenue for the Taliban regime while providing the 'war entrepreneurs' of the Northern Alliance in their fragmented territories with an illicit source of funding."<sup>189</sup> In addition to the international marketing of gems, the anti-Taliban coalition, Northern Alliance, directly benefitted from the drugs economy through taxation and supervision of farmers. According to Goodhand, the group levied a tax on opium cultivation which starting at around 2.5 percent and climbed through the 1990s, eventually reaching 20 percent.<sup>190</sup> The groups also controlled one of the main drug trafficking routes into Central Asia.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *Op.cit.*

<sup>188</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2007). Narcotics and Armed Conflict: Interaction and Implications. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, **30**, (3): 207–227. Available online at: [http://old.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2007/Cornell\\_SCT.pdf](http://old.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2007/Cornell_SCT.pdf) [Accessed 21 Aug 2013].

<sup>189</sup> Maass, Citha D., (2011). *Afghanistan's Drug Career: Evolution from a War Economy to a Drug Economy*. SWP (Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik), German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Available online at: [http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4272~v~Afghanistans\\_Drug\\_Career\\_Evolution\\_from\\_a\\_War\\_Economy\\_to\\_a\\_Drug\\_Economy.pdf](http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4272~v~Afghanistans_Drug_Career_Evolution_from_a_War_Economy_to_a_Drug_Economy.pdf) [Accessed 2 Aug 2013].

<sup>190</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2000). From Holy War to Opium War? A Case Study of the Opium Economy in North Eastern Afghanistan. *Central Asian Survey*, **19**, (2): pp. 265–280.

<sup>191</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2006). The Narcotics Threat in Greater Central Asia: From Crime-Terror Nexus to State Infiltration? *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, **4**, (1). pp. 37-67. February. Available online at: [http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/February\\_2006/Svante\\_Cornell.pdf](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/February_2006/Svante_Cornell.pdf) [Accessed 18 Aug 2013].

On the other hand, the Taliban, right from its emergence in 1994, received tens of millions of dollars annually from production opium and trade in opiates. Since 2001, when the Taliban regime was toppled, revenues from the drug trade have become one of the main sources of income for the Taliban. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, poppy cultivation grew significantly as soaring prices pushed farmers nationwide to expand opium production. Illicit narcotics bring huge sums for warlords, drug traffickers, corrupt officials as well as the insurgents. The Taliban, the main insurgent group, and Hezb-e-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the second biggest insurgent group, fighting the Afghan government and its US/NATO allies, have been benefitting from the lucrative drug trade. In November 2011, Afghanistan's Counter-narcotics Minister claimed that the Taliban got US\$155 million per year from opium.<sup>192</sup> Some other sources say that proceeds from the illicit drug trade brings up to US\$400 million a year to the Taliban coffers through an elaborate system of taxing different stages of opium and heroin including cultivation, processing and shipment.<sup>193</sup>

It is the overlapping of war and poverty usually results in the expansion of opium poppies. As Chouvy says "illicit opium production has benefited not only from synergies between war economies and drug economies: it has also thrived on economic underdevelopment and poverty, whether war-induced or not."<sup>194</sup> Majority of Afghan farmers are among the poorest in the world; therefore, a number of them started cultivating opium poppies as it brings them more money than what they get from other licit crops. Even today, as my own empirical research as well official records show, large scale opium production is mostly confined to areas of the country which are less secure and underdeveloped.<sup>195</sup> As I found out during my field work, drug production is also a main source of income for numerous poor farmers. Ironically, the interest of many poppy farmers also lies in a weak state which is incapable of implementing its poppy ban.

Drugs production and trade generally play a major role in deteriorating the security situation in Afghanistan. Narcotics are also closely linked with the issues of warlordism, bad-governance and corruption in the Afghan security and judicial institutions.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Daily Outlook (2011). *IDLG Chief Opposes Forced Poppy Eradication*. Daily Outlook, Kabul, Afghanistan, 30 November. Available online at: <[http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post\\_id=2678](http://outlookafghanistan.net/news?post_id=2678)> [Accessed 06 June 2012].

<sup>193</sup> Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban's War Chest. *New York Times*. Article published on 18 October. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 05 June 2012].

<sup>194</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy*. London: I.B. Tauris, p. xiv.

<sup>195</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *Op.cit.*

<sup>196</sup> Hodes, Cyrus and Sedra, Mark, (2007). *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*. IISS Adelphi Paper No. 391, London: Routledge, p. 35

Narcotics have resulted in three main problems in the country namely governance, security and social well-being. The problem of governance in the form of corruption and the influence of drug mafia on state is a prominent phenomenon. This has also distorted the young democracy in the country. Drugs also provide the much needed cash to the insurgents and support militants' activities. In addition, drugs have a negative impact on social wellbeing in the country where crime rate is high and drug addiction is rapidly rising.

#### **2.4.2 War Economy**

The conflict in Afghanistan created a suitable environment for groups and individuals to benefit from the war economy at different levels. As David Keen argues, war is not simply the breakdown of societies and economies, but “the emergence of an alternative system of profit, power, and even protection”.<sup>197</sup> The reorganisation of Afghan society as a result of decades of war and upheavals brought about the evolution of a war economy partly based on natural resources, including drugs. These resources are mostly located in areas where the government doesn't have proper control. Warlords who, benefit from illegal extraction of natural resources, generally not only try to preserve their power and influence but also strive to expand it. Over the past two decades, money from the drug trade and other natural resources has become the main motivation for some warlords. Therefore, insecurity and weak government serves their interest. In addition, the insurgents resist the government and fight to keep a guaranteed source of income secure. This mixture of actors and factors has made the conflict more complicated as it involves new actors and creates additional motivating factors.

As Kurtz suggests in his book on political anthropology, most political agents acquire resources through the goods that their community provides them and are generally notorious manipulators of their political economies.<sup>198</sup> In many conflict and post conflict societies, self-service has become an important part of politics where political agents use skills and power to ensure political survival and social and economic well-being.<sup>199</sup> There are elements of greed in the on-going conflict in Afghanistan where several warlords and militia commanders -- who were part of the ideological resistance during the anti-Soviet Jihad -- transformed into “conflict entrepreneurs” aiming to get rich and expand power and influence. A number of such former commanders were supportive of the US-led

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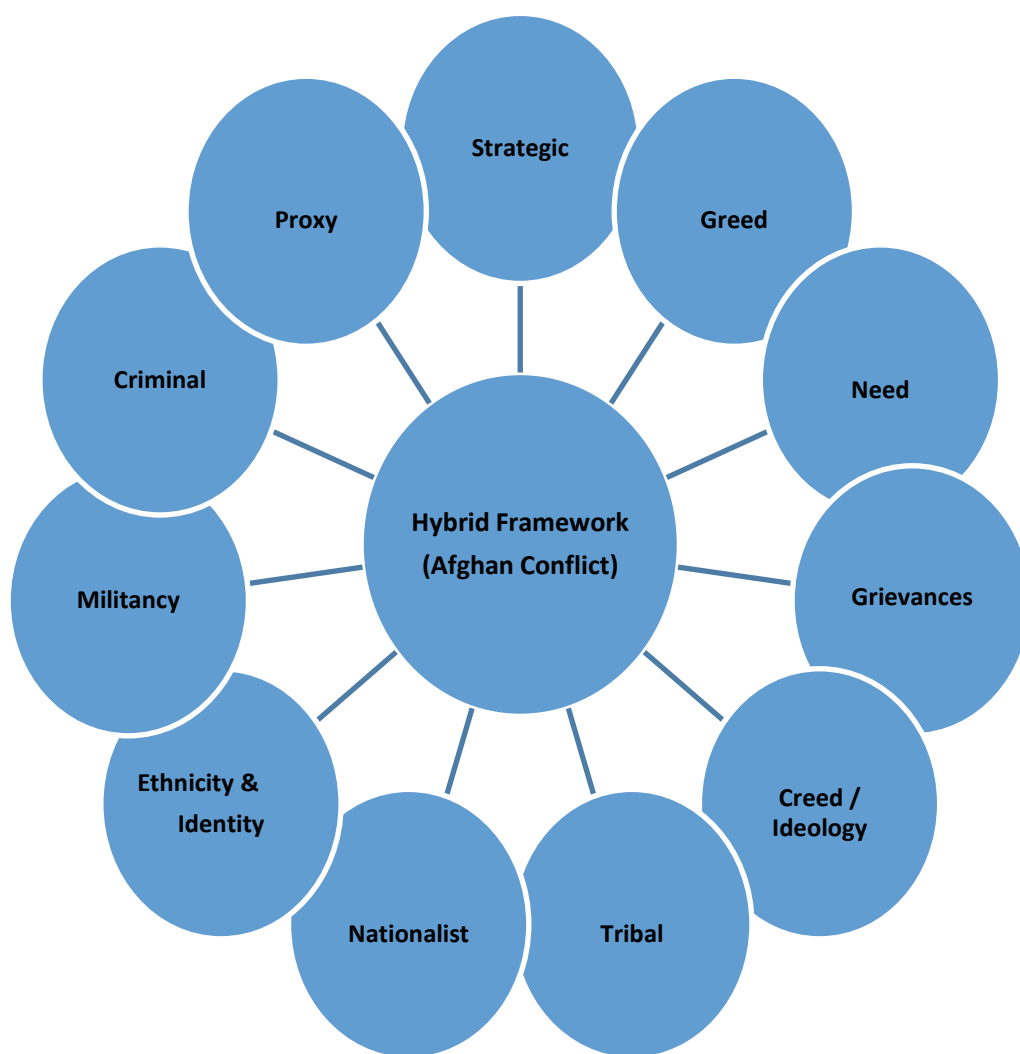
<sup>197</sup> Keen, David, (2000). Incentives and Disincentives for Violence. In: Berdal, Mats and Malone, David M. (editors), *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, pp. 19-41

<sup>198</sup> Kurtz, Donald V., (2001). *Political Anthropology: Power and Paradigms*. Oxford: Westview Press, p. 162

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

intervention in late 2001 to topple the Taliban regime and later became part of the US backed Afghan government.

As discussed above, a host of actors and factors are contributing to the decades conflict in Afghanistan. Some of actors were responsible for initiating the conflict while the role and involvement of others are simply exacerbating and perpetuating it. Applying the Hybrid Framework, the following diagram can illustrate better the complexity and multi-dimensional nature of the conflict in Afghanistan and elsewhere.



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**Figure 2.4:** Hybrid Framework and the conflict in Afghanistan: The combination of overlapping causes, motivations and actors.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In a globalised world, conflicts are becoming more and more complex involving a variety of state and non-state actors at local, regional and international levels as well as a combination of various overlapping causes and motivations. The existing models and framework about conflict do not properly explain the multiplicity of actors and factors in conflicts such as the one in Afghanistan. They either focus too much on one aspect of the conflict (such as greed) or ignore other important factors (such as transnational factors). The Hybrid Framework I have suggested takes into account the multiple drivers of conflict as well as the hybrid nature of interests, actors and motivations. The Afghan conflict provides a perfect case for the Hybrid Framework which demonstrates the overlapping nature of motivations and interests pursued by a variety of local, regional and international actors. As discussed, the multiplicity of actors and motivations has made the conflict prolonged and multi-dimensional.

The collapse of the Afghan state after the communist coup in 1978 and the Soviet invasion the following year made the country a major theatre of war in which local and foreign actors started their competition for influence and dominance. This chapter demonstrated that the conflict in Afghanistan is neither just a terrorist/extremist problem, nor a confrontation between different ethnic groups of the country. On the contrary, it is a combination of several overlapping factors including strategic, economic, religious, historical, proxy and criminal. For example, Pakistan allegedly supports the Afghan Taliban because it makes Islamabad an influential player in Afghanistan and reduces the influence of its arch-rival, India. Moreover, the Afghan Taliban want to get power in Afghanistan, expel foreign forces and enforce their interpretation of the Islamic law in the country. Although this “cooperation” prolongs the Afghan conflict, both the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan gain from this relationship as their interests overlap. For the Taliban, it is a question of religion (creed), nationalism (identity), power (greed), need and grievances. However, for Pakistan, it is a matter of gaining strategic influence in Afghanistan, having a friendly/client regime in Kabul and reducing the influence of its regional rivals. On the other hand, India and Iran supported the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance to expand their regional influence at the expense of their rivals especially Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. In addition, Afghanistan became the main theatre of the US led “war on terrorism” adding more regional and international actors including NATO, transnational jihadi groups and international criminal networks and mafia.

As demonstrated above, foreign interferences and invasions of the country resulted in the collapse of state institutions which created a perfect environment for the production of drugs. As seen in many other countries, drugs didn't cause the conflict in Afghanistan; it was the conflict that resulted in a thriving drug industry. However, the illicit drug trade has made the conflict more complicated and intense as it brings drug traders, corrupt government officials and the insurgent together. Once again, there is an overlap of interests and motivations of different actors. Violence, instability and weak state institutions are beneficial for both the insurgents and drug traders. All these factors such as ideology, nationalism, proxy and criminal have a role in causing, enhancing, transforming and sustainment of the conflict.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Funding the Insurgencies: The impact of illicit drugs on insurgent groups**

This chapter focuses on the impact of the drug trade on insurgent groups through a comparison of mainly three mini-cases – FARC in Columbia, PKK in Turkey and LTTE in Sri Lanka. The chapter argues that in the post WWII world, the link between “holy warriors” and criminal groups, especially drug smugglers, has become stronger. More than a hundred insurgent groups, mostly driven religious, nationalist or Marxist ideologies at the beginning, have somehow benefited financially from illicit drugs. The chapter also discusses the issue of profit versus ideology in the context of illicit drugs and examines the impact of narcotics business on the structure, strength, motivation and ideologies of insurgent groups. The chapter concludes by arguing that, at least in all the three cases discussed in detail here, the insurgencies were primarily driven by creed, the involvement of the insurgencies in the drugs trade came later, and the drugs trade did not hijack the struggle but rather ‘remained subservient to ideology and politics.

Insurgent<sup>1</sup> groups need money to sustain their armed struggle and expand the territories they control. They generally seek a reliable source of income as lack of sufficient funds can limit their scope and inhibit their prospects for success. These groups need a continuous flow of money to buy weapons and ammunition, pay salaries to their soldiers, buy medicines and provide health services such as treating injured colleagues, clothing, shelter, food and travelling. In recent decades, several insurgent groups have been allocating a significant amount of their financial resources to media and propaganda activities.

In the absence of a friendly country or individual donors, several insurgent groups try to find money from a variety of other activities. In order to raise funds, they exploit several resources and resort to various activities including taxation, extortion, donations,

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<sup>1</sup> Several terms have been used in both academia and the media for groups involved in armed struggle including terrorists, insurgents, belligerents, rebels and militants. For the sake of neutrality and objectivity, I have mostly used the term insurgent for individuals/groups involved in armed political/ideological struggles.

investments, robbery, arms smuggling, people smuggling, goods smuggling (contraband), kidnapping for ransom, blackmailing, money laundering, fake documents (including ID cards and passports), fake currency, credit card fraud, illegal mining, stealing and selling ancient artefacts, looting of natural resources and drug production and trafficking. In many parts of the world, the involvement of insurgent groups in illegal activities is becoming more common. In some cases, this involvement becomes so deep that the distinction between political insurgency and organised criminality becomes blurred. In other cases, ideological and political groups engaged in an armed struggle enter into an alliance of convenience with organised crime and even live in symbiosis with each other.

For a number of insurgent groups, the drug trade comes at the top of this list as it usually involves a stable flow of than many other illegal activities. As the number of insurgent groups benefiting from the drug trade has grown in recent decades, especially after WW II, the transformation from “holy warrior” to drug smugglers has become a familiar theme in an increasingly globalising world. Dozens of insurgent groups worldwide have been involved directly or indirectly in the cultivation, manufacturing, distribution, taxation and sale of illicit drugs.<sup>2</sup> The phenomenon has become more evident over the past three decades; hence the terms “narco-terrorism” and “narco-terrorists” are being used to describe the interface between “terrorist organisations” and narcotics smugglers.

Contemporary “narco-terrorism” has its roots in the 1980s, when the FARC and other similar groups began using drugs to fund their insurgencies. The term “narco-terrorism” is attributed to former Peruvian President, Fernando Belaunde Terry (1912-2002), who first used it in 1982 to describe terrorist-type attacks against his nation’s counter-narcotics police by the Shining Path or SL (*Sendero Luminoso*) Marxist rebels. At the time, “narco-terrorism” meant “the union of the vice of narcotics with the violence of terrorism.”<sup>3</sup> The term became instantly popular and gained prominence in the news as well as political and government circles. Five years later, criminologist Grant Wardlaw called it a “catchword” and added that the term had become “so inflated and its meanings so many that it has little or no analytical value”.<sup>4</sup> Writing in 1988, Wardlaw argued that: “‘Narcoterrorism’ has

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<sup>2</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2012). *World Drug Report 2012*. Vienna, pp. 84-85. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR\\_2012\\_web\\_small.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR_2012_web_small.pdf)> [Accessed 10 Aug 2013].

<sup>3</sup> Thomas, John E. Jr., (2009). Narco-Terrorism: Could the Legislative and Prosecutorial Responses Threaten Our Civil Liberties? *Washington and Lee Law Review*, **66**, (4): 1881-1920. (Quote from pp.1885-1886).

<sup>4</sup> Wardlaw, Grant, (1988). Linkages Between the Illegal Drugs Traffic and Terrorism. *Conflict Quarterly*, Summer **8**, (3): 5-26. (Quote from pp. 6-7).



emerged as a potent weapon in the propaganda war waged by governments against terrorists, insurgents, organised crime, drug traffickers, and even other sovereign states.”<sup>5</sup>

The literature on insurgent groups and their sources of funding is generally dominated by references to their involvement in the drug trade. Drugs are usually linked with insurgent groups and described as a main reason behind several armed conflicts. Ehrenfeld, in her books on the links between drugs and insurgencies, claims that insurgent groups use ideologies as a cloak for thriving criminal activity, especially the drug trade. She even implies that “terrorism” is a money making business while ideology is a tool for recruiting fighters who are used as cannon fodder.<sup>6</sup> Writing about the “nexus between drugs and terrorism”, a number of other American writers also see a strong link between militancy and illicit drug trade. For example, Lee argues: “There is a direct connection between drug trafficking organisations and terrorism. Terrorist organisations have been funded for years by the profits of drug traffickers, and it is likely to continue in the future.”<sup>7</sup>

American officials generally label any insurgent group that resorts to illicit drug proceeds for funding its campaign a “narco-terrorist” group.<sup>8</sup> The US government’s Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) believes that insurgent groups rely on drug traffickers “as a straightforward, easy source of income to finance their political agendas”, while drug traders “rely on the terrorists to provide protection for their laboratory and drug distribution endeavours. Through protection rackets, extortion, or ‘taxation’ of drug traffickers, terrorists receive the funds necessary to carry out their violent acts.”<sup>9</sup>

### 3.1 Insurgency in the post-Cold War World

The end of Cold War and the subsequent collapse of the bipolar system resulted in the decline of state sponsorship (proxy wars) for ideologically motivated insurgent groups. Many groups found it hard for insurgent groups to survive without international support in

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Ehrenfeld, Rachel, (1990). *Narco-Terrorism*. New York: BasicBooks. See also; Ehrenfeld, Rachel, (2003). *Funding Evil: How Terrorism Is Financed and How to Stop It*. Chicago and Los Angeles: Bonus Books. (Note: Ehrenfeld is seen close to the Washington hawkish circles and is a staunch supporter of the war on drugs.)

<sup>7</sup> Lee, Gregory D. (2005). *Global Drug Enforcement: Practical Investigative Techniques*. Florida: CRS Press, p. 281.

<sup>8</sup> Casteel, Steven W., (2003). *Narco-Terrorism: International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism - A Dangerous Mix*. Testimony of the Assistant Administrator for Intelligence, US Drug Enforcement Administration, before the US Senate Judiciary Committee, 20 May. Available online at: <<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-108shrg90052/pdf/CHRG-108shrg90052.pdf>> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012]

<sup>9</sup> Lee, Gregory D. (2005). *Op.cit.* p. 274.

terms of logistics, finance, arsenals and safe havens. With the demise of the bipolar confrontation, fighting a communist or non-communist regime no longer translated into financial support from a superpower or its allies and proxies.<sup>10</sup> The decline of the superpower support meant a struggle for survival for many armed groups engaged in political violence. The loss of state support also caused a decline in the strength of revolutionary political ideologies in several groups such as the Khmer Rouge (Cambodia) and the US-backed and Moist oriented UNITA (The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola).<sup>11</sup> In some cases, the changed global geo-politics resulted in the weakening of their political goals as some groups moved from political and ideological struggle to one dominated by economic aims. After losing external material and strategic support, several groups resorted to find alternative sources of funding including involvement in organised crime. A number of them started benefiting from drugs by taxing and protecting coca and opium poppy fields as well as drug production, processing, and distribution facilities.<sup>12</sup>

The changing circumstances in the post-Cold War world brought new challenges which forced many insurgent and criminal groups to shift their operational focus. The new global political and economic scene also brought new opportunities and resulted in the growth of transnational organised crime. The existence of a number of failed and weak states and ungoverned spaces meant that both insurgent and criminal groups could operate easily. On the other hand, globalisation of communication technologies and transportation made it easier for them to expand their markets and maximise profits. While some insurgent groups focused on illegal activities to replace the financial support they received from state actors, several criminal groups engaged in political activities such as participating in and/or influencing local politics in an effort to manipulate operational conditions present in a numbers of weak states. This phenomenon resulted in widening of the concept of security of state and populations alike. These groups started benefiting from technological advancements, financial and global market structures, diaspora communities worldwide, weak and failing states, and numerous geographical safe-havens. According to Makarenko,

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<sup>10</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2007). Narcotics and Armed Conflict: Interaction and Implications. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, **30**, (3): 207–227. Available online at:

<[http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2007/Cornell\\_SCT.pdf](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2007/Cornell_SCT.pdf)> [Accessed 21 Aug 2013]; Makarenko, Tamara, (2005). Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime: Tracing the Crime-Terror Nexus in Southeast Asia. In: Smith, Paul J. (ed.), *Terrorism and Transnational Violence in Southeast Asia: Challenges to States and Regional Stability*. New York: M.E. Sharpe, p. 171.

<sup>11</sup> Wright, George, (1997). *The Destruction of a Nation: United States' Policy Towards Angola Since 1945*. London: Pluto Press.

<sup>12</sup> Buscaglia, Edgardo and Ratliff, William E., (2001). *War and Lack of Governance in Colombia: Narcos, Guerrillas, and U.S. Policy*. Stanford University, CA: Hoover Institution, p. 4; Manwaring, Max G. (2002). *Nonstate Actors in Colombia: Threat and Response*. PA: US Army War College/ DIANE Publishing.

security has become “a cauldron of traditional and emerging threats that interact with one another, and at times, converge.”<sup>13</sup>

Although their backgrounds and goals are usually different, insurgent and organised criminal groups share many similar traits. According to Lee, both of them “plan, stage, and execute their crimes shrouded in secrecy. Both have cells established around the world to achieve their goals. They rely on compartmentalisation for operational security, and exhibit ingenious ways to smuggle co-conspirators, explosives, drugs, equipment, money, weapons, and other contraband long distances from one country to another.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus the cooperation and alliance between criminal groups and insurgencies on hand posed a new challenge to the security of states at a national and international level, on the other, it started a lively debate in the academic circles. The post-Cold War scholarly discussions about the intersection and convergence of organised crime and insurgency resulted in the development of the “crime-terror nexus” model<sup>15</sup> which is aimed at understanding this relationship and resolving the problems of both crime and conflict. The “crime-terror” or “crime-rebellion” nexus refers to the formation of alliances between criminal and insurgent/terrorist organisations that are originally espousing either criminal or political motivations. It involves the use of crime by insurgent groups as a source of funding such as involvement in the drug trade, diamonds smuggling, and people smuggling or engaging in credit card fraud.<sup>16</sup> The “crime-rebellion nexus” was consolidated at a time when the two traditionally separate phenomena (crime and insurgency) began to reveal many operational and organisational similarities. In some cases, the relationship between certain insurgent and criminal groups has blurred the lines and ranges from partnership to transformation and even merger and convergence.

Cooperation between insurgent and criminal groups usually helps both actors as they utilise each other’s capabilities to undertake political or criminal activities. A 2002 Library of Congress study of criminal and insurgent groups identified three broad patterns in which the nexus (association) of the two types of entities occur; (a) alliances for mutual benefit,

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<sup>13</sup> Makarenko, Tamara, (2004). The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism. *Global Crime*, 6, (1): 129-145. Available online at: <[http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/Makarenko\\_GlobalCrime.pdf](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/Makarenko_GlobalCrime.pdf)> [Accessed 18 Aug 2013].

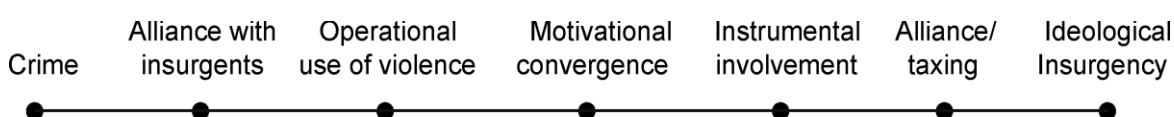
<sup>14</sup> Lee, Gregory D., (2005). *Global Drug Enforcement: Practical Investigative Techniques*. Florida: CRS Press, p. 274.

<sup>15</sup> Makarenko, Tamara, (2012). Foundations and Evolution of the Crime-Terror Nexus. In: Allum, Felia and Gilmour, Stan (editors), *Routledge Handbook of Transnational Organized Crime*. Chapter 15 (pp. 234-249). Oxon: Routledge.

<sup>16</sup> Makarenko, Tamara, (2004). *op.cit.*

in which insurgents enter an arrangement with criminals solely to gain funding, without engaging directly in commercial activities or compromising their ideologically based mission; (b) direct involvement in which insurgent groups directly involves in organised crime by removing the “middleman” but maintaining the ideological premise of their strategy, and (c) replacement of ideology by profit as the main motive for operations.<sup>17</sup>

According to Rosenthal, three main catalysts have the potential to transform a politically motivated group into one that is driven primarily by profit maximisation: (a) destruction of leadership structure, (b) political transformations that “debunk the ideological basis of the group” and (c) the opportunities for financial gains are so great that they subsume ideological motives.<sup>18</sup> Makarenko’s analytical construct of a security continuum, which places pure organised crime at one end of the spectrum and pure ideological groups at the other, shows the wide variety of possible interactions between criminal and political groups.<sup>19</sup> In this continuum, there is a “grey area” between the two ideal types, with certain variations and combinations between them. As shown in the “crime-rebellion continuum” depicted below, the interactions between criminal and ideological groups can take place either through cooperation between criminal and ideological groups; or through the involvement of an ideological group in crime or vice versa. As seen in the case of some insurgent groups, involvement in criminal activities for purely financial reasons tends to affect the motivational structures of the originally ideological groups. In addition, profit through crime, including the drug trade, can become a motivation in its own right for the existence and cohesion of the movement.<sup>20</sup>



**Figure 3.1:** The Crime-Terror Continuum<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Curtis, Glenn E. and Karacan, Tara, (2002). *The Nexus Among Terrorists, Narcotics Traffickers, Weapons Proliferators, and Organized Crime Networks in Western Europe*. Washington, DC.: Library of Congress, pp. 22-23. Available online at: <[http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/WestEurope\\_NEXUS.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/rr/frd/pdf-files/WestEurope_NEXUS.pdf)> [Accessed 20 Nov 2014].

<sup>18</sup> Rosenthal, Justine A., (2008). For-Profit Terrorism: The Rise of Armed Entrepreneurs. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, **31**, (6): 481-498. (Quote from p. 482).

<sup>19</sup> Makarenko, Tamara, (2004). *op.cit.*; Cornell, Svante E., (2007). Narcotics and Armed Conflict: Interaction and Implications. *op.cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Makarenko, Tamara, (2004). The Crime-Terror Continuum *op.cit.*; Cornell, Svante E., (2007). Narcotics and Armed Conflict. *op.cit.*

<sup>21</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2007). Narcotics and Armed Conflict. *op.cit.*

The United Wa State Army (UWSA) in Burma (Myanmar) appear to be affected by this phenomenon when the heroin industry became more important than nationalism for the group. According to Connell, UWSA and other Burmese groups have entered into the “convergence” position on the crime–terror continuum.<sup>22</sup> In several parts of the world, there is an overlap of organised crime, drug trafficking organisations and insurgent groups. The symbiotic relationship allows all of them to profit financially at different stages of the trade. In some cases, the relationship and cooperation becomes a convergence and reaches a point when “a single entity simultaneously exhibits criminal and terrorist characteristics.”<sup>23</sup> In such cases, an insurgent group or its members might remain devoted to their original cause and, at the same time, try to maintain a degree of instability and resist the state control so they can continue to make profits. It is mainly at this stage when the two types of groups become almost dependent on each other. On one hand, criminal groups becomes interested in influencing the political environment in a state; on the other hand, the insurgent groups create an environment conducive to the exploitation of opportunities provided by criminal activities.<sup>24</sup>

### 3.2 Insurgents’ Sources of Income

In general, insurgents are very entrepreneurial. Insurgent groups acquire wealth and fund their activities through a variety of initiatives and sources. Their reliance on certain sources of income depends on the environment they operate in. Insurgent groups usually try to diversify their sources of income in order to avoid the risk of bankruptcy. Some groups become so rich that their income sometimes equals that of a state’s army. In November 2014, Forbes ranked the 10 wealthiest militant groups. It placed the mainly Iraqi-Syrian group, Islamic State (IS, also known by the acronyms ISIS or ISIL) on top by calling it “the richest terrorist organisation” today and in history with an annual turnover of US\$2 billion. The Palestinian group, Hamas, was put in second place, with yearly revenues of \$1 billion. The FARC (Colombia) was ranked third with \$600 million; Hezbollah (Lebanon) was fourth with \$500 million; Afghan Taliban was fifth with \$400 million; Al-Qaeda and its affiliates with \$150 million; Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) with \$100 million; Somalia’s Al-Shabaab with \$100 million; Real IRA with \$50 million; and, closing the top-

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<sup>22</sup> Makarenko, Tamara, (2004). *The Crime-Terror Continuum op.cit.*; Connell, Svante E., (2007). *Narcotics and Armed Conflict. op.cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Acharya, Arabinda, (2008). *Terrorism and Transnational Organised Crime in Comparative Perspective*. In: Shanty, Frank G. and Mishra, Patit Paban (editors), *Organized Crime: From Trafficking to Terrorism*, Vol. 1, pp. 363-370. California: ABC-CLIO Inc., p. 366.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.* p. 366.

ten list was the Nigerian group, Boko Haram, with \$25 million annual revenue. According to the report, the sources of income for these groups ranged from raising money through charities, donations and, in some cases, government agencies to drug trafficking, robberies and extortion.<sup>25</sup> The Islamic State (IS) group also took significant amount of money and large quantity of gold bullion from government banks in areas of Iraq it captured. In addition, oil has become one of the main sources of revenues for the group which controls big chunks of Iraq and Syria.

The estimates about the revenues of these groups keep changing. In 2009, the operating budget of the Afghan Taliban was put somewhere between US\$70 million and US\$400 million.<sup>26</sup> A 2014 Washington Post report said that Hezbollah was working with between \$200 million and \$500 million while FARC had annual revenues of \$80 million to \$350 million.<sup>27</sup> Another report about Al-Qaeda's finances concluded that the network was working with an annual \$30 million operating budget at the time of the 9/11 attacks in 2001, most of which was raised through donations.<sup>28</sup>

Illicit drug trade has been a major source of income for several insurgent groups in different parts of the world. Since 1945, over one hundred belligerent groups have been involved to some extent in the illicit drug trade.<sup>29</sup> Although it is nearly impossible to know exactly how much money do they get from it, a consensus exist that drugs play a major role in funding many insurgent groups. The size of financial benefits that insurgent groups derive annually from participating in the drug trade ranges from hundreds of thousands to hundreds of millions of dollars. This issue is relevant for drug producing, drug transiting and drug consuming states in both developing and developed world.

Governments and international organisations have been responding in different ways to break the nexus between drug cartels and militant groups. A number of international documents and treatise have been formulated to address this phenomenon. For example,

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<sup>25</sup> Haaretz, (2014). *Hamas Among Richest Terror Groups Worldwide – Second Only to ISIS*. Article published on 12 Nov. Available online at: <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.625939>> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>26</sup> Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban's War Chest. *New York Times*. Article published on 18 October. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 05 June 2012].

<sup>27</sup> McCoy, Terrence, (2014). ISIS Just Stole \$425 Million, Iraqi Governor Says, and Became the 'World's Richest Terrorist Group'. *Washington Post*. Article published on 12 June. Available online at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/06/12/isis-just-stole-425-million-and-became-the-worlds-richest-terrorist-group/>> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>28</sup> Bruno, Greg, (2010). Al-Qaeda's Financial Pressures. *The Council on Foreign Relations*. Available online at: <<http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/al-qaedas-financial-pressures/p21347>> [Accessed 12 April 2014].

<sup>29</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2008). Globalization and Narcoterrorism. In: Cox, Michaelene D. (editor), *State of Corruption, State of Chaos*. Lanham: Lexington Books, p. 18.

the *United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances* (1988) recognises “the links between illicit traffic and other related organised criminal activities which undermine the legitimate economies and threaten the stability, security and sovereignty of States.”<sup>30</sup> The *UN International Narcotics Control Board’s* (INCB) 1992 report points out that “illicit cultivation of narcotic plants and illicit trafficking in drugs continue to be a threat to the political, economic and social stability of several countries. Links appear to exist between illicit cultivation and drug trafficking and the activities of subversive organisations in some countries.”<sup>31</sup> In addition, the 1993 INCB report draws attention to the connections between drug trade and insurgency, and also to the globalisation of drug smuggling.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action* (also known as VDPA) adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights (25 June 1993) states that:

The acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations as well as linkage in some countries to drug trafficking are activities aimed at the destruction of human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, threatening territorial integrity, security of states and destabilizing legitimately constituted Governments, and the international community should take the necessary steps to enhance cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism.<sup>33</sup>

At national level, a number of governments have taken strict measures to tackle illicit drug trade as part of their national security strategies. The US government has been at the forefront of the “War on Drugs”. American officials have been strong advocates of fighting against the drugs for a long time and argue that the “war on drugs” and the “war on terrorism” are linked and should be dealt with simultaneously. This assertion has become stronger in the US over the past two decades. On 5<sup>th</sup> October 2001, just two days before the US-led invasion of Afghanistan, the Department of State identified 12 of 28 “Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTO)” that traffic drugs for raising funds which included FARC

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<sup>30</sup> United Nations, (1988). *UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances*. Available online at: <[https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention\\_1988\\_en.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/convention_1988_en.pdf)> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>31</sup> INCB (United Nations International Narcotics Control Board), (1992). *Legalization of the Non-Medical Use of Drugs*. Available online at: <[https://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/Thematic\\_chapters/English/AR\\_1992\\_E\\_Chapter\\_I.pdf](https://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/Thematic_chapters/English/AR_1992_E_Chapter_I.pdf)> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>32</sup> INCB, (1993). *The importance of Demand Reduction*. Available online at: <[https://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/Thematic\\_chapters/English/AR\\_1993\\_E\\_Chapter\\_I.pdf](https://www.incb.org/documents/Publications/AnnualReports/Thematic_chapters/English/AR_1993_E_Chapter_I.pdf)> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>33</sup> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, (1993). *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*. Available online at: <<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/vienna.aspx>> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].



(Colombia), PKK (Turkey), LTTE (Sri Lanka) and Al-Qaeda.<sup>34</sup> Three months after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington, the US President, George W. Bush, while launching a new anti-drug use campaign, linked drugs with terrorism: “It is so important for Americans to know that the trafficking in drugs finances the work of terror, sustaining terrorists. Terrorists use drug profits to fund their cells to commit acts of murder. If you quit drugs, you join the fight against terror in America.”<sup>35</sup>

In 2002, Rand Beers, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, and Francis Taylor, the US Department of State’s ambassador-at-large for counterterrorism, told a US Senate Committee that “terrorist groups have looked increasingly at drug trafficking as a source of revenue”.<sup>36</sup> According to the two officials, the involvement in drug trade also has a secondary strategic purpose: “Not only does it provide funds; it also furthers the strategic objectives of the terrorists. Some terrorist groups believe that they can weaken their enemies by flooding their societies with addictive drugs.”<sup>37</sup> This is one of the reasons that some insurgents give their members and supporters in order to justify their involvement in the drug trade.

Governments in drug consuming countries spend billions of dollars each year on drug related problems and deal with the negative effects of drug abuse and its cost to the society. A study from the University of Maryland estimated that for the year 2000, the cost of illicit drug abuse in the US -- such as lack of productivity, the cost of health, and the accidents, crime, and other drug related effects -- was more than 160 billion dollars. In addition, the budget for the “war on drugs” was another US\$19.2 billion.<sup>38</sup> Steven Casteel, the Assistant Administrator for Intelligence at the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), reported to the US Senate in 2003 that 14 of the 36 groups (39 percent) designated as Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTO) on the US State Department’s list were involved in

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<sup>34</sup> Lee, Gregory D., (2007). The Global Drug Trade and its Nexus to Terrorism; Chapter 11. In: Forest, James J. F. (editor), *Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21st Century: Combating the sources and facilitators*. Connecticut: Greenwood, pp. 184-185.

<sup>35</sup> Bush, George W., (2001). *President Signs Drug-Free Communities Reauthorization Bill*. Speech was aired on 14<sup>th</sup> December, 2001. Transcript of Bush’s speech available at: <<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0112/14/se.01.html>> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>36</sup> Beers, Rand and Francis X. Taylor, (2002). *Narco-Terror: The Worldwide Connection Between Drugs and Terror*. A hearing held by the US Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Government Information, March 13. Available online at: <<http://2001-2009.state.gov/p/inl/rls/rm/8743.htm>> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Ehrenfeld, Rachel, (2002). Funding Terrorism: Sources and Methods. In: Gupta, Rajan and Perez, Mario R., *Confronting Terrorism*, Workshop held at Los Alamos National Laboratory, March 25-29, p. 394. Available online at: <[http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/lanl/funding\\_terror.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/lanl/funding_terror.pdf)>; See full details of the workshop online at: <<http://library.lanl.gov/ccw/ct2002/>> [Accessed 13 Nov 2014].



drug trade and claimed that “the nexus between drugs and terrorism is perilously evident”.<sup>39</sup>

The drug business increases physical capabilities of insurgent groups by bringing them money, weapons and increases their manpower. The term “narco-terrorism” is used for a number of ongoing conflicts around the world. It is applied in the context of the conflict in Afghanistan as it is suggested that the illicit drug trade in the country is “fuelling terrorism.” Speaking in early 2004, Antonio Maria Costa, the executive director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), warned of mounting evidence of drug money being used to finance criminal activities including “terrorism” and declared that “fighting drug trafficking equals fighting terrorism.”<sup>40</sup>

Moreover, a number of other major armed groups have attracted attention of officials and scholars alike due to their sources of income which allegedly include drugs. They are Colombia’s Marxist rebel group, FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia), Colombia’s second largest leftist rebel group ELN (the National Liberation Army); Turkey’s Kurdish Marxist separatist group, PKK (Partya Kerkeren Kurdistan) and the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) of Sri Lanka. Several smaller groups are also accused of benefitting from the drugs economy. For examples, Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA); some Chechen rebel groups and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) which was established after the collapse of the Soviet Union in Farghana Valley has allegedly links with the smuggling of opiates from Afghanistan to Central Asian Republics. In addition, profits from the trafficking of cannabis and cocaine have reportedly been used by the Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) while in Lebanon, Hezbollah has been accused of involvement in drug trafficking.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the ethnic secessionist armed group in Myanmar, the United Wa State Army (UWSA), and the Communist Party of Peru, commonly known as the Shining Path or SL (*Sendero Luminoso*), have been linked to the drug trade. The involvement of belligerent groups in illicit drugs is not confined to the Third World. In Europe, ETA (Basque Fatherland and Liberty) and the Irish Republican Army (IRA) have also been accused of benefitting from the international drug trade.

The list of criminal groups involved in the drug trade is very long and goes into thousands. Therefore, details about their activities and the nature of their involvement in the drugs

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<sup>39</sup> Casteel, Steven W., (2003). *Narco-Terrorism: International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism - A Dangerous Mix*. *op.cit.* pp. 8 & 12.

<sup>40</sup> BBC News, (2004). UN calls for War on Afghan Drugs. *BBC Newsonline*, 10 Feb. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/3476283.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3476283.stm)> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>41</sup> UNODC, (2012). *World Drug Report 2012*. *op.cit.* pp. 84-85.

economy are outside the scope of this study. However, following are a few separatist, political and ideological insurgent groups accused of having links with drugs.

<b>Militant Groups</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Description &amp; Aims</b>	<b>Involvement in Drugs</b>
FARC	Colombia	Oldest and most capable Marxist insurgency aiming to establish Marxism in the country.	Taxing cultivation, processing and trafficking of opiates
Taliban	Afghanistan/Pakistan	Movement of mainly religious students aiming to establish an Islamic system in the country.	Taxing cultivation, processing and trafficking of opiates
Hezbollah	Lebanon	Anti-Israel Shia group with aims for the creation of Iranian-style Islamic republic	Taxing and trafficking of cocaine, opiates and Marijuana
Kongra-Gel (KGK), a.k.a. Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)	Turkey, Middle East	Marxist–Leninist insurgent group aims to create a state for ethnic Kurds	Taxing processing and trafficking of opiates
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)	Central Asia	Islamic militants opposed to replace Uzbek President Karimov's secular regime with an Islamic state	Trafficking of opiates
Tamil Tigers (LTTE)	Sri Lanka	The most powerful militant ethnic Tamil group in Sri Lanka until it was dismantled in 2009; aiming to create a Tamil state	Taxing and trafficking
Kachin Independence Organisation (KMT)	Burma	Separatist movement aiming to get independence for Kachin from Burma.	Taxing and cultivation of opiates
United Wa State Army	Burma	Separatist movement aiming to get independence and protect the rights of indigenous people.	Taxing cultivation, processing and trafficking of opiates
MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)	Mali	Ethnic separatist movement in Mali aiming to establish a state for ethnic Azawads in northern Mali.	Taxing and trafficking of cocaine and Marijuana
ETA (Basque Fatherland and Liberty)	Spain, France	Established to create an independent Basque homeland in parts of Spain and France	Trafficking
Harakat <i>al-Shabaab</i> al-Mujahideen (HSM)	Somalia	Al-Qaeda linked militant group aiming to establish Islamic state in Somalia	Trafficking
Jundallah, also known as People's Resistance Movement of Iran (PRMI)	Iran/Pakistan	Militant Sunni Islamic group targeting the Shia dominated Islamic Republic of Iran and fighting for equal rights for Sunni Muslims in Iran	Trafficking
Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso, SL)	Peru	Based on Maoist teachings, aims to destroy Peruvian institutions and build communist regime	Taxing, cultivation, processing and trafficking of opiates

**Table 3.1:** Some insurgent/militant groups with alleged links to drug trade

Although each insurgent group and conflict has its unique characteristics and evolves in the context of its own peculiar environment, comparison helps to understand the issue in a broader context. Before analysing the impact of drug trade on the motivation and strength of insurgent groups, I have discussed, in the following pages, the emergence, evolution and transformation of three major contemporary insurgencies -- Colombia's Marxist rebel group, FARC (The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia); Turkey's Kurdish Marxist separatist group, PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party); and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka. Although the main focus of this study is on Afghanistan, I have chosen these three examples for the following reasons; a) They are insurgencies with defined ideologies and clear political objectives. b) The strength of these three insurgencies is comparable with the Afghan Taliban. c) As they come from different parts of the world, it will help in understanding the issue in a broader context. d) They have links with drugs trade. e) They have many organisations and operational similarities with the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.

### 3.3 Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)

PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, or Kurdistan Workers' Party) was founded on 27 November 1978 at the end of a six day congress in Fis, Turkey, to advocate independence for the ethnic Kurds and the establishment of Kurdistan -- Land of the Kurds. The foundation congress, attended by the 22 delegates, elected Abdullah Öcalan -- one of seven children of a poor farming family -- the General Secretary of the group and produced the PKK's first Central Committee.<sup>42</sup> The following year, Öcalan fled Turkey for Syria and continued his struggle from exile.

The Kurds are a non-Arabic and largely Sunni Muslim people who speak a language related to Persian. They live in a mountainous area straddling the borders of Armenia, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. Majority of Kurds live in Turkey where they are thought to make up around 20% of the country's population.<sup>43</sup> The number of Kurds in Turkey ranges from 12 million to over 20 million.<sup>44</sup> Kurd nationalists generally complain of the harsh treatment

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<sup>42</sup> The Central Committee members included M. Hayri Durmuş, Cemil Bayık, Mazlum Doğan, Mehmet Karasungur, Kesire Yıldırım and Şahin Dönmez. The first meeting also decided to set up the magazine, *Serxwebun*, to be issued monthly as the central organ of the party. See for more details: Özcan, Ali Kemal, (2006). *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 84.

<sup>43</sup> BBC News, (2012b). Kurds Clash with Turkish Police over Hunger Strikers. Article published on 30 Oct. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20138995>> [Accessed 09 Feb 2013].

<sup>44</sup> Özcan, Ali Kemal, (2006). *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 1.

they received at the hands of the Turkish government which tried to deprive them of their Kurdish identity. The Turkish government have used several tactics including designating the Kurds “Mountain Turks” and outlawing their language in educational and official institutions. The Turkish government also encouraged the migration of Kurds to the cities to dilute the population in the uplands.

Since the launch of the PKK, Öcalan has led a robust campaign of recruiting thousands of young Kurds, especially those who were poor and felt that the Turkish state was repressing their culture and language. The PKK launched its armed struggle against the Turkish state in 1984 by carrying out a large scale attack on the Turkish army. Turkish officials called the offensive on 15 August, 1984 as the work of a “bunch of bandits” and started a counter-insurgency operation against the PKK guerrillas. Kurds had been engaged in a number of short lived armed rebellions since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The PKK’s armed struggle against the Turkish Republic is considered to be the ‘29<sup>th</sup> Revolt’ of the Kurds, which the Turkish officials promised to smash within weeks or months just like the previous rebellions. Kurds had been quite for more than three decades since ‘the 28<sup>th</sup> revolt’, which took place in Dersim province in 1937 and 1938 but was suppressed in less than six months -- the longest one to date.<sup>45</sup>

However, PKK’s 1984 revolt which disrupted a relatively longer period of uninterrupted peace was different in many ways. It started the longest and most destructive war with political and social ramifications extending far beyond Kurdish and Turkish territories and involved neighbouring countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Iran. PKK had the alleged support of the Syrian government and had established bases across the border in Iraq, for years. The PKK insurgency has dragged on for decades costing tens of thousands of lives and displacing millions of people, mainly in the north-eastern Turkey.<sup>46</sup> Meanwhile, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party, the PKK, waging a guerrilla insurgency in south-eastern Turkey, has rejected the Iraqi Kurds’ decision to seek local self-government within a federal Iraq. The PKK believes any independent Kurdish state should be a homeland for all Kurds.<sup>47</sup>

In 1999, the PKK’s leader, Abdullah Öcalan, was arrested and jailed in Turkey for treason. It was a major blow for the group. The PKK agreed to enter into talks with the Turkish government and a fragile ceasefire came into effect. In exchange, the Turkish government

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<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> Barkey, Henri J. and Fuller, Graham E., (1998). *Turkey’s Kurdish Question*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

<sup>47</sup> Bilgin, Fevzi and Sarihan, Ali (editors), (2013). *Understanding Turkey’s Kurdish Question*. Plymouth: Lexington Books; Aydin, Aysegul and Emrence, Cem, (2015). *Zones of Rebellion: Kurdish Insurgents and the Turkish State*. Cornell: Cornell University Press. Özcan, Ali Kemal, (2006). *Turkey’s Kurds*, *Op.cit.*

made several concessions to Kurdish areas including relaxing the use of Kurdish language in education and media. Despite the ceasefire agreement, frictions continue with both sides occasionally breaching the ceasefire by carrying out attacks in which dozens people have been killed.<sup>48</sup>

In April 2002, at its 8<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, the PKK changed its name to Kurdistan Freedom and Democracy Congress (KADEK) and proclaimed that it was committed to non-violent activities for achieving Kurdish rights. In late 2003, the group named itself as Kongra-Gel (KGK) in an effort to improve its image and promote itself as a “peaceful” group. However, it carried out attacks in what it called in “self-defence” and refused disarmament. Although the name changes were part of its effort to widen its appeal, eventually the group decided it wanted to be known as the PKK.<sup>49</sup>

The number of PKK’s active and full time fighters changed over time. A 2011 ICG report estimated the PKK had 3,000-5,000 insurgents, mostly Turkish Kurd, based in northern Iraq and in Turkey’s Kurdish areas. In addition, the group has substantial minority support among Turkish Kurds.<sup>50</sup> The PKK is banned as a terrorist and drug-smuggling organisation by Turkey, the EU, the U.S. and a number of other countries. In May 2002, the EU also designated the organisation a terrorist group.<sup>51</sup>

### 3.3.1 PKK’s Drug Links

Turkey is a major transshipment point and a main transit route for opiates moving towards Europe and “serves as a staging area for major drug traffickers and brokers”.<sup>52</sup> According to the US officials, some heroin and opium is also smuggled to the US from Turkey. Drugs are generally smuggled overland from Afghanistan and Pakistan to Iran and then to Turkey. Opiates and hashish are also smuggled to Turkey overland from Afghanistan via Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. US government sources suggest that some processing of opium and morphine base from Afghanistan is occurring in laboratories on

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<sup>48</sup> BBC News, (2013b). *Profile: The PKK*. 21 March. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20971100>> [Accessed 10 April 2013].

<sup>49</sup> Eccarius-Kelly, Vera, (2011). *The Militant Kurds: A Dual Strategy for Freedom*. California: ABC-CLIO; Özcan, Ali Kemal, (2006). *Turkey’s Kurds*. op.cit.

<sup>50</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), (2011). *Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency*. Europe Report N°213, 20 September. Available online at: <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/213%20Turkey%20-%20Ending%20the%20PKK%20Insurgency.pdf>> [Accessed 10 April 2013].

<sup>51</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), (2012). *Turkey’s Kurdish Impasse: The View from Diyarbakır*. Europe Report N°222, 30 November. Available online at: <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/222-turkeys-kurdish-impasse-the-view-from-diyarbakir.pdf>> [Accessed 10 April 2013].

<sup>52</sup> US Department of State, (2010). *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) 2010*. [Online]: <<http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2010/vol1/137199.htm>> [Accessed 16 Aug 2013].

both sides of the Turkey-Iran border. From Turkey, the drugs are then smuggled along the *Balkan Route*. Some traffickers use a more northern route: through Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine. In addition, traffickers utilize Roll-on, Roll-off (RORO) ferries to move long-haul and Customs-sealed TIR<sup>53</sup> trucks with drugs concealed in hidden compartments or within legitimate cargo. After arriving from Turkey to Italy, these trucks are then driven to other European countries.<sup>54</sup> However, it is mainly the crime syndicates in Eastern Europe and the Balkans that have grown rich on the traffic of drugs through Turkey.<sup>55</sup>

PKK has been accused of financing its military and political activities through blackmail schemes, involvement in drug trafficking, gunrunning and human smuggling and tax collection efforts that are linked to transnational criminal enterprises in the region.<sup>56</sup> PKK fighters are mainly based in Turkey-Iraq-Iran-Syria border regions from where a significant amount of drugs are smuggled through. It is in these border areas where, according to Eccarius-Kelly, “alongside the truckers, weapons smugglers and drug traffickers pay so called ‘transfer taxes’ or ‘customs fees’ to local representatives as they pass through territory under their control.”<sup>57</sup>

Turkey’s government has long provided evidence of the PKK’s involvement in the drug trade between Turkey and Europe. In addition, many researchers have identified linkages between the PKK and drug cartels.<sup>58</sup> Connell has called the PKK as one of “the best known rebel groups to have financed their activities through the heroin trade”.<sup>59</sup> Dozens of peoples have been arrested in different European countries including France, Germany and Belgium who were accused of drug trafficking and financing the PKK. In its 2011 report, the International Crisis Group (ICG) called the PKK’s fundraising methods “dubious” and added that the opacity of its financial dealings prompted the US authorities to put the group and some of its top leaders on the US drug-trafficking watch lists.<sup>60</sup> While calling Turkey “a significant drug conduit”, West says drug smuggling in the remote Turkish border regions is “fairly established” and that the “terrorists finance their organisations through

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<sup>53</sup> TIR stands for “Transports Internationaux Routiers” or “International Road Transports.” The TIR System was designed to simplify and harmonize administrative formalities of international road transport and speed up international border crossing. It is based on a multilateral treaty concluded at Geneva in 1975.

<sup>54</sup> US Department of State, (2010). *INCSR 2010*. *op.cit.*

<sup>55</sup> Evans, Martin, (2002). *Afghanistan: A New History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. London: RoutledgeCurzon, p. 203

<sup>56</sup> Eccarius-Kelly, Vera, (2011). *The Militant Kurds*. *Op.cit.*, p.4, 44 and 105. See also Bilgin, Fevzi and Sarihan, Ali (editors), (2013). *Understanding Turkey’s Kurdish Question*. *Op.cit.*, p.78; Aydin, Aysegul and Emrence, Cem, (2015). *Zones of Rebellion*. *Op.cit.*

<sup>57</sup> Eccarius-Kelly, Vera, (2011). *The Militant Kurds: A Dual Strategy for Freedom*. *op.cit.*, p.105

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.* pp. 43-44.

<sup>59</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2005). Stemming the Contagion: Regional Efforts to Curb Afghan Heroin’s Impact. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 6, (1), Winter/Spring, pp. 23-31. (Quote from p. 23). [Online] <<http://www.silkroadstudies.org/docs/publications/2005/gjia.pdf>> [Accessed 17 Aug 2013].

<sup>60</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), (2011). *Turkey: Ending the PKK Insurgency*. *op.cit.*

heroin trafficking.”<sup>61</sup> According to Evans, the PKK has been “a major participant” in the drug trade and “runs its own processing laboratories and trafficking arrangements.”<sup>62</sup> The Marxist-Leninist PKK is also accused of not only smuggling heroin in areas between the Caspian and Black Sea but also of manufacturing heroin in Azerbaijan.<sup>63</sup>

The US has been accusing the PKK or Kongra-Gel of participation in drug trafficking for decades arguing that “drug trade is one of the Kongra-Gel’s most lucrative criminal activities”.<sup>64</sup> According to US officials, the PKK is involved in running drug labs in Turkey and has military units in the border areas it controls to collect money from drug traffickers. The US government says that the PKK “uses its network across Europe to produce, transport, and traffic opiates and cannabis.”<sup>65</sup> The US government’s figures show that nearly three hundred individuals connected to Kongra-Gel or PKK were arrested on drug trafficking charges from the mid-1980s through the early 1990s, more than half of them in Germany.<sup>66</sup>

In May 2008, the US listed the PKK in its Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) for “using its European network to produce, transport, and traffic opiates and cannabis” and called it a “significant foreign narcotics trafficker”.<sup>67</sup> While announcing the move, President George W. Bush imposed financial sanctions on the PKK denying it access to the US financial system and blocking any transactions involving American companies and individuals.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> West, Caroline S., (1992). Turkey and India. In: MacDonald, Scott B. and Zagaris, Bruce, (editors), *International Handbook on Drug Control*. (Chapter 22, pp 345-362). Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, pp.353-354. See also Stavrou, Nikolaos A., (1974). The Politics of Opium in Turkey. In: Simmons, Luiz R. S. and Said, Abdul Aziz, (editors), *Drugs, Politics, and Diplomacy: The International Connection*. (pp. 214-228). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication.

<sup>62</sup> Evans, Martin, (2002). *op.cit.* p. 203

<sup>63</sup> Steinberg, Michael K.; Hobbs, Joseph J. and Mathewson, Kent (editors), (2004). *Dangerous Harvest: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 77.

<sup>64</sup> Department of Treasury, (2009). *Treasury Designates Three Leaders of the Kongra-Gel as Significant Foreign Narcotics Traffickers*. 14 October. [Online] <<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg318.aspx>> [Accessed 16 April 2013].

<sup>65</sup> Department of Treasury, (2011). *Treasury Designates Five Leaders of the Kongra-Gel as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers*. 20 April. [Online] <<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1406.aspx>> [Accessed 16 April 2013].

<sup>66</sup> Department of Treasury, (2009). *Treasury Designates Three Leaders of the Kongra-Gel as Significant Foreign Narcotics Traffickers*. *op.cit.*

<sup>67</sup> Department of Treasury, (2012). *Treasury Sanctions Supporters of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) Tied to Drug Trafficking in Europe*. 2 Jan. [Online] <<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1406.aspx>> [Accessed 16 April 2013]; White House (2008). *Presidential Designation of Foreign Narcotics Kingpins. Statement by the Press Secretary*. 30 May 30. [Online] <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=83976>> [Accessed 16 April 2013].

<sup>68</sup> BBC News, (2008a). *US Imposes Sanctions on PKK Group*. Article published on 30 May. [Online] <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7428802.stm>> [Accessed 124 March 2013].



On 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) targeted three senior leaders of PKK/Kongra-Gel, designating them as "significant foreign narcotics traffickers" under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act).<sup>69</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2011, the Department of the Treasury announced the designation of five more PKK leaders including two of the PKK founders and three other high-ranking members as "Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers" (SDNT) pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act). Justifying the move, David S. Cohen, Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, said that the US was "striking at the heart of Kongra Gel with this action against its founders, key leaders and sources of funding".<sup>70</sup>

On 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2012, the US Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) declared three Europe based individuals; all identified as the PKK activists, as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers (SDNTs) "for acting for or on behalf of the PKK". It also ordered the freezing of their assets under the US jurisdiction and prohibiting US persons from conducting financial or commercial transactions with the designees. It was the first designation under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) of entities that are owned or controlled by individuals acting for the PKK in Europe. The US authorities identified one of them as a "high ranking member of the PKK, and a member of a Romania-based drug trafficking organisation utilizing import and export companies for illicit activities across Europe".<sup>71</sup> According to the US State Department, PKK uses Europe for fundraising and conducting political propaganda.<sup>72</sup>

Moreover, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) listed PKK as a well-known example of an "illegal" armed group using "income from the heroin trade to finance illegal armed activities in Turkey".<sup>73</sup> According to UNODC, these groups may sell on these drugs in Turkey or traffic them to Europe through their own networks.<sup>74</sup> Citing NATO intelligence analysts, UNODC said in its 2010 report entitled as *The Globalization*

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<sup>69</sup> Department of Treasury, (2009). *Treasury Designates Three Leaders of the Kongra-Gel as Significant Foreign Narcotics Traffickers*. *op.cit.*

<sup>70</sup> Department of Treasury, (2011). *Treasury Designates Five Leaders of the Kongra-Gel as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers*. *op.cit.*

<sup>71</sup> Department of Treasury, (2012). *Treasury Sanctions Supporters of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) Tied to Drug Trafficking in Europe*. *op.cit.*

<sup>72</sup> Department of State, (Not Dated). *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*. [Online] <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/65479.pdf>> [Accessed 16 Aug 2013].

<sup>73</sup> UNODC, (2012). *World Drug Report 2012*. *op.cit.* p. 84.

<sup>74</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2010). *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment*. p. 123. [Online] <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/TOCTA\\_Report\\_2010\\_low\\_res.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/TOCTA_Report_2010_low_res.pdf)> [Accessed 17 Aug 2013].



of *Crime* that “PKK pockets upwards of US\$50 million to US\$100 million annually from heroin trafficking alone.”<sup>75</sup> The Report also points to the arrest of several PKK members in Europe in 2008 on heroin trafficking charges as a further demonstration of the group’s involvement in the drug trade.<sup>76</sup>

Like other militant groups, the PKK needs millions of dollars annually to buy weapons and cover other costs such as logistics and communication. Although, there is a lack of reliable information about the PKK finances, estimates show a big fluctuation in its revenues. Different estimates have put the PKK annual income from US\$50-800. It is also difficult to say how much of the PKK’s revenues come from the drug trade. In early 1990s, it was suggested that the group received most of its money from drug related activities. In 1993, the British National Service of Criminal Intelligence estimated that “PKK obtained 2.6 million pounds sterling from extortion and 56 million German marks from drug smuggling.”<sup>77</sup> During the 1990s, it was estimated that the group’s annual income was US\$200-500 million annually. However, during early 2000s, its revenues decreased to US\$50-100 million due to the withdrawal of state support, mainly from Syria, for the PKK.<sup>78</sup>

Syria apparently cut its ties with the PKK in 1998 after Turkey threatened to invade what was then the group’s primary sanctuary inside Syrian territory. On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1998, the governments of Turkey and Syria signed the “Adana agreement” in which Damascus agreed to recognise the PKK as a terrorist organisation, cease all aid to the group and to deport its leader Abdullah Öcalan from Syria. In 2002, Iran also recognised the PKK as a terrorist organisation in exchange for Turkey doing the same for the Iranian rebel group Mujahideen-e-Khalq based in Iraq.

Faced with increasing hostility in the region, the PKK diversified its sources of funding including money from “the Kurdish diaspora in Europe and revenue derived from drug trafficking”.<sup>79</sup> According to Radu, in 2001, the PKK’s annual income from “criminal activities” was estimated at US\$86 million.<sup>80</sup> The 2007 NATO Terrorist Threat Intelligence

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid.* p. 123.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.* p. 123.

<sup>77</sup> Radu, Michael, (2001). The Rise and Fall of PKK. *Orbis* 45 (1), Winter: 47-63. [Online] <<http://web.macam.ac.il/~arnon/Int-ME/extra/RISE%20AND%20FALL%20THE%20PKK.htm>> [Accessed 24 March 2013]; Quoting from International Policy Institute for Counter-Terrorism, (2000). *Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK)*. Jan. 27.

<sup>78</sup> Cornell, Svante E., and Jonsson, Michael, (2008). Kurds and Pay—Examining PKK Financing. *Jane’s Insurgency and Terrorism*. March 13. [Online] <[http://www.isdp.eu/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2008\\_cornell-jonsson\\_examining-pkk-financing.pdf](http://www.isdp.eu/images/stories/isdp-main-pdf/2008_cornell-jonsson_examining-pkk-financing.pdf)> [Accessed 7 Feb 2013].

<sup>79</sup> Cornell, Svante E., and Jonsson, Michael, (2008). Kurds and Pay. *op.cit.*

<sup>80</sup> Radu, Michael, (2001). The Rise and Fall of PKK. *op.cit.*

Unit report puts the PKK's annual revenues at US\$50-100 million.<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, Turkish officials usually say that the PKK earns hundreds of millions of dollar each year from illegal activities including illicit drugs. In March 2008, the deputy chief of the Turkish General Staff put the PKK's annual income at 400-500 million euros (around US\$600-750 million) obtained mainly from four sources such as "drug dealing, human trafficking, smuggling and donations." According to the same official, the PKK received most of its revenues from drugs (€200-250 million), followed by various smuggling activities (€100-150 million) and donations (€15-20 million).<sup>82</sup>

There is a sizeable Kurdish diaspora in Western Europe, particularly in Germany, the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg) and Scandinavia. They are considered an important and stable source of income for the PKK. It is also reported that the PKK activists extorts money from Kurdish businessmen and professionals residing in Western countries. Anecdotal evidence from several European countries suggests that the diaspora funding is more voluntary; however, some of it is reportedly received through coercion and threats of violence. Personal friendships and clan connections also play an important role in fund raising. Even after the arrest of the PKK's leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999, the German authorities estimated that the diaspora funding from Germany alone was US\$9 million in 2001.<sup>83</sup>

The PKK denies any involvement in the illicit drug trade insisting that these allegations are part of propaganda aimed at distorting its image. Given its geographical location, there are many incentives and opportunities for the PKK to exploit the drug trade for their own benefits. However, there seems to be an element of exaggeration in the amount of money the groups might be pocketing from the drug trade.<sup>84</sup> According to Galeotti, the PKK members "have traded in drugs to fuel their operations. In practice, the PPK has largely managed to avoid losing its political identity and is not so much directly involved in the trade as in charging rent to gangs for the use of PKK-held territory on which to grow opium, operate site-processing facilities, or transport drugs."<sup>85</sup> In addition, the group's

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<sup>81</sup> Cornell, Svante E., and Jonsson, Michael, (2008). Kurds and Pay. *op.cit.*

<sup>82</sup> Sunday's Zaman, (2008). PKK Revenues Reach 500 mln Euros. Article published on 12 March. [Online] <[http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail\\_getNewsById.action?load=detay&link=136169](http://www.todayszaman.com/newsDetail_getNewsById.action?load=detay&link=136169)> [Accessed 24 March 2013].

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Interview with a Kurdish activist from Turkey who is associated with/sympathetic to the PKK who didn't want to be named, (K3). London, July 2014. Interview with a Turkish academician who didn't want to be named, (K1). London, February 2014. Interview with a Kurdish activist from Turkey who didn't want to be named, (K3). London, April 2014

<sup>85</sup> Galeotti, Mark, (2008). Turkish Organised Crime: Heroin Trafficking and Money Laundering Operations. In: Shanty, Frank G. and Mishra, Patit Paban (editors), *Organized Crime: From Trafficking to Terrorism*, Volume 1, (pp.162-165). (Quote from p. 163). California: ABC-CLIO Inc.

strategy and main characteristics are in contrast with those of criminal groups that generally focus on profits and personal enrichment and keep a low profile. The PKK does not seem to be mainly motivated by getting money through criminal activities and its links to the drug trade “is not turning it into a criminal organisation, as opposed to a political one.”<sup>86</sup>



Figure 3.2: Map of Turkey<sup>87</sup>



Figure 3.3: Map showing Kurdish population density in four countries (Turkey, Iraq, Syria and Iran)<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Cornell, Svante E., and Jonsson, Michael, (2008). Kurds and Pay. *op.cit.*

<sup>87</sup> Map copied from Lonely Planet website. Map of Turkey. [Online].  
<<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/maps/europe/turkey/>> [Accessed 18 Apr 2014].

<sup>88</sup> Izady, Mehrdad R. (1992). *The Kurds: A Concise Handbook*. Washington D.C.: Taylor & Francis

### 3.4 The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

Established in 1966 as the military wing of the Colombian Communist Party, the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) is one of the world's most tenacious armed groups. It is Colombia's oldest, largest, most capable, and best-equipped left-wing insurgency engaged in the longest-running war in the Western Hemisphere. Since its inception, the FARC maintained close ties with the Communist party of Colombia, which was traditionally pro-Soviet Union.<sup>89</sup> The FARC has been operating in areas of coca and opium poppy cultivation and claims to represent the rural poor in a struggle against Colombia's rich and powerful. The group places land reform, local governance and military reform high on its political agenda.<sup>90</sup>

Initially, the organisation consisted of those liberals who took up arms to defend themselves from members of the rival Conservative Party and the local police forces. The FARC leader, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, better known as Tirofijo ("Sureshot"), came from a peasant family and, like many liberal and leftist peasants, rose up in arms during *La Violencia* (The Violence) -- the roughly ten-year (1948–58) period of civil war in Colombia between the Colombian Conservative party and the Colombian Liberal Party which had more supporters in the rural areas. *La Violencia* began after the assassination of the Liberal Party's leader and presidential candidate, Jorge Eliecer Gaitan, in 1948.<sup>91</sup>

The violence associated with FARC or against it has claimed thousands of lives over the past six decades. The Marxist-Leninist-inspired FARC is, therefore, labelled as a terrorist organisation by many countries. The group is listed on the US State Department list of terrorist groups and, since 2002; the European Union also listed it as a terrorist organisation. Its main sources of income include taxes on drug production and trafficking, cattle stealing, extortion and kidnappings.<sup>92</sup> However, in February 2012, the FARC leadership pledged to renounce kidnapping altogether.

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<sup>89</sup> Chernick, Marc, (1999). Negotiating Peace Amid Multiple Forms of Violence. In: Arson, Cynthia J. (editor), *Comparative Peace Processes in Latin America*. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, p. 197.

<sup>90</sup> IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies), (1997). Colombia's Escalating Violence: Crime, Conflict and Politics. *Strategic Comments*, 3, (4), May. London. [Online]. <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1356788970343>> [Accessed 22 March 2013].

<sup>91</sup> Leech, Garry, (2011). *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*. New York: Zed Books; Spencer, David E., et al, (2011). *Colombia's Road to Recovery: Security and Governance 1982-2010*. Washington DC.: National Defense University. Available online at: <<https://digitalndulibrary.ndu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/chdpubs/id/18234/rec/4>> [Accessed 21 March 2013].

<sup>92</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), (2005). *War on Drugs in Colombia*. Latin America Report No. 11. 27 Jan. [Online]: <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/latin->

In its early stages, the FARC guerrillas were active in a small area of the country. Their main concern was how to survive in the face of a determined effort by the Colombian army to eliminate them. At the time, the group was mainly engaged in ambushes of military units in order to capture military equipment and raided farms to secure food and supplies. The guerrillas were also conducting raids to capture hostages for ransom and to punish government informers and spies. However, from the 1960s onwards, the group slowly expanded and opened new guerrilla fronts in areas where they had no or little activity such as Magdalena valley and the Urabá area, in the Darien gap between Panama and Colombia. In 1980s, the FARC saw a rapid expansion and established several new fronts. The aim was to have at least one front for each of Colombia's fifty-odd departments.<sup>93</sup>

The estimates about the number of FARC fronts and manpower vary greatly. According to Rabasa and Chalk, the FARC grew from 350 fighters at its founding in mid-1960 to approximately 3600 in 32 fronts in 1986; 7000 in 60 fronts in 1995; and 15,000–20,000 in over 70 fronts in 2000<sup>94</sup>. Although FARC's major presence is along the agrarian frontier in the eastern plains and jungles, its members operated in more than half of the country's municipalities. In 1985, a Colombian government report, which was based on police and military data, concluded that there was some type of guerrilla activity in 173 municipalities of a total of 1,005 municipalities, or in 17.2 percent of all municipalities. By 1995, the figure rose to 622 of a total of 1,071 municipalities, a leap that represents 59.8 percent of all municipalities.<sup>95</sup>

Although FARC suffered heavy losses in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century at the hands of US backed Colombian government, it still recruits “among the most marginal sectors where the guerrillas represent a lifestyle as well as one of the few sources of employment.”<sup>96</sup> FARC's insurgents are well trained and well-armed and generally highly motivated. A *New York Times* article in October 2012 said that FARC had “an estimated 9,000 fighters, down from about 17,000 in the 1990s”<sup>97</sup>.

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[america/colombia/11\\_war\\_and\\_drugs\\_in\\_colombia.pdf](#)> [Accessed 20 March 2013]; Leech, Garry, (2011). *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*. *Op.cit.*

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> Rabasa, Angel and Chalk, Peter, (2001). *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*. Washington DC: Rand Corporation, pp. 25-26.

<sup>95</sup> Chernick, Marc, (1999). Negotiating Peace Amid Multiple Forms of Violence. *op.cit.* p. 167.

<sup>96</sup> IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies), (1997). Colombia's Escalating Violence. *op.cit.*

<sup>97</sup> Neuman, William, (2012). Colombia Tries Again to End Drug-Fed War. *New York Times*. Article published on 17 October. [Online] <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/18/world/americas/colombia-tries-again-to-end-drug-fed-war.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>> [Accessed 22 March 2013].



The 1980s was an important decade in the history of FARC in which it saw an unprecedented expansion and started exploiting natural resources and primary commodities. By taking advantage of a ceasefire with the government of President Belisario Betancur (1984-1987), the group expanded in many resource-rich areas (cattle in the eastern plains, commercial agriculture in Urabá and Santander, oil in the middle Magdalena valley, and gold in Antioquia).<sup>98</sup> The FARC's expansionist strategy brought new sources of income. In addition to money derived from natural resources and primary commodities, it also earned money from smuggling in the border regions. More importantly, it was also at this time when the FARC began to develop linkages with the illegal drug industry.<sup>99</sup>

### 3.4.1 FARC's Relationship with Drugs

A number of reports and publications, both governmental and non-governmental, have documented that drugs are an integral part of the Colombian conflict. Although FARC receive a significant portion of its funding from the drug trade, the group's initial involvement in illicit drugs was unplanned and unintentional. In the 1980s, the Marxist group discovered the coca profits when it expanded its operations in areas rich in resources such as cattle (eastern plains), oil (the middle Magdalena valley), gold (Antioquia) and commercial agriculture (Urabá and Santander). Meanwhile, the guerrillas established new fronts in the departments of Caquetá and Meta, which became the main source of the country's coca crop. When the regional drug traffickers, protected by paramilitaries, moved into the coca cultivating areas, drug production became the dominant economic activity in several parts of the country.<sup>100</sup> FARC's arrival in such drug producing regions coincided with poverty. At the time, farmers were generally poor due to crop failures and drought which also resulted in the death of a big number of cattle. Compared with other traditional licit crops, the coca plant brought poor peasants more money. By the time the FARC entered drug producing regions, at least 300,000 people were directly dependent on the coca economy for basic subsistence.<sup>101</sup>

As the FARC considered drugs counter-revolutionary and, initially, forbade the cultivation of coca and marijuana in areas under its control. However, the FARC's anti-drug policy was not popular with many local people whose livelihood largely depended on coca

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<sup>98</sup> Rabasa, Angel and Chalk, Peter, (2001). *Colombian Labyrinth. op.cit.* p. 25.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.* p. 26

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.* p. 26

<sup>101</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2005). The Coca Connection: Conflict and Drugs in Colombia and Peru. *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 25, (2). [Online] <<http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/JCS/article/view/489/823#no14>> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

cultivation. FARC was also reluctant to embrace the drug economy as a lot of other Colombians, especially those residing in drug free regions, opposed the cultivation of coca and turning Colombia into a major drug producing country.<sup>102</sup> The founding fathers of FARC faced a dilemma as they found themselves in an uncharted territory. On one hand, supporting the drug trade was against the founding principles of the insurgency, on the other; there was a question of public support and image and reputation. The decision was bound to have enormous implication for the future of not only the FARC and Colombia but the entire region. Finally, social pressure, lack of other economic opportunities as well as the fear of losing agricultural migrants, FARC's main social base, to its political enemies forced the group to change its attitude towards drug trade. From 1981 onwards, the guerillas not only tolerated coca cultivation but also began promoting and protecting the coca crop themselves; thus assuming effective control of the coca economy.<sup>103</sup>

Using its previous experience of exploiting natural resources, the FARC quickly learnt how to maximise the drug profits. It laid out a policy of taxing the drug industry and formulated mechanism to regulate the drug market. The group recruited people in the lower end of the drug business and started with taxing the cultivation of coca. Then they expanded the tax system to include drug traders and traffickers. More money started flowing in exchange for providing protection to the *narcos* who owned coca-paste and ran cocaine labs. After the FARC consolidated its control in several parts of the country, it also began charging drug traffickers an airstrip fee for each plane that took off in the areas it controlled.<sup>104</sup>

It is estimated that FARC's overall annual income is hundreds of millions of dollars.<sup>105</sup> FARC's drugs revenues, as reported in various reports, vary from US\$100 million to US\$800 million annually. In 1994, the Colombian government estimated the annual income of FARC and ELN (revenues on investments and income flows from different sources such as kidnapping for ransom, investments in gold and coal mines, extortion, diversion of states' funds, investments in public transportation, war tax, tax on coca and poppy paste and gramaje tax) at US\$600 million. FARC's share was more than half of the total estimate. In addition, a balance sheet prepared for the Colombian government in the

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<sup>102</sup> Guillermo, Juan and Medina, Ferro, (2000). Las FARC y su Relacion con la Economia de la Coca en el sur de Colombia: Testimonios de Colonos y Guerrilleros. *L'ordinaire Latino-americain* (IPEALT, Universite de Toulouse-Le Mirail), no. 179, January-March. [Online]:

<[http://www.mamacoca.org/feb2002/art\\_ferro\\_Farc\\_y\\_coca\\_Caguan\\_es.html](http://www.mamacoca.org/feb2002/art_ferro_Farc_y_coca_Caguan_es.html)> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> Leech, Garry, (2011). *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency. Op .cit.*; David E., et al, (2011). *Colombia's Road to Recovery. Op .cit.*; See also Leech, Garry, (2011). *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency. Op .cit.* Chapters 3 and 5; Spencer, David E., et al, (2011). *Colombia's Road to Recovery. Op .cit.*

<sup>105</sup> Chernick, Marc, (1999). *Negotiating Peace Amid Multiple Forms of Violence. op.cit.*

same year concluded that the two guerrilla groups (FARC and ELN) spent about US\$65 million of the total US\$600 million they received per year. This meant that their profits totalled US\$535 million during that year alone.<sup>106</sup>

In 1996, some intelligence sources placed the total revenues for the two guerrilla groups as high as US\$800 million.<sup>107</sup> A 1997 report by the London based security think tank, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), estimated that the total annual income of the Colombia's guerrillas was US\$800 million. By contrast, the country's defence budget was about US\$1.4 billion that year.<sup>108</sup> According to the IISS report, FARC derived around \$140m annually from drugs while the rest of the money came from extortion, kidnapping and embezzlement, as well as legal investments.<sup>109</sup> A 2000 study by the Colombian police puts the monthly income of FARC and the right-wing group, AUC (United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia),<sup>110</sup> at US\$105 million; meaning more than US\$1.2 billion per year.<sup>111</sup>

A study conducted in 2005, estimated FARC's annual income from taxing the illicit drug economy to be fluctuating between US\$60 and US\$100 million per year.<sup>112</sup> According to another study in the same year, the drug profits represent at least 50 percent of the overall income for the FARC and around 20 percent<sup>113</sup> for the other Colombian leftist guerrilla movement, the ELN (the National Liberation Army).<sup>114</sup> However, as the 2005 International Crisis Group's (ICG) report says "most calculations of FARC income are overstated" and don't match the amount of drugs produced in the country and their prices.<sup>115</sup> A number of studies about the drug revenues of Colombia's anti-government armed groups are based on data which relies mainly on Colombian military sources. There is a huge gap between different estimates about FARC's revenues from the drug trade. The clandestine nature of the drug economy makes it hard to find out the exact amount of money the guerrillas get

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<sup>106</sup> Richani, Nazih, (1997). The Political Economy of Violence: The War-System in Colombia. *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs*, **39**, (2), Summer. p. 45 [Online]: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/166511.pdf?acceptTC=true>> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

<sup>107</sup> Richani, Nazih, (1997). The Political Economy of Violence. *op.cit*; Semana, (1997). *La Version Alemana*, 17 Feb. [Online]: <<http://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/la-version-alemana/31641-3>> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

<sup>108</sup> IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies), (1997). Colombia's Escalating Violence. *op.cit*.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>110</sup> United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC) is a right-wing umbrella group formed in 1997 by drug-traffickers and landowners to combat rebel kidnappings and extortion.

<sup>111</sup> Buscaglia, Edgardo and Ratliff, William E., (2001). *op.cit*. p. 26

<sup>112</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2005). The Coca Connection. *op.cit*.

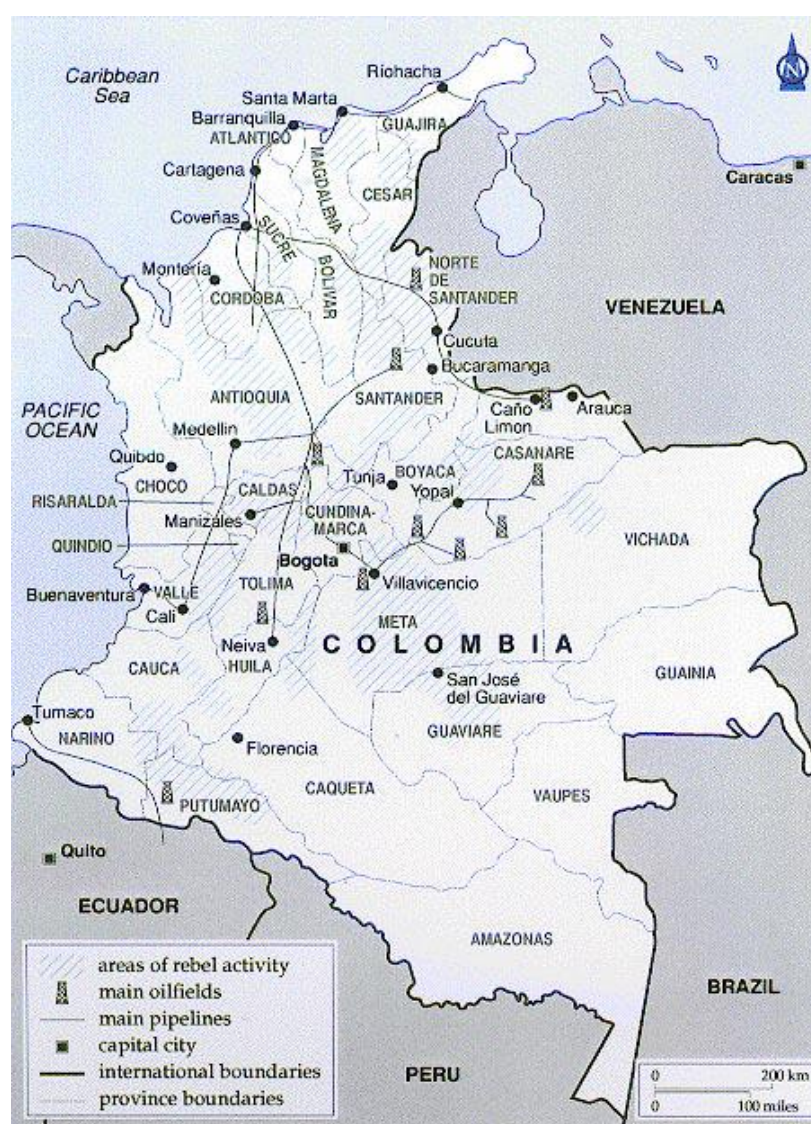
<sup>113</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>114</sup> ELN (the National Liberation Army – *Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional*) is a left-wing "national liberation" movement formed in 1965 by intellectuals inspired by the Cuban revolution and Marxist ideology. It draws on Christian Liberation theology. In recent years, ELN units have become involved in the drugs trade. The group is on US and European lists of terrorist organisations.

<sup>115</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), (2005). *War on Drugs in Colombia*. *op.cit*. p.19.



from the drug trade. Therefore, we don't have any other option but to rely upon the existing literature. According to International Crisis Group (ICG), the FARC receives a maximum of \$100 million a year from the drug trade.<sup>116</sup> However, even if it is \$US100 million a year; this is still a large amount of money to sustain an insurgent group. It is estimated that the cost of maintaining an armed fighter is US\$3 a day while a force the size of the FARC could be maintained for roughly \$20 million per year.<sup>117</sup> It is worth noting that despite benefitting financially from the drug trade, the FARC did not publicly endorse the activity and has avoided public acknowledgement of its involvement in the drugs economy.



**Figure 3.4:** Map of Colombia showing areas of insurgent activity<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies), (1997). Colombia's Escalating Violence. *op.cit.*

### 3.5 Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)

Commonly known as the Tamil Tigers, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) was formed in 1976 as a reaction to the growth of assertive Sinhala nationalism in Sri Lanka after its independence from Britain in 1948.<sup>119</sup> Based mainly in the ethnic Tamil dominated northern Sri Lanka, LTTE was a separatist militant group founded by the revolutionary socialist, Velupillai Prabhakaran (1954-2009). The formation of LTTE was part of the Tamil struggle for self-determination and the creation of an independent state for Tamil people in the north and east of Sri Lanka which was described by the Tamil separatists as “the historical homeland of the Tamil-speaking people.”<sup>120</sup>

LTTE emerged as a result of ethnic divisions between mainly Hindu Tamil minority and Buddhist Sinhala majority. Polarisation further widened between the two communities when Sri Lanka changed its name from Ceylon in 1976 and Buddhism was given primary place as the country’s religion. Against a background of perceived and real deprivation and grievances, LTTE emerged championing the cause of self-rule for what it called the “Tamil Eelam” nation.<sup>121</sup> The political campaign for the rights of Tamil evolved into a civil war in Sri Lanka in 1983.<sup>122</sup>

At the height of its power, the LTTE possessed a well-developed army and was the only insurgent organisation in the world with its own army, navy (known as Sea Tigers with having speedboats, fishing vessels, mini-subbs of indigenous construction, and underwater demolition teams) and even a rudimentary air force (Air Tigers).<sup>123</sup> The quarter-century war claimed the lives of more than 70,000 people on both sides of the conflict.<sup>124</sup> In 1997, the United States proscribed the LTTE as a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) and demanded the organisation to foreswear the use of force. According to the US State Department’s Counterterrorism Office:

“LTTE has integrated a battlefield insurgent strategy with a terrorist program that targets key personnel in the countryside and senior Sri Lankan political and military leaders in Colombo and other urban centers. It also has conducted a sustained campaign targeting

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<sup>119</sup> BBC, (2013c). *Sri Lanka Profile*. 25 March. [Online]: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11999611>> [Accessed 16 Aug 2013].

<sup>120</sup> Eelam.com, (Not Dated). *About Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam*. (LTTE linked website). [Online]: <<http://www.eelam.com/lte>> [Accessed 16 Aug 2013].

<sup>121</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Ross, Russell R., and Savada, Andrea Matles (editors), (1990). *Sri Lanka: A Country Study*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress.

<sup>123</sup> Solomon, John and Tan, B.C., (2007). Feeding the Tiger: How Sri Lankan Insurgents Fund Their War. *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, August. [Online]: <<http://www.c-cft.org/publication/pdf/FeedingtheTiger.pdf>> [Accessed 5 June 2013].

<sup>124</sup> BBC, (2013c). *Sri Lanka Profile*. *op.cit.*

rival Tamil groups and figures... The LTTE is most notorious for its cadre of suicide bombers, the Black Tigers.”<sup>125</sup>

The US Federal Bureau of investigation (FBI) described LTTE as one of “the most dangerous and deadly extremists in the world” whose “ruthless tactics have inspired terrorist networks worldwide”. FBI also called LTTE as the group that “perfected the use of suicide bombers, invented the suicide belt, pioneered the use of women in suicide attacks” and “assassinated two world leaders—the only terrorist organisation to do so.”<sup>126</sup> The former Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi assassinated by a suspected female LTTE suicide bomber in 1991 while he was campaigning for a parliamentary candidate of his Congress Party in India’s Tamil Nadu state.<sup>127</sup> Sri Lankan President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, was killed by an LTTE suicide bomber in 1993 during a May Day political rally in the Sri Lankan capital, Colombo. In addition, the group carried out many other high-profile attacks, including the assassinations of several high-ranking politicians and officials in Sri Lanka and India. Due to its violence and war tactics, LTTE was designated as a terrorist organisation by more than 30 countries. The European Union designated the LTTE as a terrorist organisation in 2006. Although, these measures had a negative impact on the collection of funds from members and supporters in Western countries, LTTE continued to receive huge sums of money from the Tamil diaspora.

The LTTE was organised along a two-tier structure – military and a subordinate political wing -- both of which were overseen by a Central Governing Committee headed by the LTTE supreme leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. The military wing was reminiscent of many professional armies and included several specific subdivisions headed by leaders who were expert in that particular field. The subdivisions included, (a) an amphibious group (the Sea Tigers), (b) an airborne group (known as the Air Tigers), (c) a suicide commando unit (the Black Tigers), (d) an elite fighting wing (known as the Charles Anthony Regiment), and (e) a highly secretive intelligence group.<sup>128</sup>

LTTE continued until 2009 when the group was defeated and all the areas it controlled were seized by the Sri Lankan military. The group’s founder and leader, Velupillai

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<sup>125</sup> Department of State, (Not Dated). *Foreign Terrorist Organizations*. *op.cit.*

<sup>126</sup> FBI (Federal Bureau of investigation), (2008). *Taming the Tamil Tigers: From Here in the U.S.* [Online]: <[http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2008/january/tamil\\_tigers011008](http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2008/january/tamil_tigers011008)> [Accessed 16 Aug 2013].

<sup>127</sup> Roberts, Michael, (2009). Killing Rajiv Gandhi: Dhanu’s Sacrificial Metamorphosis in Death. *South Asian History and Culture*, 1, (1): 25-41. [Online]: <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19472490903387191>> [Accessed 17 Aug 2013].

<sup>128</sup> Chalk, Peter, (1999). Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam’s (LTTE) International Organization and Operations - A Preliminary Analysis. Canadian intelligence Security Service, Commentary No. 77. [Online]: <<http://fas.org/irp/world/para/docs/com77e.htm>> [Accessed 16 Aug 2013].

Prabhakaran, was also killed in the 2009 military offensive. This was considered the end of the Tamil Tigers. However, the group is said to be still active in a different way. In its 2013 report on “Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTO)”, the US State Department says that despite its military defeat in 2009, “the LTTE’s international network of sympathizers and financial support persists”.<sup>129</sup>

### **3.5.1 LTTE’s Sources of Funding**

LTTE’s major external activities included fundraising, publicity and propaganda, and arms procurement and shipping. As a multi-faceted organisation, the group was allegedly funded by donations, extortion (mainly from the Tamil diaspora in the USA, Canada, Norway, UK, Western Europe and Australia and Tamils in Sri Lanka), people smuggling, documents forgery, gunrunning, drug trafficking, money laundering, sea piracy, contraband trade and innumerable business ventures.<sup>130</sup> LTTE’s sophisticated and diverse system of funding and access to financial resources helped it to prolong its political and military campaign. According to Solomon and Tan, although it was based in the north and east of Sri Lanka, the ethnic separatist organisation fulfilled its financial and procurement needs abroad through “a complex global network of professional managers and outsourced people who acquire[d] money and guns in countries with significant Tamil diaspora communities”.<sup>131</sup>

LTTE used its funds on a number of causes including logistics and purchasing of weapons and equipment, providing medical care for fighters injured on the battlefields, assisting families of seriously injured fighters who cannot earn a living anymore as well as families of those members who were killed in action. A substantial amount was also dedicated to propaganda activities both inside Sri Lanka and abroad to portray a better image of the group and to attract more supporters and members.

### **3.5.2 LTTE and the Drug Trade**

Compared with Afghanistan, Colombia and Turkey; Sri Lanka has a lesser drug problem. The Indian Ocean country is not a significant producer of narcotics or precursor chemicals but, according to US government reports, it plays a minor role as a trans-shipment route for heroin from India. Recently, a surge is noted in domestic consumption, consisting of heroin,

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<sup>129</sup> Department of State, (2013). *Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Country Reports on Terrorism 2013*. [Online]: <<http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224829.htm>> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>130</sup> Solomon, John and Tan, B.C., (2007). *Feeding the Tiger. op.cit.*

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*



cannabis, and to a lesser extent, Ecstasy.<sup>132</sup> The increasing demand for heroin in Sri Lanka was partly due to the expanding tourism industry which “induced the smugglers to establish contact with suppliers as far a-field as Pakistan and metropolitan Mumbai (Bombay), and with delivery destinations as far south as Colombo.”<sup>133</sup>

LTTE’s strategic geographical location with access to sea routes and ports including the notorious port of northern peninsula, Velvettihurai (better known as VVT), put it in a highly advantageous position to smuggle illegal goods around the world, especially munitions. Many of these weapons smuggling routes pass either directly through or very close to major drug producing and transit countries.<sup>134</sup> Due to LTTE’s proximity to “Golden Triangle” (one of Asia’s two main opium producing areas that envelops the mountains of three countries of mainland South East Asia -- Myanmar, Laos and Thailand) and “Golden Crescent” (encompassing three nations -- Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan) as well as its expertise and highly developed international and regional network, it was tempting to get involved in the lucrative drug trade which was already established in the region.

The nature and extent of LTTE’s involvement in the drug trade has received very little attention from both the media and academia. However, some sources point to the involvement of LTTE’s members and supporters in the illicit drug trade. LTTE’s links with the illicit drug trade have been described as “unorthodox ones” as the group was said to be “the service providers” to drug traders “in the form of LTTE-affiliated drug couriers on air flights.”<sup>135</sup> Force has described LTTE’s “partnerships with Pakistani heroin producers/traffickers” as one of the group’s “numerous trans-national criminal activities” to raise funds for their insurgent activities.<sup>136</sup> Writing in the context of Canada, home to the largest Tamil diaspora, Stewart Bell concludes in his book that LTTE used “every

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<sup>132</sup> Department of State, (2010). *INCSR 2010*. *op.cit.*

<sup>133</sup> Peiris, G. H., (2001). *Secessionist War and Terrorism in Sri Lanka*. Published by South Asia Terrorism Portal. [Online]. Available online at: <<http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/books/global/peiris.htm>> [Accessed 05 June 2012].

<sup>134</sup> Chalk, Peter, (1999). *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam’s (LTTE) International Organization and Operations*. *op.cit.*

<sup>135</sup> Stepanova, Ekaterina, (2012). *Illicit Drugs and Insurgency in Afghanistan*. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 6, (2). Available online at: <<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/stepanova-illicit-drugs/html>> [Accessed 15 April 2014].

<sup>136</sup> Force, Ellalan, (Not Dated). *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)*. GlobalSecurity.org. [Online]. <<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/lte.htm>> [Accessed on 17 Aug 2013].

conceivable tactic” including drugs to raise funds for their cause.<sup>137</sup> A Stanford University study also puts drug trafficking as a source of LTTE’s funding.<sup>138</sup>

The October 2001 US Department of State’s report on “Foreign Terrorist Organizations” (FTOs) linked the LTTE with drug trade and accused its members of acting as drug couriers, primarily for Pakistani hashish.<sup>139</sup> Another US official report, *The Worldwide Connection Between Drugs and Terror*, in March 2002, also linked LTTE with illicit drug trafficking.<sup>140</sup> In addition, according to a 2002 Library of Congress report, LTTE’s individual members and sympathisers worldwide traffic drugs, principally heroin, to raise money for their cause. The group was also accused of having close ties with drug-trafficking networks in Burma (Myanmar).<sup>141</sup> The 2007 Jane’s Intelligence Review says that LTTE’s activities in foreign countries also included narcotics trafficking.<sup>142</sup> Citing sources from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)/Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Jane’s intelligence Review says that Sri Lankans connected to LTTE controlled “a portion of the one billion US dollar drug market” in the Canadian city of Montreal. The report added that the group’s annual income was US\$200-300 while narcotics smuggling comprised one of its major sources of money.<sup>143</sup> Several other intelligence agencies also accused the LTTE of being involved in drug trafficking. The US State Department frequently condemned LTTE for its involvement in the drug trade. In its 2010 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR), the State Department said:

Since 1983, the LTTE was involved in bulk delivery of heroin and cannabis from producing areas in Asia to consuming countries. Mumbai was the key link in the LTTE drug trade. While Sri Lanka’s coast remains highly vulnerable to transshipment of heroin moving from India, observers expect a dramatic reduction in drug-related activity in the region, with the defeat of the LTTE.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Bell, Stewart, (2004). *Cold Terror: How Canada Nurtures and Exports Terrorism Around the World*. Mississauga: Willey, p. 27.

<sup>138</sup> Stanford University, (2013). *Mapping Militant Organizations: Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam*. Updated on 23 July. Available online at: <<http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/225>> [Accessed 05 June 2012].

<sup>139</sup> Lee, Gregory D., (2007). The Global Drug Trade and its Nexus to Terrorism. *op.cit.* pp. 184-185.

<sup>140</sup> Beers, Rand and Francis X. Taylor, (2002). *op.cit.*

<sup>141</sup> Berry, LaVerle; Curtis, Glenn E; Hudson, Rex A; Kollars, Nina A., (2002). *A Global Overview of Narcotics-Funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups*. Washington DC: Library of Congress, p.7. Available online at: <[http://www.loc.gov/r/frd/pdf-files/NarcsFundedTerrs\\_Extrems.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/r/frd/pdf-files/NarcsFundedTerrs_Extrems.pdf)> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

<sup>142</sup> Solomon, John and Tan, B.C., (2007). Feeding the Tiger. *op.cit.*

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Department of State, (2010). *op.cit.*

The same report added that the 2009 defeat of the LTTE by the Sri Lankan military “may have changed the dynamics of the drug trade in Asia.”<sup>145</sup> Indian authorities have also accused LTTE operatives of drugs smuggling within India and arrested several Sri Lankan Tamils on charges of drug smuggling. Delhi hoped that the fall of the LTTE will result in the reduction of drug trafficking.<sup>146</sup> In addition, a number of LTTE supporters and sympathisers have been arrested in various Asian, European and North American countries on charges of drug trafficking and possession of narcotics. On the other hand, several Asian and European officials linked convicted drug smugglers in their own countries to LTTE.<sup>147</sup>

The United Nations also accused LTTE of benefiting from illegal drug trade. In its 2012 annual report, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) described LTTE as a group deriving “some of their income from heroin trafficking prior to being dismantled in 2009”.<sup>148</sup> The LTTE supporters reportedly provided the ‘mules’ or couriers, traffickers, peddlers and bulk distributors from producing areas in Asia to consuming countries. According to Peiris, the involvement of LTTE in narcotics transactions was taking place mainly in four forms -- (a) bulk delivery of heroin and cannabis from producing areas in Asia via transit points; (b) conveying (as travellers) relatively small consignments of heroin (concealed in personal baggage) from suppliers in Asian countries to intermediary contact persons in consumer countries; (c) operation of drug distribution networks dealing in consuming countries; and (d) working as couriers between dealers and distributors (i.e. “muleing”).<sup>149</sup> However, the Jane’s Intelligence Review about LTTE’s funding activities said that LTTE’s involvement in street-level distribution of heroin was “unlikely” but it was “possible” that LTTE-affiliated street gangs may have been involved in lower-level distribution.<sup>150</sup> Peiris says that as opposed to criminal groups, LTTE didn’t have any extensive involvement in drug ‘peddling’ in the retail market and there was no indication of LTTE participation in opium growing and refining of heroin.<sup>151</sup> It is worth

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<sup>145</sup> Department of State, (2010). *INCSR 2010*. *op.cit.*

<sup>146</sup> The Times of India, (2009). *LTTE Fall Will Alter Drug Trade in India*. 30 May. [Online]: <[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-05-30/mumbai/28187683\\_1\\_ltte-drug-trade-velupillai-prabhakaran](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-05-30/mumbai/28187683_1_ltte-drug-trade-velupillai-prabhakaran)> [Accessed 16 Aug 2013].

<sup>147</sup> Asian Tribune, (2006). *Links Between Australian Drug Kingpin Sukumaran and LTTE*. Colombo, 16 Feb. [Online]: <<http://www.asiantribune.com/links-between-australian-drug-kingpin-sukumaran-and-ltte>> [Accessed 10 Aug 2013].

<sup>148</sup> UNODC, (2012). *World Drug Report 2012*. *op.cit.* p. 85.

<sup>149</sup> Peiris, G. H., (2001). *Secessionist War and Terrorism in Sri Lanka*. *op.cit.*

<sup>150</sup> Solomon, John and Tan, B.C., (2007). *Feeding the Tiger*. *op.cit.*

<sup>151</sup> Peiris, G. H., (2001). *Secessionist War and Terrorism in Sri Lanka*. *op.cit.*

noting that LTTE itself never acknowledged its involvement in the drug trade and denied all assertions that it used drugs as a source of funding.<sup>152</sup>



**Figure 3.5:** Map of Sri Lanka. Lined areas show high level of Tamil density.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Interview with a Tamil diaspora member sympathetic to the LTTE cause (Tamil 1), London, Feb 2013; Interview with a Tamil political activist sympathetic to LTTE (Tamil 2). London, Feb 2013; Interview with a Tamil Journalist from Sri Lanka (Tamil 3). London, March 2013.

<sup>153</sup> GlobalSecurity.Org, (Not Dated). Tamil Tigers – Maps. [Online]:  
<<http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/lte-maps.htm>> [accessed 05 June 2012].



### 3.6 Drugs and Insurgents

Although a number of rebel groups rely on drugs and contraband as their major sources of income, the impact of natural resources on conflict depends on the opportunities they have to exploit them as well as the motivation of the insurgents. The availability of natural resources might increase the risk of a conflict, both in the first place and during the post-conflict peace period, especially when exploitation of resources constitutes the main motivation and access to them is considered “a valuable prize worth fighting for.”<sup>154</sup> However, in “non-resource” conflicts (i.e. conflicts not motivated by natural resource distribution), this mechanism doesn’t apply.

In addition, other factors such as physical characteristics, spatial spread and mode of exploitation of natural resources are usually linked to the degree of illegal exploitation and the conflict itself. Illegality, lootability, and obstructability of resources are also associated with the initiation and duration as well as intensity of many conflicts. The type of natural resources is another factor closely linked to the nature of a conflict. Natural resources can be divided into two major categories – lootable/diffuse and non-lootable/point. Lootable or diffuse resources are easily accessible to criminal and insurgent groups and are generally exploited over a wide area and through a large number of small-scale illegal operators. As opposed to non-lootable or point resources, lootable resources are generally not exploited through industrial modes of production.<sup>155</sup>

Lootable and diffuse resources include alluvial gems, minerals and agricultural products such as opium and coca. However, illegal drugs have a number of peculiar characteristics that distinguishes them from many other natural resources. First of all, the very nature of drugs makes it harder for the government to control its production and trade. Drugs, like gemstones, can be relatively easily appropriated and transported to markets by individuals and small groups of people. Unlike oil, minerals and timber, which require much more time and complicated enterprises to loot, the high value-to-size ratio of drugs and alluvial diamonds make them less obstructable.<sup>156</sup> In addition, the constant demand and increasing consumption of drugs means they are marketable almost everywhere. Therefore, illegal drugs are favoured by a number of insurgent groups as they have become among the most reliable sources of income in the world. Moreover, drugs can not only buy weapons, they

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<sup>154</sup> Rustad, Siri Aas, and Binningsbø, Helga Malmin, (2012). A Price Worth Fighting For? Natural Resources and Conflict Recurrence. *Journal of Peace Research*, **49**, (4), 531-546, July. [Online]: <<http://jpr.sagepub.com/content/49/4/531.full#ref-10>> [Accessed 07 Feb 2013].

<sup>155</sup> Le Billon, Philippe, (2005). *Fuelling War: Natural Resources and Armed Conflict*. IISS Adelphi Paper No., 373. Oxon: Routledge, p. 32.

<sup>156</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2007). *Narcotics and Armed Conflict*. *op.cit.*

also corrupt officials and often weaken government institutions. The weakening or collapse of state institutions facilitate in turn usually result in more drug production and trafficking and create a suitable environment for the processing of finished products such as the conversion of opium into heroin and coca into cocaine. Drugs bring the two actors -- drug traders and insurgents -- into a close contact and, sometimes, even make the two facilitators or partners.

The interaction between drugs and the insurgents usually starts with tolerating the production and trafficking of drugs, evolves into taxation and eventually self-involvement. According to UNODC (United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crime), the problem of insurgency diminished in several countries when authorities targeted illicit drug production and drug trafficking. The UNODC report mentions government counter-narcotics efforts in Peru in the 1990s and Colombia in the 2000s which also weakened the Shining Path and FARC respectively as it “helped to reduce the income of the illegal armed groups and thus their capacity to fight.”<sup>157</sup>

The relationship between illicit drugs and rebel groups stands out for at least twelve reasons described below. First, compared to many other resources in terms of profit margin, drugs are immensely profitable, especially in the processed form such as heroin and cocaine. Second, they are renewable as the same plant can be cultivated year after year, bringing continuous profits. Third, drugs are generally illegal which make them more demanding, especially in consuming countries.<sup>158</sup> Fourth, illegal drug trade is a more enduring source of income than other activities such as kidnapping and bank robberies. Fifth, drugs can be taxed in several stages -- farming, trafficking and processing -- and, therefore, can bring more money to insurgents groups. Sixth, unlike minerals, oil, gas and timber; drugs are “lootable” and easy to appropriate by a small number of people as well as individuals. Seventh, compared to several other natural resources, it is easier to hide and smuggle drugs. Eighth, as the demand for drugs is constantly high, they are generally sold at farmgate and farmers don’t have to take them to far away markets. Ninth, as opposed to other agricultural products, opium/coca farmers usually get advance credit from traffickers and drug traders before their yield. Tenth, unlike most other agricultural products, drugs can be easily stored for years and can be sold at anytime by the farmers. Eleventh, drugs can be cultivated in almost all kinds of climates and weather conditions. In addition, compared to many other traditional legal crops, drugs, especially the opium poppy crop, need less water and less time.

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<sup>157</sup> UNODC, (2012). *World Drug Report 2012. Op.cit.* pp. 84-85.

<sup>158</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2007). *Narcotics and Armed Conflict. op.cit.*

Moreover, the drug trade provides employment and a source of income to a large number of people including farmers, traffickers and processors. In most cases, drug production is the livelihood of ordinary farmers. Therefore, destruction or suppression of drugs production and trafficking by government officials increases support for the insurgents. For the insurgent, involvement in the drug trade is also a major source of “political capital” -- support from the local population.<sup>159</sup> As Felbab-Brown says, insurgent groups derive three sets of gains from their involvement in the illicit economy; a) increased physical capabilities (money, weapons and manpower); b) increased freedom of action (the ability to optimize tactics and strategy); and c) increased political capital (legitimacy, relationship with the local population. It is the political capital element of the drugs that, at times, proves more valuable to the insurgents than financial gains. Local population, especially in drug producing areas, is usually willing to withhold intelligence on the insurgents from the government, and, meanwhile, provide intelligence about government units to them; a crucial asset for the insurgent to avoid being captured or killed.<sup>160</sup>

Research by several scholars analysing the relationship between natural resources and conflict as well as post-conflict peace show that natural resources affect the onset, duration and intensity of internal armed conflicts.<sup>161</sup> While examining the role contrabands play in several long-running civil wars since 1945, Fearon concludes that compared to wars emerging from coups or revolutions as well as anti-colonial wars, civil wars have lasted much longer when they have involved land or natural resource conflicts, the so-called “sons of the soil” wars that typically involve land conflict between a peripheral ethnic minority and state-supported migrants from a dominant ethnic group. He adds that internal armed conflicts also last longer when the rebels have access to finance from contraband goods. Fearon argues that durations for conflicts in which the rebel group has access to funds from contraband such as opium, diamonds, or coca were longer and had a mean duration of 48.2 years as compared to 8.8 years for other conflicts.<sup>162</sup> In addition, Fearon has demonstrated that narcotics extend the duration of conflicts and that civil wars “last longer when the rebels have access to finance from contraband goods like opium or cocaine.”<sup>163</sup> On the other hand, Ross says that ‘lootable’ commodities tend to lengthen

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<sup>159</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2008). Globalization and Narcoterrorism. *op.cit.* p. 18.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>161</sup> Discussed in details in Chapter One.

<sup>162</sup> Fearon, James D., (2004). Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others? *Journal of Peace Research*, **41**, (3): 275- 301. [Online]: <<http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/21457/275.pdf>> [Accessed 10 Aug 2013].

<sup>163</sup> Fearon, James D., (2004). Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others? *op.cit.* p. 297.

existing conflicts but they do not make conflict more likely to begin.<sup>164</sup> On the other hand, empirical research also indicates that, rather than generating or being generated by drug cultivation, armed conflict qualitatively and quantitatively transforms existing drug cultivation as it strengthens the capacity of insurgent groups while weakens the state.<sup>165</sup>

A number of drug producing countries are experiencing conflicts. Meanwhile, the bulk of the global drug cultivation is taking place in conflict zones. As Cornell argues, drug production today is mainly concentrated in four countries -- Afghanistan, Burma, Colombia, and Peru -- all of whom have been ravaged by some of the world's longest-lasting wars.<sup>166</sup> However, there are several examples of drug producing countries where it didn't automatically result in a long lasting conflict. In 1960s and 1970s, countries such as Turkey, Iran, Thailand and Bolivia were major producers of opium and coca without experiencing armed conflicts. In addition, Pakistan produced substantial amount of drugs in 1970s and 1980s but didn't have a drugs-linked conflict/insurgency.

On the other hand, there are several criminal groups that are not involved in any cooperation with the insurgents. Many transnational organised crime groups such as the Italian/Sicilian Mafia, the Russian *Mafiya*, the Hong Kong/Chinese *Triads*, South American Cartels, the Mexican gangs, and the Italian-American Mafias have usually stayed away from working closely with insurgent/terror groups mainly for two reasons -- (a), they don't need the help of insurgent groups because they already have their own longstanding financial strategies and stable government contacts/collaborators and (b), cooperating with the insurgent/terror groups will attract more attention from the governments at home and abroad and will put them in a riskier position.

Similarly, a number of insurgent groups have refused to cooperate with national or transnational criminal groups due to a deliberate strategy of preserving their "moral high ground" and not "diluting" their ideology. Some insurgent groups didn't want to jeopardize internal support and international goodwill by making an alliance with criminal groups and drug traders. For example, Mexico's EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional or Zapatista National Liberation Army -- a revolutionary leftist group based in Chiapas, the southernmost state of Mexico), avoided participating in the drug trade or any dealing with the drug traffickers because of its concerns that it might result in losing funding in the form

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<sup>164</sup> Ross, Michael L., (2004). What Do We Know About Natural Resources and Civil War? *Journal of Peace Research*, **41**, (3): 337–356. [Online]: <<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/ross/whatdoweknow.pdf>> [Accessed 21 Aug 2013].

<sup>165</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2007). *Narcotics and Armed Conflict. op.cit.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

of donations. In addition, insurgency by the Hmong people in Laos avoided full scale involvement in the drug trade. Several other major insurgencies, such as the anti-British Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya (1952-1960) and the Malayan National Liberation Army–MNLA<sup>167</sup> (1948 to 1960), were also not involved in drugs.

On the other hand, a number of insurgent groups get only a small amount of money from illegal drugs and they do not constitute their main sources of income. Tamil Tigers' (LTTE) involvement in the drug trade had been the least as compared to other major insurgent groups discussed in details here; namely FARC, PKK and the Taliban. Despite LTTE's minimal involvement in drugs, it was one of the richest insurgent groups in the world right until its defeat by the Sri Lankan government in 2009. The strength, longevity and activities of LTTE suggest that, even today when drugs play a prominent role in financing a number of militant organisations, it is possible for an insurgency to finance itself through other means and sources.

In recent years, Al-Qaeda has been often accused of benefiting from the illicit drug trade. Without providing any hard evidence, several Western officials claimed that the Al-Qaeda network was mainly funded by the drug trade. For example, French Defense Minister, Michèle Alliot-Marie, declared in 2003 that “drugs are now the principal source of funding for Osama bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda network.”<sup>168</sup> However, investigations showed that such assertions were not always based on reality. In a Congressional Testimony on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2001, Asa Hutchinson, Administrator of the US’s Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), acknowledged in his statement that his agency “has no direct evidence to confirm that Bin Laden is involved in the drug trade.”<sup>169</sup> Similarly, Kaplan says in his investigation about militant organisations’ sources of funding, that Al-Qaeda’s leadership “proved more wary about jumping into the drug trade” and “steered clear” of the heroin trade.<sup>170</sup> Interviews with several Al-Qaeda captives in the US custody also revealed that the group’s

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<sup>167</sup> The Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA) was a guerrilla army based in the Malayan peninsula and Singapore and fought the Japanese during the Second World War and then the British forces for an independent Malaya.

<sup>168</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2004). Narco-Terrorism in Afghanistan. *Terrorism Monitor*, 2, (6). 24 March. The James Town Monitor. [Online]:

<[http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=26379&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=179&no\\_cache=1#.VGerlzFyBIU](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=26379&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=179&no_cache=1#.VGerlzFyBIU)> [Accessed 20 Nov 2014].

<sup>169</sup> Hutchinson, Asa, (2011). DEA Congressional Testimony: Statement by Asa Hutchinson, Administrator Drug Enforcement Administration, before the: House Government Reform Committee, Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources. 3<sup>rd</sup> October. [Online]:

<<http://www.justice.gov/dea/pr/speeches-testimony/2001/ct100301p.html>> [Accessed 21 Aug 2013].

<sup>170</sup> Kaplan, David E., (2005). Paying for Terror: How jihadist Groups are Using Organized Crime Tactics - and Profits - to Finance Attacks on Targets Around the Globe. *US News*, 27 Nov. [Online]:

<<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/051205/5terror.htm>> [Accessed 23 Aug 2013].

strategists “encouraged their members not to get involved” with the drug barons.<sup>171</sup> In addition, the 9/11 Commission Report, released in 2004, notes that “while the drug trade was a source of income for the Taliban, it did not serve the same purpose for Al-Qaeda, and there is no reliable evidence that Bin Laden was involved in or made his money through drug trafficking.”<sup>172</sup> Moreover, a 2009 report by the US Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee about links between drug trade and insurgency also concludes that: “surprisingly, there is no evidence that any significant amount of the drug proceeds go to Al-Qaeda. Contrary to conventional wisdom, numerous money laundering and counter-narcotics experts with the United States Government in Afghanistan and Washington said flatly that they have seen no indication of the Taliban or traffickers paying off Al-Qaeda forces left inside the country.”<sup>173</sup> The report quotes a senior State Department official involved in the region who rejects Al-Qaeda’s role in drug trafficking by saying that “it’s not really there.”<sup>174</sup>

One of the reasons for Al-Qaeda’s avoidance to get involved in the drug trade was likely the idea that “drug trafficking would expose them to possible detection”.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, Al-Qaeda has many other sources of income. Like many other Islamist groups, Al-Qaeda relies on charitable and religious donations mainly from wealthy individuals in the Gulf region. As a special report on “Terrorist Financing” by the New York based Council of Foreign Relations says, “Al-Qaeda is not the only terrorist organization to make use of these mechanisms. Terrorists the world over have long used charities, for example, to help raise and move their funds— as the Irish Republican Army (IRA) did for decades in American cities such as Boston and New York.”<sup>176</sup> However, many Al-Qaeda affiliates in several parts of the world have been linked to the drug trade such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Al-Shabab in Somalia and Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines.

Although insurgent and organised crime groups have many common traits, there are several differences between the two types of groups and their realms. Discussing the distinctions between the two types of organisations, Lee says that “all terrorists are

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<sup>171</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> The 9/11 Commission Report, (2004). *Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States*. Issued on 22 July. [Online] <<http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf>> [Accessed 23 Aug 2013].

<sup>173</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). *Afghanistan’s Narco War: Breaking the Link Between Drug Traffickers and Insurgents*. US Senate, Washington DC: US government printing office, p. 10.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>175</sup> Kaplan, David E., (2005). *Paying for Terror. op.cit.*

<sup>176</sup> Greenberg, Maurice R.; Wechsler, William F. and Wolosky, Lee S., (2003). *Terrorist Financing: Report of an Independent Task Force Sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, New York, p. 2. [Online]: <<http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-financing/terrorist-financing/p5080>> [Accessed on 22 Sep 2014].

criminals, but not all criminals are terrorists.”<sup>177</sup> In addition, “criminals are motivated solely by profit” as their primary motivation is illicit profit-maximisation, while insurgents “commit violent crimes to make a political statement.”<sup>178</sup> Similarly, risk reduction is a key motive for the criminal, while the insurgent may ignore risk. Classic criminal groups rely on defined organisation, while insurgent groups mutate more frequently and violent acts can be accomplished by individuals or very small cells of the insurgency.<sup>179</sup> On the other hand, organised criminal groups have usually used violent tactics mainly to threaten authorities, secure their operational environment and/or destroy competitors. As Hoffman notes, there is a clear dividing line between these two opposing ideal types:

[U]nlike the ordinary criminal or the lunatic assassin, the terrorist is not pursuing purely egocentric goals -- he is not driven by the wish to line his own pocket or satisfy some personal need or grievance. The terrorist is fundamentally an *altruist*: he believes that he is serving a ‘good’ cause designed to achieve a greater good for a wider constituency -- whether real or imagined -- which the terrorist and his organization purport to represent. The criminal, by comparison, serves no cause at all, just his own personal aggrandizement and material satiation.<sup>180</sup>

Rebel groups can make extensive profits from the drug trade. Self-involvement in narcotics, generally strengthens the insurgent group, enhances its capabilities and enables it to escape defeat. Now the question is that much does self-involvement in the drug trade impact the nature and goals of the insurgent groups? Many scholars argue that some of today’s insurgent groups have transformed into transnational criminal organisations (TCOs) and that they are more interested in profits than politics. They also analysed the implications of this phenomenon for politically motivated rebel groups. According to David Keen, “increasingly, civil wars that appear to have begun with political aims have mutated into conflicts in which short-term economic benefits are paramount. While ideology and identity remain important in understanding conflict, they may not tell the whole story”.<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, Cornell says that self-involvement in narcotics by rebel groups “alters the cohesion and motivations of insurgent forces. It tends to weaken ideological motivations and strengthen economic ones.”<sup>182</sup> While discussing various degrees of this

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<sup>177</sup> Lee, Gregory D., (2005). *op.cit.* p. 274.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>179</sup> Curtis, Glenn E. and Karacan, Tara, (2002). *op.cit.* p. 4.

<sup>180</sup> Hoffman, Bruce, (1998). *Inside Terrorism*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 43.

<sup>181</sup> Keen, David, (1998). *The economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*. IISS Adelphi Paper No., 320. London: Oxford University Press, p. 7.

<sup>182</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2007). *Narcotics and Armed Conflict*. *op.cit.*

transformation, Dishman argues that “some terrorists commit criminal acts to support political operations, while others view profit-driven criminal acts as their end game.”<sup>183</sup>

However, it is worth noting that despite benefiting from illegal sources, many traditional insurgencies have not fully lost their original goals and objectives. Due to the lack of state funding and external sources of support, many insurgent groups turned to internal source of funding. Many of them replaced the external funding with resources they could exploit inside their countries. In most of these cases, “access to resources is not determinative; it is facilitative.”<sup>184</sup> Involvement in the drugs economy is the common link among all the four groups discussed in detail here -- FARC, PKK, LTTE and the Taliban. PKK and LTTE started their campaign against the state as ethnic separatist militant groups. However, both the PKK and LTTE had not been involved in the cultivation and production of drugs. Their engagement in the drug economy was mainly confined to trafficking or sale of narcotics. On the other hand, the FARC and the Taliban are not fighting purely for ethnic reasons and, as opposed to PKK and LTTE; they are not separatists or representatives of particular ethno-national groups. Ideology is more prominent in the struggle of FARC and the Taliban. In addition, the FARC and the Taliban are benefitting from both production and trafficking of illicit drugs. However, the involvement of LTTE and the PKK is mainly limited to trafficking.

According to Chernick, “FARC’s original grievances have not disappeared” with their involvement in the drug trade.<sup>185</sup> He adds that “there is no evidence that the leaders or fighters in the FARC are accumulating individual wealth. No secret bank account have ever been exposed or confiscated. FARC guerrillas do not receive salaries, unless they are taken political prisoners. Then they and their families are given small monthly sums. The FARC’s statutes expressly prohibit individual property.”<sup>186</sup> It is in this context that, according to the International Crisis Group (ICG), describing the conflict in Colombia in terms of democracy against merely “narco-terrorists” does not do justice to the complexity of the decades-old struggle. The ICG recommends to the Colombia Government to “acknowledge that the left-wing insurgencies, FARC and ELN, are not simply “narco-terrorists” but are motivated in part by political ideology, and combat them accordingly,

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<sup>183</sup> Dishman, Chris, (2001). Terrorism, Crime, and Transformation. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, **24**, (1): 43-58.

<sup>184</sup> Chernick, Marc, (2007). FARC-EP: Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – *Ejército del Pueblo*. In: Heiberg, Marianne; O’Leary, Brendan and Tirman, John (editors), *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 73.

<sup>185</sup> *ibid.* p. 73.

<sup>186</sup> *ibid.* p. 74.



complementing military and prosecutorial programs with social programs that come to grips with some of the roots of the armed conflict, such as land rights questions.”<sup>187</sup>

Similarly, the ideals and objectives of LTTE and PKK remained the same despite their involvement in illegal activities and dubious source of funding. Although it is possible that some members have used the group’s money for personal benefits, the groups finance and control system have remained very central and all funds have been used for the groups’ benefit. Although, LTTE and PKK allegedly benefited from drug trafficking, their political goals remained the same even after their involvement in the drug trade. As Felbab-Brown says, despite its involvement in the drug trade and other illegal activities, “PKK is not simply a criminal group, it has political goals.”<sup>188</sup>

There are many other groups for whom the involvement in the illicit drugs economy did not mean the end of their original goals. As Cornell says, Peru’s Sendero Luminoso (SL), which is also linked to the drug trade, “did not appear to be mainly motivated by greed. The strict and dogmatic character of the organisation was somewhat eased in coca-producing regions for pragmatic purposes, securing continued access to the crucial funding that the coca industry provided the organisation. However, there is no indication that the motivations of the organisation were affected.”<sup>189</sup>

Although proponents of the greed theory argue that civil wars are usually caused by economic rather than socio-political factors,<sup>190</sup> empirical research shows that conflicts, especially national and liberations movements, have not been initiated as a result of economic incentives. As a detailed study of dozens of conflicts in different parts of the world argues, “combatants’ incentives for self-enrichment and/or opportunities for insurgent mobilization created by access to natural and financial resources were neither the primary nor sole cause of the separatist and non-separatist conflicts analysed.”<sup>191</sup>

In addition, the operational mechanism and hierarchical structure of most insurgent groups including the PKK, FARC, LTTE and the Taliban are in many ways different from drug

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<sup>187</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), (2005). *War on Drugs in Colombia. op.cit.*

<sup>188</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2013). Senior fellow with the Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence in the Foreign Policy program at Brookings Institute, Washington DC, USA). Face to face interview, London, 1 Aug. 2013.

<sup>189</sup> Cornell, Svante E., (2007). *Narcotics and Armed Conflict. Op.cit.* p.221.

<sup>190</sup> Collier, Paul and Hoeffler, Anke, (2001). *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*. World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper 2355, Washington DC.

<sup>191</sup> Ballentine, Karen and Nitzschke, Heiko, (2003). *Beyond Greed and Grievance: Policy Lessons from Studies in the Political Economy of Armed Conflict. International Peace Academy Policy Report*, p. 1. Available online at:

<[http://www.worldpolicy.org/sites/default/files/imported/projects/arms/study/bak05\\_1.pdf](http://www.worldpolicy.org/sites/default/files/imported/projects/arms/study/bak05_1.pdf)> [Accessed 22 Aug 2013].

cartels and organised criminal syndicates. Unlike most criminal gangs, insurgent groups operate as hierarchical organised guerrilla armies with a robust and efficient financial system controlled by the centre. The centralization of their finances translates into a robust and greater control by the governing council or central committee and usually results in an equitable distribution of funds among different regions and fronts. As Chernick says, the FARC's central governing council has been managing all funds since 1985;<sup>192</sup> the period when FARC started receiving huge sums of money from the drug trade. Financial corruption is usually not tolerated and those found guilty of using the group's money for personal interests are often severely punished. The FARC has generally punished commanders of *frentes* (fronts) who have misappropriated funds or have been involved in corruption with death penalty.<sup>193</sup> In addition, LTTE and PKK also have an ethnic dimension which further distinguishes them from criminal groups where the issue of ethnicity is not a binding or motivating factor.

Involvement of insurgent groups in the illicit drug trade is mostly driven and even predetermined by a combination of two factors; (a), the main areas of their origin and areas of operation/control and (b), the comparative high profitability of the narcotics business as compared to majority of other formal and informal sources of funding.<sup>194</sup> The links between politico-military armed non-state actors and the drug business are most profound in major drug-producing regions as well as in areas along the major trafficking routes that are usually outside the government control. Although both limited and unlimited cooperation exists between many insurgent groups and drug traders, it is not always a hybrid relationship and does not always result in their merger with organised crime. The integration or merger of a militant non-state actor with illicit drug cartels happens when one can no longer discern whether its motives are mainly profit-oriented or its agenda is dominated by political and ideological goals. The Mong Thai Army – which was the largest insurgent and drug trafficking actor in Myanmar until a decisive crack-down by the government in 1996 -- is a good example of such a merger between insurgents and narco-traders. The full criminalization and political/ideological degradation of the originally socio-political armed groups is another important phases in their lifecycle. In such a scenario, the original ideals of such groups or their splinter factions fade away as they become involved in pure criminal activities without having any political or social agenda. Although there are several examples ideological degradation and even merger with organised crime, many armed non-state actors -- such as FARC, LTTE, PKK and the

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<sup>192</sup> Chernick, Marc, (2007). FARC-EP. *op.cit.* p. 74.

<sup>193</sup> *ibid.* p. 74.

<sup>194</sup> Stepanova, Ekaterina, (2012). Illicit Drugs and Insurgency in Afghanistan. *op.cit.*

Taliban in Afghanistan -- are in many ways different from organised crime, despite their involvement in the illicit narcotics business. Another main distinction is that these insurgent groups “contest a declared political incompatibility over territory or government, whereas criminal groups generally do not.”<sup>195</sup>

Discussing the “vagueness and morally charged meaning of the concept” of narcoterrorism, Dandurand and Chin argue that frequent references in the literature to the term (narcoterrorism) are often aimed at “further vilifying insurgent groups and terrorists”.<sup>196</sup> While emphasizing the difference between drug trade and insurgency, Chouvy argues that the two phenomena “have nothing to do with each other -- one being a means of coping with economic difficulties; the other being a violent way to register political -- and sometimes economic -- claims.”<sup>197</sup> According to Chouvy:

[N]arco-terrorism should not refer to terrorist groups that have been only partly funded by illegal drugs -- since any terrorist outfit is likely to at least try to benefit from such a resource. Rather, it should be used to identify organised drug traffickers who try to affect the policies of a government by terrorist means, i.e. by the systematic threat or use of terror. In the same way that ‘narco’ does not politically define a state, neither does it politically define terrorism. States are defined and categorised according to their political regimes (monarchy, democracy, military dictatorship, etc.) and not according to their economic resources, except sometimes for rentier states. Neither Afghanistan nor Burma can be said to be ‘narco-states’ as they are far from fitting any definition of rentier states and as illicit opium production is far too limited in terms of cultivated areas to justify such a designation (between 1 and 5 percent of arable land in Afghanistan.)<sup>198</sup>

On the other hand, insurgent groups understand the negativity associated with illicit drugs. Insurgent groups are generally careful about the image as they want to be seen as freedom fighters and reformers and not as criminals and drug traffickers. They go at great lengths to portray themselves as the “good guys” fighting against cruelty and injustices. Therefore, they are generally reluctant to admit their support for the production and trade of narcotics. These groups have not even publically acknowledged their involvement in the drug trade and usually prefer silence on the topic. They fear that they will lose popular support if they are perceived to be benefiting from criminal activities or have abandoned their ideological

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<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> Dandurand, Yvon and Chin, Vivienne, (2004). *Links Between Terrorism and Other Forms of Crime*. International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy, Canada, p.11. Available online at: <[http://icclr.law.ubc.ca/sites/icclr.law.ubc.ca/files/publications/pdfs/LinksBetweenTerrorismLatest\\_updated.pdf](http://icclr.law.ubc.ca/sites/icclr.law.ubc.ca/files/publications/pdfs/LinksBetweenTerrorismLatest_updated.pdf)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2012].

<sup>197</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy*. London: I.B. Tauris, p. 118.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.* p. 119.

goals. They mostly put the issue of drugs to one side and keep it separate from their main goals. Some insurgent groups, including FARC and the Taliban, have been more successful in incorporating drugs into their ideology than others.

It is also worth noting that a number of insurgent groups found illicit drugs by chance as their involvement in narcotics was not by choice. When FARC (Colombia) and Taliban (Afghanistan) emerged, drugs already existed and the drugs economy had already been established in areas of their birth and expansion. The groups just needed to adjust to the environment they operated in. Initially, FARC prohibited drugs on ideological grounds arguing that Marx and Lenin spoke against it. The internal argument among the FARC's leaders was that the group's involvement in illicit drugs would mean that FARC was criminal. Therefore, FARC was avoided direct involvement in the cultivation, trafficking, and trans-shipment of drugs in 1960 and 1970s. However, after an intense debate in 1980s, the FARC leadership decided to participate in the drugs economy as part of its strategy of taxing all economic activity, including coca cultivation, in areas under the group's control. Even after FARC's involvement in the drugs, it kept its political ideals intact and didn't completely transform into a criminal group. FARC's justified its involvement in the drugs as it fits its struggle to champion the rights of poor peasants and protect their fields and livelihoods from the government's counter-narcotics forces. As Felbab-Brown says, ideological groups that are involved in the drugs economy are "able to claim nationalist credit if a foreign power threatens the local illicit economy" and have "embraced the anti-eradication cause as a fundamentally nationalist and anti-imperial cause."<sup>199</sup>

Similarly, the Taliban in Afghanistan declared the use of drugs forbidden (*haram*) on religious grounds but allowed the drug trade and taxed its production and trafficking since the movement was launched in 1994. When the Taliban banned drug cultivation in 2000-2001, the production in areas they controlled practically disappeared. However, after the Taliban regime was toppled in late 2001, the group's leadership saw drugs production and smuggling as part of their overall insurgency against the Afghan government and its Western allies. Although they are still against the consumption of drugs, many Taliban commanders consider the drug trade as a tool to weaken Western societies. In addition, the Taliban portray themselves as the protectors of poor poppy farmers whose livelihood are being destroyed by the Afghan government and its NATO allies as part of their counter-narcotics strategy.

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<sup>199</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2008). *Globalization and Narcoterrorism. op.cit.* p. 21.

### 3.7 Insurgents' Local vs. Foreign Support

Since the end of Second World War, majority of internal armed conflicts “had been fuelled by superpower rivalry and injections of arms and aid.”<sup>200</sup> There was a hope that the new world order that emerged after the Cold War and the collapse of the bi-polar world will be based on international cooperation and peace. It was hoped that in the absence of foreign support, local insurgencies will not be able survive and thrive on local resources alone. However, this optimism was short lived as state actors continued to interfere and intervene in other countries for their own political and economic interests.

Foreign involvement remained a dominant feature in many so called civil wars and insurgencies even after the Cold War. For example, Sri Lankan Tamils Tigers (LTTE) found an ideal sanctuary in the Tamil Nadu state of India where ethno-religious and linguistic ties facilitated their operations. The ties between Indian and Sri Lankan Tamils were incorporated into India's semi-clandestine foreign policy when, from 1983, the Indian government tasked its intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), to provide arms, training and monetary support to Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups including the LTTE. Tamil insurgents were trained in camps inside the Indian territory and their leaders, including LTTE's Supreme Commander, Prabhakaran, frequently visited India. By supporting Sri Lanka's northern insurgency, India probably wanted to achieve influence in Colombo, destabilise Sri Lanka and possibly incorporate the Sri Lankan Tamils with India. In addition, India had several geo-political reasons. Since 1977, many Indian hard-liners viewed Sri Lanka to be stepping out of the non-aligned orbit and had become an ally of the West. The Indian government and press expressed concerns about rumours that US Navy establishing a major base at Trincomalee, one of the finest deep water harbours in Sri Lanka. Meanwhile, the presence of Israeli intelligence operatives, British counter insurgency experts and South African mercenaries was also reported there. In addition, Sri Lanka enjoyed good relations with India's two regional rivals, Pakistan and China. The two countries were planning to increase their military assistance to Colombo.<sup>201</sup> However, when Delhi realized that the LTTE-India nexus did not secure the intended geopolitical objectives, it reversed its policy of supporting the LTTE in 1987. When relations between the LTTE and the Indian government soured, Delhi helped broker a peace accord between the government in Colombo and the LTTE. After the LTTE refused

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<sup>200</sup> Keen, David, (1998). *The economic Functions of Violence in Civil Wars*. op.cit. p. 7.

<sup>201</sup> Roberts, Michael, (2009). *Killing Rajiv Gandhi*. op.cit.; Ross, Russell R., and Savada, Andrea Matles (editors), (1990). *Sri Lanka: A Country Study*. op.cit.; Gunaratne, Rohan, (1997). Sri Lanka Tamil Insurgency. LTTE: The Indian Connection. *Sunday Times, London*, 19 Jan. [Online]: <http://sundaytimes.lk/970119/plus4.html> [Accessed 17 Aug 2013].

to accept the peace plan and lay down their weapons, the Indian Prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, despatched Indian security forces (Indian Peace Keeping Force - IPKF) to fight the LTTE. This prompted LTTE to turn against the Indian government and resulted in the killing of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in a suicide attack.<sup>202</sup> The Indian support for LTTE weakened both Indian as well as Sri Lankan domestic security.

The foreign element is also crucial in the cases of PKK, FARC and the Afghan Taliban. The Taliban movement was supported by Pakistan and received huge sums of money from several Gulf countries.<sup>203</sup> The PKK had the support of neighbouring Syria and Iraq and have using its sanctuaries across the Iraqi border for more decades.<sup>204</sup> Similarly, FARC had the initial support of USSR and Cuba and other sympathetic regimes in the region.<sup>205</sup>

### 3.8 Conclusion

In the absence or lack of external state funding, especially after WWII and collapse of the bi-polar world, many insurgencies resorted to benefit from a variety of sources including involvement in the drug trade. Many of them receive millions of dollars annually from direct and indirect protection, production and trafficking of illicit drugs. Drugs bring them money they use for buying weapons, providing medicine and healthcare, covering logistics, paying their rank and file and conducting propaganda.

In most cases, insurgent groups are funded by multiple sources. Even in the drug producing and transiting countries, insurgent groups have not always and wholly relied on drugs only. For example, drug trade, kidnapping and cattle-rustling have been the main sources of income for the FARC. PKK has been funded by donations/extortion, investment in legal businesses as well as narcotics. For the LTTE, in addition to drug trafficking, donations from Tamils living in India and Western countries had been the biggest source of income. Similarly, the Taliban in Afghanistan have developed a complex mechanism of funding from a variety of local and external sources which involves drugs as well as many other

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<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>203</sup> See Chapter 2 and Chapter 5 for a detailed account of the Afghan Taliban and their foreign supporters.

<sup>204</sup> Bilgin, Fevzi and Sarihan, Ali (editors), (2013). *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question*. *op.cit.*; Aydin, Aysegul and Emrence, Cem, (2015). *Zones of Rebellion*. *op.cit.*; Özcan, Ali Kemal, (2006). *Turkey's Kurds*, *Op.cit.* Özcan, Ali Kemal, (2006). *Turkey's Kurds*. *op.cit.*; Barkey, Henri J. and Fuller, Graham E., (1998). *Turkey's Kurdish Question*. *op.cit.*; BBC News, (2013b). *Profile: The PKK*. *op.cit.*

<sup>205</sup> Richani, Nazih, (1997). *The Political Economy of Violence*. *op.cit.*; IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies), (1997). *Colombia's Escalating Violence*. *op.cit.*; Leech, Garry, (2011). *The FARC: The Longest Insurgency*. *Op.cit.*; Chernick, Marc, (1999). *Negotiating Peace Amid Multiple Forms of Violence*. *op.cit.*

sources including donations and the exploitation of mines and minerals. In addition, there are several insurgent groups that are not benefiting from the drugs.

Although drugs bring a lot of money to many insurgent groups, they don't always transform the conflict. As seen in a number of cases, the drug trade in general don't always hijack the political/ideological struggle and remains subservient to ideology and politics. Although illicit Drugs bring the much needed cash and extra resources to the insurgent groups, they don't control the conflict.

The three insurgencies - FARC in Columbia, PKK in Turkey and LTTE in Sri Lanka - discussed in detail above can be described as classic insurgencies as they were not initiated for economic benefits and financial gains and were not driven by greed. In addition, these groups didn't become involved in illicit drugs at the beginning of their insurgency as their interaction with narcotics came later. In most cases, the drugs economy already existed and was functioning autonomously well before these groups were founded.

The origins of these three conflicts are based on ideology and grievance as they were launched with a clear political vision. The involvement of FARC, PKK and LTTE in the drug trade didn't have a major impact on their overall motivation and organisational structures. It is possible that certain elements within these groups might have adopted an economic agenda and are motivated by financial benefits as opposed to ideology, the groups' collective goals and aspirations remain the same. Despite profound changes in global geo-politics and the emergence of new sources of funding, the demands and goals of these groups have been consistent and their support still stems from an ideological framing of grievances. Despite the illegal nature of the drug trade and the huge sums of money involved in it, their original agenda does not seem to have been hijacked by greed. Their original grievances and political objectives did not disappear after their involvement in the drug trade.

Insurgents, by their nature, are very entrepreneurial and usually exploit whatever is available in the environment they operate in. Evidence from a number of drug producing and conflict stricken countries shows that rather than generated by drug cultivation, armed conflict qualitatively and quantitatively transforms existing drug production by strengthening the capacity of insurgent groups while, at the same time, weakens the state institutions. As seen in many cases, targeting the drug trade or eliminating narcotics altogether can make the insurgent groups weaker but this alone doesn't mean the end of their struggle or the extinction of groups.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Drug Production: A Historical Appraisal**

Naturally-occurring drugs have been part of cultural, social, economic, medical and spiritual life of nearly all communities in the world since time immemorial. Psychoactive plants have been cultivated in different parts of the world for thousands of years. However, the cultivation pattern, scale and location have changed over time. This chapter explores the historical development of drug production and consumption in the world with a special focus on Afghanistan. Historically, Afghanistan was not a major opium producer and unlike many other countries in the region, did not have an ‘opium culture’. The chapter examines how the drug economy took roots in the country within a short span of time and identifies the main causes responsible for making it the biggest opium producer in the world. While discussing the dynamics of drugs economy, the chapter also provides a historical context of drug production and trade in the wider region and analyses the impact of regional and international drug economy on the country. The chapter argues that the large-scale opium production in Afghanistan is closely linked with regional and global geo-politics and conflicts mainly the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979.

#### **4.1 Drugs and Human Society: From Cure to Addiction**

Human beings have used psychoactive plants, both as a medicine and a source of euphoria, since time immemorial. Naturally-occurring drugs are an integral part of cultural, social, economic, medical and spiritual life in almost all communities in the world. Out of the 237 cultures worldwide, only four have no record of intoxicating substance use; these being societies that are isolated and incapable of cultivating psychoactive plants such as the Inuit community. Throughout human history, drugs and intoxicating substances have been consumed mainly for five purposes. Firstly, as a medicine as various drugs, especially opium and cannabis, are highly valued for their medicinal properties. Secondly, for physical stimulation especially by those engaged in arduous employment. These drugs -- such as Khat, Betel, Opium and Tobacco -- are called “work drugs” and are usually consumed to increase stamina, reduce appetite and boost physical endurance. Thirdly,



certain drugs including coca leaves, opium, cannabis and hallucinogenic plants (such as peyote and psilocybin) have been used in religious, pagan, shamanic and cultural ceremonies. These drugs have been considered as gifts from nature or god/s and promoted as a means of communicating with the divine and achieving trance and spiritual enlightenment. Fourthly, drugs have been consumed for the purpose of relaxation, especially in cultures where they were the preserve of the elite. In addition, drugs were used as part of social and tribal life. In many cultures, social drug use has been an integral part of community and traditional life. Fifthly, several drug plants such as cannabis and coca and opium poppy have been cultivated as a food source. The seeds and seed oil of a number of drug plants are highly nutritious and form a staple of rural diets in various societies. Moreover, drug plants and products were used as a means of exchange in early trading systems and bartered for spices, dyes and precious metals.<sup>1</sup>

Opium has a special place among the narcotics drugs and has been widely produced and consumed for around eight thousands years.<sup>2</sup> The opium poppy was cultivated in Mesopotamia around 5,400 years ago. Opium has been used as a medicine to cure a long list of diseases including diarrhoea, dysentery, bronchitis, asthma, cold, cough, flu, colic, fever, rheumatism and diabetes. It has been part of folk medicine in a number of cultures and is also used to increase working efficiency and relieve tiredness in adults. In some cultures, it is even given to infants to pacify them and lull them to sleep.

Opium has been hailed as the world's great pain killer, a most potent of all drugs in the pharmacopoeia and a remedy for hundreds of problems. Egyptians were famous for their opium production around 3,500 years ago. The city of *Thebes* was so famous for its poppy fields that Egyptian opium was called Thebic opium.<sup>3</sup> The Ebers Papyrus -- the ancient Egyptian compilation of herbal knowledge and one of the oldest known medical works dating to 1550 BC -- mentions opium among approximately seven hundred other remedies.<sup>4</sup> Ancient Egyptians used opium recipes as an analgesic and tranquiliser. They also prescribed opium for a wide range of ailments including tooth pain in infants and to

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<sup>1</sup> Buxton, Julia, (2006). *The Political Economy of Narcotics: Production, Consumption and Global Markets*. London: Zed Books, p.4-6.

<sup>2</sup> Saunders, Nicholas, (2013). *The Poppy: A History of Conflict, Loss, Remembrance, and Redemption*. London: Oneworld Publications.

<sup>3</sup> Hagel, J.M.; Macleod, B.P.; and Facchini, P.J., (2007). Opium Poppy. In: Pua, Eng Chong and Davey, Michael R. (Editors), *Transgenic Crops VI*. Berlin: Springer; See also, The Herb Museum, (1994). *Origins and History of Opium*. [Online]: <<http://www.herbmuseum.ca/content/origins-and-history-opium>> [Accessed 01 Jan 2014].

<sup>4</sup> Terry, Charles E. and Pellens, Mildred, (1928). *The Opium Problem*. New York: The Bureau of Social Hygiene, p. 55.

“keep children from crying too loudly.”<sup>5</sup> The use of opium for calming down the infants and children later became common in many other cultures including Europe, India and China. This practice is still common in many parts of the world such as Central and South Asia.

In his study of ancient Assyrian vegetable drugs, Reginald C. Thompson has shown that opium was known to the Assyrians at least in the seventh century BC. The Ancient Medical Tablets which were originally written around the end of the third millennium BC and formed the library of the great Assyrian King, Sardanapalus (also called Aschurbanipal, 668-626 BC) in his capital at Nineveh (today's Iraq), refer to both opium poppy plant and opium. In a list of the 115 most commonly mentioned plant drugs, opium is mentioned frequently and occurs forty-two times in these cuneiform tablets. Describing the procedure of collecting opium, one tablet says: “Early in the morning old women, boys and girls collect the juice by scraping it off the wounds (in the poppies/poppy capsules) with a small iron scoope (blade), and deposit the whole in an earthen pot.”<sup>6</sup> As Thompson says, “it seems that nothing has changed in the method of collecting opium.”<sup>7</sup>

Opium had an important place in the ancient Greek mythology and medicine where it was consumed as a drink. In the Corinth region, a city was named Mekone (meaning poppy Town) signifying the cultivation of opium poppies there. Therefore, one Greek word for opium is *mekon* or *mekone*. The word, “opium,” comes from another Greek word – *opion* – meaning “liquid.” In fact, it is this Greek word which appears in many variations around the world including Arabic “*Afiyoon*”. Poppy is also referred to in Homer's (c. 850 BC) *Odyssey* where he mentions *nepenthe*, the opium-based drug of forgetfulness, which was employed by Helen of Troy to soothe mourning warriors.<sup>8</sup>

*Afyon* (opium) is also the name of the historical city in today's west-central Turkey, 150 miles southwest of the capital, Ankara. The name comes from the poppy farms in the area.

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<sup>5</sup> Escobedo, Antonio, (2010). *The General History of Drugs*. Volume 1. (Translated and edited by G.W. Robinette). Chile: Graffiti Militante Press, pp.104-105.

<sup>6</sup> Terry, Charles E. and Pellens, Mildred, (1928). *The Opium Problem*. *op.cit.* p. 54. See also; Thompson, Reginald C., (1924). *The Assyrian Herbal: A Monograph on the Assyrian Vegetable Drugs*. London: Luvzc & co.; Kritikos, P. G. and Papadaki, S. P., (1967). *The History of the Poppy and of Opium and Their Expansion in Antiquity in the Eastern Mediterranean Area*. [Online]: <[https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin\\_1967-01-01\\_3\\_page004.html#bf129](https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1967-01-01_3_page004.html#bf129)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2013].

<sup>7</sup> Terry, Charles E. and Pellens, Mildred, (1928). *The Opium Problem*. *op.cit.* p. 54. See also; Thompson, Reginald C., (1924). *The Assyrian Herbal: A Monograph on the Assyrian Vegetable Drugs*. London: Luvzc & co.

<sup>8</sup> Hagel, J.M.; Macleod, B.P.; and Facchini, P.J., (2007). Opium Poppy. In: Pua, Eng Chong and Davey, Michael R. (Editors), *Transgenic Crops VI*. Berlin: Springer, p. 170; The Herb Museum, (1994). *Origins and History of Opium*. [Online]: <<http://www.herbmuseum.ca/content/origins-and-history-opium>> [Accessed 01 Jan 2014].

The Seljuq conquerors changed the name of the city to *Qara Hisar* (meaning Black Fortress), but in later times it took on its old name of *Afyon* (Opium). The famous French trader and traveller, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605 –1689 CE) has called the city “*Aphiom-Carassar*” when he visited it in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Tavernier wrote: “The Black City of Aphiom or Opium; because it has a prospect over a fair and large country well cultivated, where they sow great store of poppies, whence they draw their opium or Aphiom, as the Turks call it.”<sup>9</sup>

Opium has been an essential part of the eastern medicinal system where its name is synonymous with remedy and antidote. A number of physicians and healers have prescribed opium to their patients and wrote commentaries on the miraculous characteristics and magical powers of the drug. Several Muslim physicians and healers also used opium as a remedy for various illnesses. Muhammad ibn Zakariya Razi (854-925 CE), known in medieval Europe by his Latinized name as Rhazes or Rasis, is an important figure in the history of medicine and was a physician and chemist among other things. Writing about the soothing qualities of opium, he said that “after this wonderful drug, the heart remains but it hurts less”.<sup>10</sup> Razi, also an expert surgeon, is believed to be the first to use opium for anaesthesia and recommended opium and its mixture for several illnesses.<sup>11</sup> The renowned Muslim physician and philosopher Abu Ali Ibn Sina (980-1037) who hailed from the ancient city of Balkh in present-day Afghanistan (known in the West by the Latinized name as Avicenna) recommended it especially in diarrhoea and diseases of the eye.<sup>12</sup> The famous 13th century Persian poet, Saadi mentions opium as an antidote in one of his master pieces, *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden), composed in 1258.

تا تریاق از عراق آورده شود، مارگزیده مرده بود

(Till the opium (antidote) is brought from Iraq, the snake-bitten person dies.)<sup>13</sup>

Europe too has a long history of opium consumption and cultivation which dates back to at least five thousand years. Opium has been used as a medicine as well as for reaction. The

<sup>9</sup> Tavernier, Jean-Baptiste, (1677). *The Six Voyages of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Finished in the year 1670*. Book VII, The Persian Travels. (Translated from French into English by John Phillips). London: R.L. and Moses Pitt, p. 37. Available online at: <<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/123215#page/530/mode/1up>> [Accessed 01 Jan 2014].

<sup>10</sup> Dormandy, Thomas, (2012). *Opium: Reality's Dark Dream*. Cornwall: TJ International/Yale University Press, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Estreicher, Stefan K., (2006). *Wine: From Neolithic Times to the 21st Century*. New York: Algora Publishing, p. 46. See also, New World Encyclopaedia. Entry, *Razi, ibn Zakariya al-*, Available online at: <[http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Razi,\\_ibn\\_Zakariya\\_al-](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Razi,_ibn_Zakariya_al-)> [Accessed 29 Dec 2013].

<sup>12</sup> Terry, Charles E. and Pellens, Mildred, (1928). *The Opium Problem*. *op.cit.* p. 55. See also Dormandy, Thomas, (2012). *Opium: Reality's Dark Dream*. *op.cit.*, p. 32-33.

<sup>13</sup> Saadi Shirazi, Sheikh Muslihuddin. *Gulistan* (The Rose Garden), Chapter 1, Story No. 16. Available online at: <<http://ganjoor.net/saadi/golestan/gbab1/sh16/>> [Accessed 29 Dec 2013].

17<sup>th</sup> century famous English physician, Thomas Sydenham, while praising opium, stated: “Among the remedies which has pleased Almighty God to give to man to relieve his sufferings, none is so universal and so efficient as opium”.<sup>14</sup> Writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the influential Canadian physician Sir William Osler famously called opium “God’s own medicine”.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to the Middle East and Europe, opium poppies have been cultivated in West Asia, East Asia, Central Asia and South Asia for a long time. Historically, some areas have been more famous for opium production than others. Opium production in Persia (Iran) and Turkey outdates the Southeast Asian production. Opium was a by-product of early commerce along this route. Cities such as Kabul and Kunduz in Afghanistan, Peshawar in Pakistan and the Makran coast in Pakistan’s Balochistan province served as commercial hubs and relays for merchants who also traded in opium as early as the 1 AD.<sup>16</sup> Over time, the extent and gravity of opium production and consumption has moved and fluctuated in these regions.

In South Asia, opium has been produced used for centuries. Nyberg suggests that opium poppy had spread to India in Vedic Times (1700-500 BCE)<sup>17</sup>. India has been known as a major producer of opium where production has undergone a number of ups and downs. By the year 1000 AD, opium was widely used throughout the social spectrum in India. Emperor Allauddin Khilji, the second and most powerful ruler of the Afghan Khilji dynasty in India (reign 1296 to 1316) banned opium in 1310. However, the Mughal Empire in India gave opium production government patronage for revenue generating purposes.<sup>18</sup> Its founder, Zahiruddin Babur (1483-1530), and his son and successor, Humayun (1508-1556), were known opium eaters.<sup>19</sup> Later on, European colonial powers such as the Dutch, French, British and Portuguese also encouraged opium production as well as consumption in both South Asia and South East Asia. The massive opium production in South and Southeast Asia is the culmination of 400 years’ Western patronage of opium. The

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<sup>14</sup> Santella, Thomas M., Trigg, D. J., (2009). *Opium*. New York: Infobase Publishing, p. 45.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy*. London: I.B. Tauris, p. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Nyberg, Harri, (1995). The Problem of the Aryans and the Soma: The Botanical Evidence. In: Erdosy, George (editor), *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia: Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, p. 387.

<sup>18</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border*. London: Ashgate, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup> Banerji, S. K., (1938). *Humayun Badshah*. Humphrey Milford Oxford University Press; Beveridge, Annette Susannah, (1922). *The Babur-Nama in English (Memoirs of Babur)*. London: Luzac.; Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border*. London: Ashgate.

Portuguese and Dutch also introduced opium smoking in 1500 and by the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries every European colony had its official dens.<sup>20</sup>

However, it was Britain which is credited with building an “opium empire” in the region. Some scholars have even called the opium trade as the “Englishman’s other great contribution to Asia”.<sup>21</sup> Britain’s active involvement in the opium trade started in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Bengal, the richest province in the Indian sub-continent, fell to East Indian Company (EIC) following the battle of Plessy in 1764. EIC leased out the opium trade to Patna Traders and “ordered farmers to give up food production and convert their lands into a monoculture of opium poppies.”<sup>22</sup> In 1773, the Governor General of the East India Company and the First Governor General of British India, Warren Hastings, abolished the Patna syndicate and brought the opium trade under the direct control of the Company. The move gave the EIC or its agents exclusive rights to purchase opium from Bengali farmers and auction it for export.<sup>23</sup> Thus Patna (in today’s Bihar State), one of the most ancient Indian city and the Mauryan capital in the third century BC, became “the unofficial capital of opium empire that the British had created.” Patna was not only synonymous with opium trade; it was also a brand name for one of the major types of British Indian opium.<sup>24</sup> Some regions in India became known for their opium production. ‘Bengal Opium’ was produced in Kolkata (Calcutta) and ‘Malwa Opium’ in Mumbai (Bombay) Overall, poppy cultivation in India became a state monopoly and important article of trade with mainly China where consumption was greater than India.<sup>25</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, British India had a huge balance of payment problem in relation to China. Therefore, it was transformed into the largest opium exporter and remained so for the next few centuries. As part of its strategy to balance trade with China, which was exporting enormous quantities of goods but wasn’t interested in importing European products, the British colonialists started exporting opium to China.<sup>26</sup> As Chouvy says, “it was not until the British Empire started organizing and commercializing opium production in the 19th century that the opium poppy became entrenched in the world economy. The opium produced in British India was the first drug to become integrated into the then

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<sup>20</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border*. op.cit. p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Trocki, Carl, (2012). *Opium Empire and the Global Political Economy: A Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950*. England: Routledge, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). op.cit. p. 27.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 27.

<sup>24</sup> Trocki, Carl, (2012). *Opium Empire and the Global Political Economy*. op.cit. p. 2

<sup>25</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border*. op.cit. p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Ghosh, Amitav, (2008). Opium Financed British Rule in India. *BBC News*, 23 June. [Online]: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/7460682.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7460682.stm)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

emerging globalisation.”<sup>27</sup> The two so-called “opium wars” (1839-1842 and 1856-1860) waged by the British to impose their opium trade onto China provoked the biggest addiction ever to happen in world history. In addition, the rapidly increasing domestic consumption made China “the world’s foremost opium producer.”<sup>28</sup>

Opium trade proved very lucrative for British colonialists. Throughout the 19th century, opium sent to consumers in China and, on a lesser scale, Southeast Asia was one of British India’s most valuable exports.<sup>29</sup> By 1869, the Bengal government was taking active measures such as advancing interest free loans to producers to increase the supply of opium to the Chinese market. By 1800, British export of Bengal opium were an estimated 127 mt; however, by 1857, production had increased to 6,372 mt. Opium monopoly was a crucial revenue source for the British authorities in India and made a vital contribution to the maintenance of the colonial structure. The authorities not only exported opium, they also sought to maximise revenues by encouraging domestic consumption. Opium could be purchased only through government-administered shops, of which there were 10,000 by 1893. Retail sales of opium were heavily taxed. By the end of the 1830s, opium sales contributed 11 percent of total Indian revenues to the British administration. By the 1850s, this had increased to 17% of India’s total revenues.<sup>30</sup> With the expansion of production and export, opium steadily accounted for upto 1/5 or 20% of revenues accruing to the British administration.<sup>31</sup>

Opium was presented and promoted as a normal agricultural commodity. The report of the Royal Commission on Opium published in 1896, says that a moderate habitual use of opium which is common among 5-7 percent of the Indian population is quiet harmless to the well-being of the people. The report also notes the custom of giving opium to children especially in the states of Rajputana, Malwa and Bombay presidency, to keep them quiet and to enable the mother to carry on her work undisturbed, and describes it as

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<sup>27</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2006). Afghanistan’s Opium Production in Perspective. *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, 4, (1): pp. 21-24. (Quote from page 22). Available online at: [http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/February\\_2006/Pierre-Arnaud\\_Chouvy.pdf](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/CEF/Quarterly/February_2006/Pierre-Arnaud_Chouvy.pdf) [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>28</sup> *ibid*

<sup>29</sup> Richards, John F., (2001). *Opium and the British Indian Empire: The Royal Commission of 1895*. p. 2. [Online]. <[http://www.drugpolicy.org/docUploads/opium\\_india.pdf](http://www.drugpolicy.org/docUploads/opium_india.pdf)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>30</sup> Buxton, Julia, (2006). *The Political Economy of Narcotics*. *op.cit.* pp. 9-10.

<sup>31</sup> Ghosh, Amitav, (2008). *Opium Financed British Rule in India*. *op.cit.*



“inoffensive”. “Pills for Children” or *Bala-Golis* were sold containing 0.01-0.02 gram of opium.<sup>32</sup>

In his book published in 1907, David Eraser wrote that the “notable export” from Yarkand (Chinese Turkestan, now known as Xinjiang region in China) to India was chars (Hashish) which was “in high favour” in the Punjab. On the other hand, “India returned the diabolic compliment with interest by exporting to Chinese Turkestan large quantities of opium.”<sup>33</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, despite the export of “enormous quantities of opium then being exported to China”, local production vastly increased until the cultivation covered more than 2,000,000 hectares.<sup>34</sup> The increasing demand and expansion of poppy cultivation resulted in the production of record quantities of opium. According to the World Drug Report, world opium production was estimated to have been at least 30,000 metric tons by around 1909.<sup>35</sup>

The world realising the seriousness of the problem agreed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to control drugs throughout the world. The increasing global opium production, which was comparatively higher a century ago, was one of the reasons for convening the International Opium Commission in Shanghai in 1909 that led to the first instrument of international anti-drug law: the Hague Opium Convention of 1912.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, international criticism of the opium trade as well as public pressure to curtail the drug trade increased. In response, pledges were made in the Opium Conventions of 1912 and 1925 which resulted in imposing restrictions and the eventual decline of opium production.

The British Raj continued to export “an enormous amount of opium” out of India until the 1920s as the opium income was crucial for the sustainability of the European Enterprise in Asia.<sup>37</sup> Trocki even argues that “without the drugs, there probably would have been no British Empire.”<sup>38</sup> According to Ghosh, 20 years after the opium trade and opium profits

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<sup>32</sup> Lewin, Louis, (1998). *Phantastica: A Classic Survey on the Use and Abuse of Mind-Altering Plants*. (Translated into English from German by P.H.A. Wirth). Vermont: Inner Traditions Bear and Company, p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> Eraser, David, (1907). *The Marches of Hindustan: The Record of a Journey in Thibet, Trans-Himalayan India, Chinese Turkestan, Russian Turkestan, and Persia*. London: William Blackwood and Sons, p. 220.

<sup>34</sup> United Nations, (1949). Opium Production Throughout the World. *Bulletin on Narcotics*, I, (1), 01 January. [Online]: <[http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin\\_1949-01-01\\_1\\_page005.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1949-01-01_1_page005.html)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>35</sup> UNODC, (2006). *World Drug Report 2006*. Vienna, p.7. [Online] <[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR\\_2006/wdr2006\\_volume1.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR_2006/wdr2006_volume1.pdf)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>36</sup> UNODC, (2006). *World Drug Report 2006*. Vienna, p.7. [Online] <[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR\\_2006/wdr2006\\_volume1.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR_2006/wdr2006_volume1.pdf)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Trocki, Carl, (2012). *Opium Empire and the Global Political Economy*. *op.cit.* p. XIII.

stopped, the British Raj in India “more or less packed up its bags and left” as “India was not a paying proposition any longer”.<sup>39</sup>

By 1930s, several countries had already established industries to use opium for pharmaceutical purposes. In the Soviet Union (USSR), which had a border with Afghanistan’s northern provinces, opium was produced mainly “for medical and manufacturing purposes”. According to the UN report, in 1930s and 1940s, the USSR was “one of the chief countries of the world for the manufacture of morphine and other narcotic drugs from opium.” On average, opium production in USSR was some 70 tons per year during the ten years from 1929 to 1938. The UN report adds that USSR sometimes imported and sometimes exported opium.<sup>40</sup>

However, in India, the low mark in opium production came in 1941, when the whole country produced around 170 tons. Production was then stepped up on account of the World War II and reached 750 tons in 1945. In 1946, a year before the partition of India into two independent states of India and Pakistan, the overall production of opium in India (both ‘British India’ and the ‘Indian States’) was more than 400 tons. Opium production reduced in India after the end of WW II in 1945 and the departure of British from there in 1947. However, India still produced significant amount of opium both for local consumption and export. The 1949 UN report calls India as “one of the major opium-producing, opium-exporting and opium-using countries”.<sup>41</sup>

#### **4.2 The Creation of the Golden Triangle:**

Although India had been a major exporter of opium to Southeast Asian markets for a long time, Iran emerged as a major competitor in the regional opium market in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The export of Iranian opium to Southeast Asia continued until after the World War II and had supplied the region’s addicts for almost a hundred years. Following World War II, the dynamics of the opium industry in South and Southeast Asia changed significantly with Southeast Asia emerging as a major player. Three steps taken by different governments contributed to the emergence of Southeast Asia as a major opium producing region. Firstly, the shutdown of China’s vast illicit opium producing market following the victory of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army and the change of

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<sup>39</sup> Ghosh, Amitav, (2008). *Opium Financed British Rule in India. op.cit.*

<sup>40</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World. op.cit.*

<sup>41</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World. op.cit.*



government in 1949 served as serious blow to the drug economy in Southeast Asia. Secondly, major opium producing countries in Europe, Middle East and South Asia signed the UN's Opium Protocol of 1953 and agreed not to sell opium on the international market for smoking or eating. Although this international accord ended large shipments of mainly Iranian opium to Southeast Asia, Thai and French opium monopolies and international smugglers simply took over the Iranian government's role to export opium legally. Thirdly, opium production reduced sharply in Iran in 1950s resulting in the decline in exports from 246 tons in 1950 to 41 tons in 1954. The Iranian government's announcement of a complete ban on opium production in 1955 proved to be very effective.

However, Turkey filled the void by replacing Iran as a major supplier of opium to Western countries. On the other hand, opium addiction in Southeast Asia continued to expand resulting in the cultivation of opium poppies in what came to be known as the Golden Triangle consisting Thailand, Burma and Laos.<sup>42</sup> In 1950s, Southeast Asia not only became self-sufficient in opium, the Golden Triangle region was started to export the drug as it was producing approximately seven hundred tons of raw opium; about 50 percent of the world's total illicit production.<sup>43</sup>

Although opium production and trade patterns changed significantly over the past two centuries, the overall global production of opium has reduced, especially since WWI. According to the 2006 World Drug Report, almost a century from the 1909 Shanghai Commission (when the world opium production was estimated to have been at least 30,000 metric tons), the global opium production came down to about 5,000 metric tons.<sup>44</sup> This "success story" cannot not be attributed to the multilateral drug control regime only; a number of other factors such as measures taken in China to curb opium addiction as well as new pharmaceutical products replacing the medicinal and recreational use of opium have also contributed to the reduction of global opium production.<sup>45</sup>

Global drug production trends also show that it moves around from region to region and from country to country. Several factors have contributed to the problem including ineffective government control, internal political turmoil, involvement of government officials in illicit drug trafficking, regional instability and global reach of the drug

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<sup>42</sup> McCoy, Alfred W., Read, Cathleen B. and Adams, Leonard P., (1973). *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. New York: Harper Colophon Books, pp. 69-70.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> UNODC, (2006). *World Drug Report 2006*. Vienna, p.7. [Online]  
<[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR\\_2006/wdr2006\\_volume1.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/WDR_2006/wdr2006_volume1.pdf)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>45</sup> Transnational Institute (TNI), (2006). *International Drug Control: 100 Years of Success?* TNI Drug Policy Briefing No. 18, June. Amsterdam. [Online]:  
<<http://www.undrugcontrol.info/images/stories/documents/brief18.pdf>> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

syndicates. These conditions not only perpetuate the growth of drug production and trafficking but make the implementation of counter-narcotics policies extremely difficult, if not impossible. As observed in the drug producing countries of Latin America and Asia in 1970s and 1980s, they all experienced some sort of instability including coup d'état, revolution, tribal tensions, violent ethnic and/or religious protests, invasion and/or guerrilla warfare.<sup>46</sup>

In recent times, opium production in Asia has shifted with relatively more speed. Some countries with a long history of opium production managed to control the crop while several others with no history of large scale opium production became major producers. Both economic and political factors contributed to the movement of drug production in the region. The wider regional instability further helped the drug industry to flourish and contributed to the expansion of drug cultivation and trafficking. Political unrest and weakening state institutions, especially in border areas provides a conducive environment for drug dealers as well as armed groups to mobilise people and finance them through drugs money. The expansion of drug trade further impinges on regional security especially when it becomes a two-way traffic. Precursor chemicals required for converting raw opium into more potent drugs are usually smuggled into drug producing countries. In other cases, raw material is exported from the drug producing countries for conversion in drug laboratories in neighbouring/regional countries.

Although, the quantity of opium production reduced globally, the cultivation trends continued and expanded to the regions of the world where farmers were not familiar with the cultivation of opium poppy plants. By mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the "Poppy Belt" spread across the great Eurasian land-mass in most of the temperate and sub-tropical areas. At the time, opium poppy was also cultivated in parts of northern Africa and, on a smaller scale, in the western hemisphere.<sup>47</sup> Today, the varying degrees of legal or illegal cultivation of opium poppies can be found in almost all the inhabited world including, Asia, Europe, Americas and Africa.

The Cold War and the politics of proxies helped the drug economy to thrive in a number of world regions, especially in conflict zones. The Cold War made it difficult for the two super powers and their allies to cooperate on a number of issues including controlling the illegal drug trade. In addition, the two sides turned a blind eye towards their proxies'

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<sup>46</sup> Jamieson, Alison, (1990). *Global Drug Trafficking*. University of Michigan. Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World*. *op.cit.*

involvement in narcotics. Alfred McCoy argues that the Cold War helped the expansion of illicit opium economies thrive in both Southeast Asia (Laos and in Burma) and Southwest Asia (especially Afghanistan) where the anti-communist groups supported by the US's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) benefited from and in some cases were directly involved in drug production and trade such as Hmong in Laos and some Mujahideen groups in Afghanistan.<sup>48</sup> The expansion of drugs economy in various counties is closely linked to the competition between the super powers of the bi-polar world and conflict between predatory regional players. It is in this context that Chouvy says that "Afghanistan's opium production is the direct outcome of Cold War rivalries and conflicts waged by proxies who helped develop a thriving narcotic economy in the country."<sup>49</sup>

Drugs, particularly opium and heroin, also played an important role in the 10-year Vietnam War where, by 1972, at least 85% of the US military personnel irrespective of rank were being offered heroin within a day of arrival. An estimated 37,000 members of the US military in Vietnam were addicts with many GIs smoking heroin through "their pipes sometimes made from cartridge cases or human bones."<sup>50</sup> The heroin habit in Vietnam resulted in the smuggling of thousands of kilos of drugs out of the Southeast Asia to the United States. Initially, GIs sent drugs in letters and parcels and later large lumps of heroin were also sent back home "hidden inside a body bag and sometimes buried in the wounds of the corpse".<sup>51</sup>

In addition, drug prohibition regimes had the opposite results in a number of cases. As Chouvy says, the expansion of drug trafficking in Asia and elsewhere is linked to two unsuccessful drives to prohibit narcotics internationally -- the 1961 adaptation of the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and the 1971 declaration of a global "war on drugs" by the US President Richard Nixon's administration.<sup>52</sup> As the demand in drug consuming countries remained high, measures taken to eliminate drug production did not yield the intended outcome. In a number of cases, drug production simply moved to other and/or new areas.

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<sup>48</sup> McCoy, Alfred W., Read, Cathleen B. and Adams, Leonard P., (1973). *op.cit.*; See also McCoy, Alfred, (1972). *CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*. Reprinted in 1991 by Brooklyn, NY: Lawrence Hill Books.

<sup>49</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2006). Afghanistan's Opium Production in Perspective. *op.cit.*

<sup>50</sup> Dormandy, Thomas, (2012). *Opium: Reality's Dark Dream. op.cit*, p. 239.

<sup>51</sup> Dormandy, Thomas, (2012). *Opium: Reality's Dark Dream. op.cit*, p. 239.

<sup>52</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2006). Afghanistan's Opium Production in Perspective. *op.cit.*

### 4.3 The Rise of the Golden Crescent

Although opium has been produced and consumed in what came to be known as the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan) for at least a thousand years, the scale and scope of opium production, trafficking and consumption vastly expanded and moved frequently in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1955 prohibition in Iran stimulated production in neighbouring Afghanistan and Pakistan. Similarly, Turkish prohibition of opium production in 1972 spurred production in the Golden Crescent region and linked together Asia's two main poppy growing areas, namely the Golden Triangle (Burma, Thailand and Laos) in Southeast Asia and the Golden Crescent (Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan) in Southwest Asia.<sup>53</sup>

However, in late 1960s and early 1970s, it was Southeast Asia which established itself as the world's most important source of illicit opium with the Golden Triangle region -- north-eastern Burma, northern Thailand, and northern Laos -- producing about 70 percent of the world's illicit supply (around one thousand tons of raw opium).<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, farmers in South Asia (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India) harvested about 24 percent of the world's illicit opium supply, most of which was consumed locally while only small quantities find their way to Europe or the US.<sup>55</sup>

In the meantime, the US's strategy in 1978 to spray Mexican poppy fields with toxic herbicide, *Agent Orange*, to eliminate the source of raw opium also resulted in a global shortage of illicit opium.<sup>56</sup> The aerial spraying worked as the amount of "*Mexican Mud*" in the US drug market was significantly reduced. Responding to the increasing demand, another source of opiates emerged in the "Golden Crescent" area consisting of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and resulted in a dramatic upsurge in the production and smuggling of opiates.<sup>57</sup>

Although the reduction of opium in Mexico had an impact on the expansion of drug economy in Asia, the rise of the "Golden Crescent" is mainly linked to a few regional developments in 1970s and 1980s that led to the commercialisation and export of huge

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<sup>53</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2006). Afghanistan's Opium Production in Perspective. *op.cit.*

<sup>54</sup> McCoy, Alfred W., Read, Cathleen B. and Adams, Leonard P., (1973). *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. *op.cit.*, pp. 8 and 82.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.* pp. 7-8

<sup>56</sup> Ridgeway, James, (2004). *It's All for Sale: The Control of Global Resources*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, p. 151. See also Grillo, Ioan, (2012). *El Narco: The Bloody Rise of Mexican Drug Cartels*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

<sup>57</sup> PBS, Frontline, (Not Dated). *The Opium Kings: Opium Throughout History*. [Online] <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/heroin/etc/history.html>> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].



### 4.3.1 Iran and the Development of Regional Opium Economy

Historically, the eastern neighbour of Afghanistan had been a major producer, consumer and transit of opiates. There are several historical records of opium use some of which date back to around one thousand years ago. According to legends, the founder of the cult of “Assassins” or “*Fida'in*” (self-sacrificing agents), the “Grand-master” Hassan Sabbah (1050s–1124) used drugs to train young devotees of the Ismaili sect, an off-shoot of the Shia Muslims. On the order of the Grand-master, members of the secret society of the assassins were ready to give up their lives in order to eliminate the adversaries who were mainly politicians and generals. According to the famous Venetian traveler, Marco Polo (1254 – 1324), these devotees were given an opiate before they went to sleep and awoke to find themselves in a garden with streams of wine and beautiful ladies. The simple youth mostly from the rural areas were allowed to enjoy these delights for a few days before they were again given an opiate and taken back to the fortress where they pledged their full allegiance and obedience to the Grand-master with the belief that only he could take them to “paradise”.<sup>59</sup>

In Persia (modern day Iran), opium had been mostly used recreational purposes. A number of famous Persian poets have not only mentioned the drug in their poems, they also used it regularly. One of the most famous Persian poets, Hafiz of Shiraz (1325-1389), wrote the following verse more than seven centuries ago in which he described the combined effect of wine and opium.

از آن افیون که ساقی در می افکند  
حریفان را نه سرماند و نه دستار

(From the opium that the cupbearer threw into the wine,  
Our opponents were left with neither head nor turban.)

Opium has been used in various ways including eating it or drinking it after mixing it with wine, tea or another liquid. During the Safavid Dynasty (1501 to 1722), even some of the Shahs (kings) were addicted to the drug.<sup>60</sup> *Kuknar* (poppy seeds) were served in the so called *kuknar khanas* -- opium dens where addicts would gather to drink their *kuknar*

<sup>59</sup> Frampton, John (1929). *The Most Noble and Famous Travels of Marco Polo together with the travels of Nicolò de' Conti*. London: Argonaut Press, 265-269. See also Kienholz, M., (2008). *Opium Traders and Their Worlds -Volume One: A Revisionist Exposé of the World's Greatest Opium Traders*. Bloomington, IN: iUniverse. Lewis suggests that the association of drugs with the Assassins might have been untrue, see Lewis, Bernard, (2003). *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam*. New York: Basic Books. See also Daftary, Farhad, (1994). *The Assassin Legends: Myths of the Isma'ilis*. London: I.B.Tauris, 109 -113.

<sup>60</sup> Assadi, Seyed Hassan, (1998). *Two Important Problems (Population Growth and Illicit Drugs) at the Threshold of Twenty-First Century*. (Persian Language book). Tehran: Sepehr, p. 154.

(opium) drink. Solid opium (*Afyun* or *Taryak*) was sold at separate shops and was also offered at the regular coffeehouses.<sup>61</sup> The use of other drugs such as *bang* (drink based on hempseed or dried hemp leaves) and hashish also has a long history in Iran and were commonly used in Safavid Iran. *Bang* and Hashish were used either medicinally to lessen injury, recreationally to find oblivion from boredom or as an ‘illuminating’ drink as part of some ecstatic rituals.<sup>62</sup> Soldiers and mercenaries also used opium as it was believed that that eating it would make them valiant and fearless. It is recorded that at least at one occasion, opium and poppy seed drinks were given to Persian/Iranian soldiers who were sent to fight the Ottomans.<sup>63</sup>

The Persian ruling elite also found opium attractive and used it regularly for recreation. Tahmasb I (1514 –1576), the second Shah of the Safavid Dynasty of Persia, who enjoyed the longest reign of any member of this dynasty, used opium from an early age. Most of his brothers and sons, including his successor Shah Ismail II, as well as a number of his military officers and members of his court consumed opium. They used to carry opium with them in special boxes ornamented with jewels<sup>64</sup> and used it whenever the urge came whether it during their daily jobs or other activities. Small opium pills about the size of a pea were made to be swallowed when needed. For many, especially those who were addicted to the drug, the main objective of the addicts was to be euphoric. Opium was even used as a weapon to assassinate the third Safavid Shah of Persia, Shah Ismail II, who died on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1577 when he was given poisoned opium drink.<sup>65</sup> Matthee has called the plot of the Shah’s killing as “the best known” instance of opium being used as a murder weapon.<sup>66</sup>

The 17<sup>th</sup> century French merchant and traveller, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605 –1689) witnessed *Kuknar Khanas* (places where a sherbet (drink) made from poppies was consumed) and *Bang Khanas*, (places where bang i.e. hashish or cannabis was consumed)

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<sup>61</sup> Matthee, Rudi, (2005). *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500-1900*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 108.

<sup>62</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Nader, Doctor, (2010). History of Drug Use in Iran. *Daily Hammaihaan* (Persian language website), 20 July. [Online]: <<http://forum.iransalamat.com/>> [Accessed 29 Dec 2013].

<sup>64</sup> Majdzadah, Sepehrdad, (Not Dated). Taryak (Opium). *Encyclopaedia Islamica (in Persian Language)*. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.encyclopaediaislamica.com/madkhal2.php?sid=3509>> [Accessed on 29 Dec 2013].

<sup>65</sup> Majdzadah, Sepehrdad, (Not Dated). Taryak (Opium). *op.cit*; Matthee, Rudi, (2005). *The Pursuit of Pleasure. op.cit*.p. 104.

<sup>66</sup> Matthee, Rudi, (2005). *The Pursuit of Pleasure. op.cit*. p.104.



in several cities of Persia. While describing different ways of drugs use in 17<sup>th</sup> century Persia, Tavernier wrote:<sup>67</sup>

Besides their tobacco they have also opium made of poppies, cut as they grow, out of which they draw the juice and make it into pills. They take no more at first than the head of a pin, increasing their dose by degrees, till they come to take the quantity of half a wall-nut. When they are come to that pitch, they dare not give over, for fear of endangering their lives, or addicting themselves to drink wine. In their youth you shall see these *Theriakis* or *takers of opium*, with pale pensive and dejected countenances, and the use of their speech almost lost; If they omit to take for a day together this ill-continued drug that heats their brains, and causes them to act ridiculously and to talk idly, when it has done working, they are as cold and stupid as before, which obliges 'em to take it again. For this reason they are short liv'd: or if they do live till forty, they complain heavily of the pains that proceed from the cold venom of the herb. They that have a mind to kill themselves, swallow a large piece, and drink Vinegar after it, to prevent the relief of any other counterpoison, and so they dye smiling.

They have another sort of drink to make themselves merry, which they call *Kokemaar*, composed of boyld poppy seed. They take it in broth, and there are particular houses called *Kokemar Krone*, where people meet to divertise those that see the ridiculous postures which that intoxicating drink causes them to shew. Before it works they quarrel with one another, and call one another all to naught, but never fight. When the drug begins to work, they grow friends; and some are for making complements, others for telling a long tedious story, which renders them very vain. They have also another sort of liquor, which is called *Bongue*, very bitter, being made of the leaves of Hemp and some other drug mixed with it. It makes those that use it shamfully foolish and ridiculous, which is the reason the Law has forbid that and not the former.<sup>68</sup>

Similarly, John Fryer, an English physician employed by the East India Company observed in 1670s that both poppy cultivation and opium addiction were common in Persian. He also noted the “large quantities of opium eaten at a time” and the high rate of drug addiction in the country. According to Fryer, Iranians quaff *koquenar* (*kuknar* or *opium*) “when they have a mind to be merry.”<sup>69</sup> Opium production in Persia reached new heights

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<sup>67</sup> I have not changed the spelling of the text below as that is how certain English words were spelled at the time Tavernier's book was published.

<sup>68</sup> Tavernier, Jean-Baptiste, (1677). *The Six Voyages of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier. op.cit.* p. 242; See also Tavernier, Jean-Baptiste, (2012). *Travels in India*, Volume 1 and 2. (Translated from French into English by Ball, Valentine), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>69</sup> Fryer, John, (1698). *A new account of East-India and Persia: in 8 letters being 9 years travels, begun 1672 and finished 1681*. London, 1698. p. 397. Digitized version available online at: <[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=U6n1cTb3mBwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=U6n1cTb3mBwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)>.



during the Qajar Dynasty (1785 to 1925) when the commodity became “the main merchandise and majority of rural areas in Iran were involved in the cultivation of opium poppies.”<sup>70</sup> Many farmers switched to poppies as it brought more money than wheat and other crops. Opium cultivation became so popular and widespread that it made the country vulnerable to famine. As a result, the local silk and fabric industry also suffered heavily. Opium was not only consumed inside the country where herbalists made huge profits by selling it to local addicts, it was also exported to East Asia, Ottoman Empire (especially modern Turkey) and Britain. Iranian traders opened shops and offices in Hong Kong and Shanghai to trade opium.<sup>71</sup> A significant quantity of Persian opium was also sent out to Lebanon, the Arab states, and Europe.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, social ills including criminality and deterioration of family life grew manifold as a result of increasing drug addiction. Traditionally, opium had been ingested in Persian society; it underwent an important shift when many people began smoking it as of the later 19<sup>th</sup> century. Measures taken to control the problem were haphazard and short lived as Persia under the Qajar dynasty remained a traditional society.<sup>73</sup> Opium consumption was so common in Qajar Iran that inveterate opium users could get dispensation from the obligation to abstain during Ramadan by paying the *fidyah* or offering extra alms to the poor (a leeway given in Islam to the elderly and sick persons who find it difficult to fast. They have to give food or its monetary equivalent to a poor person for each day they do not fast during the month of Ramadan). However, tobacco smokers didn’t enjoy the same clemency as it was not considered a necessity of life.<sup>74</sup>

Iran continued to remain as a major producer and consumer of opium in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Phantastica, the classic study by a world-renowned pharmacologist and toxicologist Louis Lewin published in 1924 also describes Iran as a country that “occupies an important rank among opium-consuming lands. According to Lewin, both Muslims and non-Muslims “smoke a great deal of opium”, especially in Northern provinces of Iran, while “Bokhara and Afghanistan consume only a small amount.”<sup>75</sup> Although Iran produced huge quantities of opium locally, the increasing rate of consumption meant that it had to import opium

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<sup>70</sup> Siddiqiyan, Masoud, (2008). History of the Origin of Poppies. (*Tarikh-e Paidayesh-e Khashkhash*). *Armaghan-e Milli Journal* (in Persian Language), 30 August. [Online]. Available online at: <http://armaghanmille.wordpress.com/2008/06/30/%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C%D8%AE%DA%86%D9%87-%D9%BE%DB%8C%D8%AF%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B4-%D8%AE%D8%B4%D8%AE%D8%A7%D8%B4/> [Accessed 07 Dec 2013].

<sup>71</sup> Majdzadah, Sepehrdad, (Not Dated). Taryak (Opium). *op.cit.*

<sup>72</sup> McCoy, Alfred W., Read, Cathleen B. and Adams, Leonard P., (1973). *The Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia*. *op.cit.* pp. 69-70.

<sup>73</sup> Matthee, Rudi, (2005). *The Pursuit of Pleasure*. *op.cit.* p. 303.

<sup>74</sup> *ibid.* p. 298.

<sup>75</sup> Lewin, Louis, (1998). *Phantastica*. *op.cit.* p. 40.

from other regional producers. The League of Nations report published in 1925 says that opium demand was so high in Iran that the drug was also exported from Afghanistan and British India.<sup>76</sup>

Local production of opium continued to rise over the next few years. In 1934, when opium production was still legal in Iran, the country produced 459 tons. However, the largest production of opium ever reported by Iran was in 1936, when it produced some 1,346 tons of the drug. In 1930s, Iran produced an average of 1,000 tons annually. According to the Iranian government figures, the production amount in 1940 was 789 tons.<sup>77</sup>

The 1949 UN report describes Iran as “one of the chief opium-producing and exporting countries” as well as a nation “where opium addiction is widespread”.<sup>78</sup> Opium production was common in most parts of the country. Khorassan, Luristan, Isfahan and Fars were the largest opium producing provinces while Kermanshah, Hamadan, Yazd and Kerman provinces produced comparatively lower quantities of opium.<sup>79</sup> Iranian opium was mainly consumed inside the country where it was issued in the form of sticks about six and a half inches long, wrapped in paper with Persian characters and a design printed in colour; blue, purplish red or green. Opium smoking had also been permitted until 1946 when it was prohibited by a decree which said that consumption of the drug in this way was not allowed anymore. However, the government could not enforce the ban effectively and drugs consumption remained alarmingly high. According to Iranian official figures, for a period of five years, from 1937 to 1942, the average annual opium consumption by home addicts was around 270 tons. At the time, the population of Iran was about sixteen and a half million.<sup>80</sup> In 1955, the Iranian Health Minister reported that there were 1.5 million opium addicts in Iran and that about 2,000 kilograms of opium was smoked daily.<sup>81</sup>

In 1946, when the country produced an estimated 800 tons of opium, the Council of Ministers issued a decree banning the cultivation of opium poppies. The following year, opium production in the country was estimated at 300 tons.<sup>82</sup> Despite the ban on cultivation, Iran continued to produce large quantities of opium. At the fourth session of

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<sup>76</sup> League of Nations, (1925). *Records of the Second Opium Conference*. Geneva, November 17th, 1924-February 19th, 1925. Volume 1. (Text of the Debates), Geneva, p. 205.

<sup>77</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World*. *op.cit.*

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> Saleh, Jehan S., (1956). *Iran Suppresses Opium Production*. (Iranian Health Minister's statement to the UN), 01 Jan. 1956. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin\\_1956-01-01\\_3\\_page002.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1956-01-01_3_page002.html)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>82</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World*. *op.cit.*; Saleh, Jehan S., (1956). *Iran Suppresses Opium Production*. *op.cit.*

the Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 1949, the representatives of the United States and the United Kingdom estimated the production of illicit opium in Iran in the year 1948-1949 at 1,500 tons or more. However, the Iranian representative at the Commission considered this figure far too high and indicated a possible production of 350 to 400 tons during that year.<sup>83</sup>

The 1946 decree banning opium production was not enacted into law by the Iranian Parliament for almost a decade. It was only in October 1955 when “after many stormy discussions in both houses of parliament”, the bill was finally passed.<sup>84</sup> According to Jehan S. Saleh, the Iranian Health Minister at the time, during the ten years from 1945 to 1955, the total opium harvest in Iran varied between 700 and 1,200 tons annually and exports during those ten years averaged 90 tons annually. Following the enactment of the law in 1955, the Iranian government reported a strict control over poppy cultivation and opium consumption involving the eradication of poppy fields and the closure of hundreds of opium dens throughout the country.<sup>85</sup>

Following the poppy ban Iran, local consumption didn’t see a significant fall. The demand in the local market was mostly met by supplies from elsewhere, especially Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan. On the other hand, the opium ban had a negative impact on the Iranian economy and growth. As opium traders made their payment for illicit opium with gold, it severely depleted the country’s gold reserves. Therefore, in 1969, Iran lifted the total ban on opium production and a scheme of licenced poppy cultivation was launched.<sup>86</sup> The licensing scheme was widely abused as huge quantities of opium were sold and smuggled illegally. On the other hand, the introduction of heroin in 1970s further complicated the drug market in Iran. As the consumption of heroin became popular, a number of laboratories were also set up in the country to convert opium into heroin, thus making Iran a heroin exporting country.<sup>87</sup>

It was only after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 when tackling the drug problem became a main priority for the new Iranian authorities. The Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, adopted several measures to reduce drug production and consumption in the country. Harsh punishments were introduced in order to deter drug dealers. For example, drug traffickers possessing more than 30 grams of heroin and five kilogram of opium were

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<sup>83</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World. op.cit.*

<sup>84</sup> Saleh, Jehan S., (1956). *Iran Suppresses Opium Production. op.cit.*

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium. op.cit.* p. 20.

<sup>87</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border. op.cit.* p. 36.

given death penalty. Farmers who cultivated opium poppies were also faced harsh penalties. Khomeini's regime was also successful, at least partly, to disrupt the trafficking of drugs from Afghanistan and Pakistan via the deserts of Central Iran to Turkey, and from Turkey to Europe and North America. These measures resulted in the relocation of heroin conversion facilities from Iran to Pakistan's North-West frontier region as well as Balochistan province which shares a border with Iran. Meanwhile, poppy cultivation also increased in both Pakistan and Afghanistan to meet the ongoing demand for opium and heroin in Iran. Although, Iran managed to control opium production in the country, it remains one of main transit routes for drug trafficking and one of the biggest drug consumers.

#### **4.3.2 Pakistan: a leading opium producer of the Golden Crescent**

The territory that became Pakistan in 1947 has a long history of opium and cannabis production and consumption. As the UN report says, drug use "has acquired a degree of psychological and socio-cultural acceptance" in the country.<sup>88</sup> The cultivation of opium poppies in what is now called the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa/Khyber-Pashtoonkhwa province as well as parts of Punjab province predates the colonial times. Under the British Raj, opium production continued in a number of those areas which later became parts of Pakistan.<sup>89</sup>

After the creation of Pakistan, the extent and gravity of illicit drug production and consumption has fluctuated over time. According to the 1949 UN report, the rulers of the new country allowed the cultivation of opium poppies in 1947 in Khairpur State (today part of Sindh province), which had already been a small producer under the British colonial administration.<sup>90</sup> Meanwhile, the government imported opium from India to sell it through the well-established vend system which involved licenced shops marketing opium to registered users and *hakeems* (traditional medicinal practitioners and herbalists). In 1947, there were 328 such shops of which 267 were in Punjab, and only a few of them were in the North-West Frontier Province.

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<sup>88</sup> UNODC, (2008). *Illicit Drug Trends in Pakistan*. April. [Online]:

<[http://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Trends%20Report\\_Pakistan\\_rev1.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/regional/central-asia/Illicit%20Drug%20Trends%20Report_Pakistan_rev1.pdf)> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>89</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border*. p. 29.

<sup>90</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World*. *op.cit.*

In mid 1950s, the government ceased importations of opium from India and permitted cultivation in Punjab province under the International Opium Protocol of 1953. An opium factory was also established in Lahore, the capital of Punjab province, to supply opium to the vend shops. The central government then shifted attention to the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and allowed poppy cultivation in three settled districts (Swabi, Mardan and Peshawar) in 1956-57 through a licensing scheme. By the end of the decade, the licencing scheme was abused by both officials and farmers. Monitoring of poppy cultivation was not robust as officials usually took bribes from violators of licensing scheme as well as drug dealers. As a result, unregulated cultivation expanded to many other districts as well as in the Tribal Areas on the border with Afghanistan.<sup>91</sup> Within three decades of its existence, drug production expanded dramatically in Pakistan and the country became a major world producer of opium. In mid-1970s, the annual opium production in the country was estimated to be between 150 and 200 tons<sup>92</sup> while the 1977-8 opium production was 500 metric tons.<sup>93</sup> By 1978-79, the NWF province alone produced 800 metric tons, of which less than 5 metric tons were legally produced. The illicit raw opium was either converted into heroin locally or smuggled to Iran or Turkey for further processing. The 1978-79 bumper crop in Pakistan resulted in a huge international pressure, both from the UN and Western countries, as the government was repeatedly asked to outlaw opium production altogether.<sup>94</sup>

In addition to local dynamics, two regional factors contributed to the rapid expansion of drug production in Pakistan in 1970s. The enforcement of the ban on opium production and the imposition of severe restrictions on drug trafficking in Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution forced several drug producers and traffickers to shift to Pakistan (and Afghanistan). The new Iranian government led by Khomeini, also started a systematic campaign to reduce opium and heroin consumption in the country. Coincidentally, Iran took these tough measures in the same year (1979), when Pakistan had a record opium production. Consequently, Pakistani traffickers, who used to traffic a significant quantity of their opium to Iran, resorted to heroin refining inside the country. This spurred heroin consumption in Pakistan itself while the remainder was smuggled to Europe and the US.<sup>95</sup> Meanwhile, regional instability resulting from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979

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<sup>91</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *op.cit.* pp. 29-31.

<sup>92</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium. op.cit.* p. 21.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>94</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *op.cit.* pp. 29-31.

<sup>95</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium. op.cit.* p. 30.

also created a suitable environment for drugs production and trafficking in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In 1970s, Pakistan was not only cultivation opium poppies on a large scale; it also started drug processing and heroin manufacturing. Anticipating a crackdown from the authorities, a number of drug laboratories were moved into the semi-autonomous Tribal Areas along the Durand Line where, due separate political and legal structures, they could operate with near impunity. By 1978, heroin was not only manufactured in the Tribal Areas, the industry had been established in several settled districts where the government had full jurisdiction.<sup>96</sup> Thus by the end of the decade, Pakistan was not only a major producer of drugs, it was also “a major transit and consumer of heroin.”<sup>97</sup> By 1981, it was “a fully-pledged production country”, the year when “Pakistani heroin accounted for 73% of all heroin seized in Europe, the Middle-East, Africa and Central Asia including 90% of that seized in the United Kingdom”.<sup>98</sup>

In the meantime, the policies of the Pakistani military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq (1977-1988), who got power in a coup, also changed the dynamics of drugs economy in Pakistan and the wider region. As drug production increased during the first years of his rule, General Zia was under a continued US pressure to put an end to poppy cultivation. On the other hand, he was also promoting his own agenda of enacting Islamic norms for public life. Therefore, in February 1979, General Zia promulgated the *Hudood Ordinance* which banned the use of all intoxicants, including narcotics, and prohibited the legal and regulated production, sale, and consumption of intoxicants such as opium, cannabis as well as alcohol.<sup>99</sup> General Zia also ordered the closure of “previously licensed opium shops, hence cutting the legitimate supply to consumers.”<sup>100</sup> Years later, in 1995, Presidential Ordinance further clarified the situation around the opium production and trafficking in Pakistan which resulted in further reduction in opium production. Pakistan passed two more laws -- the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Act and the Control of Narcotics Substances Act -- during the second government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (1997-1999). However, due to the “failure or the reluctance of the various government agencies to

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<sup>96</sup> Asad, Amirzada and Harris, Robert, (2003). *op.cit.* pp. 36-37.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* p. 38.

<sup>99</sup> Iqbal, Nadeem, (2000). Poppy Eradication Prompts Opium Imports. *AsiaTimes Online*. 1<sup>st</sup> July. [Online] <<http://www.atimes.com/ind-pak/BG01Df01.html>> [Accessed 08 Dec 2013].

<sup>100</sup> Kurin, Richard, (1986). Islamization: A View From the Countryside. In: Weiss, Anita M., (editor), *Islamic Reassertion in Pakistan: The Application of Islamic Laws in a Modern State*. New York: Syracuse University Press, p. 122.

enforce the Acts passed”, Pakistan failed to prevent drug production and trafficking or convict major drug traffickers.

There were three main reasons for reducing drug production in Pakistan since the government’s ban in 1979. The eradication of opium poppy fields was a key part of the country’s counter-narcotics strategy. In addition, the international community helped in the provision of alternative development/alternative livelihood for poppy farmers.<sup>101</sup> As a result, drug production gradually shifted over to across the border<sup>102</sup> to Afghanistan,<sup>103</sup> where the war that had started with the 1979 Soviet invasion had weakened the state institutions and destroyed much of the agricultural infrastructure in many parts of the country. The ban on poppy cultivation in Pakistan triggered the illegal drugs industry in the country and resulted in an increased number of factories converting opium into heroin. As Booth says, at the time, most of the “Golden Crescent” heroin was refined in laboratories in Pakistan.<sup>104</sup> The heroin was then smuggled to Pakistan’s coastal and border areas from where it is destined further to the high priced markets of Europe and the US.<sup>105</sup>

Meanwhile, many farmers in Pakistan continued to cultivate opium poppies despite the ban. In 1980s, poverty, falling prices of legal agricultural commodities such as cotton, wheat and tobacco as well as the farmers’ debt problems forced many farmers to cultivate poppies. In addition, the food aid Islamabad received regularly from the international community for distribution among the hundreds of thousands Afghan refugees, who had started migrating to Pakistan since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, also contributed to the fall of prices of local commodities especially in the former’s North-West region. Thus it was mainly a combination of these factors which prompted a number of farmers in Pakistan to turn to expansive cash crops such as opium poppies to avoid economic ruin. However, during the 1980s, the gradual and large scale shift of poppy cultivation from Pakistan to Afghanistan altered Pakistan’s position from a major drug producer to a main transit nation for narcotics produced in Afghanistan. Large quantities of drugs were smuggled in and through the Pakistani territory especially through its coastal areas and along the border with Iran.

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<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Pakistan and Afghanistan share a 2500 kilometres long border, commonly called as the Durand Line.

<sup>103</sup> Iqbal, Nadeem, (2000). Poppy Eradication Prompts Opium Imports. *op.cit.*

<sup>104</sup> Booth, Martin, (1996). *Opium: A History*. New York: Simon & Schuster, p. 311.

<sup>105</sup> Ashish, Shukla, (2010). Drug Trafficking in Pakistan: Threat to Regional Security. *Journal of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation*, 14. (3), July-September. [Online]:  
<[http://www.academia.edu/1079715/Drug\\_Trafficking\\_in\\_Pakistan\\_Threat\\_to\\_Regional\\_Security](http://www.academia.edu/1079715/Drug_Trafficking_in_Pakistan_Threat_to_Regional_Security)>  
[Accessed 15 Dec 2013].



Infiltration of state institutions by narco-traffickers and the links between drug barons, politicians and security officials -- often referred to as “narcotics-politics nexus” and “drug-military nexus” -- created a suitable environment for a large scale trafficking of illicit drugs in Pakistan. Based on the principle of mutual benefits, this nexus which “began in the late 1970s came to be consolidated by the 1980s.”<sup>106</sup> Officials in nearly all government institutions, including the military, have been accused of involvement in or benefiting from the illicit drugs economy. According to Chandran, the Army, the most powerful institution in the country, “needed the drug money to pursue its security interests in Afghanistan and northern India. The drug mafia needed the support of the Army for the safe passage of drugs.”<sup>107</sup>

Shanty also says that the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies used the drug trade “as a funding mechanism for various insurgent movements.”<sup>108</sup> Serious allegations of official Pakistani involvement in the drug trade emerged during the 1980s when Pakistan’s main intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), was serving as a conduit for delivery of US covert arms and material to Afghan Mujahideen groups fighting against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Moreover, it was also reported that both civilian and military officials of President Zia’s government (1977-1988) were involved in the transportation of drugs from Afghanistan in 1980s. A report prepared by a consultant for the CIA in 1992, said that “drug corruption had permeated virtually all segments of Pakistani society” and that “drug kingpins were closely connected to the country’s key institutions of power, including the president and military intelligence agencies”.<sup>109</sup> In addition, the US’s Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officials turned “a blind eye to participation in the trade by some of the anti-Soviet Afghan guerrillas they backed from Pakistan in the war”.<sup>110</sup>

According to Bird and Marshal, many Pakistani officials including those “at the highest level in government were complicit”<sup>111</sup> in the drug trade. Sixteen military officers were

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<sup>106</sup> Chandran, D. Suba, (1998). Drug Trafficking and the Security of the State: A Case Study of Pakistan. *Strategic Analysis*, 22, (6). [Online]: <<http://www.idsa-india.org/an-sep8-7.html>> [Accessed 14 December 2013].

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Shanty, Frank C., (2011). *The Nexus: International Terrorism and Drug Trafficking from Afghanistan*. California: Greenwood Publishing Group, p. 117.

<sup>109</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Golden, Tim, (1997). Pakistan’s Jailing of a Drug Agent Sours U.S. Ties. *New York Times*, 17 November. [Online]: <<http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/17/world/pakistan-s-jailing-of-a-drug-agent-sours-us-ties.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>> [Accessed 15 Dec 2013].

<sup>111</sup> Bird, Tim and Marshall, Alex, (2011). *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way*. Cornwall, TJ International Ltd., pp. 35-36.



arrested on charges of heroin trafficking in 1986 alone.<sup>112</sup> Officials of Pakistan's main intelligence agency, ISI, have also been accused of protecting heroin traffickers.<sup>113</sup> In addition, the country's army reportedly used its vehicles to traffic drugs within Pakistan. The ISI usually used trucks from Pakistan's military National Logistics Cell (NLC) to carry arms from Karachi sea port to the Afghan border. According to Chouvy, the agency "also allowed NLC trucks to return from the border loaded with opium and heroin."<sup>114</sup> The sealed trucks were protected by ISI papers and the police were not allowed to check them.<sup>115</sup>

Although some of the locally produced heroin was consumed inside the country, most of it was smuggled abroad, mainly to Europe, US and the Middle East. According to US intelligence officials in 1990s, the heroin smuggled through Pakistan accounted "for perhaps 20 percent of the heroin market in the United States."<sup>116</sup> On the other hand, several members of Pakistani air force also used their planes to smuggle heroin outside Pakistan. At one occasion, the US's Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) arrested a Squadron Leader of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), who was carrying two kilogram of heroin in the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) flight in New York.<sup>117</sup>

A study commissioned by the CIA and leaked to the media in 1993, disclosed that a number of members of the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies were "significantly involved in narcotics" and used the drug money to finance covert operations or to enrich themselves.<sup>118</sup> Pakistani officials rejected these accusations as usual. However, a few months later in September 1994, Nawaz Sharif<sup>119</sup> who had been Prime Minister of Pakistan first from 1990-1993, told the Washington Post, that "Pakistan's army chief and the head of its intelligence agency proposed a detailed 'blueprint' for selling heroin to pay for the country's covert military operations" and sought his approval. In an interview with the Newspaper, "Sharif claimed that three months after his election as prime minister in November 1990, General Aslam Beg, then army chief of staff, and General Asad Durrani,

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<sup>112</sup> *ibid.* p. 35.

<sup>113</sup> Golden, Tim, (1997). Pakistan's Jailing of a Drug Agent Sours U.S. Ties. *op.cit.*

<sup>114</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2011). *Drug Trafficking*. 4 November. [Online]: <<http://geopium.org/303/drug-trafficking>> [Accessed 27 Dec 2013].

<sup>115</sup> Bird, Tim and Marshall, Alex, (2011). Afghanistan. *op.cit.* pp. 35-36; Peters, Gretchen, (2009). *How Opium Profits the Taliban*. United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Washington DC, Peaceworks No. 62, August, pp. 8-9. [Online]: <[http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/taliban\\_opium\\_1.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/taliban_opium_1.pdf)> [Accessed 14 December 2013].

<sup>116</sup> Golden, Tim, (1997). Pakistan's Jailing of a Drug Agent Sours U.S. Ties. *op.cit.*

<sup>117</sup> Golden, Tim, (1997). Pakistan's Jailing of a Drug Agent Sours U.S. Ties. *op.cit.*

<sup>118</sup> Peters, Gretchen, (2009). *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin Is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

<sup>119</sup> Nawaz Sharif was Prime Minister of Pakistan from 1990-1993 and then from 1997-1999. He became Prime Minister for the third time in 2013.

then head of the main intelligence agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), told him the armed forces needed more money for covert foreign operations and wanted to raise it through large-scale drug deals”. Sharif said that “both General Beg and General Durrani insisted that Pakistan’s name would not be cited at any place because the whole operation would be arrived at by trustworthy third parties.”<sup>120</sup> In addition, politicians and political parties have also been accused of accepting donations from known drug barons some of whom became politicians themselves and won seats in the national parliament and provincial assemblies.

Pakistan faced three main drug problems since early 1970s; (a) drug cultivation and trafficking within the country, (b) drug trafficking through the country as a transit route and (c) drug consumption within the country. The country also became an outlet as well as a market for the drugs produced in neighbouring Afghanistan. In addition, opium produced in Afghanistan was converted into high-quality white heroin in make shift laboratories in Pakistan. Although Pakistan still remains both a market and an outlet for drugs, the country managed to reduce its annual harvest from 800 tonnes in 1979 to near zero levels in 1999 and 2000. It eventually got “poppy free” status in 2000-01<sup>121</sup>; the year Taliban regime in Afghanistan imposed a total ban on opium poppy cultivation. However, poppy cultivation was reported again soon and since 2003, small scale opium production has been taking place in Balochistan province and in the North-West of the country.<sup>122</sup>

In recent years, Pakistan, though considered by the US as a “close ally” in its “war on terror” has been again accused of having benefitted from the drug trade. When on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2003, the former US ambassador to Pakistan, Wendy Chamberlin, was asked while testifying under oath before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the House Committee on International Relations, about the degree of “the Pakistani ISI involvement in the opium business on the Afghan-Pakistan border over the last 6 years”, her answer was “substantial.”<sup>123</sup> Pakistan is still a major drug transit route, a main source for precursor chemicals to convert opium into heroin and a chief consumer of opiates.

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<sup>120</sup> Anderson, J. W., and Khan, Kamran, (1994). Heroin Plan by Top Pakistanis Alleged; Former Prime Minister Says Drug Deals Were to Pay for Covert Military Operations. *Washington Post*, 12 September, p.A13.

<sup>121</sup> UNODC, (2008). *Illicit Drug Trends in Pakistan. op.cit.*

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> Chamberlin, Wendy, (2003). The U.S. and South Asia: Challenges and opportunities for American policy. Wendy Chamberlin, USAID Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Asia and the Near East: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 20 March, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Serial No. 108–15, Washington DC., p. 53. [Online]: <[http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa85841.000/hfa85841\\_Of.htm](http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intlrel/hfa85841.000/hfa85841_Of.htm)> [Accessed 05 September 2014]. See also, Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium. op.cit.* p. 120.

#### 4.4 Afghanistan and the Opium Production

Opium poppies have been cultivated in the area which later became known as Afghanistan for centuries. With its many healing properties, opium has been known as an important medicine used to cure several problems including pain and flu. In addition, opium has also been used for recreational purposes in certain parts of the country, especially in some eastern and northern regions. In 2008, an international team of conservators and archaeologists found the world's oldest-known oil paintings dating back to the mid-seventh century A.D. depicting images of Buddha, *bodhisattvas*, and female devotees among other scenes in a series of caves in Afghanistan's Bamiyan Valley, which lay on the Silk Road where goods and ideas flowed between the East and the West for millennia. Their research revealed that paint samples contained drying oils, most likely walnut and poppy-seed oils, which are key ingredients in oil-based paints.<sup>124</sup> Around one thousand years ago, opium poppies were cultivated on a limited scale during the Ghaznavid Empire (975 to 1186) whose capital was in Ghazni - a city in today's south-central Afghanistan. It was mostly used as a medicine to kill pains and cure sleeplessness/insomnia.<sup>125</sup>

Perhaps the first historical account of the opium consumption in Afghanistan is that of Abu'l Fazl Bayhaqi (995-1077) who was born in what is now western Afghanistan, and served as the head of the secretariat of the Ghaznavid court and official historian of the dynasty.<sup>126</sup> According to Bayhaqi, the Ghaznavid Sultan, Masud I (Reign 1031-1040), who was famous for his valour and martial skills, took some opium due to tiredness on his way to Nishapur (in today's Iran) to fight the rebellious Seljuk General, Toghril Beg. After consuming opium, the Sultan went to sleep while riding on an elephant. The elephant driver reduced the speed thinking moving fast will disturb his sleep. This gave Toghril enough time to escape the area and go to safety.<sup>127</sup> Toghril later managed to assemble a bigger army to weaken the Ghaznavid Sultan and declared himself as an independent ruler.

Although the medicinal use of opium had been known for a long time in Afghanistan, its production was not widespread. The recreational use of drugs including opium is generally

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<sup>124</sup> Bonn-Muller, Eti, (2009). Oldest Oil Paintings: Bamiyan, Afghanistan. *Archaeology*, **62**, (1), January/February. Archaeological Institute of America. Available online at: <[http://archive.archaeology.org/0901/topten/oldest\\_oil\\_paintings.html](http://archive.archaeology.org/0901/topten/oldest_oil_paintings.html)> [Accessed 07 Dec 2013].

Archaeologist working on the project called the find as "one of the most important art-historical and archaeological discoveries ever made," as it was previously thought the technique originated in Europe during the Renaissance, eight centuries later.

<sup>125</sup> Siddiqiyan, Masoud, (2008). *History of the Origin of Poppies*. *op.cit.*

<sup>126</sup> Adamec, Ludwig W., (2009). *The A to Z of Islam*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, p. 59.

<sup>127</sup> Majdzadah, Sepehrdad, (Not Dated). Taryak (Opium). *op.cit.*; Da'nishnama-e Buzurg-e Islami (Great Islamic Encyclopaedia), (Not Dated). *Taryak* (Opium). (in Persian Language). **Vol. 15**, Article No. 5921. [Online]. Available at: <<http://lib.eshia.ir/23022/15/5912>> [Accessed 29 Dec 2013].

discouraged in the Afghan society and opium eaters are not seen as respected members of the society. A popular Pashto proverb calls people addicted to opium as worthless.

تاریاکی! دوه په ایکی.

(Opium eater(s)! two with a coin.)

Opium was rare in Turkestan (roughly today's Central Asia) as late as the 19<sup>th</sup> century and people usually smoke bang/hashish as a narcotic.<sup>128</sup> As the UN report says, opium consumption remained relatively low in Afghanistan with only a few parts of the country, especially north-eastern Badakhshan province had "something like an 'opium tradition'; but even this does not appear to date back much longer than the 18<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>129</sup> According to the classic study of narcotic plants, *Phantastica*, published in 1924, opium production and consumption was not common in Central Asia. The book adds that "the Uzbeks and Tartars are addicted to hemp" while mainly dervishes consumed hashish in Afghanistan and Balochistan as part of their ecstatic practices.<sup>130</sup> Contemporary record show that even hashish production was not widespread in Afghanistan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As locally produced hashish was not enough for a small number of users in the country, the commodity was imported from the Chinese Turkestan. French explorer, Gabriel Bonvalot, who visited Central Asia in 1880s, wrote about one of his encounters with a couple of Afghan traders in the snowy Pamir mountains who were on their way from Kashgar (Chinese Turkestan) to Kabul through Badakhshan bringing *Khame* (cotton fabric), Tibet goats' wool and hashish.<sup>131</sup>

In the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Afghan authorities reported opium production inside the country "though it was then still very modest."<sup>132</sup> Afghanistan participated in the meetings of the Permanent Central Opium Board held under the auspices of the League of Nations.<sup>133</sup> Representatives of the Afghan government also attended the Second Opium Conference held in Geneva in 1924<sup>134</sup> and reported poppy cultivation in only three regions -- northern Badakhshan (bordering Chinese Turkestan), western Herat (bordering Iran) and eastern Jalalabad (bordering North-West Frontier region of the then British India and now

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<sup>128</sup> Matthee, Rudi, (2005). *The Pursuit of Pleasure. op.cit.* p. 110.

<sup>129</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem*. Vienna/New York, p. 88. Available online at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter\\_Narcotics/The\\_Opium\\_Economy\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_-\\_2003.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf) [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>130</sup> Lewin, Louis, (1998). *Phantastica. op.cit.* p. 96.

<sup>131</sup> Bonvalot, Gabriel, (2012). *Through the Heart of Asia: Over the Pamir to India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 160.

<sup>132</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan, op.cit.* p. 88.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.* p. 88.

<sup>134</sup> League of Nations, (1925). *Records of the Second Opium Conference. op.cit.*

Pakistan).<sup>135</sup> However, the amounts of opium produced in these areas, was “still very small compared to other reporting countries.”<sup>136</sup> Most of the opium produced was exported to Iran while a very small amount was consumed locally mainly as a medicine.<sup>137</sup>

For the first time, quantitative estimates of opium production in Afghanistan were provided for the year 1932 during which the country produced 75 tons of opium with an area of cultivation of 3,846 hectares.<sup>138</sup> China, in comparison, produced about 6,000 tons in the same year.<sup>139</sup> According to the UN report, importations by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from Afghanistan averaged nearly 18 tons from 1934 to 1937 and reached just above 50 tons in 1938. Some of the Afghan opium was also imported by Germany, France and the US in 1930s.<sup>140</sup>

Afghanistan prohibited opium production in 1945.<sup>141</sup> Although the government was not able to enforce the ban fully, opium production had fallen to 12 tons by 1956.<sup>142</sup> In 1955, the Afghan government issues another Opium Law containing guidelines for legal opium production through a licensing scheme. According to the Law, licenses had to be renewed annually and, in addition, the government representatives were tasked to supervise and monitor poppy farms and opium production. The Law also made the government the sole controller of cultivation and export of opium and made it obligatory for farmers to sell their produce to the government in exchange of cash. On the other hand, the health ministry was instructed to formulate and implement a strategy to fight opium consumption in the country.<sup>143</sup> In 1956, the government promulgated another law called “the law of prohibiting the cultivation, trade, selling and buying, shipment and consumption of opium in Afghanistan” and declared that violators will be punished.<sup>144</sup> The new law which replaced the previous one allowed legal production of opium under a licensing scheme. However, despite the official ban, small scale opium production continued in some remote areas. According to the report of the International Narcotics Control Board in 1970, the

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<sup>135</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 88.; IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), (2004). *Afghanistan: Chronology of Opium Through History*. 2nd August. Available online at: <<http://www.irinnews.org/indepthmain.aspx?InDepthId=21&ReportId=63040>> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.* p. 88.

<sup>137</sup> League of Nations, (1925). *Records of the Second Opium Conference*. op.cit. p. 205.

<sup>138</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World*. op.cit.; IRIN, (2004). *Afghanistan: Chronology of Opium Through History*. op.cit.

<sup>139</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 88.

<sup>140</sup> United Nations, (1949). *Opium Production Throughout the World*. op.cit.

<sup>141</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> UNOD, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 88.

<sup>143</sup> Government of Afghanistan, (1955). *The Opium Law, 1955*. Kabul: Government Printing House.

<sup>144</sup> Government of Afghanistan, (1956). *The Law of Banning the Cultivation, Trade, Selling and Buying, Shipment and Consumption of Opium in Afghanistan, 1956*. Kabul: Government Printing House.

outflow of opium into adjoining regions of Afghanistan indicated that the ban was not being enforced.<sup>145</sup>

#### 4.5 Expansion of Opium Industry in Afghanistan

Although Afghanistan is a mountainous country and only around 12 percent of its land is arable, it has been mainly an agricultural society. Even today, farming remains the primary means of existence for around 70 percent of Afghans. By the time the communists staged a coup in Kabul in April 1978 (which was followed by the Soviet invasion of the country the next year), agriculture accounted for 60% of the country's production and 85% of the population were peasants or nomads.<sup>146</sup> The main agricultural products in Afghanistan include fresh and dry fruits, vegetables and wheat. Contrary to the popular perception, "historically, Afghanistan did not have a strong opium tradition or culture."<sup>147</sup> As Byrd and Gildestad say, before 1978, Afghanistan was self-sufficient in food production and agricultural products constituted over 30% of the total exports earning the country US\$ 100 million per year.<sup>148</sup> According to a UN report:

"In contrast to India, Iran and other parts of Asia, opium poppy was not really a 'traditional crop' in Afghanistan. It was not cultivated in most parts of the country until the 1990s. Unlike many other countries in the region, Afghanistan did not have much of an 'opium culture'...It was only in the late 20th century, notably in its last two decades, that Afghanistan emerged as an important opium producer."<sup>149</sup>

A combination of several external and internal factors including war, a spill-over from regional countries and increasing demand for opium in the region and beyond triggered the rapid expansion of poppy cultivation and the entrenchment of drugs economy in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, opium production can be divided into two major phases -- before and after the Soviet invasion of 1979. The pre-Soviet invasion opium production was much lower and was mainly exported to Iran. In addition, the cultivation of opium poppies was limited to only a few areas as majority of farmers didn't even know how to

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<sup>145</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 88.

<sup>146</sup> Rubin, Barnett, (1995). *Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 19.

<sup>147</sup> Ward, Christopher, and Byrd, William, (2004). *Afghanistan's Opium Drug Economy*. The World Bank, (SASPR Working Paper), December. Available online at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Publications-Resources/20325060/AFOpium-Drug-Economy-WP.pdf.pdf> [Accessed 06 December 2013].

<sup>148</sup> Byrd, William and Gildestad, Bjorn, (2001). *The Socio-economic Impact of Mine Action in Afghanistan*. Islamabad: The World Bank and Nordic Consulting Group. P.22. Available online at: <http://www.gichd.org/fileadmin/GICHD-resources/rec-documents/Study-SocioEco-Impact-of-Mines-in-Afghanistan-Gilestad-2001.pdf> [Accessed 8 Aug 2014].

<sup>149</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 88.



produce opium. There were four main factors that contributed to eventually make Afghanistan as the biggest opium producer in the world.

Firstly, the ban on opium production in Iran in 1955 was the first major external factor responsible for an increased poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. The Iranian ban brought a halt to the drug production in the country that has been a major producer and home to a large population of drug addicts. A number of Iranian smugglers fled to Pakistan to avoid the crack down of the new government in Tehran. The shortage of opium in Iran stimulated production in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Several Afghan farmers, especially in southern and western provinces benefitted from the resources and expertise of the Iranian drug dealers and started cultivating opium poppies.

Secondly, at around the same time, the opium harvest in East Asia was bad which increased the international demand for opium. The prices of opium also went high which served as an extra incentive for many farmers in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>150</sup> Meanwhile, Turkey also controlled its illicit production of opium adding to the demand both in the established markets as well as countries where the consumption of opiates was a new phenomenon. Meanwhile, international drug trafficking groups in various countries including China, Colombia, Mexico and Nigeria were “aggressively marketing heroin in the United States and Europe.”<sup>151</sup> In Afghanistan, despite the increasing regional and international demand, opium production remained low until mid-1970s and almost all of it was exported to Iran.<sup>152</sup>

Thirdly, responding to an increasing Western pressure to curb opium production, and part of his own Islamisation agenda, the Pakistani dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq, banned the crop in February 1979. The poppy ban in Pakistan also pushed some Pakistani drugs smugglers and producers to go to Afghanistan from who then taught the Afghan farmers how to produce opium. At the same time, opium production experienced another set-back in the region when Afghanistan’s eastern neighbour, Iran, imposed a strict ban on drug production after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Following the ban by the Khomeini regime, “the Iran drug barons shifted their capital to the Afghan Helmand Valley”,<sup>153</sup> where poppy cultivation expanded markedly.

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<sup>150</sup> Dorronsoro, Gilles, (2005). *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan: 1979 to Present*. (Translated from the French into English by John King). London: Hurst & Company, pp. 134-135.

<sup>151</sup> PBS, Frontline, (Not Dated). *The Opium Kings: Opium Throughout History*. *op.cit.*

<sup>152</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium*. *op.cit.* p. 29.

<sup>153</sup> Chandran, D. Suba, (1998). *Drug Trafficking and the Security of the State*. *op.cit.*

Fourthly, the 1979 Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan destroyed most of the country's agricultural infrastructure and resulted in the collapse of government in many parts of the country. Most of the rural economy deteriorated in the war with food production falling by half to two thirds in 1979-80. This resulted in a shift in agricultural livelihood strategies as the collateral damage from intense fighting destroyed other income generating activities. A number of farmers started cultivating opium poppies, especially in areas where the government control was absent; to get the much needed cash to survive.<sup>154</sup>

As most of the Mujahideen resistance fighters were based in the country side, the Soviet forces "pursued a determined campaign of destroying agriculture in Afghanistan".<sup>155</sup> The strategy was aimed at starving the Mujahideen by denying them food supplies and deterring farmers and villagers from giving them food and shelter. The Soviet forces employed several tactics including arresting and killing of farmers suspected of having links with the Mujahideen, destroying food supplies and means of food production and reprisal attacks. This resulted in the "whole regions" of the country becoming "areas if barren waste".<sup>156</sup> The delicate and complex Afghan food system mostly involved *Karez* -- the traditional underground aqueduct system or underground water channels -- which bring water from hills and springs to cultivate flatlands through a series of underground wells connected by tunnels. These channels require constant maintenance against silting and cave-ins and are extremely vulnerable to bombing. As *Karezes* were sometimes used by the Mujahideen fighters to hide, the Soviet forces targeted these wells and channels which resulted in the destruction of the entire agricultural infrastructure in many parts of the country. In addition, as the war displaced millions of people internally, and millions other became refugee in Pakistan and Iran, *Karezes* were not maintained anymore and most of them eventually dried.<sup>157</sup> In general, the war destroyed most of the country's economy and resulted in a substantial fall in the gross domestic product (GDP). Summing the destructive impact of the war on Afghan economy, the 2003 UN report says:

"There was considerable destruction in the country resulting in the gross national product (GNP) per capita falling from an already very low level of \$222 in 1984 to \$164 in 1991, a decline by more than a quarter in seven years and – compared with published UNDP figures – the third lowest GNP per capita figure in the world after Mozambique and

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<sup>154</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. op.cit. pp. 88-89.

<sup>155</sup> Laber, Jeri and Rubin, Barnett, (1984). *Tears, Blood and Cries: Human Rights in Afghanistan Since the Invasion, 1979–1984*. A Helsinki Watch Report, p. 70. Available online at: <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1984/afghan1284.pdf> [Accessed 05 Jan 2014].

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> Laber, Jeri and Rubin, Barnett, (1984). *Tears, Blood and Cries*. op.cit. See also Byrd, William and Gildestad, Bjorn, (2001). *The Socio-economic Impact of Mine Action in Afghanistan*. op.cit.



Ethiopia. As an estimated 9% of the population were killed between 1978 and 1989 and a third fled the country, thus the decline of overall GDP amounted to almost 60% over the 1981-1991 period. In addition, UNDP estimated Afghanistan's GDP to have amounted to \$1.72 bn in 1991/92 compared to \$2.6 bn in 1978/79, i.e. a decline by some 50% based on nominal US-dollar figures. If the calculation is based on constant US-dollars (i.e. taking inflation into account), the real decline was again close to 60%...Between 1979 and 1989 regular agricultural production was severely disrupted. Between half and two thirds of all villages were bombed. The amount of live-stock fell by 70%. Between a quarter and one third of the country's irrigation systems were destroyed. About one third of all farms were abandoned. The reduction in fertilizer availability and affordability lowered crop yields further; in some areas fertilizer use declined by 90 percent. Thus, by 1988 total food production had declined to around 45% of the level prevailing before the Soviet invasion in 1979. The country had to import 500,000 tons of wheat annually from the Soviet Union. This went hand in hand with a severe depopulation in the rural parts of the country: a third of the population fled the country between 1978 and 1989 and 11 percent became internal refugees, migrating to the urban centres.<sup>158</sup>

On the other hand, the war made Afghanistan as one of the most mine-affected countries in the world. By the end of 2000, a total area of about 940 sq. km. of mine-contaminated land had been identified and surveyed and additional minefields are still being discovered in previously unsurveyed areas. Landmines have been taking a devastating toll of human lives, health, and livelihoods with farmers and nomads being the main victims. Many parts of the country became no go areas for them due to mines and unexploded ordnance.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, a number of farmers switched to opium as the crop needed less water and brought them more money than other crops.

Meanwhile, some of the Mujahideen also started benefitting from the drugs economy and used the production and sale of opium to purchase arms as part of their war against the Soviet occupation. Some local commanders exploited drugs for their own personal goals and used the drugs money to expand their power and control. It was in these anarchic circumstances that an "opium for arms trade" also emerged.<sup>160</sup> In addition, the collapse of the state in the Afghan countryside was a golden opportunity for the regional and international drug mafia to invest in new suppliers of drugs in order to fill the gap opened up in the international opium market. In addition, the existence of refining laboratories and international smugglers in next door in Pakistan also played an important role to make

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<sup>158</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. *op.cit.* p. 88.

<sup>159</sup> Byrd, William and Gildestad, Bjorn, (2001). *The Socio-economic Impact of Mine Action in Afghanistan*. *op.cit.* p. i.

<sup>160</sup> Ward, Christopher, and Byrd, William, (2004). *Afghanistan's Opium Drug Economy*. *op.cit.* p.9.

Afghanistan a major opium producing country.<sup>161</sup> By 1980s, it was becoming clear that “internal factors were leading to an upswing in Afghan opium production while external factors were opening major markets, ensuring the economic viability of opium production.”<sup>162</sup>

According to the UN report, “opium production in Afghanistan grew at an average rate of 15% per annum over the 1980-2000 period, almost twice as fast as the global opium production growth rate of 8%.”<sup>163</sup> In 1979, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, less than 200 tons of opium was produced in the country.<sup>164</sup> In the period succeeding the onset of the conflict, drug production continued to expand. Afghanistan produced about 19% of world opium in 1980. In 1988, in less than a decade, the production rose from 200 tons to 1,000 tons. Over the previous four decades, the Golden Triangle region of Southeast Asia was the main opium producer. Thus the demand created internationally, as well as conflict, poverty and drought in Afghanistan prepared ground for a bumper opium crop year after year. The proportion of opium production in Afghanistan grew to 52% by 1995, the year prior to the Taliban takeover of Kabul, when production levels in the country reached 3,000 mt. In 1999, Afghanistan produced 4,600 tons; around 79% of the global illicit opium. Thus within just two decades, (1980s and 1990s), an opium economy became firmly established in the country and flourished in the conditions of conflict.<sup>165</sup>

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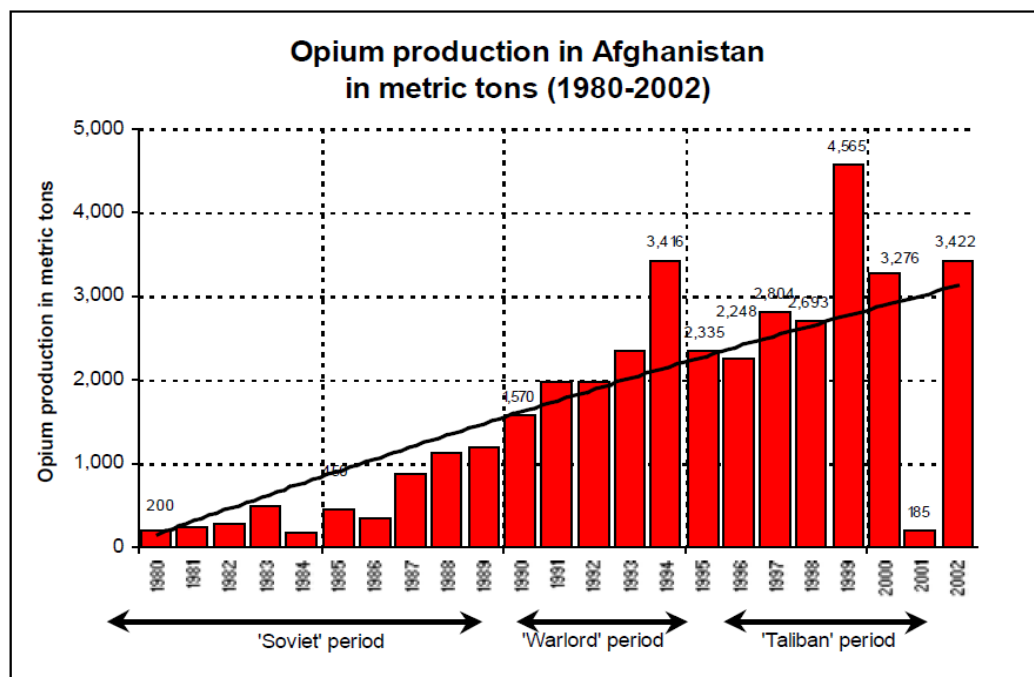
<sup>161</sup> Dorransoro, Gilles, (2005). *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan: 1979 to Present. op.cit.* pp. 134-135.

<sup>162</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.* pp. 88-89.

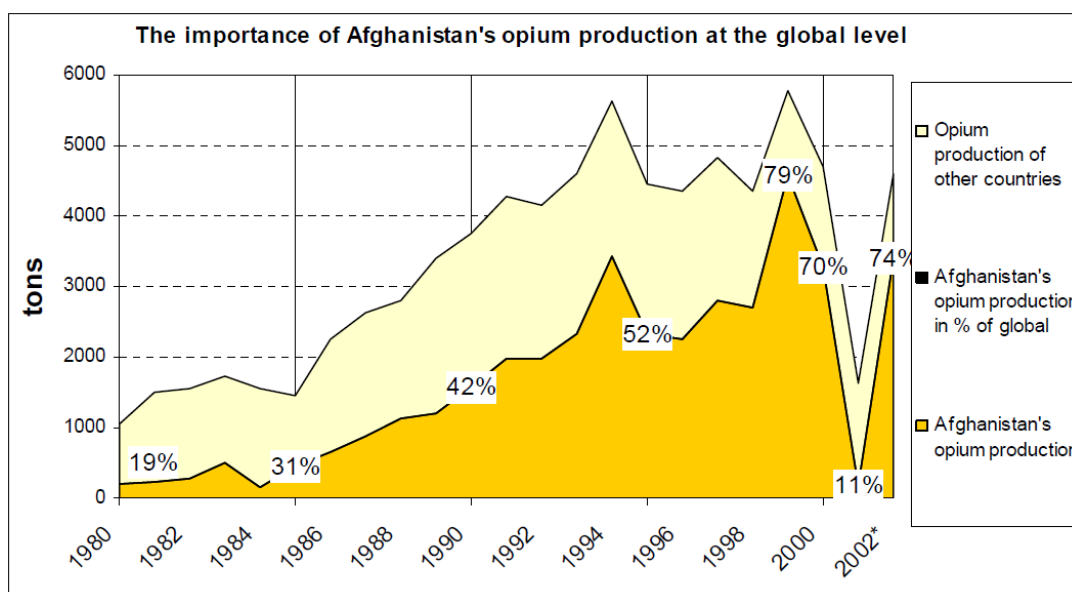
<sup>163</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 89.

<sup>164</sup> IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), (2004). *Afghanistan: Chronology of Opium Through History. op.cit.*

<sup>165</sup> IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), (2004). *Afghanistan: Chronology of Opium Through History. op.cit.*; UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.* pp. 88-89; PBS, Frontline, (Not Dated). *op.cit.*



**Figure 4.2:** Opium Production in Afghanistan, 1980-2002. (Source: UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan.*)<sup>166</sup>



**Figure 4.3:** Importance of Afghanistan's opium production at the global level, 1980-2002. (Source: UNODC, (2003).)<sup>167</sup>

A number of internal factors supported the trend of opium production in the country such as (a) climatic conditions for poppy cultivation are very favourable in Afghanistan, (b) farmers derive more income from illicit narcotic crops than from legitimate ones, (c) rural

<sup>166</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.*

<sup>167</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 89.

poverty, and (d) weakness or absence of state institutions especially in remote country side. Although most of these conditions had existed in Afghanistan for a long time, they didn't result in making the country a major producer of drugs. It was mainly the conflict that created a suitable environment for the drugs economy to flourish.

As a UN report says, "the Soviet occupation triggered the development of an opium economy", in Afghanistan.<sup>168</sup> However, the drug economy became even more entrenched in Afghanistan's domestic economy after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces. During the ten years of the Soviet occupation of the country (1979-1989), "the average annual growth rate for the production of opium in Afghanistan was 14%...but it accelerated to 19% between 1989 and 1994."<sup>169</sup>

For ordinary farmers, the main motivation for cultivating opium poppies has generally been the high price of opium. Opium proved to be "a miracle crop for Afghanistan's battered rural economy -- a durable commodity commanding a high price, with a guaranteed market outlet, easy to transport, and non-perishable, so that stocks can be carried over as a price hedge."<sup>170</sup> The dozens of farmers and villagers I interviewed during my field work repeatedly said that opium turned a much higher profit than other traditional crops such as wheat, cotton and fruits and vegetables. It is consistent with several other surveys conducted by the UN and other organisations. In October 2003, shortly before the start of the 2003/04 opium planting season, UNODC interviewed a sample of 1,329 farmers and village headmen in the opium producing regions of Afghanistan about their intention and motivation to plant opium poppies. The main reasons cited included the alleviation of poverty (31%); high prices of opium (30%); access to credit (18%); purchasing luxury items such as motorcycles (7%); and the expectation of compensation for eradication (8%). In addition, 77% of the farmers interviewed were aware of the Afghan government ban, and 33% were "prepared to respect it", most adding the caveat "if there is development assistance".<sup>171</sup> A decade later, in 2013, the UNODC report said that 72% of farmers cited high sale price to be the most important reason for cultivating opium poppy. In addition, high income from little land, improving living conditions, and the

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<sup>168</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 90

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Ward, Christopher, and Byrd, William, (2004). *Afghanistan's Opium Drug Economy. op.cit.*

<sup>171</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Counter-narcotics Directorate (CND) of the Government of Afghanistan, (2004). *Afghanistan Farmers' Intentions Survey 2003/2004*. February. Vienna: UNODC, pp. 5-6. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afg\\_fis\\_report\\_2003-2004.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afg_fis_report_2003-2004.pdf)> [Accessed 16 December 2013].

provision of basic food and shelter for the family were other important reasons cited by farmers.<sup>172</sup>

Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the country entered the new decade with its economy destroyed and infrastructure in ruins. Meanwhile, aid, both from the Soviet Union and Western countries decreased dramatically. As the international strategic scene changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Afghanistan was largely neglected by the United States and its allies. New players, mainly neighbouring and regional countries including Pakistan, Iran, the newly emerged Central Asian states, Russia and Saudi Arabia competed for influence in an Afghanistan severely weakened by years of wars and destruction. These state actors backed their proxies in a changed regional set up and engaged in a new struggle to dominate the strategically located Afghanistan.

When the Kabul government backed by the Soviet Union and later Russia collapsed in April 1992, an internal war began in the country with local commanders and factional leaders violently struggling to expand their political and economic power. The breakdown of the central government resulted in the weakening of social and legal constraints on opium trade. Opium increasingly became the means of financing the activities of warlords who took greater control of trafficking activities. Opium provided a viable source of income for warring factions. As sources of external support and patronage of warring factions ceased or decreased, drug production, trafficking and taxing the drug trade and production became a major source for many factions and warlords. As the internal conflict expanded “various factions had a direct interest in giving opium a market of increasingly viability while markets for other crops continued to deteriorate.”<sup>173</sup>

On the other hand, farmers who returned home after living in Pakistan and Iran as refugees for years found their farms and irrigation canals destroyed. As their families had grown in size, opium seemed a better option and sustainable alternative for a number of farmers to feed their families and pay for other expenses such medicines and transportation. In addition, drug dealers were readily available to give farmers credit -- cash before the poppy cultivation to buy seed and fertilizers which they paid the pay back after the harvest.

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<sup>172</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics (MCN) of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2013a). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013*. November. Vienna: UNODC, pp. 22-23. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_report\\_Summary\\_Findings\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_report_Summary_Findings_2013.pdf)> [Accessed 16 December 2013].

<sup>173</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 89.

Drought and water scarcity also pushed numerous farmers towards opium poppy which is a less thirsty crop. In addition, opium is a durable commodity and can be retained and stocked for years. Meanwhile, “food prices rose by factors of five or ten and the government financed its growing budget deficits by printing money. People lost faith in the currency and opium increasingly became a means of saving and exchange”.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, the increasing monetization of the economy necessitated by the war had created incentives for cash based activities such as the sale of opiates.<sup>175</sup> Therefore, in a high-risk environment and in the context of a highly fragmented power, a number of farmers and local commanders pursued new survival strategies including predation (by commanders and) and poppy cultivation (by peasants).<sup>176</sup> These conditions made whole sectors of the economy perverted as in many parts of the country, cultivating opium became the only form of survival for rural communities. In addition, commodity trade was distorted because, “apart from arms and contraband, the only other commodity worth trading was opium.”<sup>177</sup>

By the time the Taliban emerged in the fall of 1994, Afghanistan was already a major opium producer with about 56% of the poppy crop grown in those areas of southern Afghanistan the group captured within a year, while 39% was cultivated in eastern provinces, which it took a year later.<sup>178</sup> In 1990s, with the state control absent, neither the Taliban nor their opponents treated poppy cultivation and opium trading as criminal activities. The opium trade in the country was by and large peaceful and competitive.<sup>179</sup> It was open and new traders could easily enter the drug market.

In the second half of 1999s, the security brought by the Taliban created a more suitable environment for opium trade. As the risk decreased in the Taliban controlled areas, the drug traders felt safe to travel and conduct their business without the fear of being intimidated by local warlords or robbed by criminals. The Taliban regime not only allowed the opium market to remain open, it also levied taxes on both poppy farmers and drug dealers. Although the eastern and north-eastern regions of Afghanistan had a relatively long history of opium production, it was under the Taliban regime when opium production increased dramatically in southern Afghanistan. In 2000, the Taliban controlled southern Helmand province was the highest producer of raw opium with 1,853 mt. or 57% of the

<sup>174</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 90.

<sup>175</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 89.

<sup>176</sup> Rubin, Barnett R. (2000). *The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan*. World Development, **28**, (10): 1789-1803. Available online at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.461.517&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed 4 June 2014].

<sup>177</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 82.

<sup>178</sup> Rubin, Barnett R. (2000). *The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan. op.cit.* p. 1795.

<sup>179</sup> Rubin, Barnett R. (2000). *The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan. op.cit.*

national product.<sup>180</sup> However, in the same year, the Taliban announced a total ban on opium cultivation. Due to the Taliban opium ban, The national production of raw opium for the year 2001 was only 185 mt. which constituted a reduction of 94% from 3,276 mt. recorded in 2000 and a reduction of 96% from the record high of nearly 4,600 mt. After the Taliban's poppy ban, opium production was mainly confined to just those three provinces which were still outside the Taliban control. This was a marked reduction from the year 2000 when opium production was reported from 22 provinces.<sup>181</sup> In 2001, 151 mt. opium (out of the national total of 185 mt.) was produced in the north-eastern Badakhshan province which was controlled by anti-Taliban coalition commonly called as the Northern Alliance. The combined opium production of Badakhshan's two biggest producing districts, Jurm and Keshim, was 134 mt; 72% of the national total.<sup>182</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Taliban as a result of the US led intervention in late 2001, the new Afghan government renewed the ban on the production and trade of drugs. However, it lacked the capacity and resources to enforce its ban. Meanwhile, former warlords, who returned to areas they had lost to the Taliban, exploited the vacuum of power in many parts of the country and encouraged opium production. On the other hand, farmers suffering from several years of drought and the Taliban opium ban used the transitional vacuum to cultivate opium poppies in order to pay back the accumulated debts and earn relatively more money. In 2003-2004, the Taliban slowly re-emerged as an insurgent movement and took control of huge areas in the country side. The group not only reversed its ban on poppy cultivation, it started providing protection to poppy farmers by fighting against the Afghan government's forces who were tasked to eradicate poppy fields.

On the other hand, over the next few years, the drug mafia became more organised in the country and infiltrated the state institutions. By late 2005, the consolidation of control over drug trafficking by a limited number of key traffickers was well underway. As Shaw says, these major drug dealers are "connected through payment and patronage to senior political figures who provide the required protection".<sup>183</sup> Therefore, an informal alliance was

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<sup>180</sup> UNDCP (United Nations International Drug Control Programme), (2001) *Afghanistan: Annual Opium Poppy Survey 2001*. pp.12-13. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/report\\_2001-10-16\\_1.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/report_2001-10-16_1.pdf)>[Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

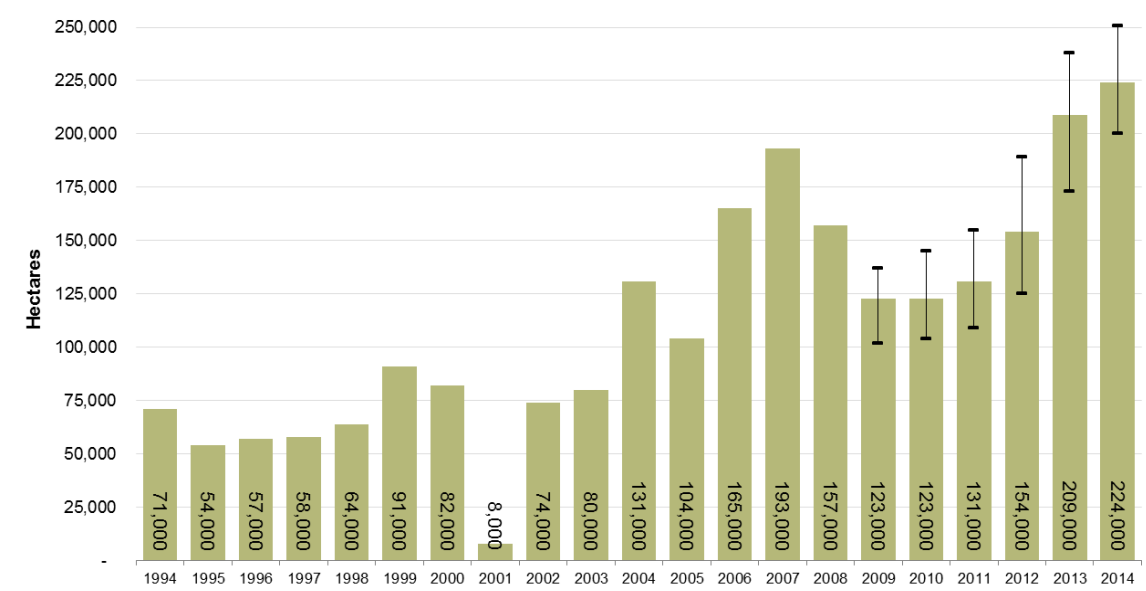
<sup>181</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 89.

<sup>182</sup> UNDCP, (2001) *Afghanistan: Annual Opium Poppy Survey 2001*. op.cit. pp.12-13.

<sup>183</sup> Shaw, Mark, (2005). Drug Trafficking and the Development of Organised Crime in Post-Taliban Afghanistan. In: Buddenberg, Doris, and Byrd, William A. (editors), *Afghanistan's Drug Industry: Structure, Functioning, Dynamics and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*. UNODC and the World Bank, Chapter 7, p. 210. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/Afgh\\_drugindustry\\_Nov06.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/Afgh_drugindustry_Nov06.pdf)> [Accessed 5 Jan 2014]; UNDCP, (2001) *Afghanistan: Annual Opium Poppy Survey 2001*. op.cit. pp.12-13.

established between poppy farmers, local commanders, Taliban insurgents and corrupt government officials, all of whom want to continue benefitting from the drugs economy.

Although the Afghan government eradicates thousands of hectares of poppy farms every year, poppy cultivation has continuously increased since the fall of the Taliban. The vast majority (around 90%) of poppy cultivation takes place in most insecure provinces of the country. Southern Helmand province, a main theatre of the war, has been Afghanistan's principal poppy cultivating province since 2004, with around half of the country's total poppy cultivation.<sup>184</sup> According to UNODC's 2014 Afghanistan Opium Survey, the total area under opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was estimated to be 224,000 hectares (200,000-250,500) in 2014, which represents a 7% increase compared to 2013.



**Figure 4.4:** Opium cultivation in Afghanistan, 1994-2014 (Hectares). (Source: UNODC, (2014)<sup>185</sup>

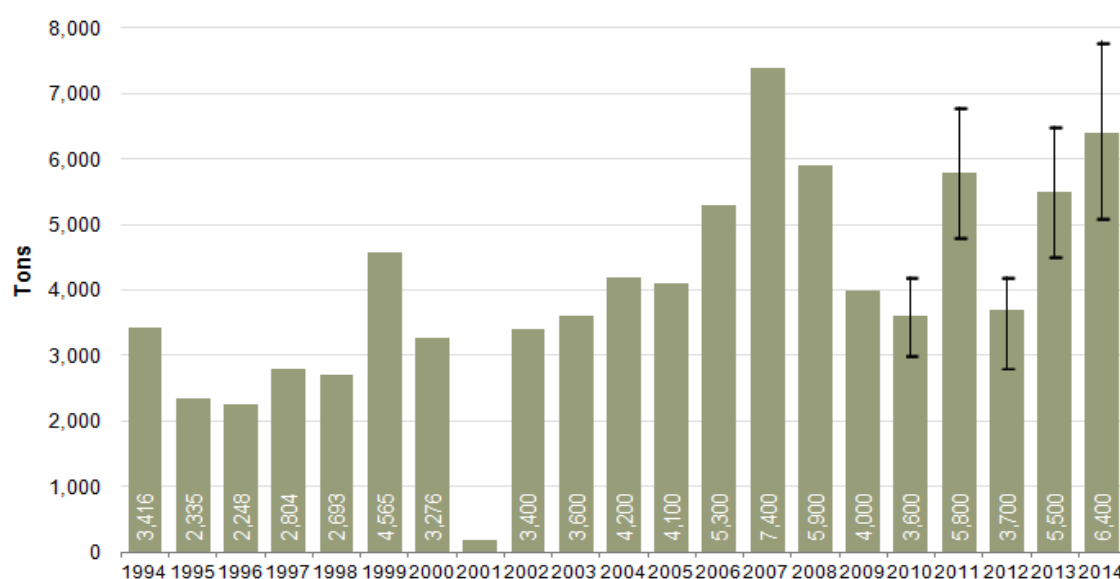
As shown in the figure below, drug production has also increased year over year. In 2014, the UNODC and Afghanistan's Ministry of Counter-narcotics estimated that opium production in Afghanistan amounted to 6,400 tons (5,100-7,800 tons), an increase of 17%

<sup>184</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *op.cit.*; UNODC and MCN, (2013a). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013*. November. *op.cit.* p.6. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_report\\_Summary\\_Findings\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_report_Summary_Findings_2013.pdf)> [Accessed 16 December 2013].

<sup>185</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2014). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014: Cultivation and Production*. November. Vienna: UNODC, p.12. Available online at: <<https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan-opium-survey-2014.pdf>> [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].



from its 2013 level (5,500 tons). The increase in the production of opium was mainly linked to the expansion of poppy cultivation.<sup>186</sup>



**Figure 4.5:** Opium production in Afghanistan, 1994-2014 (Tons). (Source: UNODC, (2014))<sup>187</sup>

Afghans earn relatively little from the illegal drug trade while the greatest proportion of profit is accrued by foreigners. As Rubin says, “super-profits in the global drug market derive from the risk premium of marketing an illegal commodity in wealthy societies.” Afghan opium traders generally sell only to the border and are not involved in the lucrative retail markets mainly in the West.<sup>188</sup>

According to the 2010 World Drug Report, the total value of the heroin market at retail level is an estimated US\$55 billion while the size of the annual opium market is US\$7-10 billion. Nearly half of the overall opiate (opium/heroin) market value (US\$65) is accounted for by Europe (some US\$20 billion) and the Russian Federation (US\$13 billion). According to UNODC, “most profits are generated downstream, leaving Afghan producers with only a fraction of the profits.” After adjusting to include the profits derived from trafficking of opium and the conversion of opium to morphine and/or heroin, the UNODC

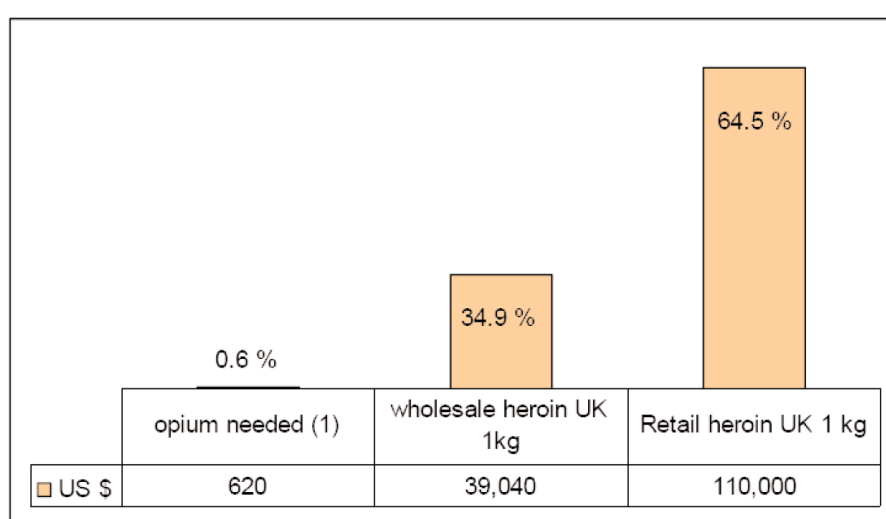
<sup>186</sup> *ibid.* p.31.

<sup>187</sup> *ibid.* p.34.

<sup>188</sup> Rubin, Barnett R. (2000). *The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan*. *op.cit.* p. 1796.; UNDCP (United Nations International Drug Control Programme), (1998). *The Dynamics of the Farm Gate Opium Trade and the Coping Strategies of Opium Traders*. Afghanistan Programme, Final Report, Strategic Study # 2, October. Islamabad.

estimated the value to the Afghan opium economy in 2009 at US\$2.4 billion or only about 3.5% of the total value of the global opiate industry. Among all the major actors in the drugs economy, poppy farmers usually get the least amount of money. The report adds that the farm-gate value to the farmer for cultivation and immediate sale of opium was estimated at US\$0.4 billion in 2009.<sup>189</sup> According to the UN report, Afghan farmers earn less than one percent of the value of the global opium economy.<sup>190</sup>

Vertical price structure and the price margins at different stages show a huge price variation at each main stage starting from the farm-gate inside Afghanistan to the main transit countries surrounding Afghanistan and finally, in the distant consuming countries. The figure below illustrates vertical structure of opiate prices from farms in Afghanistan to the wholesale and final retail level in the United Kingdom, a major consumer of the Afghan opium. It shows that “the vast bulk of ‘value added’ in the drug industry is generated outside Afghanistan, with a substantial chunk accruing in neighbouring countries but even bigger price margins in transit to industrialized consumer countries.”<sup>191</sup>



**Figure 4.6:** UK “Value Chain” for Heroin in 2004. (Source: *UNODC, World Bank*)<sup>192</sup>

<sup>189</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2010). *World Drug Report 2010*. Vienna: UNODC, p. 42. Available online at: [https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR\\_2010/World\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2010\\_lo-res.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf) [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].

<sup>190</sup> Aikins, Matthieu, (2014). Afghanistan: The Making of a Narco State. *Rolling Stone*, 4 December. Available online at: <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/afghanistan-the-making-of-a-narco-state-20141204> [Accessed 14 Dec 2014].

<sup>191</sup> Byrd, William A., and Jonglez, Olivier (2005). Prices and Market Interactions in the Opium Economy. In: Buddenberg, Doris, and Byrd, William A. (editors), *Afghanistan’s Drug Industry: Structure, Functioning, Dynamics and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*. UNODC and the World Bank, Chapter 5, pp. 129-130. Available online at: [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/Afgh\\_drugindustry\\_Nov06.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/Afgh_drugindustry_Nov06.pdf) [Accessed 5 Jan 2014].

<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*

Even at record levels of cultivation, opium poppy takes up a small proportion of Afghanistan's agricultural land overall. Despite being the biggest opium producer for around two decades, opium poppy remains a minor crop in terms of relative cultivation levels, with only 3-4 percent of natural agricultural land used towards its cultivation.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

Opium has been part of human society for thousand of year. The drug has been used both for recreation and medicianl purposes. The cultivation of opium poppies has moved from one place to antoher due to several factiors incuding climate changes and conflicts. Afghanistan, which has been an agricultural country with 70 percent of its inhabitants still relying on farming as a means of income, is a relatively new player in global drugs economy. Unlike other countries in the region such as Iran, Turkey and Pakistan; historically, Afghanistan was not a major opium producer and did not have an 'opium culture'. Although a small scale production of opium for medicine and recreation existed for a long time, drug production (mainly opium) grew rapidly during the wars in 1980s and 1990s. It was in these two decades when the country emerged as a major opium producer.

The rapid expansion of opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is closely linked to the conflict in Afghanistan and geo-politics in the surrounding countries. Mainly two factors are responsible for making Afghanistan as the biggest opium producer in the world – war in Afghanistan and the destruction of its economy and the increasing demand for drugs. Firstly, the increasing demand for opium in the region (especially in Turkey, Iran and Pakistan) prompted a number of Afghan farmers to cultivate opium poppies. When Turkey banned the production of illegal opium in 1972, it created a gap in the global and regional drug market. Meanwhile, the harvest in East Asia was bad in late 1970s which further increased international prices of opiates. On the other hand, the Iranian opium ban following the 1979 Islamic Revolution also brought a halt to the drug production in the country -- a traditional consumer with a large population of drug addicts. In addition, faced with an increasing international pressure and as part of his Islamisation policies, the Pakistan military dictator, General Zia-ul-Haq, banned opium production in his country in 1979. The poppy ban in Pakistan, which had been a major opium producer, also pushed several Pakistani smugglers and drug producers to go to Afghanistan who then taught many Afghan farmers how to produce drugs.

Secondly, the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan proved to be the biggest factor in popularising poppy cultivation in the country. The decade long war against the Soviet occupation destroyed much of Afghanistan's economy, especially its agricultural infrastructure, and forced a number of farmers to produce opium which brought them more money than traditional licit crops. Meanwhile, opium proved very lucrative for the Mujahideen in their war against the Soviet forces to get the much needed cash to survive and buy weapons. The conflict also resulted in the collapse of the Afghan central state and the lack of credible law enforcement. Following the Soviet withdrawal and the collapse of the Kabul regime, local warlords and warring factions benefitted heavily from the drug trade during factional fighting in 1990s. Despite the US led invasion in late 2001 combined with the international community's efforts to re-build the Afghan state and the economic infrastructure, both the area under cultivation and the overall production of opium has increased.

In Afghanistan, opium economy flourished in conditions of war and anarchy and later became part of a vicious circle, contributing to the perpetuation of war and anarchy. Even at record levels of cultivation, opium poppy takes up a small proportion of Afghanistan's agricultural land overall, with only 3-4 percent of natural agricultural land used towards its cultivation. As long as the conflict remains and Afghan farmers are not provided with real alternatives, the issue of drug production is likely to remain an acute problem for decades to come.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Drugs, Taliban and the Insurgency

This chapter explores the Taliban's attitude towards narcotics and examines the impact of drugs economy on the group since its launch in 1994. It analyses how the opium industry, which existed before the Taliban's emergence, grew faster under their regime. The chapter also discusses the reasons behind Taliban's strict ban on poppy cultivation in 2000 which resulted in an almost total halt to poppy growing. However, the Taliban reversed their opium policy after their regime was toppled by the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001 and quietly incorporated narcotics into their overall insurgency. This chapter goes into detail on the multiple sources of the Taliban income and explores the Taliban's complicated and evolving relationship with illicit drugs. It analyses how the opium economy and the insurgency mutually reinforce each other and discusses whether a "FARCification" of the Taliban is already underway? The chapter draws on field work and a large number of original interviews with the Taliban members and supporters, drug smugglers, opium poppy farmers, local elders and government officials to produce a uniquely detailed account of the mechanism and extent to which the drug trade inhibits state building and facilitates insurgency in Afghanistan. It also details the Taliban's sources of income and the impact of their involvement in the drugs on their strength, motivation and ideology. The chapter also provides a comprehensive picture of the Taliban's governance and organisational structure during its rule (1994-2001) and their post-Emirate insurgency and "shadow government" (2001-2015).

#### 5.1 The Emergence of the Taliban

The Taliban is an Islamic militant organisation that emerged in Kandahar province, southern Afghanistan, in 1994 under the leadership of Mullah Muhammad Omar and soon became the pre-eminent politico-military force in the country. The direct Pashto translation of the word "Taliban" is "students" as most of the leaders and members were graduates or students of Islamic religious seminaries (*madrassas*). The Taliban recruited heavily among the rural population of Afghanistan as well as poor Afghan refugee population in Pakistan.

In addition, a number of Pakistani madrassa students also joined them in their campaign to establish their rule all over Afghanistan.

The emergence of the Taliban Movement has been a matter of debate and controversy since its inception. The first and somehow prevailing theory gives the credit of the Taliban's creation to Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> The Taliban emerged at a time when Pakistan was keen to establish trade links with the landlocked countries of Central Asia via Afghanistan. However, the environment for a transnational trade was not suitable due to factional fighting, warlordism and the existence of numerous private militias across the Afghan territory. Many of those local commanders detested Pakistani government, especially its security establishment, for what they saw its interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs. Despite security risks, a Pakistani trade convoy consisting of around thirty trucks and led by a Pakistani intelligence officer, Sultan Amir Tarar, popularly known by his nom de guerre, Colonel Imam,<sup>2</sup> embarked from Pakistan's Quetta city in October 1996 and headed for Turkmenistan via the Afghan cities of Kandahar and Herat. The convoy was stopped in Kandahar by some local commanders who kept custody of the trucks and demanded exorbitant toll. As the trucks encountered check points, armed Taliban flooded to break the blockade and freed the convoy and its passengers.<sup>3</sup> The incident led to the belief that Islamabad had a role in the creation of the Taliban Movement in Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, the Taliban soon attracted interest and support from Pakistan's powerful military. Within weeks of the emergence of the Taliban, hundreds of additional students arrived from religious madrassas in Pakistan. The Pakistani government established the Taliban's communication system and all the major Afghan cities were linked to Pakistan's telephone grid.<sup>5</sup> With the expansion of the Taliban territorial control in Afghanistan, their reliance on Pakistan increased further. Pakistan also extended its helping hand as the Taliban were a much better option for Islamabad. Islamabad's support for the Taliban was both for strategic and economic reasons. The group brought stability to Afghanistan;

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<sup>1</sup> Rashid, Ahmed, (2010). *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. (Revised and reprint edition). London: I.B. Tauris.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Imam was a member of Pakistani military's special forces group. He was organising training of the Afghan mujahideen in 1980s. During the Taliban, he was counsellor general of Pakistan in Afghanistan's Herat province bordering Turkmenistan. He killed by Pakistani militants in North Waziristan in January 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Haji Agha Lalai Dastgiri, Tribal elder and member of Kandahar Provincial Council, Oct., 2014; Interview with Haji Rahmat, Tribal elder in Helmand province, Nov., 2013; Interview with a Villager/Tribal Elder 5 (V5), Kandahar province, Nov., 2011; Interview with Politician 3 (P3), Kandahar province, Nov., 2011; Rubin, Barnett, (1995). *Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System*. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. xxii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; See also Marsden, Peter, (1998). *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*. New York: Zed Books, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> Kandahar was linked to Quetta, Kabul to Karachi, Herat to Lahore, Nangarhar to Peshawar etc.

something that Pakistan needed to trade with Central Asian countries. As Goodhand suggests, “the stability brought by a pliant regime would also enable Pakistan to establish an economic bridgehead -- through transport, communications and pipelines – with Central Asia.”<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the Afghan government in Kabul, led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani, and a number of other local commanders were hostile to Pakistan for its meddling in the Afghan affairs and supporting their opponents. In addition, the Kabul government was close to India, Pakistan’s arch rival. However, Pakistan has denied any formal role in the creation of the Taliban. Colonel Imam, a famous Pakistani intelligence officer with close links to the Taliban, denied that he or the Pakistan’s main intelligence agency, ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence), had any role in the formation of the Afghan Taliban Movement. Although Colonel acknowledged that he personally knew many founding members of the Taliban from the time of the Afghan Jihad against the Soviet occupation in 1980s, he insisted that Pakistan’s security establishment was taken by surprise when it got the news about the emergence of a group called the Taliban.<sup>7</sup> As opposed to the first theory, which says that the Taliban are Pakistani creation, some others believe that the group was an indigenous formation. Therefore, Gall says that “Pakistan did not create the Taliban, it acted swiftly to co-opt the movement.”<sup>8</sup>

Thirdly, some rumours that existed at the time of the emergence of the Taliban also “suggested that the old alliance of the USA, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is again operational, this time in support of the Taliban rather than the Mujahideen.”<sup>9</sup> Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE; all major US allies, were the only three countries that recognised the Taliban regime and supported the regime politically and financially.<sup>10</sup> The idea of a possible US support for the Taliban was further strengthened after American oil companies, especially Unocal and Bidas, “courted” the Taliban to connect the gas fields of Turkmenistan with the energy hungry markets of Pakistan and India through pipelines via Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup> However, the US government has denied any links with the Taliban indicating its unease with the way the Taliban were ruling over Afghanistan.

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<sup>6</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2005). Frontiers and Wars: The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 5, (2): 191-216, April. Available online at:

<[http://relooney.fatcow.com/Afghanistan\\_1.pdf](http://relooney.fatcow.com/Afghanistan_1.pdf)> [Accessed 18 Apr 2014].

<sup>7</sup> Geo TV Channel, (2009). “Colonel Imam Interview in Jawab Deyh.” The interview in Urdu on Pakistan TV Channel, Geo, was aired in September 2009 and is available online at:

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKESRQTKlpl>> [Accessed 23 Sep 2012].

<sup>8</sup> Gall, Carlotta, (2014). *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*. New York: Harcourt Publishing Company, p. 43-44.

<sup>9</sup> Marsden, Peter, (1998). *The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan*. op.cit., p. 128.

<sup>10</sup> Rashid, Ahmed, (2010). *Taliban*. op.cit., p. 45.

<sup>11</sup> Rashid, Ahmed, (2010). *Taliban*. op.cit., p. 157-169.

Fourthly, the Taliban themselves challenge the prevailing notion of the movement's origins and reject the idea that it was harboured and nurtured by foreigners. They describe the Taliban Movement as a home-grown phenomenon and retrace their history to the "Taliban Fronts" -- bands of religious students who fought alongside the mainstream Afghan Mujahideen in southern Kandahar and neighboring provinces; a region generally referred to as *Loy* or Greater Kandahar. The *Taliban Fronts* operated during the 1980s Afghan resistance against the Soviets and were organised by mostly local religious scholars (*mullahs*) and religious students (*talibans*). Some of these jihadi fronts were independent while others were semi-independent or were fully associated with one of the eight (later seven) mujahideen factions (*tanzim*) which supplied them with weapons and money to conduct their jihad.

The Taliban guerrilla fronts were mostly associated with the mujahideen's clerical faction (party), *Harakat-i Enqelab-i Islami* (Movement of the Islamic Revolution) led by Mawlawi Muhammad Nabi. A number of them were also linked to the Mawlai Yunus Khalis's Hezb-e Islami faction (Islamic Party). Most of the Taliban fronts ceased fighting after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 followed by the fall of the Kabul regime in 1992. Members of the *Taliban Fronts* went back to their normal life of learning religion and earning a living mostly as farmers. However, appalled by the chaos created by local militia commanders after the fall of the government in Kabul, some members of the *Taliban Fronts* remobilised and formed what they called the "Islamic Movement of the Taliban" (*Da Talibanu Islami Tahreek/Ghurzang*, in Pashto).<sup>12</sup>

The founding members of the Taliban generally emphasize that the group was started as an indigenous movement and gave its leadership to Mullah Muhammad Omar, who had been serving as a prayer leader (*mullah*) in a small village outside Kandahar city. Initially, less than one hundred village *mullahs* (prayer leaders/religious scholars) and religious students (*taliban*) started a coordinated military campaign against local armed militia commanders.

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<sup>12</sup> Interview with Taliban member/Sympathiser, (T1). Kandahar province, Nov., 2011; Interview with Akbar Agha (a former Mujahideen and Taliban commander), Kabul, Oct 2014; Interview with Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef (a founding member of the Taliban and former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan), Kabul, Nov., 2011. For details about the *Taliban fronts* in the 1980s and their link to the Taliban Movement in 1990s see: Agha, Sayyed Mohammad Akbar, (2014). *I Am Akbar Agha: Memories of the Afghan Jihad and the Taliban*. Berlin: First Draft Publishing; Zaeef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *My Life with the Taliban*. (Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix (editors). London: Hurst and Company; Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban/Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan, 1970-2010*. London: Hurst and Company, pp. 43-50; Giustozzi, Antonio, (2012). Taliban Networks in Afghanistan. In: Genest, Marc and Dew, Andrea (editors), *CIWAG Case Study Series 2011- 2012*. Newport, RI: US Naval War College, Center on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups, pp.17-18. Available online at: <<https://www.usnwc.edu/getattachment/cb721e1e-7ec1-418b-934c-7aad90d187c4/Giustozzi-final-for-website.pdf>> [Accessed 20 June 2014];



At that early stage, the group was supported with money and weapons by a few local notables. However, its membership soon increased as more and more people kept joining them from Kandahar as well neighbouring provinces.<sup>13</sup> The initial response of the local population, who was fed up with the anarchy and chaos that had prevailed in the country, was generally positive. Local commanders had established their own fiefdoms with people living in fear and facing constant intimidation. Initially, the Taliban declared that they were not interested in power and their aim was simply to bring peace and order and enforce the true Islamic values. The Taliban announced that they wanted to end lawlessness and corruption and dispense speedy and cheap justice.

Although most founding members of the Taliban Movement were veterans of the Afghan Jihad, there were many differences between the style and ideology of the Taliban Movement in the 1990s and the *Taliban Fronts* of the 1980s. In contrast to the *Taliban Fronts*, the Taliban Movement was more political in their strategy, ambitions and tactics. The Taliban Movement also wanted to capture power and impose *Sharia* (Islamic law). On the other hand, the 1980s *Taliban Fronts* focused mainly on fighting the Soviets and didn't systematically try to "Islamise" the Afghan society and culture or enforce certain aspects of *Sharia* on individuals such as forcing them to keep beard or stop listening to music. In addition, the Taliban Movement was more organised and much more powerful than the *Taliban Fronts*.

Around two years after the launch of the movement, Mullah Muhammad Omar's position as the leader was later officially recognised in a public ceremony in Kandahar. On Thursday, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1996, hundreds of religious scholars selected Mullah Omar as the overall leader and gave him the title of *Amir-ul-Momineen* (leader of the faithful).<sup>14</sup> He became both the military and political leader and acquired a mythical status. As the Supreme Leader, he controlled the affairs from his seat in Kandahar and issued orders and edicts which were implemented to the letter. From the very beginning, Mullah Omar established his authority over the group and left no room for disobedience and violation of his decrees. He controlled every aspect of the group and the activities of its members. For example, after receiving reports about the increasing number of Taliban fighters smoking

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<sup>13</sup> Interview with Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, Taliban government's foreign minister, Nov. 2013. Kabul, Afghanistan; Interview with Akbar Agha (a former Mujahideen and Taliban commander), Kabul, Oct 2014; Interview with Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef (a founding member of the Taliban and former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan), Kabul, Nov., 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Shahamat.info, (Taliban's Official Website), (2014). *Message to Commemorate the 18<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation of the Islamic Emirate*. (in Pashto language, 'Da Islami Amarat Da Atlasami Kaalizi pa Munasibat'). Available at: <<http://shahamat.info/index.php/articles/46245>> [Accessed 18 Apr 2014].

cigarettes and its rising costs to the Taliban's treasury, Mullah Omar issued a decree ordering all of them to immediately stop smoking cigarettes. The ban on smoking, which was only for the Taliban members and not for the general public, proved very effective. Eventhough the ban was not based on religious grounds, tens of thousands of Taliban members quit smoking overnight.

The Taliban fought continuously with local commanders and warlords as well as the government in Kabul and rapidly expanded their control. On 26 September 1996, the Taliban captured the capital Kabul and established the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan." The group eventually managed to capture more than 90 percent of Afghanistan's territory and remained in power until the US-led invasion toppled their government in late 2001 as part of the US's Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Only three states -- Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) had officially recognised the Taliban government while the rest of the international community continued to recognise the deposed government led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

## **5.2 Taliban's Governance Structure (1994-2001)**

There has been a change and continuity in the overall functionality of the Taliban during the first two decades of its existence. The group's organisation and command structure has evolved since its launch in 1994 to cope with new demands and challenges. At the beggning, the group had a basic structure with Mullah Muhammad Omar as the overall political and military head who was called *Amir* (leader) and a Leadership Council (*Rahbari Shura*) comprising of a few veteran commanders of the anti-Soviet Jihad who became founding members of the Taliban Movement. When the Taliban captured southern Kandahar province, Mullah Muhammad Hassan Akhund was appointed as the provincial governor; Mullah Obaidullah became the Kandahar Corps Commander; Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour was appointed head of the air force/aviation in Kandahar which has one of the biggest airports in the country, while Mullah Bor Jan became the security chief of the province. The Leadership or Supreme Council's (*Rahbari Shura*) meetings were chaired by Mullah Muhammad Rabbani who served as Mullah Omar's deputy. Other Taliban members were appointed to lead government departments in the province.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, Nov. 2013. Kabul, Afghanistan; Interview with Mullah Abdul Salam Zaef, Kabul, Nov., 2011; Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban. op.cit.* pp. 15-16; Zaef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *My Life with the Taliban. op.cit.*;

The group captured a number of provinces with a quick succession and its strength and membership continuously increased as thousands of new volunteers joined it ever month. About two years later, on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1994, around fifteen hundred religious scholars (*Ulama*) gathered together in a famous mosque in Kandahar city and named Mullah Omar as the “Leader of the Faithful” (*Amir-ul-Momineen*), a title with great resonance in Islamic history. With this, the Taliban Movement entered a new phase and Mullah Omar’s sole authority in all political and military affairs was formally endorsed.

Within two years of the launch of the Movement, the Taliban created five main institutional and governance structures including the office/secretariat of the Supreme Leader known as the “Leader of the Faithful” (*Amir-ul-Momineen*), the Leadership Council (*Rahbari Shura*) based in Kandahar, the Council of Religious Scholars (*Ulama Shura*) based in Kandahar and the Military Council (*Nizami Shura*) based in Kandahar. The Kabul based Caretaker Council (*Sarparast Shura*), also called as the Council of Ministers (*Waziranu Shura*), was formed after the group captured the capital in 1996.<sup>16</sup>

The Taliban’s regional government before the seizure of Kabul and northern provinces, had a dual nature. On one hand, it was an *Amarati/Emirati* system as it had the leader (*Amir*) at the top who possessed the overall authority including veto power over the Leadership Council’s (*Rahbari Shura*) decisions and generally ruled with a decree. On the other hand, it was also a *Shura* (Consultation) system as the Leadership Council (*Shura*) was a recognised institution which met regularly to consult, create consensus and advise Mullah Omar on important issues. The Leadership Council was also called the Kandahar *Shura* as it was based in Kandahar, even after the Taliban took Kabul. It was divided into two mini-councils (*shuras*). The “Inner” *Shura* consisted of more than twenty most important Taliban leaders and was once “considered the Taliban’s collective leadership”. The “Outer” *Shura* was a council with over 100 members including religious figures and notables among others. Its aim was to provide advice to the Inner *Shura*. Although the Kandahar *Shura* had influence on decision making process and the overall direction of the Taliban Movement/government, it lost most of its clout since Mullah Omar assumed the

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<sup>16</sup> Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban*. *op.cit.*, pp. 15-16; Zaeef, Abdul Salam, (2010). *My Life with the Taliban*. *op.cit.*; Interview with Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef (a founding member of the Taliban and former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan), Kabul, Nov., 2011; Interview with Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, (who served at Mulla Omar’s office before becoming the Taliban government’s foreign minister), Nov. 2013. Kabul, Afghanistan; US Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, (1997). *Afghanistan: Taliban Decision-Making and Leadership Structure*. December 30. Available online at: <<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB295/doc08.pdf>> [Accessed 16 April 2014]. See also US Embassy (Islamabad) Cable, (1998). *Afghanistan: Taliban Decision-Making and Leadership Structure*. December 31. Available online at: <<http://nsarchive.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB295/doc13.pdf>> [Accessed 16 April 2014].

title of *Amir-ul-Momineen* (Leader of the Faithful). In addition, the Kandahar *Shura* did not have a fixed criterion and specific number of members and its decisions were not binding on the executive branch. The ultimate power to make decision remained in the hands of the *Amir* (Mullah Omar) while the *Shura* mainly had an advisory role.<sup>17</sup>

The third major institution of the Taliban government was Religious Scholars' Council (*Ulama Shura*) headed by Mawlawi Abdul Ghafoor Sanani. The *Ulama Council* also served as the judiciary and played a key role in advising Mullah Omar on Islamic law and Jurisprudence. The Council of Religious Scholars was also based in Kandahar and had significant influence on social policies.

When the Taliban captured Kabul in September 1994, the group changed its name from "The Islamic Movement of Taliban" to the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan." Mullah Omar issued an executive order (*Farman*) dispatching the provincial officials in Kandahar to head the national institutions in Kabul while their deputies were promoted to fill in their positions in the province. The Taliban announced a national cabinet of twenty-five- "acting/caretaker ministers" as well as heads of other national institutions including the Central Bank. For example, the head of Religious Scholars' Council (*Ulama Shura*) and judiciary in Kandahar, Mawlawi Abdul Ghafoor Sanani, was appointed as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in Kabul; Mullah Obaidullah, the Kandahar Corps Commander, was appointed as the Defence Minister; Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, head of air force/aviation in Kandahar became the Aviation Minister. Thus the Council of Ministers (*Waziranu Shura*) became the fourth major institution created by the Taliban. The Council of Ministers, also called as Caretaker Council (*Sarparast Shura*) and Kabul Shura, was charged with implementing policies approved by the Leadership Council and the Supreme Leader, Mullah Omar. The Council of Ministers was headed by Mullah Muhammad Rabbani, who until then headed the Leadership Council (*Rahbari Shura*) in Kandahar and was the Taliban Movement's deputy chief. Meanwhile, the former governor of Kandahar province, Mullah Muhammad Hassan Akhund, became his deputy. Mullah Muhammad Rabbani's official title varied between "Chairman of the Acting/Caretaker Council (*Da Sarparast Shura Rais*)" in Kabul and "Chairman of the Interim/Acting/Caretaker government." Later on, his title was changed to the Head of Ministers/Cabinet (*Rais-ul-*

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<sup>17</sup> Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban. op.cit.*, pp. 37-38; Interview with Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, (Taliban government's foreign minister), Nov., 2013. Kabul, Afghanistan. See also Semple, Michael, (2015). *Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement*. Washington DC.: United States Institute of Peace. Available online at: <<http://www.usip.org/publications/rhetoric-ideology-and-organizational-structure-of-the-taliban-movement>> [Accessed 02 March 2015].

*Wuzara*) with the responsibilities of a prime minister in a presidential system. Initially, all the members of the Taliban cabinet in Kabul were called acting/caretaker ministers as they didn't have control over most of the Afghan territory. Once they captured most of the country, the prefix of acting was removed from the titles of cabinet ministers and heads of national institutions.<sup>18</sup> In 1999, the Taliban overhauled their administrative structure and government in Kabul as part of their state building efforts and adopted the old offices previously employed by King Zahir Shah.<sup>19</sup> Mullah Omar was based in Kandahar even after the Taliban captured around 90% of Afghanistan while the cabinet and judiciary were located in Kabul. Although the Kabul based institutions had a degree of independence, they were controlled and directed through executive orders (*farmans*) issued from Mullah Omar's office in Kandahar.<sup>20</sup>

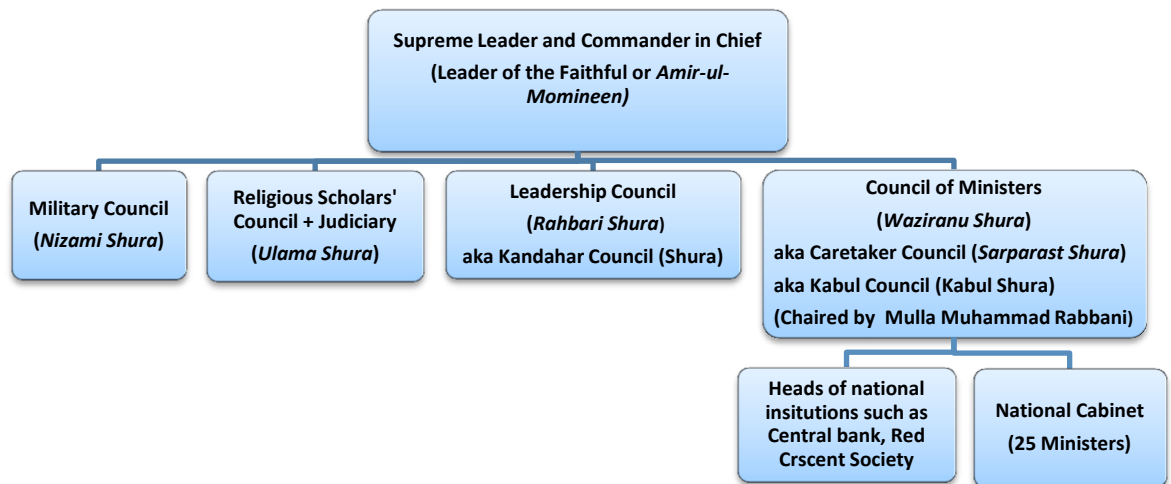
The fifth major institution in the Taliban regime was the Military Council (*Nizami Shura*) which was based in Kandahar. Its members were generally commanders, especially those who had fought against the Soviet forces in the 1980s and were headed by Mullah Omar himself as he was also the Commander in Chief. As the Taliban were continuously at war with their opponents, the role of the Military Council was to give advice to Mullah Omar on military issues including the appointment of security officials. Mullah Omar, in his capacity as the Commander in Chief was closely following the developments on the frontlines and spoke regularly with the field commander through wireless telephone system (Figure 5.2).

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<sup>18</sup> Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban. op.cit.*, pp. 38-40. See also Crews, Robert D., and Tarzi. Amin, (2008). *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 254.

<sup>19</sup> Barfield, Thomas, (2012). *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p.261. See also Crews, Robert D., and Tarzi. Amin, (2008). *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan. op.cit.*, p.254.

<sup>20</sup> Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban. op.cit.*, p. 41.



**Figure 5.1:** Taliban’s governance structure during its rule (1994-2001)

### 5.2.1 Structure and Organisation of the Taliban Insurgency (2001-2015)

Most of the Taliban’s governance infrastructure shattered as a result of the US-led invasion of Afghanistan which started on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2001. Several high ranking Taliban officials were either killed or captured. However, most of the group’s senior leaders managed to flee to Pakistan where they established sanctuaries and reinvented the movement as an insurgency. The Taliban insurgency’s inner workings are shrouded in mystery and its structure and decision making process has remained opaque. This study has relied on a number of credible sources to draw a comprehensive picture of the group’s administrative structure formed after it was expelled from power. They include interviews with the Taliban members and supporters, Taliban statements and information on their websites and social media accounts, interviews with experts, general media outlets, independent research and literature and other published and unpublished documents. These findings reveal that the group’s structure and organisation in both phases of existence has a remarkable degree of continuity. The Taliban’s shadow government, formed after the fall of their regime, almost mirrors their old governance structure and the current government in Kabul. The group still calls itself the “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”, the name it used

when in power, thus reinforcing the claim that it is still the legitimate government of Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup>

After the fall of the Taliban regime, most of the Taliban leaders didn't have the plan to continue fighting. Although several Taliban leaders and officials were either killed or captured in the US-led military operations, most of them went back to their own villages hoping to start a new living. Fearing detention and prosecution by the US forces and the new Afghan government, many top leaders fled to Pakistan. There was a lull in violence for a while. However, when the crackdown on the Taliban intensified, their leaders re-organised themselves and re-emerged as a group intent on fighting.

In 2003, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar (the Taliban Supreme Leader's close confidante), and Mullah Obaidullah (the Taliban government's Defence Minister) rearranged the organisation and laid down the foundations of the Taliban insurgency.<sup>22</sup> A new Leadership Council (*Rahbari Shura*) was formed consisting of around 10 Taliban leaders<sup>23</sup> which made decisions based on consensus. Mullah Baradar became head of the Leadership Council overseeing the group's revival, organisation and activities. Since the fall of the Taliban regime, Mullah Omar had been hiding for security reasons and was mostly inaccessible even to high ranking Taliban leaders including members of the Leadership Council. Mullah Baradar ran the organisation as his deputy as he and Mullah Obaidullah were among the only few members of the inner core of the Taliban leader with a direct access to him. However, Mullah Obaidullah, who reported to Mulla Baradar,<sup>24</sup> was arrested by Pakistani authorities in early 2007.<sup>25</sup> Following Mullah Obaidullah's arrest,

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<sup>21</sup> Giustozzi, Antonio, (2008). *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 89-95 and 110-115; Nijssen, Stefanie, (2011). The Taliban's Shadow Government in Afghanistan. NATO Civil-Military Fusion Centre (CFC). Available online at: <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/64968002/The-Taliban-s-Shadow-Government-in-Afghanistan>> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2014]; Fergusson, James, (2010). *Taliban: The True Story of the World's Most Feared Guerrilla Fighters*. London: Random House, p.168; Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created Afghanistan and Taliban*. op.cit., p.272; Chivers, C.J., (2011). In Eastern Afghanistan, at War With the Taliban's Shadowy Rule. *New York Times*, 6 Feb. 2011. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/world/asia/07taliban.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/07/world/asia/07taliban.html?_r=1)> [Accessed 16 Apr 2014] ; Interview with a Taliban official, (T5), 2013; Interview with a Taliban member (T6), Jan 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Crews, Robert D., and Tarzi. Amin, (2008). *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*. op.cit., p. 293.

<sup>23</sup> Fergusson says the Leadership Council began with a membership of ten while according to Strick Van Linschoten and Kuhen, the originally it had eleven members. See for details Fergusson, James, (2010). *Taliban: The True Story of the World's Most Feared Guerrilla Fighters*. op.cit., p.184; Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created*. op.cit., p.269

<sup>24</sup> Mazzetti, Mark and Filkins, Dexter, (2010). Secret Joint Raid Captures Taliban's Top Commander. *New York Times*, Article published on 15 Feb. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/16/world/asia/16intel.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/16/world/asia/16intel.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2014].

<sup>25</sup> Mulla Obaidullah later died in a Pakistani jail in Karachi. See for more details BBC News, (2012). Senior Afghan Taliban leader, Mullah Obaidullah, is dead. *BBC News*, 13 Feb. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-17011844>> [Accessed 5 Oct 2014].



Mullah Baradar headed the group's overall political and military activities in the capacity of the Taliban's deputy head. Mullah Baradar had developed a profile as a political and military strategist and remained the most powerful man after Mullah Omar after the fall of the Taliban regime. Mullah Baradar was eventually captured in a joint US-Pakistani raid in Pakistan in February 2010.<sup>26</sup>

Until 2010, the Taliban Supreme Leader, Mullah Omar, had one deputy. However, following the arrest of Mullah Baradar, he changed the structure and appointed two new deputies. Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour (Aviation Minister in the Taliban government and a member of the Leadership Council after the fall of the regime), was selected the head of political affairs and Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir (an ex-Guantanamo detainee and military commander) became the group's top commander and in charge of military affairs.<sup>27</sup>

The Afghan Taliban's Leadership Council (*Rahbari Shura*) was reportedly formed in the Pakistani city of Quetta and is, therefore, often referred to as the Quetta *Shura*. The membership of the Leadership Council has changed since its reinvention in 2003 when it had around 10 members. At one stage, the membership rose to more than twenty; however, by early 2015, the Leadership Council had about 18 members, all of them veterans of the pre-2001 conflict. As opposed to a classic politburo, the membership of the Taliban's Leadership Council has an element of informality and is more fluid. In addition to full members, cadre of senior figures also have a degree of access to decision making without formally belonging to it. The Leadership Council remains the central organ of the Taliban insurgency which also appoints higher level commanders and shadow governors for almost all of Afghanistan's thirty four provinces. The portfolios and responsibilities of the Leadership *Shura*'s members are constantly changing; ranging from taking up civilian positions to fighting and organising the war. Those members who are killed or captured are quickly replaced with others. However, the Mulla Omar, the Supreme Leader, remained the constant in the group. The overall leadership lies with the Supreme Leader but the day-to-day operations and decisions are made by his deputy/deputies who usually chair/s the Leadership *Shura* (*Rahbari Shura*).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> BBC News, (2013d). Profile: Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. *BBC Newsonline*, 21 Sep.. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-20582286>> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2014].

<sup>27</sup> BBC Persian, (2010). Mullah Omar Appointed Two New Deputies, (Original in Persian titled as *Mulla Omar Du Muawin-e Jadid Bargozeed*, ملا عمر دو معاون جدید برگزید). Article published on 23 March. Available online at: <[http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2010/03/100323\\_109\\_mollah\\_omar\\_new\\_deputies](http://www.bbc.com/persian/afghanistan/2010/03/100323_109_mollah_omar_new_deputies)> [Accessed 20 Dec. 2014].

<sup>28</sup> Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created*. op.cit., p.269-270; Fergusson, James, (2010). *Taliban: The True Story of the World's Most Feared Guerrilla Fighters*. op.cit.,



Under the Leadership Council, several commissions function as ministries and project the image of a government. From time to time, new formal institutional structures emerge within the Taliban to address specific issues. The number and responsibilities of the Taliban commissions have also evolved over time. From around 2009, the Taliban reshuffled the governance structure; some new commissions were created or some of the old ones were re-staffed or merged. By early 2015, the Taliban had nine commissions each responsible for specific affairs. They included: Military Commission (*Nizami*), Financial/Economic Commission (*Maali/Iqtisaadi*), Political Commission (*Siyaasi*), Cultural Commission (*Farhangi/Kalturi*), Educational & Training Commission (*Talimi*), Health Commission (*Sihi/Roghthiyayi*), Recruitment, Invitation & Integration Commission (*Jalb aw Jazb*), Prisoners' Affairs Commission (*Asiranu/Bandiyanu*) and NGOs' Affairs Commission (*Mosisaat*).<sup>29</sup>

As the group's main function has been fighting the Afghan government and its foreign allies, its Military Commission (*Nizami Kumisyun*) is the biggest and most resourceful. In fact, Military Commission is the most important institution after the Leadership Council (*Rahbari Shura*) and its head is equivalent to the defence minister in a government. There are several sub-commissions with the Military Commission responsible for specific tasks and operations. The Taliban's head of intelligence, in charge of targeted assassinations and special police are also part of this commission. The group sub-divided the Military Commission/Council into three or four individual sub-commissions/smaller councils based in different cities/towns of Pakistan – Quetta/Girdi Jangal, Peshawar and Miran Shah. These sub-commissions are responsible for the clusters of the adjacent provinces of Afghanistan. For examples, the Quetta and Girdi Jangal subdivisions or subsidiaries of the Military Council are responsible for carrying out military operations in the southern and western provinces of Afghanistan, the Peshawar *Shura* (Taliban's eastern Afghan wing) manages the affairs of Afghanistan's eastern and northern provinces and the sub-

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p.168; Semple, Michael, (2015). *Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement. op.cit.*, p.18.; Interview with a Taliban official, (T5), 2013; Interview with a Taliban member (T6), Jan 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with a Taliban official, (T5), 2013; Interview with a Taliban member (T6), Jan 2015; Interviews with local journalists in several provinces of Afghanistan and the capital, Kabul, (J1, J2, and J3). Nov 2011 and Nov. 2013; Giustozzi, Antonio, (2008). *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop. op.cit.*; Giustozzi, Antonio, (2010). *Negotiating with the Taliban: Issues and Prospects*. New York: The Century Foundation. Available online at: <<http://www.tcf.org/assets/downloads/tcf-Giustozzi.pdf>> [Accessed 20 June 2014]; Semple, Michael, (2015). *Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement. op.cit.*; Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created. op.cit.*; The Taliban's official website.

commission based in the Tribal Areas (especially Miran Shah in North Waziristan) is responsible for operations in the south-east and north of Afghanistan.<sup>30</sup>

The Taliban's "*Economic/Financial Commission*" (*Iqtisaadi/Maali Kumisyun*), which resembles a finance ministry, is responsible for collecting money from a number of different sources including donations, taxing the drug trade and commissions/protection money from NATO supply convoys inside Afghanistan. The Financial Commission has a number of representatives in different cities and countries. Occasionally, it sends its emissaries to foreign countries including the oil rich Gulf region, to collect donation and charity payments. From time to time, it also makes international public appeals for donations through advertisements published on the Taliban's website. The Taliban's Financial Commission has also reportedly invested money in legal businesses, including farming and real state, to generate more funds and avoid sanctions.<sup>31</sup>

As part of their strategy to establish a robust organizational structure inside Afghanistan, the Taliban started appointing provincial governors from 2003 onwards. From about 2006, they have been appointing district governors, judges and have been filling a few other less-important positions, especially in areas outside the government control. The Taliban's shadow provincial governors are part of the second tier of the group's leadership and are mostly appointed for their leadership qualities and fighting expertise. Nearly all of Afghanistan's 34 provinces have a Taliban "shadow governor (*Wali*)" and, in many cases, a shadow government with functional courts and revenue collection mechanisms. In addition, almost every district with a Taliban presence has a Taliban district governor/administrator (*Wulaswaal*). The Taliban's shadow governors are basically military commanders as their main responsibility to lead and organise the war in their areas. However, they also address local grievances and arbitrate local disputes.<sup>32</sup>

In post-Emirate Taliban (after the fall of the Taliban's government which was called the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan), fighting remains the group's main priority and activity. However, the insurgents also have a small civilian administration largely consists of three

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<sup>30</sup> Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created*. op.cit, p. 269. Semple, Michael, (2015). *Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement*. op.cit.; Interview with a Taliban official, (T5), 2013; Interview with a Taliban member (T6), Jan 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Interview with a Taliban official, (T5), 2013; Interview with a Taliban member (T6), Jan 2015; Taliban's statements and official website.

<sup>32</sup> Nijssen, Stefanie, (2011). The Taliban's Shadow Government in Afghanistan. op.cit.; Fergusson, James, (2010). *Taliban: The True Story of the World's Most Feared Guerrilla Fighters*. op.cit., p.168; Strick Van Linschoten, Alex and Kuhen, Felix, (2012). *An Enemy We Created* op.cit., p.272; Interview with a Taliban official, (T5), 2013; Interview with a Taliban member (T6), Jan 2015; Semple, Michael, (2015). *Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement*. op.cit.; Chivers, C.J., (2011). In Eastern Afghanistan, at War With the Taliban's Shadowy Rule. op.cit.

pillars -- judiciary, education and health. The group have established a basic health sector in some remote areas with a primary purpose of offering treatment to wounded Taliban fighters. Local population also reportedly benefitted from these medical services. Many of the seriously wounded fighters are helped by the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) and, in some cases, are treated in hospitals in Pakistan. The Taliban have also carried out minor efforts in education, mostly in the form of religious madrassas. However, the biggest part of their civilian administration is the establishment of a separate judiciary. Operated by the Taliban-appointed judges, these courts exist in dozens of districts especially in areas where the government control is weak. In places where the Taliban are not in full control or the risk of being targeted by the government of US/NATO forces is high, they usually invite people to take their cases to the Taliban judge in the neighbouring district. The provision of judicial services and resolving and mediating disputes between individuals and communities has been a winning card and a major source of legitimacy for the Taliban. By providing a speedy and cheap justice, the Taliban have earned the support of a lot of people especially in rural areas where the population usually complain from the government's lengthy, expensive and corrupt judicial system.<sup>33</sup>

Despite developing a formal organisational and governance structure, the Taliban generally work as a collection of networks. The nature of these networks is predominantly religious, and the typical commander is a mullah or a religious student (*talib*). However, former mujahideen<sup>34</sup> and other non-clerical elements also have presence in some layers of the network. At the lowest level, usually a local commander has a few fighters gathered around him. A variable number of these small groups are networked together around a bigger commander such as a district-level Taliban leader/commander. This network is then linked to a larger network through its leader, who would pay obedience to some greater figure, for example a province-level leader such as provincial shadow governor or head of the provincial council. The figures at the centre of these larger networks might be the leader of a front (*mahaz*), a member of the Leadership Council or head of the relevant commission. These individuals are answerable to the Leadership Council (*Rahbari Shura*) and the deputy head of the group. The Taliban have also developed a provincial and district management structure in the shape of provincial councils (*Wilayati Shura*) and district councils (*Wulaswali Shura*) through which they organise their affairs and plan operations (Figure 5.3).

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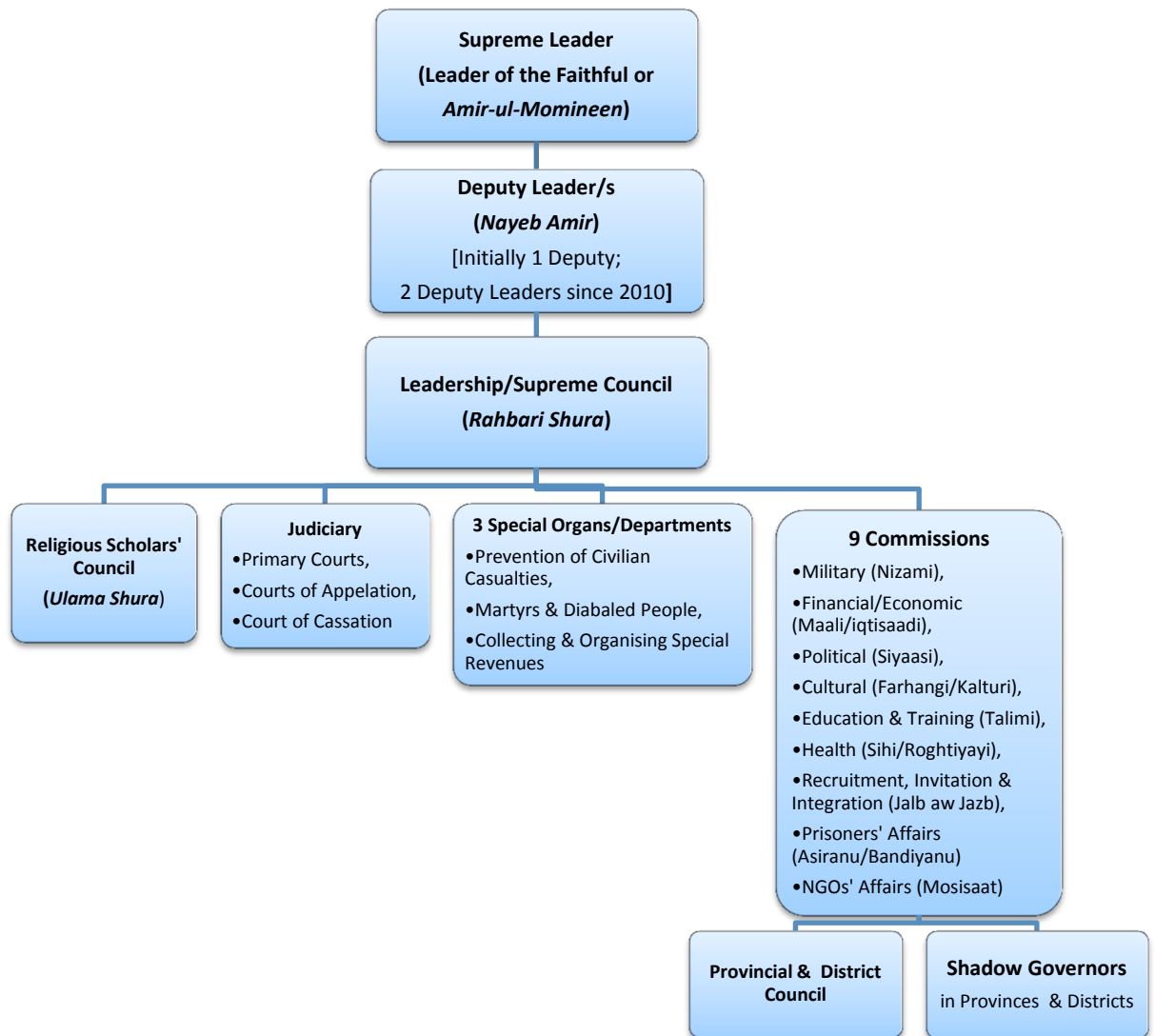
<sup>33</sup> Interview with a Taliban official, (T5), 2013; Interview with a Taliban member (T6), Jan 2015; local journalists in several provinces and Kabul, (J1, J2, and J3). Nov 2011 and Nov.; Villagers (V1, V2, V3) Nov 2012 and Nov 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Afghan resistance fighters who fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1980s.

The Taliban's formal structure has several layers and individuals are encouraged to play their role within the system, report to the superior and obey the chain of command. However, personal relations also play an important role and, in several cases, direct relations exist between relatively small Taliban networks and the top leaders. Although the Taliban's provincial and district governors as well as heads of provincial and district councils are supposed to be in on the ground inside Afghanistan, the principal leaders of the insurgency are reportedly based in Pakistan and operate from there. However, Pakistani officials usually deny the presence of the Taliban's command and control infrastructure on their territory.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Interview with a Taliban official, (T5), 2013; Interview with a Taliban member (T6), Jan 2015; the Taliban's official website; Giustozzi, Antonio, (2008). *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop op.cit.*, pp. 89-95 and 110-115; Giustozzi, Antonio, (2012). Taliban Networks in Afghanistan. *op.cit.*; Giustozzi, Antonio, (2010). *Negotiating with the Taliban. op.cit.*; Waldman, Matt, (2010). *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents*. Crisis States working papers series no.2, no. 18. Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science.



**Figure 5.2:** Structure and organisation of the Taliban insurgency after the fall of their regime (2001-2015)

### 5.3 Taliban and Drugs

By the time the Taliban emerged, drug trade was already an established business in many parts of the country. As different factions and commanders fought for power and resources during the 1990s, many of them relied on incomes from drug production and trafficking. The Taliban, in a way, inherited the drug problem. Initially, drug traders feared that, given the Taliban's strict enforcement of *Sharia*, the group might try to ban narcotics altogether. The production and consumption had been a controversial topic among religious circles in Afghanistan even before the formation of the Taliban Movement. Afghan religious

scholars (*ualama/mullahs*) debated the religious status of drugs cultivation including opium poppies for years as part of an effort to guide the public opinion.

As opium had been used in Afghanistan as a medicine for centuries, a number of religious scholars had a favourable view towards poppy growing. However, drugs which didn't have medicinal use and were mainly used for recreation, such as cannabis (*chars*), were considered harmful addictive substances and the *mullahs* couldn't allow their production on religious grounds. Even before the formation of the Taliban, a near consensus had emerged among the religious establishment that the production of opium could be justified on religious grounds due to its medicinal properties while the production of other drugs was considered un-Islamic. A number of farmers interviewed as part of this study clarified their position towards different drugs by saying that they "don't produce cannabis because it is against the *Sharia* (*ghair-e-sharaii*)". However they considered poppy cultivation as religiously permitted (*halal*) because "opium was a medicine".<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, there are a number of farmers who cultivate cannabis too without getting involved in the complexities of religious justification. For them, it is simply a matter of livelihood and feeding their families and the drugs bring them more money than other licit traditional crops.

The Taliban Movement was already against the use of addictive drugs and considered them un-Islamic and fighting narcotics was part of its initial agenda. Therefore, some Taliban leaders and religious scholars also considered a ban on drugs as soon as they took charge of several drug producing areas in the south of Afghanistan. They also took a few initial steps which indicated their displeasure with the drug trade. The group had already prohibited other practices it considered un-Islamic such as the sale of musical instruments, playing of music, watching television and taking pictures of all living things. However, taxing the drugs economy was one the biggest sources of its income. On the other hand, as the group got most of its support from rural communities many of whom relied on poppy cultivation, taking action against drug production risked their financial as well as political capital. In addition, a number of rich individuals who were involved in drug production and trafficking supported the Taliban financially in the form donations.

The Taliban faces the same dilemma vis-à-vis illicit drugs the Marxist rebel group, FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) faced in Colombia in early 1980s. The FARC considered drugs as counter-revolutionary and contrary to the group's founding principles.

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<sup>36</sup> Face to face interviews with farmers in southern Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F1, F2, F3 and F4). Nov 2011 and Nov 2013.

Therefore, the FARC initially prohibited the cultivation of coca and marijuana in areas it controlled. However, as its area of operation expanded, the groups found out that its anti-drug policy was not popular with the local people, especially those whose livelihood mostly depended on coca cultivation. At the end, due to social pressure and lack of other economic opportunities, the FARC not only relaxed its rules by accepting drug production but also began to encourage and protect coca crop themselves.<sup>37</sup>

The Taliban leadership in Afghanistan initially thought that a total ban on drug production will cause poverty and alienate a lot of people, especially those who were associated with the drugs economy and whose livelihood dependent on poppy cultivation including poppy farmers, drug traders and traffickers as well as sharecroppers. Several Taliban leaders concluded that it would be too costly for them, both politically and economically, to crack down on poppy farmers and the drug trade. Commenting on the Taliban's approach towards illicit drugs, Abdul Hakeem Mujahid, the group's representative in the United States said that, "[w]e are against poppy cultivation, narcotics production and drugs...but we cannot fight our own people. They are the sole source of our authority."<sup>38</sup> The Taliban leaders were also cautious about banning drugs as many of them believed they will not be able to impose a full ban at a time when the group was in its infancy and had not established its rule on most of the country. Therefore, the Taliban allowed the drugs business to continue as usual. Taliban's tolerance towards drugs and the overall peaceful environment they created also helped the drugs economy to flourish, especially in areas they controlled. The Taliban's revenues from the drug production and trade also increased with their victories over most of the warring factions and commanders and the establishment of their writ in most of Afghanistan. The poppy growers had to pay them the Islamic tithe (*ushr*)<sup>39</sup> on all agricultural produce, including opium, at the farmgate and mostly in kind.

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<sup>37</sup> Guillermo, Juan and Medina, Ferro, (2000). Las FARC y su Relacion con la Economia de la Coca en el sur de Colombia: Testimonios de Colonos y Guerrilleros. *L'ordinaire Latino-americain* (IPEALT, Universite de Toulouse-Le Mirail), no. 179, January-March. [Online]:

<[http://www.mamacoca.org/feb2002/art\\_ferro\\_farc\\_y\\_coca\\_Caguan\\_es.html](http://www.mamacoca.org/feb2002/art_ferro_farc_y_coca_Caguan_es.html)> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

<sup>38</sup> Bartholet, Jeffrey, (1999). The Holy Men Of Heroin. *Newsweek*, 12 June. Available online at:

<<http://www.newsweek.com/holy-men-heroin-163118>> [Accessed 27/01/2015].

<sup>39</sup> Ushr (عشر) is a compulsory tithe in Islam for all crops which becomes obligatory immediately after the produce is harvested from the land. One-tenth of the agriculture produce is due in most of cases and in some cases half of it (one-twentieth) is charged. If the land is irrigated by canal or channel water, Ushr i.e. one-tenth of the produce is due thereon and if it is irrigated by shoal or bucket, then half Ushr (one-twentieth) is due. Similarly, half Ushr is also due on field irrigated by the water bought from somebody who is owner of it. Ushr is due on each cultivation, and on all kinds of produce like wheat, barley, maize etc. dry fruits like walnut, almond, peanut etc. and vegetables like melon, water-melon, cucumber etc. irrespective of less or more cultivation. *Ushr* is dropped if the land produces nothing.

As the Taliban saw itself as the guardian of people's morality, they banned the recreational use of drugs such as cannabis and heroin and decalred the practice as un-Islamic. They considered drugs addiction as "a threat to personality, wisdom, life, health, economy and morality."<sup>40</sup> The regime had established rehabilitation centres mainly for heroin addicts and its police regularly arrested addicts from the streets and locked them up in these centres until they were rehabilitated. The Taliban's drug rehabilitation centres became so popular that several families from Pakistan used to take their addicted relatives to Afghanistan and handed them over to the Taliban for rehabilitation. The Taliban also arresred and punished cannabis users. In a decree issued in April 1999, the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar declared that "cultivating cannabis is completely prohibited throughout the country. Those who cultivate marijuana will be punished severely in accordance with the Islamic *Sharia*."<sup>41</sup> A few months later, in August 1999, Mullah Omar issued another decree calling the use of cannabis/marijuana as a "religiously bad practice" and an "un-religious act" which "weakens human's intellectual senses and even destroys them."<sup>42</sup> This time, he ordered the officials of the Taliban's government to "destroy cannabis and its factories/laboratories completely wherever they are."<sup>43</sup>

When the Taliban banned the use of cannabis and heroin in the 1990s, drugs addiction, especially opium and heroin use, was already very low in Afghanistan. Meanwhile, the Taliban officials, while justifying the production of opium due to its medicinal values, saw the reactional use of drugs as a problem of Western countries and something that was not damaging their own people in Afghanistan. According to a Taliban official, the Westerners "can use opium as a medicine, or as a narcotic. It's their choice".<sup>44</sup> Initially the Taliban also taxed the conversion stage of the drug, but, later on, they discouraged the processing of opium and its conversion into heroin and destroyed some heroin laboratories in areas they controlled. Most processing was, therefore, taking place in areas outside the Taliban control or abraod; mainly in Pakistan.

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<sup>40</sup> BBC News, (2002). *Afghan Opium Problem 'Serious'*, 27 August. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/2218488.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/2218488.stm)> [Accessed 20 March 2013].

<sup>41</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, (1999a). *Official Gazette # 788*. Taliban government's decree banning the cultivation of marijuana issued on 13 Muharram 1420 of Islamic Lunar Hijri year (29 April 1999). Kabul: Government Publication, p. 90. See appendix I for the full text of the decree.

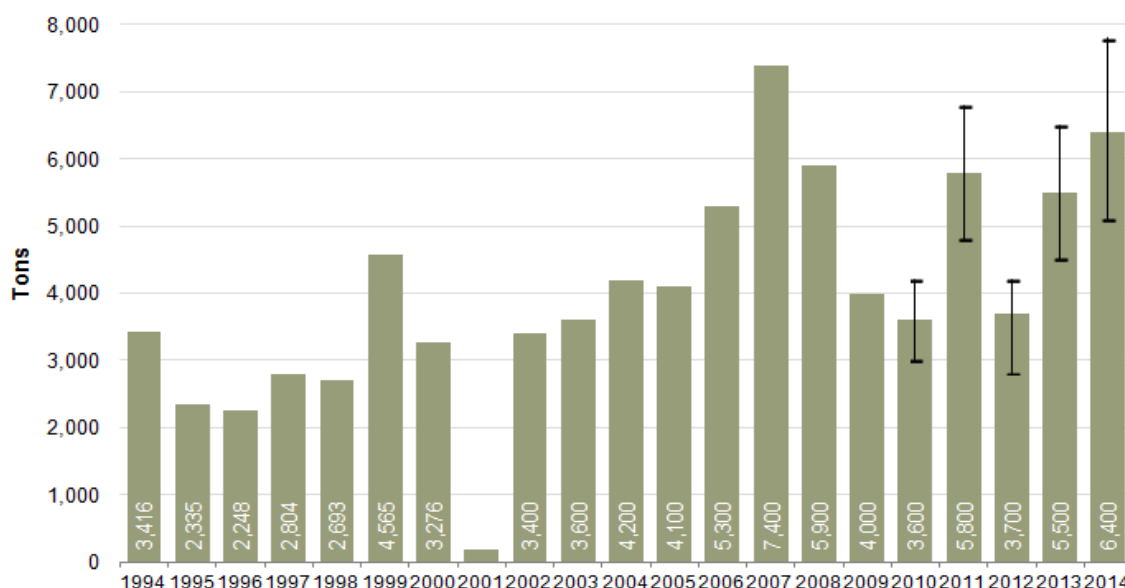
<sup>42</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, (1999b). *Official Gazette # 788*. Taliban government's decree about the destruction of cannabis/ marijuana and its laboratories was issued on 6 Jumad al-Awal 1420 of Islamic Lunar Hijri year (17 August 1999). Kabul: Government Publication, p. 91. See appendix I for the full text of the decree.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> BBC News, (2000a). *The Taleban's Drug Dividend*. *BBC News*, 14 June. Available online at <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/783268.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/783268.stm)> [Accessed 30 Dec 2013].



Opium was treated like any other agricultural commodity by all factions involved in the conflict in Afghanistan including the Taliban and their adversary, the Northern Alliance. There was nothing illegal or un-Islamic about it and farmers and traders were allowed to continue as usual. People used to carry opium in their “back-packs” to carry it from one part of the country to another. Some people even took opium on domestic flights as their hand baggage.<sup>45</sup> The Taliban’s rise to power initially led to a minor decrease in opium production, but the opium production soon started to grow. By the time the Taliban captured Kabul (September 1996), the country was already one of the biggest opium producers in the world with many farmers switching to an agricultural monoculture. Opium production in Afghanistan reached 2,700 tons in 1997-98, while in 1999; the country produced a record 4,600 tons, now accounting for around 79% of global opium production.<sup>46</sup>



**Figure 5.3:** Opium production in Afghanistan, 1994-2014 (tons). (Source: UNODC, (2014)<sup>47</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Face to face interview with a former drug trader in Afghanistan (S4). Nov. 2012. Kabul.

<sup>46</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem*. Vienna/New York. pp. 88-89; Available online at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter\\_Narcotics/The\\_Opium\\_Economy\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_-\\_2003.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf) [Accessed 06 Dec 2013]; IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), (2004). *Afghanistan: Chronology of Opium Through History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> August. Available online at: <http://www.irinnews.org/indepthmain.aspx?InDepthId=21&ReportId=63040> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013]; PBS, Frontline, (Not Dated). *The Opium Kings: Opium Throughout History*. [Online] <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/heroin/etc/history.html> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

<sup>47</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2014). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014: Cultivation and Production*. November. Vienna: UNODC, p.34. Available online at: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan-opium-survey-2014.pdf> [Accessed 23 Nov 2014]; SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), (2014a). *Future U.S. Counternarcotics Efforts in*

Since the emergence of the Taliban, opium became an important source of funding as they were engaged in a bloody war against their opponents. In addition to covering the cost of war, the Taliban also needed cash to run the civilian institution as they established their government in most of the country's territory. Like all other trade and economic activities, the opium economy was also dependent on the Taliban for protection and transportation. On top of taxing the opium industry, the Taliban also received regular funding from drug trafficking groups.

It is difficult to know exactly the amount of revenues the Taliban derived from the drug trade in the 1990s. Estimates range from US\$15 million to US\$300 million. According to a 1998 newspaper report, the Taliban derived something between US\$60 and US\$300 million a year from the drug production.<sup>48</sup> A report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) says that between 1995 and 2000, the Taliban earned some US\$ 75-100 million annually from taxing the opium industry.<sup>49</sup>

However, the Taliban raised more revenues from the transit trade than drugs. The group removed armed militias and warlords who were taxing traders in their little fiefdoms which changed after every few kilometres. The security that the Taliban established allowed cross-border trade to flourish. Therefore, several non-state interests such as transport groups and "smuggling mafia" in Pakistan also gave the groups donations and taxes. Most of the main road system was now free for the duty free consumer goods brought from Dubai in ships to Iran, from where truckers transported them to Afghanistan and finally smuggled to Pakistan. Similarly, goods were also brought in ships to Pakistan, taken to Afghanistan by road under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA) and then smuggled back to Pakistan by Afghan and Pakistani traders. According to a 1999 World Bank study, the Taliban derived US\$75 million in one year in revenues from taxing this regional trade in consumer goods, compared to US\$27 million from taxing poppy cultivation.<sup>50</sup> Given the levels of opium produced in the Taliban controlled areas and the amount of money they received indicate the correct estimate of the Taliban income from

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*Afghanistan*. 15 January. [Online]. <<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR-14-21-TY.pdf>> [Accessed 30 Aug 2014].

<sup>48</sup> Evans, Martin, (2002). *Afghanistan: A New History*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition), London: RoutledgeCurzon, p. 203. (Citing The Times of 13<sup>th</sup> April 1998).

<sup>49</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency: The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium*. October. Vienna/New York: UNODC, p.17. Available online at <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_Opium\\_Trade\\_2009\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf)> [Accessed 10 April 2014].

<sup>50</sup> Naqvi, Zareen F., (1999). *Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade Relations*. Islamabad: World Bank.

the drug industry to be around US\$30 million dollars annually.<sup>51</sup> In addition to taxing the drugs and transit trade, the Taliban sent fundraisers to Arab countries, especially in the Gulf region, to get additional financial support and resources. Some networks of Islamic groups such as Al-Qaeda, whose leaders established links with the Taliban, also gave financial assistance to the Taliban.

#### 5.4 Taliban's Poppy Ban

In the summer of 2000, the Taliban's supreme leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, unexpectedly announced a total ban on opium poppy cultivation. In a decree issued in August, just a few weeks before the 2000 poppy cultivation season, Mullah Omar declared that "poppy cultivation is absolutely prohibited throughout the country. Those who cultivate poppies and violate this order will be given a severe Islamic punishment."<sup>52</sup> He ordered his government officials to take necessary measures to prevent opium poppy cultivation. The poppy ban announced by the Taliban's leader was not only shocking for poppy farmers; it also surprised many across the world. A couple of months later, Mullah Omar issued another decree; this time addressed to the district and provincial councils of religious scholars (*ulama shuras*). They were asked to convey this message to the general public and instruct prayer leaders (*imams/mullahs*) in mosques throughout the country to let people know that poppy cultivation was not allowed anymore.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the ban on poppy growing, the Taliban allowed the trade of opium produced over the previous years. The ban on poppy growing was announced when there were signs of an increasing domestic drug addiction, especially among those Afghans returnees who had become addicted in refugee camps in Pakistan and Iran – countries where drug addiction has been one of the highests in the world. Some of the Taliban officials were also concerned about the rapid expansion of poppy cultivation and the trade in opiates and their

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<sup>51</sup> Rubin, Barnett R. (2000). *The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan*. World Development, **28**, (10), pp. 1789-1803. Available online at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.461.517&rep=rep1&type=pdf> [Accessed 4 June 2014]; Rubin, Barnett R., (2004). *Road to Ruin: Afghanistan's Booming Opium Industry*. Center on International Cooperation, New York University. Available online at: <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/kf/ROADTORUIN.PDF> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>52</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, (2001a). *Official Gazette* # 795. Published on 12 Shawal 1421 Islamic Lunar Year (7 January 2001). Contains Mullah Omar's decree banning opium poppy cultivation which is dated as 21 Jumad-Al-Awwal 1421 of Islamic Lunar Hijri year (21 August 2000). Kabul: Government Publication, p. 308. See appendix I for the full text of the decree.

<sup>53</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, (2001b). *Official Gazette* # 795. Published on 12 Shawal 1421 Islamic Lunar Year (7 January 2001). Contains Mullah Omar's decree asking religious scholars to convey the message of poppy ban to people) dated 14 Rajab 1421 of Islamic Lunar year (11 October 2000). Kabul: Government Publication, p. 309. See appendix I for the full text of the decree.

negative impact on the health of both Afghan society and economy. According to, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil, the foreign minister in the Taliban government, the regime had formulated a three phased strategy to deal with the drug problem. Firstly, “the trafficking of heroin was declared illegal” and “heroin laboratories were destroyed” in eastern and southern provinces of the country. The next phase was to ban the source of heroin -- the cultivation of opium poppies. And the final phase of the strategy was to impose a total ban on the trade (buying and selling) of heroin, “a measure which was already carried out under a religious decree.”<sup>54</sup>

It is worth noting that, contrary to the popular understanding; Mullah Omar issued a *Farman* (administrative regulation/executive order) not a *Fatwa*<sup>55</sup> (religious edict/injunction). UNODC’s reports as well as a number of academic and journalistic sources have inappropriately called it a *Fatwa*.<sup>56</sup> As opposed to the assertion made by various commentators, the Taliban’s decision to halt poppy cultivation was not based on “religious grounds”<sup>57</sup> and the group didn’t call poppy cultivation a “violation of Islam”<sup>58</sup> or something which is forbidden by Islam (*haram*).<sup>59</sup>

In October 2000, a couple of months after the first decree, Mullah Omar issued his third edict related to the ban on poppies. This time, he gave detailed instructions to district governors/administrators (*Wulaswals*) and ordered them to immediately implement the ban by force. Meanwhile, he explained the logic and reasons behind his decision to ban poppies by saying that the measure was taken because opium’s “harms are far greater than its [financial] benefits.”<sup>60</sup> He also told them that “don’t seek any more information about its [religious] permission and prohibition. The ban has been ordered for the sake of expediency and its implementation is obligatory on all.”<sup>61</sup> Mullah Omar’s decree banning

<sup>54</sup> Mutawakkil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (2005). *Afghanistan and Taliban*. (The book is in Pashto language and titled ‘*Afghanistan aw Taliban*’). Kabul: Maiwand Publishing House, pp. 56-57.

<sup>55</sup> A *fatwā* is an Islamic religious ruling on a matter of Islamic law issued by a qualified jurist or recognized religious authority in Islam. The *fatwā* is rendered in accordance with fixed precedents from the sources of Islamic law.

<sup>56</sup> UNODC, (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency*. *op.cit.* p.2.

<sup>57</sup> Stepanova, Ekaterina, (2012). Illicit Drugs and Insurgency in Afghanistan. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 6, (2). Available online at: <<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/stepanova-illicit-drugs/html>> [Accessed 15 April 2014].

<sup>58</sup> Draper, Robert, (2011). Opium Wars: A Key Step to Securing Peace Will be to Wean Afghan Farmers off Growing Poppies. *National Geographic*, February. Available online at: <<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2011/02/opium-wars/draper-text>> [Accessed 15 April 2014].

<sup>59</sup> Face to face interview with Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkil, Taliban government’s foreign minister, Nov. 2013. Kabul, Afghanistan.

<sup>60</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, (2001c). *Official Gazette* # 795. Published on 12 Shawal 1421 Islamic Lunar Year (7 Jan. 2001). Contains Mullah Omar’s decree ordering district governors to implement the poppy ban; dated 14 Rajab 1421 of Islamic Lunar year (11 Oct. 2000). Kabul: Government Publication, pp. 310-312. See appendix I for the full text of the decree. See appendix I for the full text of the decree.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

smoking by the Taliban members, especially those fighting the fronts, uses the same logic when it says that “smoking of cigarettes is absolutely banned” and then follows with the sentence that “no one will talk about its [religious] permission and prohibition.”<sup>62</sup>

The relatively drought-resistant and high value poppy crop provided farmers with vital income. Given the poverty of farmers who had been enduring the fourth year of a calamitous drought, the implementation of the poppy ban was not only a big challenge; it was also a move which had severe consequences. However, the enforcement of the Taliban opium decrees was unique. First of all, the ban was announced on the radio well ahead of the start of the poppy cultivation season. In addition, all provincial and district governors as well as other relevant officials were ordered to inform the public about the Taliban government’s decision to ban poppies. The poppy ban was carried out through the chain of command. Mullah Omar’s decree was communicated to provincial governors and district administrators. As the main officials in their provinces and districts, these administrators were made responsible for the implementation. The role of district administrators was the most crucial. They explained the ban to local *mullahs/imams* (prayer leaders in village mosques) and tribal elders and asked for their cooperation. Village mullahs passed on the message to farmers in their mosques. Within a few days, the message reached every corner of the Taliban controlled territories. While informing farmers of the poppy ban, the Taliban officials told them to grow other crops such as wheat, maize, cotton, maize and onions. Potential violaters were threatened with imprisonment and fine or both.

The Taliban generally gave their decisions a religious coating. Mullah Omar was referred to as *Amir-ul-Momineen*, the Leader of the Faithful, and his disobedience was considered a sin as well as a crime by many of them. Local and village *mullahs*, who were already supporters of the Taliban regime and are usually very influential in their own communities, also played a crucial role in convincing the people to obey the *Amir* (leader). The *mullahs* frequently cited Islamic injunctions against drug addiction and encouraged people to abandon poppy cultivation.

Seeing the Taliban’s seriousness, most farmers obeyed to save themselves from the wrath of the Taliban. A number of farmers also complied that year thinking the ban will be temporary. In the absence of government support and other economic activities, many farmers were already indebted and were experiencing a severe drought. Thereofre, when

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<sup>62</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, (1999c). *Official Gazette* # 788. Taliban government’s decree ordering all of its employees, fighters and members not to smoke cigarette anymore. Kabul: Government Publication, p.8. (Note. The smoking ban was not for the general public.). See appendix I for the full text of the decree.

the poppy plantation season arrived, some farmers couldn't resist the temptation and took the risk to grow poppies. Many of them also thought that the implementation of the ban will be flexible and they would be able to get away with. Some of them planted poppies in their courtyards; some used camouflage techniques by trying to conceal poppy plants in the patches of other legal crops. In other cases, they planted poppies in very remote areas of rural Afghanistan. However, all these methods proved to be inadequate.<sup>63</sup>

The Taliban counternarcotic squads and other officials even used helicopters to survey agricultural fields and made landings wherever they saw a poppy field. In addition, the Taliban's vast network of informers also reported those farmers to the authorities who had violated the ban. Some of farmers caught for non compliance were punished in different ways. Their fields were generally ploughed and they were jailed until they paid the fines, apologised and gave assurances that they would not violate the ban in the future. Farmers were also forced to pay for the cost ploughing. The Taliban usually hired tractors and violators had to pay for the fuel and wages of the tractor drivers while eradicating poppy fields. Farmers were generally charged by the number of hours spent on eradication. In some cases, the faces of violators were blackened and marched through the bazaars with a string of poppies around their neck.<sup>64</sup>

The Taliban poppy ban had a dramatic effect. According to the UN and US drug agencies, the ban meant an "almost total halt to opium growing in the 2001 season".<sup>65</sup> The Taliban ban on poppy cultivation is considered as "the largest, most successful interdiction of drugs in history"<sup>66</sup> and was called "an unprecedented" and "rare triumph in the long and losing war on drugs."<sup>67</sup> The first American narcotics experts to go to Afghanistan under Taliban rule confirmed at the end of their eight day trip to poppy growing areas that poppy planting was ended in one season. The team of US drug officials "found nothing to contradict earlier United Nations reports" about the success of the ban.<sup>68</sup> A United Nations official

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<sup>63</sup> Interviews with poppy farmers in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F1, F3 and F4). Nov. 2011 and Nov. 2013.

<sup>64</sup> Interviews with farmers in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F2, F4). Nov 2011 and Nov. 2013.

<sup>65</sup> BBC News, (2002). *Afghan Opium Problem 'Serious'*. *op.cit.*

<sup>66</sup> Orth, Maureen, (2007). Afghanistan's Deadly Habit. *Vanity Fair*, 1<sup>st</sup> March. Available online at: <<http://www.mapinc.org/drugnews/v02.n259.a04.html>> [Accessed 16 Apr 2014].

<sup>67</sup> Bearak, Barry, (2008). At Heroin's Source: Taliban Do What 'Just Say No' Could Not. *New York Times*, 4<sup>th</sup> Jan. Available online at:

<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C04E3D7103DF937A15756C0A9679C8B63&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=1>> [Accessed 16 Apr 2014].

<sup>68</sup> Crossette, Barbara, (2001). Taliban's Ban On Poppy A Success, U.S. Aides Say. *New York Times*, 20 May. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/20/world/20AFGH.html>> [Accessed 16 Apr 2014].



called it “one of the most remarkable successes ever” in the UN’s drug fight.<sup>69</sup> Bernard Frahi, head of the UN’s drug-control programme in Islamabad (Pakistan), said at the time that “opium poppy cultivation has effectively been eliminated in Taleban-controlled areas.”<sup>70</sup>

Under the ban, there was simply no harvest in the Taliban-held Afghanistan. A comprehensive UNDCP ground survey confirmed that overall opium production in 2001 fell by a massive 94%, back to the level of the early 1980s. The nationwide opium output fell from more than 3,000 tons (70% of global illicit opium production) in 2000 to only 185 mt., mainly because of continued cultivation and production in areas under the control of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance forces.<sup>71</sup> According to Bearak, the Taliban managed to tackle the drug cultivation “without the usual multimillion-dollar aid packages that finance police raids, aerial surveillance and crop subsidies for farmers.”<sup>72</sup>

By the time the Taliban imposed the ban on poppy cultivation (in 2000), the group had already emerged as a functional *de facto* state able to enforce law and order in around 90% of the Afghan territory. They made sure that their decisions were implemented down to the local level, even if they interfered with informal markets dynamics or social-economic needs of the segments of local population. The success of the poppy also demonstrated their ability to exercise functional governance in a very large part of the country.<sup>73</sup>

Although the Taliban ban on poppy cultivation was very effective and successful, the reaction to the ban was largely sceptical. Many Western countries were questioning the Taliban’s motives behind the move and were waiting to see what the Taliban will do next. Would they lift the ban or continue the policy? The real motivation/s behind the Taliban’s poppy ban is still a mystery for most people. During my ethnographic research, the following five major suggestions and theories emerged as to what prompted the regime to prohibit poppy cultivation.

A), it is suggested that the Taliban ban on poppy growing was a push for legitimacy and is seen as an attempt to gain international recognition. Although the Taliban were controlling

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<sup>69</sup> Jelsma, Martin, (2005). Learning Lessons from the Taliban Opium Ban. *International Journal on Drug Policy*, **16**, (2), March. Available online at:

<[http://www.tni.org/detail\\_page.phtml?page=archives\\_jelsma\\_taliban](http://www.tni.org/detail_page.phtml?page=archives_jelsma_taliban)> [Accessed 16 Apr 2014].

<sup>70</sup> Farrell, Stephen, (2001). Taliban Poppy Purge Wins Few Allies. *The Times*, 30 May. London.

<sup>71</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem*. Vienna/New York, pp. 92-93. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter\\_Narcotics/The\\_Opium\\_Economy\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_-\\_2003.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf)> [Accessed 10 April 2014].

<sup>72</sup> Bearak, Barry, (2008). At Heroin’s Source. *op.cit.*

<sup>73</sup> Stepanova, Ekaterina, (2012). Illicit Drugs and Insurgency in Afghanistan. *op.cit.*

more than 90 percent of the Afghan territory, including the capital Kabul, the Taliban government was officially recognised by only three countries -- Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The Taliban wanted the rest of international community as well as international organisation especially the UN to recognise their regime as the legitimate government of Afghanistan.

B), the second view is that Taliban banned poppies in response to the international pressure the Taliban regime was under. Curbing opium production was one of the main demands of Western countries. The pressure was exerted by mainly those countries whose populations were consuming the end products of a seemingly endless supply of Afghan drugs. The regimes was under increasing international pressure to tackle not only the drug problem, but also address the issue of human rights, especially women rights, and prevent Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for international militants groups including the Al-Qaeda network. By the time the Taliban announced the poppy ban, the regime was already under several international sanctions. Therefore, it is suggested that the 2000 poppy ban may have been intended to avert further international sanctions that could have negatively impacted the Taliban's income from taxation of other imported goods that were smuggled to other regional countries, especially Pakistan.<sup>74</sup>

C), the Taliban ban was limited to the cultivation of opium poppies while the trading and trafficking of opium continued as usual. They didn't target the drug-lords some of whom were among the biggest financial supporters of the Taliban regime. Therefore, some Western officials suggested that the Taliban used the ban to drive up drug prices by deliberately curtailing the supply of opium.<sup>75</sup> These officials also alleged that the Taliban had been stockpiling significant quantities of opium from the previous years. Due the poppy ban, the amount of exported opium decreased, and in the meantime, a ten-fold increase in prices of opium was noted.<sup>76</sup> At the start of the poppy ban, a kilogram of opium was sold for around US\$44 wholesale, but a year later, the price rose to US\$400.<sup>77</sup>

D), according to another theory, the Taliban expected foreign financial assistance after their ban on poppy growing. Although it was a unilateral act on the part of the Taliban, some officials in the regime expected that the country would be compensated for giving up

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<sup>74</sup> Stepanova, Ekaterina, (2012). *Illicit Drugs and Insurgency in Afghanistan. op.cit.*

<sup>75</sup> Draper, Robert, (2011). *Opium Wars. op.cit.*; See also Crews, Robert D., and Tarzi. Amin, (2008). *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p.254.

<sup>76</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2005). *Frontiers and Wars: The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. op.cit.*

<sup>77</sup> Leinwand, Donna; Locy, Toni and Walt, Vivienne, (2001). *US Expected to Target Afghanistan's Opium. USA Today*, 16 Oct. Available online at: <<http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/sept11/2001/10/16/opium-usatcov.htm>> [Accessed 18 Apr 2014].



the lucrative poppy crop in the same way as several Latin American countries were rewarded for their ban on drug production. However, the international community did not reward the Taliban regime for its ban on poppy cultivation.

In addition, an unconventional theory that I call “mass deprivation and mass mobilisation” also emerged during my field work. Despite all the negative side-effects of opium production, the drug had become the main source of income for hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Afghans. As the country had already been in the midst of a severe drought for several years, the poppy ban not only destroyed the livelihood of a big number of farmers, it also deprived numerous others who worked as day labourers in poppy fields. According to this theory, the Taliban wanted to deprive a big segment of the population of their livelihoods, especially in areas they controlled. The tactic would compel a large number of people to join the Taliban rank and file thus boosting the regime’s manpower it needed to expand their control and crush the remaining resistance they were still facing. As traditional licit crops were not enough to feed the families of many small farmers, the only way easy way to get an income would have been joining the Taliban and fighting for them.<sup>78</sup>

The Taliban generally reject all the above suggestions and insist the ban was instituted for purely domestic reasons. Although the Taliban were under a number of international sanctions, they stressed that poppy cultivation was not banned for any quid pro quo. Rumours existed at the time that the Taliban expected an ease of sanctions on the regime in exchange for the poppy ban. Aware of some these ideas, Mullah Omar himself explained his motivation for the ban in his decree issued in October 2000 saying that the measure was not taken by the regime as part of an effort to be recognised by the international community or to attract foreign aid. He added that: “we have banned it only and only for the welfare of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan.”<sup>79</sup> Mullah Omar asserted that the decision was made for domestic reasons because only “a few people reap the benefit but a lot of people have become indebted or addicted and the number of drug addicts is increasing year by year.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> This was mentioned to the author by a few people in Helmand and Kandahar who witnessed the developments surrounding the Taliban poppy ban first hand. Interview with Villager/Tribal Elder 5 (V5), Kandahar province, Nov. 2011; Interview with Villager/Tribal Elder 6 (V6), Helmand province, Nov., 2013; Interview with Farmer 2 (F2), Kandahar province, Afghanistan, Nov., 2011; Interview Taliban member/Sympathiser, (T1), Kandahar province, Nov., 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, (2001a). Official Gazette # 795. Taliban government’s decree banning poppy cultivation issued on 14 Rajab 1421 of Islamic Lunar Hijri year (11 October 2000). Kabul: Government Publication. See appendix I for the full text of the decree.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

The Taliban government's foreign minister, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, also argues that there were two main reasons for banning poppy cultivation – a), the rising number of drug addicts and b), the expansion of the drug trade and increasing reliance of the economy on drugs. According to Mawlawi Mutawakkil, “the drug trade was an obstacle for the development of other small businesses because due to the high levels of drugs profits, the narcotics industry was becoming an investment priority for many people.”<sup>81</sup> Although Mutawakkil insists that the ban was imposed primarily for domestic reasons, he adds that “the potential political advantages and economic benefits -- including recognition of the Taliban regime and the flow of foreign humanitarian aid -- would have been the indirect and secondary consequences of the ban.” He concluded that if the Taliban had stayed in power, “they would have also banned the drug trade and trafficking in the next phase of their counter-narcotics policy.”<sup>82</sup>

Although it seems that a number of factors including market forces, political conditions and socio-religious imperatives combined to motivate the Taliban to ban poppy cultivation, the move didn't help the Taliban internationally and they were not rewarded for this action. Despite the poppy ban, the Taliban regime was not recognised by more countries, there was no foreign assistance forthcoming and sanctions were not removed. Instead, the regime was punished with additional international sanctions. On the other hand, the Taliban lost millions of dollars in taxes as well as the good will of a number of poppy farmers.

In the absence of foreign assistance and lack of alternatives, the Taliban poppy ban had a very negative impact on the country's economy as a whole. Opium not only brought more money than other traditional crops; it was also labour intensive and provided a reliable and relatively lucrative employment to a large number of people. Landowners usually hire people to turn the soil and collect the opium paste. An estimated 350 person days are required to cultivate one hectare of opium poppy in Afghanistan compared to approximately 41 person days per hectare for wheat and 135 person days per hectare for black cumin. In addition, harvesting of poppy alone requires as much as 200 person days per hectare.<sup>83</sup> Thus the Taliban poppy ban denied jobs to hundreds of thousands of people.

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<sup>81</sup> Face to face interview with Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, Taliban government's foreign minister, Nov. 2013. Kabul, Afghanistan.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (1999). *Access to Labour: The Role of Opium in the Livelihood Strategies of Itinerant Harvesters Working in Helmand Province, Afghanistan*. Strategic Study # 4, June. Vienna: UNODC

The poppy ban came at a huge cost to poppy farmers as a number of them became poppy refugees. Many of them migrated to neighbouring countries of Pakistan and Iran in search of work or became internally displaced and moved to huge camps with the hope of receiving some food aid. The ban exacerbated the wider economic and social crisis and brought many parts of the country to economic ruin. It pushed poor farmers into greater indebtedness and the sale of livestock and land became a common strategy for meeting debt repayments and more immediate needs.<sup>84</sup> The Taliban opium ban survived for just one year as the US-led coalition invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington and toppled the Taliban regime. Many poor farmers were happy to see the fall of the Taliban regime thinking they will now be free to cultivate poppies.

### **5.5 Reversal of the Taliban's Poppy Ban**

Soon after the Taliban regime was overthrown in late 2001, impoverished Afghan farmers returned to growing the lucrative opium. Although the ban on poppy cultivation was renewed by Hamid Karzai, the president of the post-Taliban Afghan government; it lacked the power and resources to enforce it. In addition, regional warlords and powerful drug traders also exploited the weakness of the new government and encouraged farmers through several incentives such as credit to grow poppies. On the other hand, corrupt government officials also turned a blind eye as they found the drug production as a good source of income mainly in the form of bribes from farmers and drug traffickers.

Both poppy farmers and drug traders took advantage of the vacuum left by the regime change. By 2003 and 2004, the Taliban re-emerged as an insurgency and started their militant activities in different parts of the country, especially in southern and eastern provinces that border Pakistan. The Taliban insurgency got momentum in 2005 and 2006 and by 2007 and 2008; the group posed a serious security challenge to the new Afghan government and the overall US-led NATO mission. The Taliban gradually got control of several areas of the country where they allowed people to cultivate poppies and produce and traffick drugs.

The Taliban fighters went a step further and started protecting farmers' poppy fields from eradication by NATO and Afghan forces and fought against the government's eradication

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<sup>84</sup> Interviews with poppy farmers in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F1, F2, F3 and F4). Nov. 2011 and Nov. 2013.

squads. In some areas, especially Helmand and Kandahar provinces, some local Taliban commanders and foot soldiers even encouraged farmers to grow opium poppies with a promise that they will provide protection to their fields.<sup>85</sup> Taliban members went to mosques in several villages telling farmers they were allowed to cultivate opium poppies and that they will not let the government and NATO destroy their livelihoods.<sup>86</sup> By attacking government's eradication teams on a regular basis, the Taliban made the destruction of poppy fields harder and costlier. Taliban also use landmines and booby traps to prevent eradication teams from entering poppy cultivation areas.<sup>87</sup> This way, the Taliban get a lot of "political capital" and support from the local population, especially those whose livelihood are linked with the drugs economy.

With the passage of time, eradication of poppy fields became riskier for the government's counter-narcotics force. Over the past one decade, hundreds of Afghan security forces involved in poppy eradication have been killed and thousands of others have been injured in attacks by the Taliban insurgents and drug traders. The Afghan government's figures show that during the 2012 poppy eradication campaign alone, 102 Afghan soldiers, police officers and civilians died while another 127 were injured in such attacks.<sup>88</sup> The number of security incidents and fatalities and injuries during the 2013 eradication campaign was even higher with a total of 143 people killed and 93 injured.<sup>89</sup> However, the casualty figure in 2014 came down, as the eradication campaign was not as widespread as it had been over the previous two years. According to UNODC and Afghan government figures, during the 2014 eradication period, 13 lives were lost (8 police, 3 members of Afghan National Army and 2 farmers) and 26 persons were injured (13 Police, 2 Afghan Local Police, 8 members of Afghan National Army, one farmer, one tractor driver and one verifier).<sup>90</sup> In some cases, poppy farmers also resort to violence to protect their fields from destruction arguing they cannot allow the government to take away their only means of

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<sup>85</sup> Interviews with poppy farmers in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F1, F2 and F3). Nov. 2011 and Nov. 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Interviews with poppy farmers in Helmand provinces. (F3 and F4). Nov. 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Interviews with Assadullah Wafa, former governor of Helmand province. Nov. 2011. Kabul.

<sup>88</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *BBC News*, 26 February. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21548230>> [Accessed 25 Aug 2013].

<sup>89</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2014). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014: Cultivation and Production*. November. Vienna: UNODC, p.18. Available online at: <<https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan-opium-survey-2014.pdf>> [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].

<sup>90</sup> UNODC and (MCN), (2014). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014*. op.cit.

income.<sup>91</sup> In addition, many more Afghan security forces are killed and injured in fighting drug traffickers in remote areas of the country.

Although the Taliban have not issued a public statement to clarify their position on poppy cultivation after the fall of their regime, they quietly incorporated the drugs in their overall strategy. The Taliban usually have three justifications or explanations for reversing their poppy ban. Firstly, the Taliban government was toppled; therefore, they were not in power anymore and not responsible for enforcing the poppy ban. Secondly, the ban was based on a *Farman* (executive order) of Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban supreme leader, and was not a *Fatwa* (religious decree). Therefore, soon after the situation changed as a result of the fall of the regime, the executive order was repelled by another order which said that the poppy ban was not viable anymore. Thirdly, it is the need of the time to lift the poppy ban because the money received from the drug trade could be used to fight a “greater evil” -- the US-led “invaders and occupiers.”<sup>92</sup>

## 5.6 Taliban’s Sources of Income

Like insurgencies in other parts of the world, the Taliban in Afghanistan also need money to survive and sustain their violent campaign. The group needs money to buy vehicles, especially motor cycles that they usually use for transportation inside the country. Inside Afghanistan, they don’t spend a lot of money on food as they mostly go to nearby villages where local people feed them either willingly, out of fear or simply for a possible future favour. A significant portion of their funds are spent on running sanctuaries and training camps. Although a number of seriously wounded Taliban fighters are treated by the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), the group spends a lot of money on treating its wounded and sick. Some portion of their income goes into buying weapons especially explosives used in landmines and car bombs. They also buy the material used in individual suicide attacks such as explosive jackets. As the group has been facing a shortage of weapons for the past few years, it also buys grenades, rockets and other guns in the open market. In addition, they have set up a special commission which is looking after the families of those Taliban members killed in fighting or in the US or Afghan government’s custody. In addition, the group also bribes local Afghan security and judicial officials to secure the release of their jailed comrades. A significant amount of the Taliban funds are

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<sup>91</sup> Interviews with poppy farmers in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F1, F2, F3 and F4). Nov. 2011 and Nov. 2013.

<sup>92</sup> Interview with a Taliban official, (T5). 2013.

also spent on propaganda and media activities which comes under the jurisdiction of the group's Cultural Commission (*Farhangi/Kalturi Kumisyun*). They run a multi-lingual websites with audio, video and text as well as publish literature for general distribution. The aim is to win public support, promote their cause and boost the morale of their fighters.<sup>93</sup>

Although foreign assistance is invaluable to insurgents,<sup>94</sup> they are normally dependent on civilian economy for food and logistics. Like other successful insurgencies, the Taliban realize they need both local and foreign financial sources in case one or more of them are evaporated. Therefore, from the very early stages of their insurgency, the group developed multiple sources of income. The group covers its costs through a variety of schemes and run a sophisticated financial network, both inside and outside the country.

The Taliban's annual income from 2011 onwards was estimated to be US\$400 million<sup>95</sup> obtained from more than ten sources including *ushr*<sup>96</sup> (10% Islamic tax on all agricultural produce including opium), *zakat* (2<sup>1/2</sup>% Islamic annual tax on money and other assets), money secured from domestic businesses including telecommunication companies/ mobile telephone operators, money obtained from reconstruction/development projects/NGOs, mining companies, money taken from private security firms involved in transportation of NATO supplies and other trucking companies, charity/donations inside the country, kidnapping (human and vehicles), extortion. Another major source of financing for the Taliban is protection payments from legitimate businesses operating in Taliban-controlled territory. In addition, they receive money from many foreign donors, mainly in Pakistan as well as in the Gulf countries where the Taliban collect donations from rich Arabs and Afghan businessmen in the name of *Zakat* and *Khairaat* (charity).<sup>97</sup> It is worth noting that,

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<sup>93</sup> Interviews with Taliban members/sympathisers (T1, T2 and T3) and local journalists in several provinces and Kabul, (J1, J2, and J3). Nov 2011 and Nov. 2013. See also Azami, Dawood, (2010b). Taliban harness power of the web. *BBC News*, 17 July. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/8570742.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8570742.stm)> [Accessed 5 Oct 2014].

<sup>94</sup> Joe, Anthony James, (2011). What is Guerrilla Warfare? In: Coyne, Christopher J., Mathers, Rachel L. (Editors), *The Handbook on the Political Economy of War*. Cheltenham (UK): Edward Elgar Publishing, pp.59-108.

<sup>95</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *First report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Implementation Monitoring Team Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 1988 (2011) Concerning the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities*. 5 September. New York: United Nations, p. 15. Available online at: <[http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2012\\_683.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2012_683.pdf)> [Accessed 30 Dec 2013]; See also Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth, (2014). Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition. *Congressional Research Service Report* (R43540). 9<sup>th</sup> May. p.1. Available online at: <<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43540.pdf>> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

<sup>96</sup> Beyond the opiate economy, Taliban levy taxes on all forms of trade and agriculture in areas under their control.

<sup>97</sup> Interviews with Afghan labourers and members of diaspora in Gulf countries of UAE and Qatar (D1, D2, and D3). 2013 and 2014.

the ratio and percentage of income from each of the above sources have been different from time to time depend on several factors including the opportunities to exploit and the generosity of donors.

Some regional and international militant groups also support them financially. Despite Islamabad denials, the Afghan government as well as some US officials say that elements within the Pakistani government also give financial support to the Afghan Taliban.<sup>98</sup> In recent years, Iran has also been accused of supporting the Afghan insurgency.<sup>99</sup> Money raised locally is mainly spent on local operations and the rest is channelled upwards to the Taliban's Economic/Financial Commission (*Iqtisaadi/Mali Kumisiyun*) which serves as finance ministry. However, most of the money is collected by the Financial Commission and then distributed among different organs and fronts.

Foreign aid going into Afghanistan has been one of the richest sources of the Taliban funding. They raised millions of dollars annually from the money that have flowed into the country since 2001.<sup>100</sup> Although the Taliban get a fraction of the billions of dollars donated for Afghanistan's reconstruction, they maximise their income by taking a cut at various steps along the way. In 2012, the UN Security Council's Taliban Sanctions Monitoring Team reported that the estimated Taliban income from contracts funded by the US and other overseas donors range from 10 to 20 percent of the total.<sup>101</sup>

Nearly all major projects, especially in or near the Taliban controlled areas, pay them a healthy cut. This way, international donors, primarily the US, have been financing their own enemy. The Taliban usually negotiate a price with the contractors, mostly indirectly through a third person or sometimes call the contractor or the person incharge of the project directly on the telephone. The money paid to the Taliban depends on the nature of

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<sup>98</sup> Gall, Carlotta, (2014). *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*. New York: Harcourt Publishing Company; Waldman, Matt, (2010). *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents*. Crisis States working papers series no.2, no. 18. Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science; Boone, Jon, (2015). Musharraf: Pakistan and India's Backing for 'Proxies' in Afghanistan Must Stop. *Guardian*, Friday 13 February. Available online at: <[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban?CMP=share_btn_tw)> [Accessed 13 Feb 2015].

<sup>99</sup> Interviews with Taliban members/sympathisers (T1), Nov., 2011; Interview with a Taliban official, (T5). 2013; Interviews with poppy farmers in Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F1, F2 and F3). Nov. 2011 and Nov. 2013; Interviews with local journalists local journalists in several provinces and Kabul, (J1, J2, and J3). Nov., 2011 and Nov. 2013; See also Whitlock, Craig, (2009). Afghan Insurgents' Diverse Funding Sources Pose Challenges. *Washington Post*, 27 September. Available online at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/26/AR2009092602707.html>> [Accessed 14 April 2014]; Boone, Jon, (2010). WikiLeaks: Afghan MPs and religious scholars 'on Iran payroll'. *Guardian*, 2 December. Available online at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/02/afghan-mps-scholars-iran-payroll>> [Accessed 16 Dec 2014].

<sup>100</sup> MacKenzie, Jean, (2009). Funding the Afghan Taliban. *Global Post*, 7 August. Available online at: <<http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/taliban/funding-the-taliban?page=full>> [Accessed on 30 Dec 2013].

<sup>101</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *op.cit.*

contract and the amount of money involved; sometimes it is a fixed price and in other cases, a percentage is taken from the overall cost of the project which goes upto 20% in some cases. Contractors included the money they siphon off for the insurgents in their budget when they bid for a contract from the Afghan government or an international donor. According to a 2012 UN report, in just one province, Farah (western Afghanistan), the Taliban took up to 40 percent of the money coming in to pay for the government's National Solidarity Programme, the community reconstruction projects.<sup>102</sup> If a contractor refuses to pay the Taliban or the negotiations fail, there will be a cost to pay. The property or machinery related to that particular project is damaged or destroyed or camps where engineer/s and workers stay or the vehicles carrying them are attacked. In some cases, they are kidnapped and then released for a higher price or at the end of a protracted process. In many parts of the country, an understanding has developed between the Taliban, contractors and investors where they operate under unwritten procedures.<sup>103</sup>

In addition, the US/NATO troops supply convoys have been another major source of income for the Taliban for many years. The Taliban have successfully exploited the transportation market which expanded with the establishment of military bases and outposts. The arrival of more foreign troops to Afghanistan created more financial opportunities and resulted in a bigger income for the insurgents. The supply needs of international military scattered across the country have been mostly met by private security companies that protect convoys of trucks carrying American supplies to a network of military bases and offices. These contractors are forced to pay to protect American supply routes controlled by warlords, tribal militias and the Taliban. These funds add up to a huge amount of money for the Taliban who are paid for not attacking the trucks carrying US/NATO supplies. It is estimated that 10 to 20 percent of the Pentagon's logistics contracts go to the insurgents.<sup>104</sup> While testifying at a 2009 Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Afghanistan, the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton acknowledged that: "there's a lot of evidence that, in addition to funding from the Gulf and the illegal narcotics trade, that siphoning off contractual money from the international community and the – in terms of just outright fraud and corruption, but also intimidation and extortion, is a major source of funding for the Taliban."<sup>105</sup> A 2010 report by

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<sup>102</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *op.cit.*

<sup>103</sup> Interviews with Afghan businessmen in Kabul, and villagers in Kandahar and Helmand (V5 and V6) Nov 2011 and Nov 2013.

<sup>104</sup> Roston, Aram, (2009). How the US Funds the Taliban. *The Nation*, 11 November. Available online at: <<http://www.thenation.com/article/how-us-funds-taliban>> [Accessed 30 Dec 2013].

<sup>105</sup> Clinton, Hillary, (2009b). Hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Afghanistan: As Delivered by the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. 2 December. Transcript available at:



congressional investigators entitled Warlord, Inc. found that the US military funds a massive protection racket in Afghanistan, indirectly pays tens of millions of dollars to warlords, corrupt public officials and the Taliban to ensure safe passage of its supply convoys to US bases.<sup>106</sup>

In addition, the Taliban fighters regularly attack security posts, military convoys and other government/NATO installations. The weapons, vehicles and other valuables captured in such raids are considered as “spoils of war” and become the property of the fighters involved in the attack. The Taliban’s “Economic Commission” usually buys those weapons and other seized items for an estimated price. The equipment thus become the Taliban’s collective property and are then handed over to the “Military Commission” for distribution among different fronts and fighting groups.<sup>107</sup>

The Taliban have also targeted gemstone and mining operations. Afghanistan is rich in gemstone deposits most of which is extracted illegally. It is difficult for the authorities to monitor and control these deposits as they are distributed throughout the country, notably the Panjshir Valley (emeralds), Jegdalek (rubies and sapphires), Nuristan (emeralds, rubies, aquamarine, tourmaline, kunzite, and spodumene), Helmand (flourite), Herat (aquamarine and tourmaline), and Badaskhan (sphene, peridot, aquamarine, ruby, spinel, lazurite and lapis lazuli). The World Bank estimates that the country’s gemstone industry could be worth up to US\$300 million per year.<sup>108</sup> Many insurgent commanders impose a “tax” on local Afghans or take a cut from marble and gemstone extraction as well as timber and antiquity smugglers. Illegal marble mining has been a very lucrative business for the Taliban in many provinces especially southern Helmand province. In its 2014 annual report, the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team on the Taliban described the marble mining as the second major revenue source in Helmand. Identifying from 25 to 30 illegal mining operations in Helmand province alone, the UN report adds that “this Taliban revenue stream is significantly larger than \$10 million a year.”<sup>109</sup>

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<<http://www.understandingwar.org/reference/senate-armed-services-committee-hearing-afghanistan-transcript>> [Accessed 30 April 2013].

<sup>106</sup> DeYoung, Karen, (2010). U.S. Indirectly Paying Afghan Warlords as Part of Security Contract. *Washington Post*, Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> June. Available online at: <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/21/AR2010062104628.html>> [Accessed 05 June 2012].

<sup>107</sup> Interviews with Taliban members/sympathisers (T1, T2 and T3). 2012 and 2013.

<sup>108</sup> World Bank, (2012). Afghanistan Diagnostics Trade Integration Study. Report No. 70645-AF, November. Available online at: <[http://www.enhancedif.org/en/system/files/uploads/afghanistan\\_dtis2012.pdf](http://www.enhancedif.org/en/system/files/uploads/afghanistan_dtis2012.pdf)> [Accessed 18 April 2014].

<sup>109</sup> Reuters, (2014). *Taliban Changing From Religious Group to Criminal Enterprise – UN*. 13 June. Available online at: <<http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/06/13/us-afghanistan-taliban-un-idUKKBN0EO2K520140613>> [Accessed 15 June 2014].

In areas of Afghanistan controlled by the Taliban, the insurgents also rely on donations which can be forced or voluntary motivated by religious or ideological convictions. The funds are generally extorted from businessmen and wealthy landowners in the name of *Zakat* (annual Islamic tax on one's assets), *Khairat* (charity) or simply "assistance with the Mujahideen (Taliban fighters)." Major drug traders also make large ad hoc donations to the Taliban to obtain their favour and cooperation. Some local people in various areas under the Taliban's influence complain this kind of "forced payment" and say that they fear they might be labelled as anti-Taliban or collaborators with the Afghan government or "foreign occupiers" for refusing or not paying the insurgents. Even in the government controlled areas, several landowners and businessmen are asked or encouraged to pay the Taliban. In most of these cases, local Taliban commanders call potential donors and ask for a donation.<sup>110</sup>

However, drugs are said to be the biggest source of income for the Taliban, especially over the four years when their revenues from other sources reduced. The US and NATO officials have called illicit drugs as "the insurgency's chief source of revenue" which "buys the bomb makers and the bombs, the bullets and the trigger-pullers."<sup>111</sup> First of all, the Taliban's drug income mechanism consists of several segments and stages. The Taliban officials charge poppy farmers a 10% religious tax called *ushr* usually at the farm gate and in kind. Secondly, Taliban foot soldiers augment their pay by working in the poppy fields, especially during harvest – an activity which brings them "sufficient funds for weapons and supplies."<sup>112</sup> Thirdly, the Taliban also receive money for protecting laboratories where opium is processed and converted into heroin. Fourthly, drug Traffickers and truckers pay them a transit tariff for the drugs smuggled out of the Taliban territory and sometimes for escorting the drugs convoy. Fifthly, big drug traders make regular payments to the Taliban leaders mostly in a bid to earn their favours and avoid any trouble. Sixthly, some local Taliban commanders have their own shares in the drug trade and get the money when drugs are delivered at the intended destinations.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Interviews with Afghan businessmen in Kabul (B1, B2 and B3), and villagers in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, (V5 and V6). Nov 2011 and Nov 2013.

<sup>111</sup> Shanker, Thom, (2008). Obstacle in Bid to Curb Afghan Trade in Narcotics. *New York Times*, 23 Dec. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/23/world/asia/23poppy.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/23/world/asia/23poppy.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 14 April 2014].

<sup>112</sup> Farrell, Theo and Giustozzi, Antonio, (2013). The Taliban at War: Inside the Helmand Insurgency, 2004–2012. *International Affairs* 89, (4): 845–871. (Quote from p. 896). Available online at: <[http://static1.squarespace.com/static/52908c90e4b023ca755eb442/t/53675c80e4b0e77173cc09af/1399282816124/89\\_4\\_03\\_FarrellGiustozzi.pdf](http://static1.squarespace.com/static/52908c90e4b023ca755eb442/t/53675c80e4b0e77173cc09af/1399282816124/89_4_03_FarrellGiustozzi.pdf)> [Accessed 14 March 2014].

<sup>113</sup> Interview with General Abdul Manan Farahi, head of Counter-Terrorism at the Afghan Interior Ministry. Oct 2012.

Seventhly, since 2013, the Taliban have been increasingly renting out the government land, especially in areas they control, to farmers and sharecroppers for the cultivation of opium poppies.<sup>114</sup> Local Taliban commanders or representatives of the Taliban's Economic Commission have invested in some of these schemes in several districts of southern Helmand province, including Kajaki, Sangin and Musa Qala, where the Taliban have hired farmers as sharecroppers. Such fields are usually irrigated through water pumped out of deep wells, ditches or river. The amount of renting the field (which is usually in kind in the form of opium) mostly depends on the access to water which is a very precious commodity in most of Afghanistan. Generally four main sources of irrigation are used such as rivers/streams, rain, underground water channels (called *Karez*) and deep wells (called *Bawrai* or *Barmah* depending on their depth and the way they are dug or drilled). Over the past few years, farmers, especially in drought stricken and water-scarce regions of southern Afghanistan have been increasingly relying on deep water wells that are dug or drilled. Some of such wells were drilled by NGOs and ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) contractors as part of Afghanistan's reconstruction plan but are now used for poppy cultivation. Water is pumped up from these wells and ditches through generators run on fuel, electricity<sup>115</sup> and solar panels. Like in other crops, rent farming is also common in poppy cultivation and both sides get their due share of the produce depending on the investment they make. The harvest is usually divided in half if the sharecropper provides inputs and work. If the landowner (in this case, the local Taliban commander or the representative of the Taliban's Economic Commission) provides inputs, the Taliban receive 2/3 and the sharecropper gets 1/3 of the harvest. Local Taliban commanders have also rented the plots of those landowners who have left their homes and villages in the Taliban controlled areas because of their association with the government or opposition to the Taliban.<sup>116</sup>

Although it is generally believed that the Taliban obtain most of their money from the drug trade, opinion has been divided on the actual amounts. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the cumulative revenue from opiate farming and trade accruing to the Taliban insurgents in the 2005-2008 period was estimated at US\$ 350-650 million, or an annual average of US\$ 90-160 million in Afghanistan alone.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Interview with Mohammad Abdali, counter-narcotics chief of Helmand Province. Oct. 2014.

<sup>115</sup> In Helmand it is usually from the Kajaki dam. Taliban also charge a fee for the Kajaki dam electricity in areas of Helmand province they control. They have fixed prices for household use and pumping water from wells/ditches.

<sup>116</sup> Interviews with farmers in southern Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F1, F2, F3 and F4). Nov 2011 and Nov 2013. Also Interview with Mohammad Abdali, counter-narcotics chief of Helmand Province. Oct. 2014.

<sup>117</sup> UNODC, (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency*. *op.cit.* p. 9.

However, this estimate didn't include insurgents' potential revenues from other drug-related activities (labs, imports of precursor chemicals need to convert opium into heroin) in Afghanistan and from the US\$1 billion opiate trade in Pakistan. A 2008 report estimates that opium trade finances more than 40 percent of the Taliban's insurgency.<sup>118</sup> In 2009, the US military estimated that the Taliban collected \$70 million annually from poppy farmers and narcotics traffickers.<sup>119</sup> On the other hand, the UNODC estimated that in 2009, the Afghan Taliban's income from the drug trade was around US\$155 million, Afghan drug traffickers earned US\$2.2 billion and the Afghan farmers received US\$440 million.<sup>120</sup> A New York Times report on 18 October 2009 quoted UN and Pentagon officials saying that the Taliban proceeds from the illicit drug trade alone ranged from \$70 million to \$400 million a year.<sup>121</sup> According to the UN Security Council's Taliban Sanctions Monitoring Team, the Taliban income for the year 21 March 2011 to 20 March 2012 (the Afghan calendar year) was around \$400 million of which an estimated \$100 million to \$155 million annually came from the drug trade -- a sum that may represent more than a quarter of total Taliban funds.<sup>122</sup> According to the 2012 Afghan government figures, "insurgents and warlords" received an estimated \$200-400 million US dollars annually from drug trafficking.<sup>123</sup> Meanwhile, Zarar Ahmad Muqbel, Afghanistan's minister for counter-narcotics, calculated that the Taliban made at least \$155 million from the poppy crop in 2012.<sup>124</sup> As the cultivation of poppies expanded and insecurity increased, the estimates of the Taliban drugs revenues went higher. In 2014, Afghan government officials expected the Taliban yield from that year's poppy harvest to be upto \$50 million only from Helmand, the biggest opium producing province.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Stanekzai, Mohammad Masoom, (2008). *Thwarting Afghanistan's Insurgency: A Pragmatic Approach Towards Peace and Reconciliation*. Washington, DC; United States Institute of Peace, p 2. Available online at: <<http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr212.pdf>> [Accessed 15 April 2014].

<sup>119</sup> Whitlock, Craig, (2009). Afghan Insurgents' Diverse Funding Sources Pose Challenges. *op.cit.*

<sup>120</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2011). *The Global Afghan Opium Trade: A Threat Assessment*. Vienna. P5. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Global\\_Afghan\\_Opium\\_Trade\\_2011-web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Global_Afghan_Opium_Trade_2011-web.pdf)> [Accessed 10 April 2014].

<sup>121</sup> Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban's War Chest. *New York Times*. Article published on 18 October. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 30 Dec 2013].

<sup>122</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *op.cit.*; See also Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth, (2014). Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition. *Congressional Research Service Report* (R43540). 9<sup>th</sup> May. p. 1. Available online at: <<http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43540.pdf>> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

<sup>123</sup> Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Government of Afghanistan, (2012). *Afghanistan Drug Report 2012*. Executive Summary and Policy Implications. Available online at: <[http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=sn4gbBg\\_g6w%3D&tabid=12254&mid=15756&language=en-US](http://unama.unmissions.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=sn4gbBg_g6w%3D&tabid=12254&mid=15756&language=en-US)> [Accessed 15 April 2014].

<sup>124</sup> Rubin, Alissa J., (2012). Opium Cultivation Rose This Year in Afghanistan, U.N. Survey Shows. *New York Times*, 20 November. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/21/world/asia/afghan-opium-cultivation-rose-in-2012-un-says.html>> [Accessed 10 April 2014].

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Mohammad Naeem Baloch, the governor of Helmand province. Jan. 2014.

After insisting for years that drugs had been the main source of income for the Taliban, Western officials later shifted their focus to foreign donations. By 2009, US officials were “surprised to learn” that foreign donations, rather than drugs, had been the single largest source of cash for the Taliban. Richard Holbrooke, the US’s special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, said in June 2009 that it was “simply not true” that “the money all came from drugs in Afghanistan.”<sup>126</sup> According to Holbrooke, private donors, including some from Persian Gulf countries, were increasingly believed to be a far more important source of money for the Taliban than the opium trade.<sup>127</sup> The Middle East, especially the Gulf countries, has been a main foreign source of income for the Taliban for years. Taliban leaders usually send fund-raisers to a number of Arab countries to keep their coffers brimming with cash. In 2009, the CIA estimated that the Taliban leaders and their allies received \$106 million in 2008 from donors outside Afghanistan.<sup>128</sup> This view was supported by General Stanley McChrystal, the top commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, in his 2008 report assessing the overall state of the Afghan war. He voiced scepticism that clamping down on the opium trade, even if possible, would crimp the Taliban’s overall finances unless other funding sources remained intact.<sup>129</sup> Following these revelations, a new assessment emerged that the Taliban receive less than half of their revenues from the drug trade while other sources accounted for much of the rest.<sup>130</sup>

In order to “bankrupt” the Taliban and their affiliated groups, the US and its allies have been engaged in a number of initiatives including the prosecution of individuals and organisations accused of providing material support to the insurgents and the freezing of assets of dozens of financiers and networks with alleged links to militancy. International organisations including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) -- an inter-governmental policy group tasked with finding regulatory fixes to money laundering and terrorist financing -- have also participated in this crackdown. Meanwhile, the United Nations is at the forefront of efforts

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<sup>126</sup> Tavernise, Sabrina and Masood, Salman, (2009). U.S. Plans New Hunt for Sponsors of Taliban. *New York Times*, 5 June. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/06/world/asia/06pstan.html>> [Accessed 15 April 2014]; Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban’s War Chest. *op.cit.*;

<sup>127</sup> Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban’s War Chest. *op.cit.*; Tavernise, Sabrina and Masood, Salman, (2009). U.S. Plans New Hunt for Sponsors of Taliban. *op.cit.*; McChrystal, Gen. Stanley A., (2009). COMISAF’s Initial Assessment. 30 August. Available online at: <[http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment\\_Redacted\\_092109.pdf](http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf)> [Accessed 15 April 2014];

<sup>128</sup> Whitlock, Craig, (2009). Afghan Insurgents’ Diverse Funding Sources Pose Challenges. *op.cit.*

<sup>129</sup> Whitlock, Craig, (2009). Afghan Insurgents’ Diverse Funding Sources Pose Challenges. *op.cit.*; Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban’s War Chest. *op.cit.*

<sup>130</sup> Tavernise, Sabrina and Masood, Salman, (2009). U.S. Plans New Hunt for Sponsors of Taliban. *op.cit.*; Reuters, (2009). *Who is Funding the Afghan Taliban? You don’t Want to Know*. 13 August. Available online at: <<http://blogs.reuters.com/global/2009/08/13/who-is-funding-the-afghan-taliban-you-dont-want-to-know/>> [Accessed 30 Dec 2013].

aimed at impeding the ability of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban to fund their activities and sustain their infrastructure. As part of its “1267” list, the UN targeted Al-Qaeda and the Taliban financiers and subjected hundreds of individuals and entities to asset freezes and travel restrictions as part of the UN so-called “black-lists.”<sup>131</sup>

## 5.7 Taliban Insurgency and the Opium Economy

The Taliban’s revenue generation has been uneven and the extent of their income from different sources has changed overtime.<sup>132</sup> In some provinces, such as Helmand, Nimroz and Kandahar, local fighting groups are not only financially self-sustaining, they also send extra money to the central budget, i.e. the Taliban’s “Economic Commission.” The funds are usually transferred to the Commission in cash or via “*hawala*”, an informal money transfer system which doesn’t involve moving any physical currency. According to the 2014 annual report by the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team on the Taliban, the group spends 20 percent of the money on fighting in Helmand, while 80 percent is sent to the central leadership for redistribution to needier Taliban elsewhere.<sup>133</sup> The Taliban’s expenditure in a particular area also varies and depends on a number of factors such as the intensity of fighting, the number of their fighters and the freedom of movement. According to a 2013 UN report, the Taliban spent around US\$40 million per year to finance their activities in the south-central Urozgan province while they were able to generate around \$8 million a year through the drug trade and extortions from the province’s local economy.<sup>134</sup>

Since around 2011, the Taliban’s reliance on drug money increased further due to two major developments -- the US/NATO troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and the Arab Spring. Donations for the Taliban from many Middle Eastern countries, especially the Gulf region, substantially decreased since the start of the “Arab Spring” in Tunisia in December 2010. When people in several Arab countries took to the streets in a revolutionary wave of

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<sup>131</sup> Bruno, Greg, (2010). Al-Qaeda’s Financial Pressures. *The Council on Foreign Relations*. Available online at: <<http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/al-qaedas-financial-pressures/p21347>> [Accessed 12 April 2014].

<sup>132</sup> Author’s own observations and interviews with Taliban members/sympathisers (T1, T2, T3), villagers (V1, V3 and V4); local businessmen (B1, B2) and reconstruction workers and Afghan and NATO officials. 2011, 2012 and 2013.

<sup>133</sup> Reuters, (2014). *Taliban Changing From Religious Group to Criminal Enterprise – UN. op.cit.*

<sup>134</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2013). *Third Report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team. Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 2082 (2012) Concerning the Taliban and Other Associated Individuals and Entities Constituting a Threat to the Peace, Stability and Security of Afghanistan*. 11 November. Available at <<http://cdn.thejournal.ie/media/2013/11/n1349273.pdf>> [Accessed 30 Dec 2013].



uprisings to topple their autocratic regimes, many traditional rich Arab donors diverted their funds to support the causes closer to home such as the uprisings against Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Al-Gaddafi in Libya, Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen, and Bashar Al-Assad in Syria.<sup>135</sup>

The money the Taliban receive from contractors, mainly private security companies that protect convoys of trucks carrying supplies to US/NATO military bases has also decreased due to the gradual withdrawal of international forces in 2013 and 2014. The sharp decreases in the number of US military bases across the country meant there was less demand for the transportation of fuel, food and other items. The Taliban usually got “protection money” from this logistics operation and charged each truck at different stages of its journey to the final destination. Meanwhile, as the number of international forces decreased in Afghanistan, the Taliban’s insurgency expanded further and group opened new fronts which put more pressure on its budget. Although thousands of Taliban fighters have been killed since the US led invasion of Afghanistan, the Taliban insurgency remained resilient and attracted new volunteers. So, the shrinking of two major sources of income prompted the Taliban to exploit the drug trade further to meet their increasing needs.

Although some Taliban commanders were already involved in drug trade both before the Taliban emerged and continued their business as usual during their rule (1996-2001), the group’s reliance on opium income has become deeper over the past five.<sup>136</sup> Many local Taliban commanders in opium-producing areas, particularly in southern Helmand and Kandahar provinces, are now linked to the drug trade in many ways and play an important role in both the upstream and downstream sides of the narcotics industry. Unlike the past when the Taliban were only going after the 10 percent *usher* tax and protection money, there are indications that they are now more involved than ever in almost all stages of the drug trade from encouragement of poppy cultivation to farming and from protection to trade and trafficking.

Many local commanders or their representatives encourage farmers to cultivate opium poppies, lend them seed money, buy the opium paste from them, refine it into exportable

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<sup>135</sup> Interviews with Taliban members/sympathisers (T1, T2 and T3) and local journalists (J1, J2, and J3). Nov 2011 and Nov. 2013. For details of Arab Spring, see Dabashi, Hamid, (2012). *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism*. London: Zed Books; Lynch, Marc, (2012). *The Arab Uprising: The Wave of Protest that Toppled the Status Quo and the Struggle for a New Middle East*. New York: PublicAffairs.

<sup>136</sup> Moreau, Ron, (2013). The Taliban’s New Role as Afghanistan’s Drug Mafia. *Newsweek*, 12 June. Available online at <<http://www.newsweek.com/2013/06/12/talibans-new-role-afghanistans-drug-mafia-237524.html>> [Accessed 15 June 2014].

opium and heroin and finally help in the transportation of drugs to other parts of the country, especially to Afghanistan's shared borders with Iran and Pakistan. During my field research and interviews, it emerged that local Taliban commanders or representatives of the Taliban's "*Economic/Financial Commission*" (*Iqtisaadi/Mali Kumisyun*), which serves as a finance ministry, usually keep a register of all the farmers and farms in opium producing regions. They visit the fields at several stages and finally get their share based on the size of the field and the total yield, mostly in kind. Farmers cannot hide or cheat as everything is recorded.<sup>137</sup> This researcher also found that fighters involved in protecting the poppy fields from the government's eradication campaigns get a percentage of opium or its monetary equivalent after the crop is obtained. In some areas, Taliban fighters usually supplement their pay by protecting poppy fields and working there during the harvest. Different areas in the two main opium producing provinces, Helmand and Kandahar, have been divided between different commanders. In some cases, they either have their own share in the drug trade or poppy fields are owned by members of their family or clan.

The Taliban's involvements in the drug trade and income from other "illegal sources" have raised concerns about "increasing criminality" in its rank and file. The question now arises what has been the impact of Taliban's involvement in narcotics on their ideology and motivation? According to a 2014 United Nations report, the Taliban's reliance on extortion and kidnappings, along with narcotics and illegal mining operations, is transforming it into a criminal enterprise hungry for profit. The annual report by the UN Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team on the Taliban adds that "these activities increasingly change the character of parts of the movement from a group based on religiously couched ideology to a coalition of increasingly criminalized networks, guided by the profit motive."<sup>138</sup> In February 2015, another UN Security Council report said that "their involvement in criminal activity, including narcotics trafficking, illicit mining, collusion with "transport mafias" and kidnapping for ransom, appears to be increasing."<sup>139</sup> The report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team added that "at times, the Taliban have attempted to generate resources directly by acting as a criminal body. On other occasions, they have extracted revenue from, or in cooperation with, criminal

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<sup>137</sup> Interviews with farmers in Helmand and Kandahar provinces (F1, F2, F3 and F4). Nov 2011 and Nov 2013; Interviews with local journalists (J1, J2, and J3). Nov 2011 and Nov. 2013.

<sup>138</sup> Reuters, (2014). *Taliban Changing From Religious Group to Criminal Enterprise* – UN. *op.cit.*

<sup>139</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2015). Letter dated 2 February 2015 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. 2 February. Available online at: <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SpecialReports/20150209%202160-I-p-special-report.pdf> [Accessed 15 Feb 2015].



networks.”<sup>140</sup> The report also identified a number of alleged Taliban traffickers who tap into the supply chain at every stage of the narcotics trade. In addition to the allegations that the Taliban are increasingly benefitting from criminal activities, some reports have suggested that the Taliban are paid monthly salaries with each fighter typically earning US\$200-500 a month.<sup>141</sup>

However, this research found that most Taliban fighters are volunteers motivated by a cause or ideology. Majority of them don’t get regular salaries and are usually paid by their superiors to cover the cost of the day to day living. A number of fighters spend their own money while in the field and some even make their own financial contributions instead of taking money from the Taliban treasury. Although there are signs of criminality, such as kidnappings and extortion, within the Taliban insurgency, it is still mainly driven by ideology rather than money and control over resources. The Taliban remains a very hierarchical organisation with their finances controlled by the centre (mainly its “Economic Commission”) leaving little room for corruption. However, some of the group’s leaders have accumulated personal wealth and seems to be richer than what they had in the past. The reason is not always corruption and stealing of group’s funds. In addition, it doesn’t mean that the group’s general motivation has changed and is now driven by an economic agenda. The Taliban have deliberately left some room for accumulating personal wealth. The Taliban members including their leaders usually get two types of donations – a), for their own personal/family use and b), for the insurgency in general. Some of them, who reportedly live in Pakistan, own properties and fancy cars. It doesn’t mean that owning a nice car or a big house has become a main priority for most of the group’s members. Even the well off Taliban leaders consider their newly acquired wealth as a by-product of their insurgency not the main purpose.<sup>142</sup>

Although it is also difficult to precisely determine the income and expenditure of the Taliban, the group’s annual revenues are estimated to be around US\$400.<sup>143</sup> Meanwhile, the cost of running the Taliban insurgency is much lower than the money spent by the Afghan and

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<sup>140</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2015). *op.cit.*

<sup>141</sup> Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban’s War Chest. *op.cit.*

<sup>142</sup> The Taliban members/sympathisers as well as villagers and local tribal elders interviewed for this research showed that, although money is an incentive for many, financial reward is not the main motivation of most Taliban fighters. Interviews with local politicians and elders in Kandahar and Kabul, (V5, B1, P1, P2, P3); Interviews with Taliban members/sympathisers (T1, T2, T3, T4) Nov., 2011, Nov., 2012, Nov., 2013, Oct., 2014.

<sup>143</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *op.cit.*; Schmitt, Eric (2009). Many Sources Feed Taliban’s War Chest. *New York Times*. Article published on 18 October. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/asia/19taliban.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 05 June 2012]; Haaretz, (2014). *Hamas Among Richest Terror Groups Worldwide – Second Only to ISIS*. Article published on 12 Nov. Available online at: <<http://www.haaretz.com/news/middle-east/1.625939>> [Accessed 15 Nov 2014].

US/NATO security forces. The Taliban insurgency is also cheaper as compared to other insurgencies such as FARC (Colombia), PKK (Turkey) and LTTE (Sri Lanka). The Taliban fighters don't have a special uniform or boots and don't spend money on other protocols and formalities. They have a simple life style and wear the local Afghan dress. In addition, they don't live in purpose built barracks but live in villages among ordinary people. According to ISAF's estimates, the cost to the Taliban of mounting attacks during 2011 was between US\$100-155.<sup>144</sup> Meanwhile, a UN Security Council's report estimated the annual Taliban income from the drug trade in 2011-2012 to be between US\$100-155 million.<sup>145</sup> If these figures are accurate, it means that only the drugs income covers all the costs of war while the money the Taliban receive from other sources were spent on maintaining the overall insurgency or were a surplus.

Despite the Taliban's huge financial gains from the narcotics industry, the group is still a minor player compared to other major actors. The total value of the opium economy within Afghanistan in 2012 was US\$2 billion while it was US\$3 billion in 2013.<sup>146</sup> This makes the Taliban's income to lower than poppy farmers and drug traders. In addition, corrupt government officials earn much more in bribes and extortion than what the Taliban get from the drugs economy. According to the UN Security Council's Taliban Sanctions Monitoring Team, the "Taliban share, while sizeable in absolute terms, is not particularly large in percentage terms. This suggests that the Taliban do not make great efforts to exploit this potential source of revenue."<sup>147</sup>

It is worth noting that despite their increasing reliance on the drugs industry, the Taliban have never acknowledged publically that the group has been involved in the drug trade that it receives millions of dollars annually from it. They have been careful about their public and international image and do not want to be portrayed as drug smugglers. A few days after a 2015 UN Security Council's report, which said that the Taliban had been increasingly benefitting from criminal activities,<sup>148</sup> the Taliban issued a statement calling it a document full of "baseless allegations." They also rejected the notion that their members

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<sup>144</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *op.cit.*

<sup>145</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *op.cit.* p.1.

<sup>146</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2013b). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013*. December. Vienna: UNODC, p.10. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_Opium\\_survey\\_2013\\_web\\_small.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_survey_2013_web_small.pdf)> [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].

<sup>147</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *op.cit.*

<sup>148</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2015). *op.cit.*

had “links with the mafia circles” and stressed that their economic means are “legal/Islamic.”<sup>149</sup>

The Taliban have the option of full involvement in the drug trade and controlling the whole opium industry. However, they understand the negativity associated with it and the damage it will do to their cause and reputation. According to Jean-Luc Lemahieu, head of the UN’s Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan, “not all in the Taliban are happy about the drug business, but undeniably too many of them are involved.”<sup>150</sup> The Taliban’s involvement in the drug trade has been mostly facilitative; not determinative. Taliban’s original goals and grievances did not disappear with their deeper involvement in the drug economy. The group’s aim is not to accumulate wealth and get rich for the sake of it. In addition, so far, there are no indications that its main goals have been affected by its involvement in illicit drug trade or it is now motivated by greed. As the Taliban control certain parts of the country, some people who were already involved in the drug trade have either joined the group or liaise with it to have the freedom of cultivating opium poppies and trafficking drugs. Therefore, the narcotics industry brought the Taliban and the drug traders closer as their interests are overlapping. Narcotics finance insurgents while their violence weakens government control and encourages poppy cultivation. Similarly, drug traders fund the Taliban because stronger Taliban means the ability to produce and traffick drugs with ease. It seems that, like many other insurgent groups elsewhere in the world, the Taliban have been adapting to new realities and are quick to exploit and replace the means and sources of income.

## 5.8 Conclusion

The drugs economy already existed in Afghanistan when the Taliban emerged in 1994. The group’s “love-and-hate” relationship with the narcotics trade predates the 2001 US-led invasion of Afghanistan which toppled its regime. The Taliban declared the use of drugs *haram* (forbidden) on religious grounds but allowed the opium trade and taxed its production and trafficking since the movement was launched in Afghanistan in 1994. When the Taliban banned the cultivation of opium poppies in 2000, the production in areas

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<sup>149</sup> Taliban’s statement sent to media by email by one of their two main spokesmen on 11 February 2015.

<sup>150</sup> Graham-Harrison, Emma, (2014). Drug Trade Could Splinter Afghanistan into Fragmented Criminal State – UN. *Guardian*, 6 Jan. Available online at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/05/drug-trade-afghanistan-fragmented-criminal-state>> [Accessed 05 September 2014].

under their control practically disappeared. However, after the Taliban were removed from power, the group quietly incorporated the drugs trade into its strategy.

The drug economy has served as a quadruple-pronged tool for the group: a), the drug trade has been one of the major sources of funding for the group and helps it to buy weapons (guns, ammunitions, explosives) and pay for other expenditures including food, medicine, clothing and propaganda; b), the expansion of poppy cultivation in post-Taliban Afghanistan highlights inability of the Afghan government and its international allies to tackle the narcotics problem. This way, the Taliban exploit this weakness and highlight the fact that their ban on poppy growing was successful while the current government in Kabul lacks control over vast territories of the country; c), the Taliban also use the drug money to corrupt and weaken the Afghan government institutions and thus challenge the legitimacy of the government; d) some of their commanders see the drug trade as part of their overall insurgency against what they call “occupying powers” and consider it as a tool to weaken Western societies.

Meanwhile, by protecting poppy fields from the government’s eradication efforts, the Taliban earn political capital and good will of all actors in the drugs economy, especially farmers. They portray themselves as the protectors of poor farmers whose livelihood are threatened and destroyed through the eradication and interdiction campaigns carried out by the Afghan government and its US/NATO allies. The Taliban also claim nationalist by protecting the livelihoods of poppy farmers and call their violent campaign a national cause and a resistance against “foreign occupation.”

Like an enterprise, the Taliban have diversified. From the very early stages of their insurgency, the Taliban developed several sources of income. The group now has more than ten major sources of income including drugs, domestic and foreign donations, and reconstruction projects in Afghanistan, mainly private security companies that protect convoys of trucks carrying supplies to US/NATO military bases. However, the group’s revenue generation has been uneven and the extent of its income from different sources has changed overtime. The Taliban total annual revenues are said to be around US\$400 and around a quarter (US\$100-150) of it is said to be from the drugs industry. It is a lot of money as, compared to organised and professional armies, the insurgency is generally cheap and costs much less. In addition, the cost of the Taliban insurgency is relatively lower as its fighters don’t wear special uniforms and boots and live in villages among ordinary people.

As the total value of the opium economy within Afghanistan in 2013 was US\$3 billion, it shows that the Taliban are still receiving less money than other major actors in the drugs economy especially drug traffickers, corrupt government officials and farmers. According to a 2012 UN Security Council's Taliban Sanctions Monitoring Team report, the Taliban share is not particularly large in percentage terms and if they wanted, they could have earned much more by exploiting this potential source of revenue.

Since 2011, the Taliban's reliance on the drug trade has increased. Foreign donations, mainly from the Middle East, have decreased due to the Arab Spring, when many oil rich donors from the Gulf region diverted funds to causes closer at home including Syria, Yemen, Libya and Egypt. Meanwhile, the money the Taliban used to receive for giving safe passage to US/NATO supply convoys inside Afghanistan has also reduced after the withdrawal of most foreign forces.

In post-Taliban Afghanistan, the presence and quantity of poppy cultivation has become a measure of instability. The provinces that produce most opium are the most violent. The two southern provinces, Helmand and Kandahar which account for around 70 percent of the world's opium supply, experience the highest levels of insurgent related activities. It seems that drug production and trade has become a joint venture for the Taliban and drug traders. The interests of both actors are overlapping here as both of them want to ensure that vast areas of Afghanistan remain outside the government control. Narcotics finance insurgents while their violence weakens government control and encourages poppy cultivation. Similarly, drug traders fund the Taliban because stronger Taliban creates the environment for the production and trade of narcotics.

The Taliban's involvement in the drug trade has been mostly facilitative; not determinative. Like many other successful insurgent groups elsewhere in the world, the Taliban have been adapting to new realities and are quick to exploit and replace their sources of income. Taliban's original goals and grievances did not disappear with their deepening involvement in the drug economy. Given the weakness of Afghan state institutions, eliminating insurgents' access to narco-profits will be very difficult, at least in the short term, but it would be disruptive and would substantially weaken the group. However, the elimination of drugs industry would not destroy result in the extinction of the Taliban insurgency so long as the motivations for war persist and other sources of funding remain intact.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Drugs Economy: Crime, Conflict and State-(Un)Building**

While focusing on Afghanistan, this chapter explores the role illicit drugs play in the conflict and institution (un)building. Based on the first-hand information from the field and dozens of original interviews, the chapter argues that there is a mutually reinforcing relationship between opium economy, criminality and insurgency in Afghanistan. Narcotics finance insurgents while their violence weakens government control and encourages poppy cultivation. In addition, the narcotics industry has helped produce a new elite class in Afghanistan which is benefiting from the ongoing violence and has penetrated the state institutions mainly through patronage and corruption. This chapter reveals how corrupt officials and warlords/militia leaders often play both sides -- the insurgents and the counterinsurgents -- and infiltrate state institutions by colonising part of the civil and military administration. While appreciating the political economy dynamics of illicit drugs in Afghanistan, the chapter gives a detailed account of the mechanism and extent to which drug production and trafficking inhibits institution-building and facilitates insurgency in Afghanistan.

Conflicts and the subsequent social and political upheavals generally result in the creation of a new socio-economic and political order with political agents, usually leaders, engaging in strategies to attain power and influence and control resources. As the discipline of Political Anthropology suggests, self-service is an important part of politics where political agents use skills and power to ensure both political survival and social and economic well-being.<sup>1</sup> In his discussion on the bases of power in chiefdoms, Earle says, “a society’s economy and ideology stand in different ways as infrastructure and justification for developing political domination.”<sup>2</sup> Social and political power largely depends on the production, acquisition and distribution of economic resources. Besides human and material resources, ideology, symbols and information are considered the five critical

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<sup>1</sup> Kurtz, Donald V., (2001). *Political Anthropology: Power and Paradigms*. Oxford, Westview Press, p.10.

<sup>2</sup> Earle, Timothy, (1991). The Evolution of Chiefdoms. In: Earle, Timothy (ed.), *Chiefdoms: Power, Economy, and Ideology*. Cambridge University Press, p. 1.

constituent resources of political power.<sup>3</sup> Conflicts generally alter the usual rules of the game and create dominant leaders who seek obedience. Lewellen argues that in peacetime the very structure of kinship-based systems prevents any single person or elite group from assuming dominance.<sup>4</sup> However, according to Kurtz, kinship plays an effective role and is used by political agents to form political alliances, unite potential enemies and acquire and control human and tangible resources.<sup>5</sup> In conflict situations, such actors usually acquire monopoly on the three main components of power -- control over the economy, war, and ideology.<sup>6</sup>

Most political agents acquire resources through the goods that their community provides them and are generally notorious manipulators of their political economies.<sup>7</sup> In Afghanistan, illicit drugs have been a major source of income for a number of actors and interest group for the past few decades. Several actors including the Taliban insurgents, security officials especially the police and many warlords-cum government officials profit from it. In the context of Afghanistan, Giustozzi defines “Warlords” as “military leaders who emerge to play a *de facto* political role, despite their lack of full legitimacy.”<sup>8</sup>

The conflict and the illicit drug trade resulted in the creation of a new elite class in the country. During the war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1980s, commanders used foreign money and aid to assert their authority to the detriment of traditional local elders which had a “devastating impact on the Afghan social fabric” whose infighting and rivalry led to the fragmentation of Afghanistan into numerous fiefdoms under the control of warlords who fought each other for power and influence.<sup>9</sup> The breakdown of central government power paved the way for the emergence of locally powerful figures and warlords “who wielded power and set up patronage networks through access to foreign aid, weapons, tax revenues, natural resources, and the illicit narcotics

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<sup>3</sup> Kurtz, Donald V., (2001). *Political Anthropology. op.cit.* p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Lewellen, Ted C., (2003). *Political Anthropology: An Introduction.* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, pp. 113-114.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 86-87.

<sup>6</sup> Earle, Timothy, (1991). *The Evolution of Chiefdoms. op.cit.* p.9.

<sup>7</sup> Kurtz, Donald V., (2001). *Political Anthropology. op.cit.* p. 162.

<sup>8</sup> Giustozzi, Antonio, (2004). ‘Good’ State vs. ‘Bad’ Warlords? *A Critique of State-Building Strategies in Afghanistan.* Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 1, 51. Crisis States Research Centre, School of Economics and Political Science, London, October. [Online] Available online at: <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/13314/1/wp51.pdf>> [Accessed 20 June 2014].

<sup>9</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency: The Transnational Threat of Afghan Opium.* October, Vienna/New York: UNODC, pp.105-106. Available online at <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_Opium\\_Trade\\_2009\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf)> [Accessed 10 April 2014].

trade.”<sup>10</sup> Although they are the product of the conflict which started after the 1979 Soviet invasion and the subsequent factional war (1992-2001), warlords mostly function as political leaders and exploit criminal economy.<sup>11</sup>

Warlords use the drug money to maintain and expand their political and economic power and try to infiltrate the state institutions by helping their partners and protégés get the government positions. Through using bribes and influence to appoint or transfer government officials, warlords corrupt government officials, especially in security and judicial institutions, whose job is to tackle the illicit drug trade. Therefore, “warlordism” poses one of the biggest challenges to the Afghan state building as they and their acolytes hamper the establishment of an accountable, transparent and efficient Afghan state.<sup>12</sup>

The local actors involved in Afghanistan’s drug trade can be divided into two groups -- those who do it out of need (farmers, small traders) and those who are doing it out of greed (wealthy drug traders, corrupt officials, warlords). The greedy actors usually put pressure or offer incentives such as cash credits and leasing their lands to the needy ones to produce opium.<sup>13</sup> “Warlords” and local militia leaders are more innovative in exploiting the drug trade. Due to weak state institutions and a resilient insurgency, illicit drug trade has become a low-risk activity in a high-risk environment<sup>14</sup> and a “persistent challenge to stability” in the country.<sup>15</sup> According to Ghani and Lockhart, a state should be able to perform ten key functions including the monopoly on the legitimate use of force and administrative control.<sup>16</sup> When the state is unable to perform its responsibilities effectively, people become disenfranchised and might resort to violence.<sup>17</sup>

Governments in many parts of the world are struggling to break the nexus between drugs and conflict both of which create a suitable environment for institutional corruption. In some cases, the production and trade of narcotics sustain the conflict while in others; the counter-narcotics policies themselves have the opposite affect of fuelling the conflict. The Afghan government, established after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, is struggling to build a functioning state able to monopolise the use of legitimate means of coercion and

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<sup>10</sup> Jalali, Ali A. (2006). The Future of Afghanistan. *Parameters*, 36, (1), Spring, p.5. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/USAWC/parameters/Articles/06spring/jalali.pdf>> [Accessed 20 June 2014].

<sup>11</sup> Hodes, Cyrus and Sedra, Mark, (2007). *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*. IISS Adelphi Paper No. 391, London: Routledge, p.12.

<sup>12</sup> Giustozzi, Antonio, (2004). ‘Good’ State vs. ‘Bad’ Warlords? *op.cit.*

<sup>13</sup> Jalali, Ali A., (2006). The Future of Afghanistan. *op.cit.* p.12.

<sup>14</sup> Jalali, Ali A. (2006). The Future of Afghanistan. *op.cit.*

<sup>15</sup> Ghani, Ashraf and Lockhart, Clare, (2008). *Fixing Failed States: A Framework of Rebuilding a Fractured World*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.75.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.* pp. 124-166.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* p. 163.



develop the capacity to respond to the people's political, social, and economic needs. However, it has faced with numerous big challenges, especially the illicit drugs economy and the insurgency, both of which are closely linked with the state (un)building in Afghanistan. Drugs provide the much needed cash to the insurgents and support their militant activities. Meanwhile, it has resulted in the creation of a criminal network which has infiltrated the state institutions. Drug not only finance the parties involved in the conflict; it has also served as a corrupting agent of government officials. According to a 2005 World Bank report, the drugs economy is a major obstacle in establishing good governance, security and the rule of law in Afghanistan. The report adds that that "the security and political implications of Afghanistan's opium economy present a grave danger to the country's entire state building and reconstruction agenda."<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, the illicit drug trade has a negative impact on the social wellbeing of the people as it generally results in the rise in criminality and drug addiction. Although drug addiction is a relatively new problem in Afghanistan, the number of drugs users is rapidly increasing. Many of the Afghan drug addicts began taking drugs in refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan and brought the problem with them after returning to their own country. There are an estimated 1.2 million drug users, including women and children; around five percent of the population, which is among the highest rates in the world. The use of opiates doubled from 2005 to 2009 putting Afghanistan on par with Russia and Iran.<sup>19</sup> According to UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), in 2013, local consumption accounted for about 5% (258 tons) of the estimated 5,500 tons of opium produced in the country that year. An approximately 11% of opiates, equivalent to 628 tons of opium equivalent, was seized while the rest (84%) was available for export in the form of opium, morphine or heroin.<sup>20</sup>

There are various reasons behind increasing drug use in Afghanistan including peer pressure, availability of cheap narcotics, limited access to treatment/rehabilitation, economic hardship, depression and other medical problems and direct involvement in drug production and trafficking. The drug use also led to domestic violence, crimes,

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<sup>18</sup> World Bank, (2005). *Afghanistan – State Building, Sustaining Growth and Reducing Poverty*. A World Bank Country Study. Washington DC: World Bank. [Online]. Available at: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/0821360957\\_Afghanistan--State\\_Building.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/0821360957_Afghanistan--State_Building.pdf) [Accessed 20 June 2014].

<sup>19</sup> Ahmed, Azam, (2013). That Other Big Afghan Crisis, the Growing Army of Addicts. *New York Times*, 2 Nov. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/03/world/asia/that-other-big-afghan-crisis-the-growing-army-of-addicts.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> [Accessed 27 Sep 2014].

<sup>20</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2013b). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013*. December. Vienna: UNODC, p.69. Available online at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_Opium\\_survey\\_2013\\_web\\_small.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_survey_2013_web_small.pdf) [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].

unemployment and poverty as the addicts generally face financial difficulties. The high rate of drug addiction also results in the loss of productivity in the workplace and, as a consequence, creates “a greater propensity for corruption.”<sup>21</sup>

## **6.1 Main actors in Afghanistan’s Drug Economy**

The illicit drug trade has become one of the most lucrative businesses in the contemporary world. It is mainly the profit that makes it attractive to a lot of people around the globe. A number of people, with profit motives in short span of time and with comparatively little efforts, are dragged into the drugs economy. Farmers cultivate poppies and other narcotic plants because they bring them more money as compared to many legal crops. On the other hand, drug traders and traffickers take the risk of being jailed and, in some cases, executed due the large amounts of money involved in it. In addition, government officials find it more profitable to flout laws than enforce them.

The drug industry involves three main but specialized functions -- production, trafficking and consumption -- with each one generally requiring different actors ranging from poor farmers in the remotest areas of drug producing countries to traffickers and finally consumers in urban centres of the world’s richest countries. There are more than ten “primary actors” involved in Afghanistan’s drug economy: farmers/landowners; drug traders; rural labourers; refiners; government officials; warlords, commanders, and other power brokers/notables; Taliban and other insurgent groups; cross-border smugglers; cross-border (corrupt) officials; and drug consumers.

A), Farmers, sharecroppers and landowners cultivate opium poppies mostly in areas where the government writ is weak. They get the least amount of money involved in the global drugs economy. B), Drug traders include both small and wholesalers. Small traders usually buy and sell varying volumes of opium at farm gate and villages and sell it in small general-purpose district bazaars. They also sell opium to large traders in the same province or to drug traders based in other provinces. They are mostly the ones who frequently run into trouble and are at the highest risks of being captured. C), Wholesalers or big drug traders trade larger quantities of opium and often organise the processing of opium. They also commission collectors and may be landowners with sharecroppers/tenants. In most

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<sup>21</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2014). *Impacts of Drug Use on Users and Their Families in Afghanistan*. April. Vienna: UNODC, pp. 7-8. Available online at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Impacts\\_Study\\_2014\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Impacts_Study_2014_web.pdf) [Accessed 27 Sep 2014].

cases, they are also involved in transferring the products across borders. Although most large Afghan trafficking networks have responsibilities up to the border, after which internationally-oriented groups take over; some also have representation in neighbouring countries such as Iran and Pakistan.<sup>22</sup> D), Rural labourers usually work in the seasonal cultivation of opium poppy and collection of opium paste, both of which are labour intensive activities. Most of the labourers are local villagers but in many cases, people from other provinces also go to poppy growing areas during the opium harvest season and earn a dissent living. E), Refiners process the opium into heroin or sometimes morphine generally on a commission payment basis. Some refiners are also involved in trading activities. In some cases, especially in the case of small farmers, the grower, trader and refiner is the same person. F), Corrupt government officials, especially in the security sector, are involved in the opium economy by receiving bribes and other payments at various stages of the opium chain including protection (of poppy fields and opium stores), transport/smuggling (of opiates), transactions or by simply turning a blind eye. Corrupt officials in the judiciary also get money for cooperating with the drug traders. G), Warlords and commanders, and other power brokers are involved in protecting and facilitating the drug cultivation and trade and benefit directly and indirectly from it. In a number of cases, they remote control the drug trade and receiving money from those involved in the drug trade by facilitating the transport and transactions of drugs as well as protection from law enforcement agencies. H), The Taliban insurgents usually protect poppy fields from eradication and drug trafficking convoys from interdiction. I), Cross-border smugglers include both individual traders and organised groups who have links with the regional and international drug mafia. When drugs cross the Afghan borders, more professional and organised drug cartels take over and smuggle them to high value markets including Western Europe. This group also include those who import precursor chemicals required for the processing of drugs especially the conversion of opium into heroin. J), Border officials in Afghanistan and neighbouring/regional countries receive bribes from drug traffickers in exchange for a safe passage of their cargo. Similarly, they allow the smuggling of precursor chemicals into Afghanistan. K), Drug consumers exist both inside Afghanistan and abroad. However, most of the drugs produced in Afghanistan are consumed in foreign countries.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> UNODC, (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency. op.cit.* p.104.

<sup>23</sup> Interviews with Villagers/Tribal Elder (V5, V6) in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, Nov 2011 and Nov 2013; Interviews with Farmer 4 (F4), Helmand province, Nov 2013, Farmer 5 (F5), Urozgan province, Oct 2014, Farmer 6 (F6), Balkh province, Nov 2011; Interviews with Drug Trader/ Smuggler, (S1), Kandahar Province, Nov 2011, Drug Trader/ Smuggler, (S2), Helmand Province, Nov 2011, Drug Trader/ Smuggler, (S3), Helmand, Province, Nov 2011, Drug Trader (former), (S4), Kabul, Oct 2014; See also

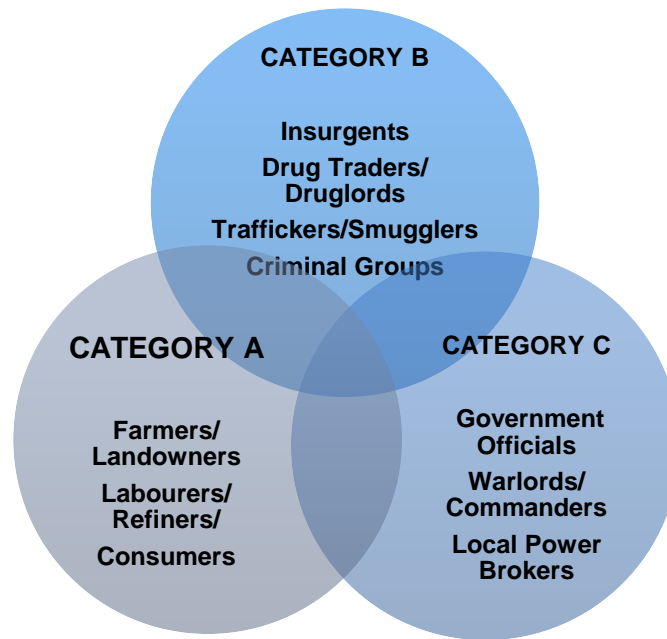
With opium being the country's most valuable cash crop and the biggest contributor to its GDP for around two decades, drug production and trade play an important role in the political economy of Afghanistan. Although opium crop occupies around 3% of the arable land, the opium economy directly provides more than 400,000 full-time-equivalent jobs.<sup>24</sup> In impoverished countries such as Afghanistan, where around 70% of the population lives below the poverty line, the scope and economic importance of the drug economy goes beyond the involvement of the aforementioned actors and also involves what I call "secondary actors". They include those who live off of imports purchased with drug profits, including durable consumer goods (such as mobile phone sets, television sets, motorcycles, cars, clothes, watches, etc.), fuel, travelling, fruit, and other amenities and "luxuries." In addition, with the expansion of drug trade, local services such as teashops/restaurants and rest houses experienced a boost especially in areas through which drugs are trafficked. The involvement of government officials and influential figures in the drug trade has been an open secret in the country. The affects of the drug boom are more evident in real state, especially in the form of "poppy palaces" going up in Kabul and other provincial capitals.

As illustrated in the figure below, primary actors can be divided into three categories. "Category A" consists of actors whose involvement in the drugs economy is due to need and includes farmers/sharecroppers, small landowners, labourers and refiners. "Category B" includes of those actors whose aim is to weaken the state control such as insurgents, drug traffickers and criminal groups. In "Category C", the actors' involvement is mainly due to greed and they include corrupt government officials, warlords/commanders and local powerbrokers. As illustrated in the following diagram (Figure 6.1), the roles and interests of the primary actors in the drug industry are generally overlapping. In addition, the nexus of corrupt security officials with the drug mafia is usually stronger in poppy producing areas as well as those regions from where drugs are trafficked. The survival and growth the drug network inside Afghanistan is upto large extent dependant on the nexus bewtween corrupt officials and the drug traders.

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Ward, Christopher, and Byrd, William, (2004). *Afghanistan's Opium Drug Economy*. The World Bank, (SASPR Working Paper), December. Available online at: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Publications-Resources/20325060/AFOpium-Drug-Economy-WP.pdf.pdf> [Accessed 06 December 2013]; Byrd, William A., (2008). *Responding to Afghanistan's Opium Economy Challenge: Lessons and Policy Implications from a Development Perspective*. World Bank, Working paper No. 4545, pp. 14-15. Available online at: <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-4545> [Accessed 14 Aug 2014].

<sup>24</sup> SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), (2014c). *Quarterly Report to United States Congress*. 30<sup>th</sup> October. Virginia: p.3. Available online at: <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-10-30qr.pdf> [Accessed 02 Nov 2014].



**Figure 6.1** - Main actors in Afghanistan's illicit drugs economy

## 6.2 Drug Trade and the Patronage Pyramid

The decades long conflict in Afghanistan has irreparably damaged the traditional structures in the society. Foreign aid as well as illicit drugs played a major role in the transformation of the Afghan society and polity. In 1980s a number of individuals became commanders in the resistance against the occupying Soviet forces. Several of those Mujahideen commanders were involved in the drug trade which bought them the much needed weapons and food. The decline of the traditional leadership in Afghanistan resulted in the emergence of a new elite class mostly dependent on foreign aid and the drug trade. As Roy says, these “new notables”,<sup>25</sup> established their power as redistributors of goods by creating “a network of clients, strengthened by matrimonial bonds.”<sup>26</sup> A number of Mujahideen commanders in poppy producing areas not only allowed drug production but also sponsored the cultivation of poppies and the production of opium. The drug money

<sup>25</sup> For more details on the decline of traditional Afghan leadership and the rise of the “new notable”, see Roy, Olivier, (1990). *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*. Second edition. Cambridge: University of Cambridge, pp. 215-218.

<sup>26</sup> Roy, Olivier, (1995). *Afghanistan: From Holy War to Civil War*. Princeton: Darwin Press, p. 107.

transformed these village commanders into powerful warlords and gradually gave them a degree of independence from their external sponsors and suppliers.

In early 1990's, when Afghanistan experienced anarchy following the collapse of the Soviet backed communist regime in Kabul, powerful warlords used the drug money to maintain their power and tried to further increase their political and military influence. In many areas, local commanders/warlords taxed the drug production and trade and acted as independent entities.<sup>27</sup> In post-Taliban Afghanistan (2001 onwards), power has been mostly coalescing around the same factions and individuals that established a power base during the war years and continue to have access to means of protection and predation. They also use elections to further entrench their power structures in the provinces as well as the centre and increase their capacity to generate money and patronage through the drugs economy. As the central government is weak, these power-brokers have a level of autonomy and leverage resulting in fluid political arrangements between central government and the peripheral elites. Although some warlords and power brokers have joined the government, they still benefit from the drug trade, have links with illegal armed groups and, in some case, maintain their own private militias.

There is a deep interpenetration of formal politics with informal structures of networks and factions. In order to maintain internal political stability, the central government is forced to accommodate these factions and individuals who are organised along the patron–client lines.<sup>28</sup> The Interior Ministry is described as the most corrupt of all the government institutions, with officials taking bribes for appointing police officers and protecting a wide range of wrongdoers, including drug traffickers.<sup>29</sup>

Like the confusion of public and private interests that existed in early modern European states, these practices have blurred the line between the public and the private today. In renaissance Europe, public domain was not clearly distinguished from private interest. Thereofre venality and patronage was common and phenomena like nepotism, string-pulling, and squeeze were either legitimate or their moral status was confused. According to Harding, “in pre-bureaucratic governments, officeholders often treated their offices as

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<sup>27</sup> Interviews with local elders and villagers in Kandahar, Helmand, and Balkh (V5, V6, F6, F7). Nov. 2011 and Nov. 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2008). Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan. *International Peacekeeping*, **15**, (3): 405-423. (Quote from p. 411). Available online at: <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13533310802058984>> [Accessed 7 Aug 2014]

<sup>29</sup> Burns, John F., (2011). Afghan President, Pressured, Reshuffles Cabinet. *New York Times*, 11 Oct. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/world/asia/12afghan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/world/asia/12afghan.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 08 Nov 2014].

business enterprises and sought to maximise their personal income from them.”<sup>30</sup> In addition, writing about the patronage system in England in early seventeenth century, Linda Levy Peck says that gratuities, frequently involuntary, were far more important than salaries for the office holders. She calls that period as the era of patrimonial bureaucracies where offices were staffed through kinship and clientage, bought and sold and treated as the holder’s private property.<sup>31</sup>

Warlords-cum politicians sponsor the narcotics industry not only for their own financial benefits; they also get the political support of those involved in the drug trade. Such public support helps them to sustain their clout and influence in the government. Corrupt officials usually seek appointments in border districts and drug producing areas. The posts of police commanders and district governors in drug producing and along the drug trafficking routes are among the most attractive. As various interviewees told me during my field research, a number of people pay officials in the central government to secure posts with “high income opportunities.” The price of such appointments allegedly ranges from tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars.<sup>32</sup> The patterns of corruption are not limited to Interior and Justice Ministries; there is an assemblage of actors and institutions continuously evolving and shifting across ministries and other formal institutions in order to adjust themselves with the changing environment. According to Byrd, the transformation of warlords into politicians has been accompanied by compromising of parts of some government agencies by drug industry interests. As a result, “security forces, most notably the police, are in part facilitating the activities of the drug industry rather than countering it.”<sup>33</sup>

This chain goes from the districts to high ranking officials and politicians in Kabul. Officials get financial benefits from the drug trade in a number of ways. Firstly, farmers pay relevant authorities to protect their poppy fields from eradication both individually and collectively when a group of farmers collect money for officials as part of the arrangement that the eradication police would not visit their village to destroy poppy fields. In addition, farmers with who have “the right connections in the government” or pay “big bribes” want to ensure that even if the poppy eradication teams visit their villages and farms, they do,

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<sup>30</sup> Harding, Robert, (1981). Corruption and Moral Boundaries of Patronage in the Renaissance. In: Lytle, Guy Fitch and Orgel, Stephen, (editors). *Patronage in the Renaissance*. (Chapter Three, pp-47-64). New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp.47-48.

<sup>31</sup> Peck, Linda Levy, (1981). Court Patronage and Government Policy: The Jacobean Dilemma. In: Lytle, Guy Fitch and Orgel, Stephen, (editors). *Patronage in the Renaissance*. (Chapter Two, pp. 27-46). New Jersey: Princeton University Press, pp. 30-31.

<sup>32</sup> Interview with government officials and journalists in Kabul, Helmand and Nangarhar. (G3, G4, G2, and J2, J4, J5). Nov 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Byrd, William A., (2008). *Responding to Afghanistan’s Opium Economy Challenge*. *Op.cit*, pp. 14-15.

the eradication is “cosmetic” and superficial with most of the farm remaining unscathed. Secondly, drug traders, who sell drugs in locally, pay security and civilian officials in the hope that their businesses would not be raided and drugs confiscated. Thirdly, drug smugglers pay security officials to avoid interdiction and get a safe passage at checkpoints. Fourthly, owners of heroin laboratories also pay officials to ensure their own safety and protect their opium processing laboratories from government raids. Fifthly, those arrested on charges of drug production and trafficking pay security and judicial officials to secure their release or get a lighter sentence. Sixthly, officials and government employees are also rewarded when they tipped off the drug traders before a raid or interdiction takes place. My interviews with poppy farmers, drug traders and tribal elders in Kandahar, Helmand and Nangarhar provinces in 2012 and 2013 revealed that there were a number of incidents when drug traders were given information in advance about raids on their businesses so they could have time to move some or all of their their drugs to another location and flee the area to avoid being captured.<sup>34</sup> Drug traffickers are also informed if certain routes are not safe at a particular time due to heavy security or ongoing search operation. Sevethly, the confiscated drugs are given back to the owner in exchange of money.<sup>35</sup> In some cases, drugs seized in raids are fully or partly sold back by the corrupt officials especially those involved in the raid. There are no fixed rates for these services.

The amount of money farmers and drug traders and traffickers pay to corrupt government officials has changed with time and depends on a number of factors including the prices of drugs and the extent of risks involved in productin and trafficking of narcotics. The Afghan government doesn’t have the capacity to prevent poppy cultivation all over the country, especially in areas under the Taliban’s influence. Opium is traded freely in areas outside the control of the government forces. Even though security forces raid areas under the Taliban control to destroy drug factories and seize drugs, the drug traders quickly return and restore the old regime. However, trafficking is another matter. Drugs are mostly smuggled through the government controlled territories in the form of opium, heroin and marijuana. The drug shipments go through a number of government checkpoints and usually face several patrols on their way to the border districts from where they are smuggled into the neighbouring countries. The involvement of government officials is greater at the trafficking stage of the drug trade.

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<sup>34</sup> Interviews with farmers, traders and tribal elders in Kandahar, Helmand and Nangarhar provinces, (F1, F3, V5, V6, F9, F10, P5). Nov. 2011, Nov 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with a drug trader in Kandahar, (S1). Nov. 2011. He told the author that he negotiated the price with a local police commander to get back his opium confiscated in a government raid. But his deal with local commander was scrapped when more senior commander became aware of it.

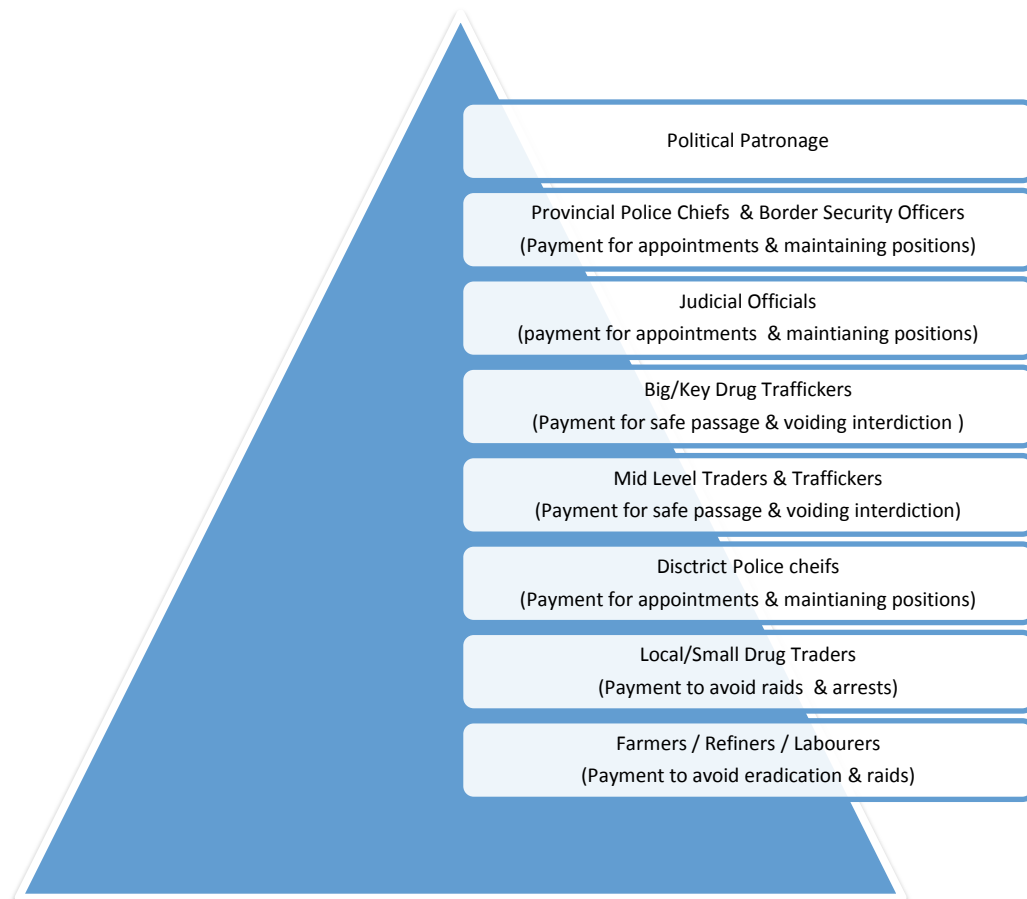


In most cases, it is a “patron-client” relationship with drug traders/warlords providing farmers access to land, credit while corrupt officials cooperate with drug traders and traffickers. The corruption in the judiciary and security institutions is mostly linked to patronage networks in which the illicit drug trade plays a key role. In post-Taliban Afghanistan, the drug networks grew mainly under the political patronage with some social personalities, warlords and politicians providing support and protection to those involved in the drug trade. Patronage and criminal networks facilitate the drug trade, subvert the government and security institutions and, in some cases, provide money to the insurgents. According to John Sopko, the United States’ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), “the patronage system and the failure to prosecute people guilty of gross fraud and abuse is undermining the Afghan economy and putting future development efforts at risk.”<sup>36</sup> In addition, a 2004 World Bank report says that “illegitimate regional powerbrokers” linked to illicit drugs have “captured” large parts of the country while opium production “funds interests strongly opposed to state-building” in Afghanistan. The drugs economy in general has induced a “vicious circle” of bad governance, insecurity and poverty.<sup>37</sup> The following figure (Figure 6.2) illustrates the involvement of different actors in the drug trade and links them in what I call the “Patronage Pyramid.”

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<sup>36</sup> SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), (2014b). *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*. 30 April. Virginia, p. 9. Available online at: <http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-04-30qr.pdf> [Accessed 05 Sep 2014].

<sup>37</sup> World Bank, (2004). *Afghanistan – State Building, Sustaining Growth and Reducing Poverty: A Country Economic Report*. (Report No. 29551-AF). Washington DC: World Bank, p.120. [Online]. Available at: [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2004/09/15/000160016\\_20040915113121/Rendered/PDF/295510AF.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2004/09/15/000160016_20040915113121/Rendered/PDF/295510AF.pdf) [Accessed 7 Aug 2014].



**Figure 6.2:** The Patronage Pyramid

The patron-client relations in the drug trade create and cement structural corruption, a problem that has got worse in the post-Taliban Afghanistan. As in several other countries in the region, a number of people entered politics with the intention of accumulating more power and wealth rather than having a political agenda or vision. *Nouveau riche* and new elite have links with regional and national power brokers and are protected under their patronage. The presence of such politicians not only impacts the normal functionality and quality of political institutions, it also affects the over all political process in the country. Drugs money also play an important role in financing political parties and political and government leaders. Several individuals who have known links with the drug trade fund election campaigns of various politicians. The fuelling of the political system with drugs money has made the drug traders capable of infiltrating state institutions and destabilising government, at least at local level.

### 6.3 Drugs, Conflict and Governance Nexus

The involvement of corrupt officials and other power brokers in the drugs economy takes several forms. Direct involvement means that the individual owns land and either he himself, his family members or relatives cultivate poppies or lease/rent his land to farmers for poppy cultivation. The other form of direct involvement is the trading and/or trafficking of drugs in which case, the individual might not be involved in the cultivation of poppies. Indirect involvement means that the individual has a share in somebody else's drugs business or benefit financially from it. It can take many shapes ranging from a percentage or lump sum payment for making sure that poppy fields are not eradicated and drugs pass safely through government security checkpoints. It also involves the use of one's influence to get a safe passage for drugs, protect poppy fields and drug factories and secure the release of those charged with drugs offences.

In a number of areas, corrupt police commanders turned a blind eye towards poppy fields and ignore implementing the government's policy of eradicating. The eradication of poppy fields is manual and generally includes the using of sticks or sickles, blade and uprooting of plants by hand and tractor and animal plough. Relatives and family members of officials and other influential figures have been generally exempt from eradication in many parts of the country. In some cases, a "mock eradication" takes place in which only some parts of the field are eradicated just to show that the authorities have fulfilled their obligation.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, a number of officials and power brokers who speak publically against illicit drugs have been accused themselves of being involved in the drug trade. The tactic of condemning the drug trade in public while benefitting from it privately has been used by many former warlords and militia commanders who are part of the government.<sup>39</sup> These politicians have been accused of helping officials in their appointments in exchange of a continuous flow of money. In some areas, police commanders and district officials have even a share in the local drug trafficking. Several border police units have been notorious for this type of involvement in the drugs economy.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Interviews with local politicians, farmers and traders in Nangarhar, Kandahar, Kabul and Helmand, (P2, P3, P4, P5, F1, F3, F4). Nov. 2011, Nov. 2013, Oct 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Interviews with local politicians and elders in Kandahar and Kabul, (V5, B1, P1, P2, P3). Nov 2011, Oct 2014; Interviews with local Journalists in Balkh, Helmand and Kandahar provinces (J1, J2 and J3). Nov 2011 and Nov 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Baldauf, Scott, (2006). Inside the Afghan Drug Trade. *Christian Science Monitor*, 13 June. Available online at: <<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0613/p01s04-wosc.html>> [Accessed 31 July 2014]; Interviews with local Journalists in Balkh, Helmand and Kandahar provinces (J1, J2 and J3). Nov 2011 and Nov 2013.

A number of high ranking officials privately admit that a long chain of the personnel in law enforcement agencies benefit from the drug trade including district police chiefs as well as officials in the capital Kabul. In many cases, politicians and power-brokers have a “remote control” involvement in drug trade by working through individuals lower down the chain. In 2005, Afghanistan’s interior minister, Ali Ahmad Jalali, said that the ministry had a list of 100 influential individuals who were being watched for evidence about their involvement in the drug trade. The unpublished list included top officials in the security institutions, provincial governors and even cabinet ministers. According to Jalali, sometimes high ranking officials use their cars for drug trafficking or rent them for a fee as they are not searched at security checkpoints. Even if the drugs are found in these vehicles, the officials deny any knowledge of the activity and usually blame drivers or bodyguards for the wrongdoings. However, the same officials then use their influence to secure the release of their men.<sup>41</sup>

In 2006, Abdul Rashid, the Deputy Chief Justice of Supreme Court, admitted that the names of powerful players involved in the drug trade were being excluded when legal cases are prepared by prosecutors. According to him, “the main and dangerous people” involved in narcotics trade live freely while “we have punished cleaners or drivers.”<sup>42</sup> The same year, the then security chief at Kabul airport accused high ranking Afghan officials of colluding with the drug smugglers. He publically complained that they order him to release “heroin smugglers caught red-handed” and added that “the smugglers had their own people within the government.”<sup>43</sup> In 2007, Afghanistan’s first Vice President, Ahmad Zia Massoud, said that corruption in the Afghan government institutions was increasing due to the drugs industry. While linking foreign and local drug mafia, he added that failure in the fight against illicit drugs is largely due to the involvement of senior government officials in drug trade.<sup>44</sup> The same year, the spokesman of Afghanistan’s Counternarcotics Ministry acknowledged that corruption was hampering the fight against drugs and added that international mafia had established links with officials in the Afghan government institutions.<sup>45</sup> In November 2007, the country’s Counter-Narcotics Appeal Court

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with Jalali, Ali Ahmad, (2014). (Former Interior Minister of Afghanistan 2003-2005). October; See also Harnden, Toby, (2006). Drug trade ‘reaches to Afghan cabinet.’ *Daily Telegraph*, 05 Feb 2006. Available online at: <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/1509702/Drug-trade-reaches-to-Afghan-cabinet.html>> [Accessed 28 September 2014]; Baldauf, Scott, (2006). Inside the Afghan Drug Trade. *Op.cit.*

<sup>42</sup> BBC Pashto Service, (2007). Daily Evening Radio Current Affairs Programme. 1500-1600 GMT. 5 Nov.

<sup>43</sup> BBC News, (2006). Afghan officials accused on drugs. *BBC Newsonline*, 6 Jan. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/4585188.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4585188.stm)> [Accessed 28 September 2014].

<sup>44</sup> BBC Pashto Service, (2007). Daily Evening Radio Current Affairs Programme. 1500-1600 GMT. 5 Nov.

<sup>45</sup> BBC Pashto Service, (2007). Interview with Zulmai Afzali (Spokesman of Afghanistan’s Counter-narcotics Ministry). BBC Pashto Daily Evening Radio Current Affairs Programme. 1500-1600 GMT, 5 Nov.

announced over the previous two years, six-hundred cases linked to illicit drugs have been brought to and processed by the court. However, there were no high ranking officials and “big players” on the list and included only five policemen who had been sentenced to 18 year imprisonment.<sup>46</sup>

Afghan judicial officials admit that despite having evidence, it is hard for them to arrest or prosecute a number of known drug traders. Such reluctance is usually justified as for the sake of stability and avoiding trouble and negative reaction from these influential figures. In 2010, Afghanistan’s Justice Minister, Habiullah Ghaleb, said that the government knew that a number of officials and power brokers were involved or benefitting from the drug trade but couldn’t take action against them “because they can cause instability”.<sup>47</sup> In addition, in some cases, security officials do not destroy poppy fields for the fear of losing political capital and support of the population. According to two different police commanders in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, growing poppies was the only livelihood for many farmers and destroying their fields would push them towards the Taliban. As one of the commanders said that “our priority is peace and stability and if we eradicate their fields, these people will turn against us.”<sup>48</sup>

While on one hand, some degree of corruption is tolerated for the sake of stability, on the other hand, it is corruption itself which is preventing the formation of functioning and accountable state institutions. Corruption in state machinery has been detrimental to the overall strategy of state-building. In many ways, the drugs trade ties together the Taliban insurgents, drug traffickers and corrupt officials. There are reports about corrupt officials turning a blind to the activities of Taliban-linked drug traders. Many of my interviewees said that a number of officials are in cohort with the drug traders who have links with the insurgency or make payments to the insurgents.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> BBC Pashto Webpage, (2007). *The Prosecution of Drug Traffickers and Officials*. Story published on 5<sup>th</sup> Nov. Available online at: <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/afghanistan/story/2007/11/071105\\_yb-af-drug-traffickers-trials.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/afghanistan/story/2007/11/071105_yb-af-drug-traffickers-trials.shtml)> [Accessed 28 September 2014].

<sup>47</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2010a). Interview with Habibullah Ghalib (Justice Minister of Afghanistan). Audio of the interview broadcast by the BBC Pashto Service Radio on 16 March in its Daily Evening Current Affairs Programme. 1500-1600 GMT on 5th Nov. Available at: <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/afghanistan/2010/03/100316\\_hh-ghalib-bbcpashto.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/afghanistan/2010/03/100316_hh-ghalib-bbcpashto.shtml)> [Accessed 05 September 2014]; See also BBC Pashto Service Webpage, (2010). *Ghaleb: High Ranking Officials Are Involved in Drug Trade*. Story based on the interview with Afghanistan’s Justice Minister. Published on 16 March. London/Kabul. [Online]: <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/afghanistan/2010/03/100316\\_hh-minister-of-justice.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/pashto/afghanistan/2010/03/100316_hh-minister-of-justice.shtml)> [Accessed 05 September 2014].

<sup>48</sup> Interviews with government officials in Kandahar, Helmand and Kabul, (G2, G5, G7) . Nov, 2011, Nov. 2013 and Oct. 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Interviews with local politicians and elders in Kandahar and Kabul, (V5, B1, P1, P2, P3). Nov 2011, Oct 2014; Interviews with local Journalists in Balkh, Helmand and Kandahar provinces (J1, J2 and J3). Nov 2011 and Nov 2013; Graham-Harrison, Emma, (2014). Drug Trade Could Splinter Afghanistan Into Fragmented Criminal State – UN. *Guardian*, 6 Jan 2014. Available online at:

As seen in many drug producing countries and regions, bad governance and weak state institutions create favourable conditions for the cultivation and trade of illicit drugs. Funds generated from the drug trade are usually used in two ways -- to buy influence in the state institutions and to undermine the state capacity. This leads to the weakening of government institutions and results in the fragility and even failing of the state. State failure occurs when its institutions are unable to fulfil its core functions including securing its territory and providing services to its population. Over all, the illicit drug trade is causing at least three major problems; it enhances corruption, distorts legal economy and undermines state's legitimacy.

#### 6.4 Drugs and Corruption

Depending on its context, corruption is defined differently. Joseph Nye's public office centred definition is often cited in public policy and academic circles which says that "corruption is behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence."<sup>50</sup> In his classic definition, Nye describes such behaviour as "bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of a scriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses)."<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, Friedrich focuses more on public interest in his description of corruption and calls corruption a "deviant behaviour associated with a particular motivation, namely that of private gain at public expense."<sup>52</sup> These private gains may be monetary or may take other forms such as "a rapid promotion, an order, decorations, and the like of, and the gain may not be personal, but benefit a family or group." According to Friedrich, the patterns of corruption exist when a power holder takes actions to favour reward providers in a way that constitutes a breach of law or of standard of high moral

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<<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/05/drug-trade-afghanistan-fragmented-criminal-state>> [Accessed 05 September 2014].

<sup>50</sup> Nye, Joseph, S., (1967). Corruption and Political Development: A Cost-Benefit Analysis. *American Political Science Review*, **61**, (2): pp. 417-427, June. (Quote from p. 419). Available online at: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1953254?origin=JSTOR-pdf>> [Accessed 28 September 2014].

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Friedrich, Carl J., (1972). *The Pathology of Politics: Violence, Betrayal, Corruption, Secrecy, and Propaganda*. New York: Harper & Row, p. 172.

conduct.<sup>53</sup> In addition, Van Klaveren says in his market centred conception that corruption is the abuse of authority by a corrupt civil servant who “regards his public office as a business, the income of which he will...seek to maximise. The office then becomes a -- maximising unit.”<sup>54</sup>

The contemporary discussion on corruption is more focused on the individual behaviour of the office holder. As Jain says, the behaviour of politicians and bureaucrats is important “because political values, institutions, and parties play an important role in defining the values of the society and in defining the norms that individuals in positions of power have to follow, as well as in designing the control systems that determine the limits of the behaviour of the political elite.”<sup>55</sup> As Dobel says, corruption destroys the fabric of a society, results in the loss of a capacity for loyalty and self-interest becomes the normal motive for most actions. Dobel adds that: “societal or state corruption involves the moral incapacity of citizens to make disinterested moral commitments to actions, symbols and institutions which benefit the common welfare.”<sup>56</sup> In addition, laws which can be manipulated at will by the wealthy and powerful lose their spontaneous acceptance by the common people.<sup>57</sup> Therefore, institutionalised corruption not only upsets the markets, it also does corrosive damage to governance, disrupts the democratic process and damages the legitimacy of the political system.

Corruption, in its different forms, exists in almost all countries. In every society, certain people look for opportunities to exploit the system and take advantage of the weakness in laws. However, corruption seems to be more common in developing countries where accumulation and allocation of public resources involve changes in property rights and institutions or the creation of new ones. In his study of patron-client networks and the economic effects of corruption in Asia, Khan argues that, given the importance of such

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Van Klaveren, Jacob, (2002). Corruption as a Historical Phenomenon. In: Heidenheimer, Arnold J. and Johnston, Michael (editors), *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts*. (Third Edition). Chapter 5. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, pp. 83-94.

<sup>55</sup> Jain, Arvind K., (2001). Power, Politics, and Corruption. In: Jain, Arvind K. (editor), *The Political Economy of Corruption*. London: Routledge, p. 4. Book available online at: <[http://www.untagsmd.ac.id/files/Perpustakaan\\_Digital\\_1/CORRUPTION%20The%20political%20economy%20of%20corruption.pdf](http://www.untagsmd.ac.id/files/Perpustakaan_Digital_1/CORRUPTION%20The%20political%20economy%20of%20corruption.pdf)> [Accessed 30 September 2014].

<sup>56</sup> Dobel, J. Patrick, (1978). The Corruption of a State. *The American Political Science Review*, **72**, (3): pp. 958-973, September. (Quote from p.960). Available online at: <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/1955114.pdf?acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true>> [Accessed 30 September 2014].

<sup>57</sup> Dobel, J. Patrick, (1978). The Corruption of a State. *op.cit.* p.968.



allocations and, in the meantime, the absence of legitimate practices and strict rules, there are huge incentives to dispute, contest and attempt to change them often with bribing.<sup>58</sup>

The corruption in Afghanistan mostly mirrors Klaveren market centered conception mentioned above. Meanwhile, the following typology of forms of corruption in three West African countries (Benin, Niger and Senegal) by two French anthropologists, Giorgio Blundo and Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan, fits well in the case of Afghanistan. The seven basic forms of corruption they identified are: (1) commission for illicit services, (2) unwarranted payment for public services which is usually free or inflating the cost of a routine service; such as issuance of ID cards, Passports, licences and other officials certificates and documents (3) gratuities, (4) string pullings, (5) levies and tolls, (6) side-lining, and (7) misappropriation.<sup>59</sup>

In many drug producing countries, the narcotics trade is usually linked with both state corruption and mainstream politics. The interaction of drugs and politics is closer in areas where drugs are produced or trafficked from. As the drug industry has been a significant part of Afghanistan's political economy for the past several decades, it has resulted in an unlevelled playing field in politics. The drug money is used in election campaigns by certain candidates who want to become members of provincial and national assemblies and thus get influence as well as immunity from prosecution.

For government officials, a job in state institutions that deal with drugs has the potential to bring more kickbacks and bribes. Such jobs are often sold to the highest bidder or the person who has good connections and influential patrons. Therefore, an employee who has spent a hefty sum to secure his employment will have to earn sufficient to pay this off before his investment becomes profitable. Generally, drug money weakens formal state institutions and erodes their capacities at many levels. Illicit drugs have become a short cut for many people to accumulate money and power.

Illicit drugs provide multiple opportunities and incentives for institutional corruption. Firstly, illicit drug trade usually corrupts the state system through bribes and incentives and fully or partially captures government institutions through the appointment of actors linked with the drug trade. In addition, unlike many other resources such as oil and timber, which

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<sup>58</sup> Khan, Mushtaq H., (2002). Patron-Client Networks and the Economic Effects of Corruption in Asia. In: Heidenheimer, Arnold J. and Johnston, Michael (editors), *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts*. (Third Edition). (Chapter 26, pp. 467-487). New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, p.469.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, Daniel Jordan, (2007). *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, p. 17; Blundo, Giorgio and De Sardan, Jean-Pierre Olivier, (2001). La corruption quotidienne en Afrique de l'Ouest. *Politique Africaine*, No. 83, pp 8-37. October. Available online at: <<http://politique-africaine.com/numeros/pdf/083008.pdf>> [Accessed 28 September 2014].



takes more time and effort to be looted, illegal drugs are less obstructable and easily marketable. The insurgents use the drug funds not only to buy weapons; they also utilize the narcotics money to corrupt government officials. For warlords and politicians, drugs bring money they use for acquiring influence in state institutions while corrupt government employees use the drug related bribes to enrich themselves and buy promotions and appointments. Drug traders usually rely on their “links” and “supporters” in the government<sup>60</sup> who come to their help when they are in trouble.

The drug traffickers target state institutions in order to create an environment where drugs economy can continue and flourish. Weak state institutions pave the way for more violence and drug trade. According to Lee, “both drugs and terrorism organizations thrive in countries that lack strong central governments and whose law enforcement officials are ineffective and highly susceptible to corruption....These organisations operate freely after establishing partnership with corrupt officials to facilitate their criminal enterprise.”<sup>61</sup>

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in 2011, “half of Afghan citizens paid a bribe while requesting a public service.”<sup>62</sup> Meanwhile “almost a quarter of Afghan National Police (24 percent) were offered a bribe or received the offer in order to prevent imprisonment or speed up the release of a prisoner” while “another 21 percent were offered a bribe to not report drug trafficking or the smuggling of other items.”<sup>63</sup> In addition, actions such as tampering with criminal evidence and “turning a blind eye to” drug trafficking are other reasons for police to be offered bribes which according to UNODC’s report are “acts that can have a shattering impact on overall integrity of law enforcement activities in the country.”<sup>64</sup> The report concludes that “drug traffickers are seen to be the biggest influence on police work at the local level and criminal group leaders the third biggest, after tribal leaders.”<sup>65</sup>

In April 2014, General John Allen, former commander of US/NATO forces in Afghanistan, called corruption as “the existential threat to the long-term viability of

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<sup>60</sup> Starkey, Jerome, (2008). Drugs for Guns: How the Afghan Heroin Trade is Fuelling the Taliban Insurgency. *The Independent*, 29 April. Available online at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/drugs-for-guns-how-the-afghan-heroin-trade-is-fuelling-the-taliban-insurgency-817230.html> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>61</sup> Lee, Gregory D. (2005). *Global Drug Enforcement: Practical Investigative Techniques*. Florida: CRS Press, p. 275.

<sup>62</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2012). *Corruption in Afghanistan: Recent Patterns and Trends*. December. Vienna: UNODC, p.5. [Online]. Available at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Corruption\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/frontpage/Corruption_in_Afghanistan_FINAL.pdf) [Accessed 05 September 2014].

<sup>63</sup> UNODC, (2012). *Corruption in Afghanistan*. December. *op.cit.* p.13.

<sup>64</sup> UNODC, (2012). *Corruption in Afghanistan*. December. *op.cit.* p.7.

<sup>65</sup> UNODC, (2012). *Corruption in Afghanistan*. December. *op.cit.* p.8.

modern Afghanistan” and more serious than the Taliban insurgency. In his testimony to a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee, General Allen proclaimed that “the ideological insurgency, the criminal patronage networks, and the drug enterprise have formed an unholy alliance, which relies for its success on the criminal capture” of the Afghan government.<sup>66</sup> According to Karl Eikenberry, former US ambassador to Afghanistan (2009-2011), seventy percent of drug trafficking probably involves the Afghan security forces.<sup>67</sup> In addition, a US State Department report says that drug-related corruption is “a problem, being particularly pervasive at provincial and district government levels. Corruption behaviours range from facilitating drug activities to benefiting from revenue streams that the drug trade produces.”<sup>68</sup>

It is not only the Afghan officials and politicians who have links with the drug trade, state government and political actors in regional countries from where illicit drugs are transited also benefit financially from it. Most of the drugs produced in Afghanistan are smuggled into Iran, Pakistan and central Asian countries where some of it is consumed domestically while the rest is transited further. Opium is smuggled from Afghanistan through two main corridors -- the Balkan route and Northern route -- linking Afghanistan to the huge regional and international markets including Russian Federation and Western Europe. The Balkan route traverses Iran (partly via Pakistan), Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria across South-East Europe to the Western European market, with an annual market value of some US\$20 billion. The northern route runs mainly through Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (or Uzbekistan or Turkmenistan) to Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. The size of that market is estimated to total US\$13 billion per year.<sup>69</sup> Approximately 35% of heroin produced in Afghanistan arrives in Iran for domestic consumption and westward transit on the Balkan route while approximately 40% transits through Pakistan towards destinations in Europe, Africa, the Gulf States, China, and North America (Canada, primarily). Another 25% moves through Central Asia, most of which flows through Tajikistan and onward to Russia

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<sup>66</sup> Swarts, Phillip, (2014). Afghanistan Corruption Still Severe Problem, U.S. Watchdog Says. *Washington Times*, 14 May. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/may/14/afghanistan-corruption-still-severe-problem-us-wat/?page=all>> [Accessed 05 September 2014].

<sup>67</sup> Eikenberry, Karl, (2014). *The End of America's Long War and the Future of Post-Election Afghanistan*. Lecture delivered at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, on 25 June. Video available Online at: <<http://www.iiss.org/en/events/events/archive/2014-0f13/june-d70b/the-end-of-americas-long-war-9a6f>> [Accessed 05 September 2014]. (Comments about the involvement of Afghan security forces in drug trafficking start at 00:39:45).

<sup>68</sup> Department of State, (2007). *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) 2007: Drug and Chemical Control*. Washington DC, p. 229. [Online]: Available at: <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/81446.pdf>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>69</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), (2010). *World Drug Report 2010*. Vienna: UNODC, p. 42. Available online at: <[https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR\\_2010/World\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2010\\_lo-res.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf)> [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].

and Europe on the Northern route.<sup>70</sup> In all major relay points for drugs flowing out of Afghanistan, officials are involved or benefit from the narcotics trafficking and the mafia has managed to infiltrate parts of the governments.

Funds generated from the illegal drug trade are used to undermine state capacities and make government institutions fragile. The process of weakening the state or preventing the building robust institutions is usually done in two ways; co-option and attacks/threats. Drug money is used to weaken formal institutions either by undermining them through corruption or partly capturing them by those involved in the drug trade. In several cases, the traffickers and their agents are corrupt government officials themselves who forge alliances with drug smugglers and even with insurgent groups to keep the flow of money open. Eventually, the relationship between drug mafia and corrupt officials becomes so close that evolves into an alternative governance structure which is part official and part un-official but anti-state and criminal. Such governance structure can be observed in some parts of drug producing and transiting countries. These structures influence the functions of the rest of the government and impact the democratisation process by monopolizing power and eliminating opponents and alternative sources of authority.

The state-building process in the Afghanistan is comparatively more complicated and challenging for mainly two reasons. Firstly, institutions had to be built from scratch after years of wars and destruction, and secondly, the actors that are determined to weaken the state or prevent state building (including the drug mafia and Taliban insurgents) are strong and active. The “drug cartels have long established links with members of the government and security forces”<sup>71</sup> and the expansion of drug production resulted in wealthy traffickers and drug-lords gaining more influence over the economy and state institutions.

Therefore, both market and non-market (parochial) corruption is found in the country’s polity. “Market” corruption signifies competition and involves an impersonal process in which influences is accorded and rents are allocated competitively to the actors who can “pay” the highest bribe, regardless of who they are. In Market corruption, the price is set by the market and consumers can go to another supplier of corrupt service. On the other hand, “parochial” (nonmarket) corruption is a situation where only ties of kinship,

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<sup>70</sup> Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth, (2014). Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition. *Congressional Research Service Report* (R43540). 9<sup>th</sup> May. p. 3. Available online at: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43540.pdf> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

<sup>71</sup> Green, Matthew (2012). U.S. Lists Afghan Insurgent as Taliban’s First Heroin “Kingpin”. *Reuters*, 15 November. Available online at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/11/15/afghanistan-kingpin-idUSL3E8MF65820121115> [Accessed 15 Sep 2014].

affection, caste, and other traditional obligations (such as nepotism) determine access to the favours of power holders.<sup>72</sup>

Over the past five years (2009-2014), the Berlin-based institute, Transparency International, which ranks countries and territories based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be, has been putting Afghanistan among the bottom five in its annual corruption perception index. In 2012 and 2013, it put Afghanistan, North Korea and Somalia in the last place in its corruption perception index.<sup>73</sup> Afghan officials acknowledge that corruption is a reality in their country, in the services sector, and add they are committed to tackling it. However, they point to what they call “the big corruption” which, according to them, takes place in awarding multi-million dollar international contracts.<sup>74</sup>

## 6.5 Drugs Economy vs. Legal Economy

As Kopp says, the existence of criminal organisations and illegal economy has detrimental consequences on the conduct of other economic activities and creates distortions by penetrating legal economies.<sup>75</sup> Illegal drugs economy affects the legal economy in a number of ways and largely supports anti-state actors. It also side-lines legal economic activities and, since it is not taxed, results in the reduction of government revenues, limiting its ability to deliver services to the public. Although the drug trade is the source of a substantial amount of money and helps to stabilise the economy, especially at times of financial crisis, it generally distorts legal economy.

Illegal narcotics represent a big share of the Afghan economy and results in indirect benefits. By providing funds for foreign exchange and driving up rural wages, the drug money helps in keeping the economy and currency, the Afghani, stable. However, the return flows of drug money are also generating “Dutch Disease” which is defined “a reduction in a country’s export performance as a result of an appreciation of the exchange

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<sup>72</sup> Hutchcroft, Paul D., (2011). The Politics of Privilege: Rents and Corruption in Asia. In: Heidenheimer, Arnold J. and Johnston, Michael (editors), *Political Corruption: Concepts and Contexts*. (Third Edition). Chapter 27, pp. 489-512. New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, p. 494.

<sup>73</sup> Transparency International, (2012). *Corruption Perception Index*. [Online]. Available at: <<http://www.transparency.org/cpi2012/results>> [Accessed 05 September 2014]; Transparency International, (2013). *Corruption Perception Index*. [Online] Available at: <<http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/>> [Accessed 05 September 2014]. In the Transparency International’s index for 2014, Afghanistan was one of the improvers, rising four points and acquired the 172 rank out of the 175 countries included in the index. See Transparency International, (2014). *Corruption Perception Index*. [Online]. <<http://www.transparency.org/cpi2014/results>> [Accessed 30 Dec 2014].

<sup>74</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2013). What Kind of Afghanistan Will Foreign Forces Leave? *BBC News*, 17 Dec. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-25410582>> [Accessed 05 September 2014].

<sup>75</sup> Kopp, Pierre, (2004). *The Political Economy of Illegal Drugs*. p38. London: Routledge.

rate after a natural resource such as oil has been discovered.”<sup>76</sup> Labour in opium harvesting and opium trading earns high returns as compared to other licit crops and, therefore, shifting to other, licit activities is discouraged. As opium production has become entrenched in some areas and has been a major economic activity for more than two decades, the opium economy affects asset prices (most notably the price and rental/sharecropping rates for agricultural land) and non-opium business activities.<sup>77</sup> In addition to foreign aid, the drug money accounts for much real-estate speculation as well as a significant portion of other business activities in Afghanistan. This gives the illegal economy a comparative advantage and hampers the development of legal economy. As in Afghanistan, drugs also caused the stagnation of the GDP growth rate and resulted in the “Dutch Disease” in Colombia in 1980s and 1990s when millions of hectares of land was bought by those suspected of being involved in the drug trade.<sup>78</sup>

According to UNODC, the farm-gate value of opium production in Afghanistan in 2014 was US\$ 0.85 billion (US\$ 853 million), or the equivalent of roughly 4% of Afghanistan’s estimated GDP.<sup>79</sup> In 2013, the farm-gate value of opium production was US\$ 0.95 billion, again the equivalent of roughly 4% of the country’s estimated GDP. However, together with profits made by drug traffickers, the total value of the opium economy within Afghanistan was significantly higher. In 2013, the *gross* export value of opium and heroin/morphine exports was US\$3 billion (as compared to US\$2 billion in 2012) while the *net* export value of Afghan opiate exports was US\$2.9 billion. A comparison of these gross and net values with the 2013 GDP of Afghanistan (US\$ 21.04 billion) shows that the net opium exports were worth some 14% of GDP.<sup>80</sup>

## 6.6 Illicit Drugs and State’s Legitimacy

The creation of a legitimate and capable political authority is a major challenge in most post-conflict societies. Illegal drugs economy undermines the legitimacy and authority of the state at different levels. If law enforcement agencies and security institutions adopt a

<sup>76</sup> Barder, Owen, (2006). A Policymakers’ Guide to Dutch Disease: What is Dutch Disease, and is it a Problem? Center for Global Development, Working Paper Number 91, July 2006. [Online]. <<http://eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/doc14813.pdf>> [Accessed 14 Aug 2014].

<sup>77</sup> Byrd, William A., (2008). *Responding to Afghanistan’s Opium Economy Challenge*. op.cit. pp. 4-5.

<sup>78</sup> Rocha, Ricardo, (2000). *The Colombian Economy After 25 Years of Drug Trafficking*. Bogotá: UNDCP.

<sup>79</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2014). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2014: Cultivation and Production*. November. Vienna: UNODC, pp. 6 and 46. Available online at: <<https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan-opium-survey-2014.pdf>> [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].

<sup>80</sup> UNODC and MCN, (2013b). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013*. December. op.cit. p.10.

repressive approach towards drug production and target poppy farmers, the state then risks losing public support and can become de-legitimised in the eyes of some of its citizens. On the other hand, the government's reputation and legitimacy is also damaged if it is perceived to be infiltrated by the drug mafia or connected with illegal drug trade. The official corruption and judicial impunity are seen some of the greatest challenges to the legitimacy of the Afghan government. The 2013 study commissioned by the top US/NATO Commander in Afghanistan found that: "Corruption directly threatens the viability and legitimacy of the Afghan state. Corruption alienates key elements of the population, discredits the government and security forces, undermines international support, subverts state functions and rule of law, robs the state of revenue, and creates barriers to economic growth."<sup>81</sup> In 2014, another US official, John Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), proclaimed that "corruption is really the big issue" which "robs the Afghan people of the resources they need and makes them lose faith in their government."<sup>82</sup>

The Taliban insurgents are successfully exploiting the problems of corruption in the Afghan government as well its policy of eradicating poppy fields. Ban on poppy cultivation and the eradication of poppy fields have deprived many poor farmers of their livelihoods and resulted in their alienation. As part of their strategy to mobilise support, the Taliban protect poppy fields from the government's eradication police teams. As officials are the face of a government, the perception of a widespread corruption in state institutions has become a powerful tool which is often used to question its legitimacy. The presence of crooked officials on key posts features heavily in the Taliban propaganda. The insurgent group's statements usually refer to widespread corruption in the government and call it "*fasid*" (corrupt).<sup>83</sup> In addition, the presence of officials linked to criminal activities also has a negative impact on the overall reputation of the government. It "indirectly assists the insurgency", leads to "further alienation of the public from formal political institutions" and erodes popular support for the government.<sup>84</sup> In addition, the Afghan government and its international allies are often criticised for their inaction against the big actors in the narcotics industry as well as those officials and politicians who benefit from the drug trade. During my field research, a number of farmers and villagers frequently complained that the

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<sup>81</sup> Department of Defense, (2014). *Operationalizing Counter/Anti-Corruption Study*. Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), Division of Joint Staff J-7 (Joint Force Development), 28 April. Pentagon. p.1. Available online at: <[http://nust.edu.pk/INSTITUTIONS/Schools/NIPCONS/nipcons-institutions/CIPS/Download%20Section/JCOA%20CAC%20Final%20Report\\_U.pdf](http://nust.edu.pk/INSTITUTIONS/Schools/NIPCONS/nipcons-institutions/CIPS/Download%20Section/JCOA%20CAC%20Final%20Report_U.pdf)> [Accessed 05 September 2014].

<sup>82</sup> Swarts, Phillip, (2014). Afghanistan Corruption Still Severe Problem, U.S. Watchdog Says. *op.cit.*

<sup>83</sup> See the Taliban official website for their statements.

<sup>84</sup> UNODC, (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency*. *op.cit.* p.105.



security forces were arresting only poor poppy farmers and small drug traders while the big “drug-lords” lived with impunity.<sup>85</sup>

Afghan authorities acknowledge the side affects of its poppy eradication campaign and accept the fact that some poppy farmers whose fields were destroyed joined the Taliban or resort to violence.<sup>86</sup> In addition, organised crime also poses a security threat to government employees and target “uncooperative officials.” Drug mafia usually earmark those officials who are not willing to co-opt and/or create hurdles in their path. Security and civilian officials, including judges and prosecutors, have been regularly attacked by the drug mafia. On 4<sup>th</sup> September 2008, the chief judge of the Central Narcotics Tribunal appeals court, Alim Hanif, 65, was shot dead while on his way to work. He was known for his tough stance on drug trafficking and his assassination was seen as a warning to those in the judiciary who try to stamp out Afghanistan’s drugs trade.<sup>87</sup> In addition, hundreds of Afghan policemen and soldiers involved in the eradication of poppy fields and interdiction have been killed or injured over the past decade. According to official figures, during the 2010-11 poppy eradication and interdiction operations, 22 members of Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) were killed.<sup>88</sup> The government figures for 2012 show that during the poppy eradication campaign alone, more than one hundred Afghan soldiers, police officers and civilians lost their lives and many more were injured in attacks aimed at preventing poppy eradication that year.<sup>89</sup> Border posts and other security checkpoints are also regularly attacked by armed groups associated with drug traffickers. The killing of government officials generally weakens the state institution and has a demoralising affect on the workforce in general.<sup>90</sup>

In addition, the Taliban have been benefiting from the drug trade at many levels including taxing the crop and heroin laboratories as well as protecting poppy fields and safeguarding trafficking convoys. Some Taliban members are said to have been directly involved in the drug trade. In November 2011, the US government added a top Taliban commander to its

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<sup>85</sup> Interviews with villagers (V1, V2, V3) Nov 2012 and Nov 2013. interviews with farmers in southern Helmand and Kandahar provinces, (F1, F2, F3 and F4). Nov 2011 and Nov 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with Mohammad Abdali, counter-narcotics chief of Helmand Province. Oct. 2014.

<sup>87</sup> BBC News, (2008b). Afghan Anti-Drugs Judge is Killed. *BBC Newsonline*, 4 Sep. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/7598540.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7598540.stm)> [Accessed 2 Sep 2014].

<sup>88</sup> Ministry of Interior, Afghanistan, (2011). *Speech of Mr. Baz Mohammad Ahmadi, Deputy Minister for Counter Narcotics*. Text of the speech available online at: <<http://www.cnpa.af/english/2011-01-11-10-12-37/53-2011-01-11-06-39-26>> [Accessed 27 Sep 2014].

<sup>89</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *BBC News*. 26 February. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21548230>> [Accessed 25 Aug 2013].

<sup>90</sup> Interviews with Afghan officials (G1, G2, G3, G4, G5). Nov 2001 and Nov. 2013.

list of suspected drug trafficking “Kingpins”<sup>91</sup> in the first such designation of a leader of the Afghan insurgency.<sup>92</sup> The US Treasury accused Mullah Naim Barich -- the Taliban’s “shadow governor” of the largest opium producing province, Helmand -- of being “involved in many levels of the heroin and opium trade, including leading meetings with drug traffickers, controlling opium production, and owning his own drug loads.”<sup>93</sup> According to US officials, Mullah Barich had directed his followers “that all measures should be taken to protect the poppy harvest which includes planting improvised explosive devices against Coalition forces and corrupting Afghanistan government officials by enticing them to take bribes.”<sup>94</sup> Moreover, the US has put on its sanctions list dozens of other Afghan and Pakistani individuals and businesses and accused them of being involved in the narcotics industry and financing the Taliban through their drug money.<sup>95</sup> Official British documents also point to the Taliban’s “direct connection to the manufacture and processing of opium that helps to fund and fuel the Taliban insurgency.”<sup>96</sup> The 2011 report by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons adds that “narcotics trafficking and terrorist funding and attacks are all inter-connected.”<sup>97</sup> The links between the insurgents and drug traders vary from outright membership of insurgent groups to ties of tribal loyalty and alliances of convenience based on transit and protection fees.<sup>98</sup>

Drug trafficking in Afghanistan is also closely linked with the rise and expansion of criminal networks that, in addition to the drug trafficking, are involved in arms and human trafficking as well as burglary and kidnapping. The organised crime, “a form of accumulation based on corruption and the use or threat of physical violence”, in has transnational linkages into Afghanistan’s neighbouring countries and beyond.<sup>99</sup> According

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<sup>91</sup> The Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act commonly known as the Kingpin Act list bans American citizens from doing business with the person/s whose name is on the list and freezes any assets s/he may hold under the US jurisdiction. For more details see the official overview of the US’s “Narcotics Sanctions Program” at: <<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/drugs.pdf>>.

<sup>92</sup> Green, Matthew (2012). U.S. Lists Afghan Insurgent as Taliban’s First Heroin “Kingpin”. *op.cit.*

<sup>93</sup> Department of the Treasury, (2012). *Treasury Targets Taliban Shadow Governor of Helmand Afghanistan as Narcotics Trafficker*. Press Statement issued on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov. Available online at: <<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/tg1768.aspx>> [Accessed 15 Sep 2014].

<sup>94</sup> ISAF (International Security Assistance Force), (2012). *Taliban Leader Designated as Drug Kingpin*. Officials Statement issued on 15<sup>th</sup> November. Available online at: <<http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/isaf-releases/taliban-leader-designated-as-drug-kingpin-nov-15.html>> [Accessed 2 Sep 2014]; Department of the Treasury, (2012). *Treasury Targets Taliban Shadow Governor of Helmand Afghanistan as Narcotics Trafficker*. *op.cit.*

<sup>95</sup> For details of individuals, groups and businesses on the US sanctions list, see US Department of the Treasury, Resource Center, Counter Narcotics Trafficking Sanctions at: <<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/narco.aspx>> [Accessed 15 Sep 2014].

<sup>96</sup> House of Commons, (2011). The UK’s Foreign Policy Approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Fourth Report of Session 2010-11, **Vol. 1**. Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence. London: House of Commons: Foreign Affairs Committee, The Stationery Office, p. 62.

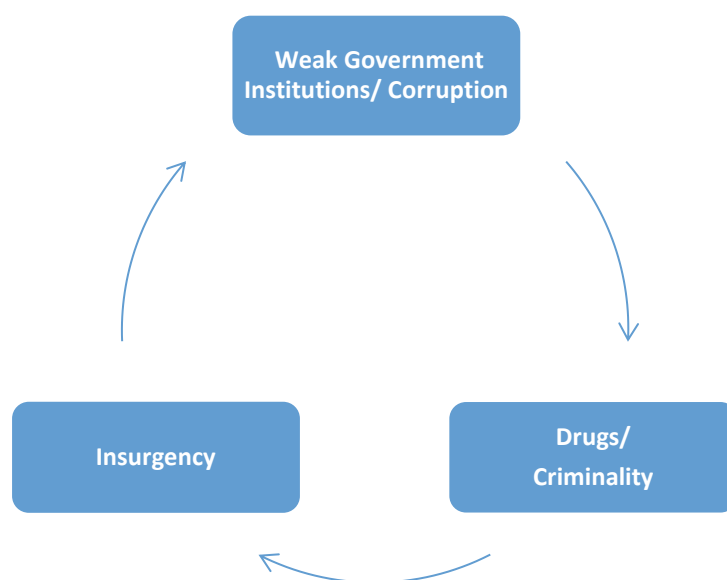
<sup>97</sup> House of Commons, (2011). The UK’s Foreign Policy Approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan. *op.cit.* p. 62.

<sup>98</sup> UNODC, (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency*. *op.cit.* p.105.

<sup>99</sup> UNODC, (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency*. *op.cit.* p.104.



to UNODC, “criminal groups are the main organisers and beneficiaries of the opium trade” and are “contributing substantially to corruption and undermining state capacity” in Afghanistan.<sup>100</sup> The UNODC report adds that organised crime “is heavily intertwined with the state and the insurgency, participating in or buying protection from both sides of the conflict.” Members of criminal networks undermine the effectiveness of the government, generate revenue for the insurgency, supply it with weapons and partner with it in violent resistance to government encroachment.<sup>101</sup> The narcotics trade is not only worsening the security situation in Afghanistan, it is also linked with warlordism and the issues of bad governance and corruption in the government.<sup>102</sup> The processes of illegal drugs contributing to the erosion of state capacities and strengthening insurgent and criminal groups work in a circle and impact each other. The following diagram (Figure 6.3) illustrates the links between illegal drugs economy, weak state institutions and insurgency/criminality.



**Figure 6.3:** The Drugs-Insurgency-Governance Cycle

The international community’s drugs policy has usually oscillated between tolerating drugs-linked corruption for the sake of stability and taking targeted but limited action against those involved in it. However, power brokers linked to the drug trade realised that the best way to benefit from the drugs economy was join politics or the government. A

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> UNODC, (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency*. op.cit. pp.104-105.

<sup>102</sup> Hodes, Cyrus and Sedra, Mark, (2007). *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan*. op.cit. p35.

number of people suspected of being involved in the drug trade took up positions in the government or became members of provincial councils and national parliament in an effort to protect their businesses and get immunity from prosecution. While some drug traders joined the Afghan government, others infiltrated the government institutions in different ways including appointing relatives or associates on important government positions especially in the security institutions. The other means they use is to simply pay bribes to officials for their cooperation.

The US-led international coalition allied itself with a number of power brokers including warlords who were suspected of having links with the drug trade. The US worked through them instead of being obsessed with their “criminal” practices and the means of their income. As Gretchen says, the US had “a wealth of evidence that some of these individuals are enriching themselves through the opium trade”, it found them “helpful in the effort to capture Al-Qaeda fugitives.”<sup>103</sup> For several years after the fall of the Taliban, “the United States condoned opiates production both in areas traditionally controlled by the United Front (Badakhshan) and in areas held by various local commanders whose support was deemed strategically necessary to fight the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.”<sup>104</sup>

The international community’s dependence on such controversial but “useful” interlocutors, and using them for intelligence, logistics and direct counterterrorism operations further deteriorated governance and the public’s trust on formal institutions. Their illegal activities were generally ignored as they facilitated anti-Taliban operations and helped the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) get things done. According to Felbab-Brown, the international community, led by the United States, allowed “pernicious power brokers and corruption” and “systematically underemphasized good governance” by subordinating it to short-term battlefield priorities.<sup>105</sup> As Byrd says in his description of “the vicious circle of the drug industry”, when opium production rebounded in the first two years following the fall of the Taliban regime, local warlords exploited the situation in order to maximise their wealth and power:

“[P]ayments from the opium economy strengthened warlords, who in turn undermined the state, while drug-related corruption also undermined the state directly. In return for

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<sup>103</sup> Peters, Gretchen, (2009). *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin Is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, p. 21.

<sup>104</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy*. London: I.B. Tauris, p. 120

<sup>105</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2013). *Aspiration and Ambivalence: Strategies and Realities of Counterinsurgency and State building in Afghanistan*. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press, p.16. See also Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2009). *Shooting Up: Counter-Insurgency and the War on Drugs*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press.

payments, warlord militias helped provide the enabling environment (often including armed protection) for the opium economy to operate. The weak government was unable to provide genuine security or rule of law, and this created a good environment in which the opium economy could continue to thrive. Thus the dynamic tendencies at work would perpetuate a large opium economy and a weak, ineffective state.”<sup>106</sup>

The US authorities acknowledge the damage caused by their alliance with such “controversial” figures. A 2009 US Senate Foreign Relations Committee’s report acknowledges that “regional and local warlords and militia commanders” were on the US’s “payroll” and adds that “despite alliance with the opium trade, many of these warlords later traded on their stature as US allies to take senior positions in the new Afghan Government, laying the ground work for the corrupt nexus between drugs and authority that pervades the power structure today.” The report concludes that this contributed to the “escalation of opium production” in Afghanistan and had a negative impact on governance.<sup>107</sup>

In addition, the study commissioned in 2013 by General Joseph Dunford, Commander of US Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A), also linked corruption in Afghanistan to the US’s dealing with the warlords. The report laid out some key findings and said that “the US’ initial support of warlords, reliance on logistics contracting, and the deluge of military and aid spending which overwhelmed the absorptive capacity of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) created an environment that fostered corruption.”<sup>108</sup>

Warlords and militia leaders, majority of whom are still loosely affiliated with one of the ex-Mujahideen parties, exploit the weakness of the central government which does not exercise effective control over most of the country’s territory. A number of them also enjoy a degree of influence within the government structures and with international coalition countries. Many of them have entered the political process and are members of national parliament and provincial councils. Some of them have been appointed to key government posts, such as police chiefs and civilian administrators. Despite years of costly counter-narcotics campaign, many warlords still have connections to drug trafficking networks and benefit directly and indirectly from the drug trade.<sup>109</sup>

In addition, several district and provincial governors and police commanders as well members of parliament and warlords are widely reported to be profiting from the drug

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<sup>106</sup> Byrd, William A., (2008). *Responding to Afghanistan’s Opium Economy Challenge*. op.cit. pp. 13-14.

<sup>107</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). *Afghanistan’s Narco War: Breaking the Link Between Drug Traffickers and Insurgents*. US Senate, Washington DC: US government printing office, p. 4.

<sup>108</sup> Department of Defense, (2014). *Operationalizing Counter/Anti-Corruption Study*. op.cit. p.1.

<sup>109</sup> UNODC, (2009). *Addiction, Crime and Insurgency*. op.cit. pp.105-106.

trade.<sup>110</sup> In August 2013, the Deputy Minister of Counternarcotics, Baz Mohammad Ahmadi, admitted that senior government figures, including police officers, had connections with drug traders. A few days later, the Afghan authorities announced the arrest of a high ranking security official, the police chief for south-western Nimroz province bordering Iran, on the charge of collaborating with drug traffickers.<sup>111</sup> He was the highest ranking government official arrested on drug charges in Afghanistan. However, he was cleared of the drug charges and instead convicted of obstruction of justice.

The involvement of government officials in the drug trade has undermined the rule of law and the public's faith in many state institutions. In addition, drug trafficking is linked to arms smuggling, especially in northern Afghanistan where narcotics are exchanged for weapons. A number of Afghan drug smugglers pay for guns and ammunitions with drugs and the sell weapons to private or Taliban-linked dealers. Drug mafias in Tajikistan and Russia are reportedly the main players in this type of bartering.<sup>112</sup>

As part of their strategy to bankrupt the Taliban, Afghan and US/NATO forces started targeting drug traders and poppy farmers. However, this strategy had only a limited success. One on hand, it made the alliance between the Taliban and drug traders stronger as they had a shared interest in the continuation of the drug trade. They used eachother's "resources" and expertise to weaken the government's control and maximise their profits. On the other hand, eradication of poppy fields alienated many Afghans living in rural areas and also strengthened the Taliban physically as it drove farmers and other economic refugees into the insurgents' hands. In addition, the eradication strategy undermined the motivation of local population, especially farmers, to provide intelligence on the Taliban to the government; instead, they provided intelligence about the movement and location of Afghan and international forces as well as eradication teams to the Taliban.

Although the link between official corruption and drug trade is a well-established fact, the existence of drugs economy and corruption doesn't always result in chaos and conflict. The effects of drugs and corruption on peacebuilding processes are generally ambivalent and context-specific. As Synder, in his political economy of extraction framework, argues that lootable resources such as drugs are associated with divergent effects on political stability.

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<sup>110</sup> Gall, Carlotta, (2004b). Afghan Poppy Growing Reaches Record Level, U.N. Says. *New York Times*, 19 Nov. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/19/international/asia/19afghanistan.html>> [Accessed 01 Aug 2014].

<sup>111</sup> Pajhwok News Agency, (2013). *Nimroz Police Chief Detained on Drug Charges*. 13 Aug. Available online at: <<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/08/23/nimroz-police-chief-detained-drug-charges>> [Accessed 01 Aug 2014].

<sup>112</sup> Starkey, Jerome, (2008). *Drugs for Guns*. *op.cit.*

If rulers could construct institutions of joint extraction of lootable resources, then these resources can contribute to the stability by providing the income with which to govern. For example, the joint extraction by the Burmese military in 1990s transformed opium from a source of conflict into a source of order. In contrast, the breakdown or absence of such regimes increases the risk of civil war by making it easier for rebels to get income.<sup>113</sup>

As it is difficult for rulers, rebels and other private actors to establish monopoly control on illicit drugs economy, joint extraction of illicit drugs benefits all parties including the rulers. Rulers can use a range of sticks (no extraction, drug eradication, legal inducements, interdiction etc.) and carrots (protection, non-enforcement of the law, amnesty etc.) in order to get private actors to co-operate and share their wealth as part of joint extractions.<sup>114</sup> On the other hand, private actors also find it useful to enter a joint extraction with the rulers in order to minimise risks. In such cases, violence is generally avoided and discouraged because it is bad for business.

Joint extraction takes place in several parts of Afghanistan. Security officials and district administrators usually receive payments from drug producers, processors and traffickers for allowing them to carry on their activities. It is often reported that security officials have allowed the drug traffickers to ship their cargo after receiving a payment from the smugglers. In other cases, officials have received money for not raiding opium storage facilities as well as heroin making laboratories despite having the capability and resources. In addition, farmers also save their poppy farms from eradication by paying corrupt officials. In some cases, only a “mock” eradication campaign takes place where only parts of the field are eradicated.<sup>115</sup>

Historically, illegality and shadow economy has generally grown during the early phases of state-building process. For example, in Burma, peace proved more profitable than war because the returns on opium increased dramatically after the ceasefire agreements between the military and insurgents.<sup>116</sup> The construction of institutions of joint extraction by the Burmese military thus transformed opium from a source of conflict into a source of order.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Snyder, Richard, (2004). *Does Lootable Wealth Breed Disorder? A Political Economy of Extraction Framework*. Working Paper No. 312, July. Kellogg Institute, p.12. Available online at: <https://www3.nd.edu/~kellogg/publications/workingpapers/WPS/312.pdf> [Accessed 07 Aug 2014].

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.* pp.6-9.

<sup>115</sup> Interviews with farmers, journalists and local elders in Helmand, Kandahar and Nangarhar, (F1, F3, F9, J2, J3). Nov. 2011, Nov. 2013 and Oct 2014.

<sup>116</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2008). *Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? op.cit.* pp. 415-416.

<sup>117</sup> Snyder, Richard, (2004). *Does Lootable Wealth Breed Disorder? op.cit.* p.12.

However, comparative evidence exposes an important limitation of the existing research on the impact of joint extraction on peace and stability in conflict zones. Regimes of joint extraction work better in a “greed” driven and criminal environment. Joint extraction of resources by the two opposite sides is not the norm when the conflict is motivated by ideology and nationalism. In the context of Afghanistan, the construction of a general joint extraction regime is difficult for mainly two reasons. Firstly, the Afghan insurgency is still largely driven by ideology, at least at local level; and, secondly, the international community, which is a main actor in the counter-narcotics campaign in Afghanistan, prevents the institutions of joint extraction. Governments in countries dependent on foreign aid such as Afghanistan are usually reluctant to enter a joint extraction regime of illegal resources due to international pressure. In several countries including Colombia, the externally-induced prohibition against joint extraction causes violence and disorder as it puts governments into a confrontation with drug cartels.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, a limited joint extraction regime only exists between some officials and drug traders in Afghanistan. The scope and size of the institutions of joint extraction vary from area to area. The government is unable to function normally or coerce private actors to share their drug money in areas of the country controlled by the Taliban. Here, the Taliban want to monopolize the extraction of resources including the drug-related rents. The insurgent group is usually not interested in constructing a joint extraction regime with a government it aims to dismantle. However, the Taliban refrain from fighting during the poppy harvesting season to allow farmers collect their opium paste. There is usually a lull in fighting during that period of the year and the conflict usually intensifies as soon as the opium harvesting is over.

In Afghanistan, joint extraction of drugs generally happen at a secondary level; usually between drug smugglers, warlords and corrupt officials. Over the past few years, most of the drugs are produced in southern provinces while the north of the country has mainly served a drug trafficking/transit route to Central Asian countries and all the way to Europe. Government officials use carrots (such as protection, non-enforcement of the law, safe passage and non-eradication) and sticks (including arrest, raid, eradication, interdiction and prosecution) to get drug traders share their drugs income. On the other hand, private actors can use negative and positive inducements to get cooperation of the rulers. In the absence of a mutual understanding, private actors avoid or refuse to share their income with officials and, in extreme scenarios, attack government officials for preventing them from

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<sup>118</sup> *ibid.* p.9.

doing business. In drug producing and trafficking areas, corrupt government officials have adopted a policy of limited interference and even maintain a protection racket. This arrangement has resulted in some degree of stability in some parts of the country.

The relationship between state-building and illicit drug trade is both ambiguous and complex. In the context of Afghanistan, the drugs economy is a major hurdle for building viable state institutions. The drug trade supports a criminal network of drug smugglers and corrupt officials and funds the insurgency. Given the large scale opium production, some writers have argued that “poppy has been deeply entwined in the socio-economic and political fabric of the whole country.”<sup>119</sup>

Ashraf Ghani, speaking as Afghanistan’s finance minister in 2003, was among the first who warned of Afghanistan becoming a “narco-mafia state” and called for an “infusion of urgency” into everyone’s commitment.<sup>120</sup> In February 2004, while commenting on the expansion of drug trade in Afghanistan, Antonio Mario Costa, head of the UN office on drugs and crime (UNODC), stated that he didn’t “think we can call it a narco-state now” but warned that the country was at risk of becoming a narco-state because corruption was aggravating the drugs problem.<sup>121</sup> In September 2004, the Bush administration’s special envoy and ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, repeated this assertion by acknowledging that “there is a potential for drugs overwhelming the institutions [in Afghanistan] -- a sort of narco-state.”<sup>122</sup> Later on, several commentators dubbed Afghanistan as a “narco-state”<sup>123</sup> while Dormandy, in his book on opium characterised the country as “a 21st century narco-state.”<sup>124</sup> It was the assertion by Hillary Clinton, US’s Secretary of State, which caused more controversy. In January 2009, while commenting on the level of penetration of the Afghan government by the drugs economy during her

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<sup>119</sup> Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2013). *Aspiration and Ambivalence. op.cit.* p.162.

<sup>120</sup> BBC News, (2003). Opium Crop Clouds Afghan Recovery. BBC Newsonline, 22 Sep. Available online at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/3127864.stm> [Access on 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>121</sup> BBC News, (2004). UN calls for War on Afghan Drugs. *BBC Newsonline*, 10 Feb. Available online at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/3476283.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/3476283.stm) [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>122</sup> Burnett, Victoria, (2004). Crackdown on Afghanistan’s Cash Crop Looms: In War on Drugs, Authorities Seek to Uproot Poppies. *Boston Globe*, 18 September 2004. Available online at: [http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2004/09/18/crackdown\\_on\\_afghanistans\\_cash\\_crop\\_looms?pg=full](http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2004/09/18/crackdown_on_afghanistans_cash_crop_looms?pg=full) [Accessed 22 Sep 2014]. See also Rubin, Barnett R., (2004). *Road to Ruin: Afghanistan’s Booming Opium Industry*. Center on International Cooperation, New York University. P.1. Available online at: <https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/kf/ROADTORUIN.PDF> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>123</sup> Schweich, Thomas, (2008). Is Afghanistan a Narco-State? *New York Times*, 27 July. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/27/magazine/27AFGHAN-t.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> [Accessed 8 Aug 2014].

<sup>124</sup> Dormandy, Thomas, (2012). *Opium: Reality’s Dark Dream*. Cornwall: TJ International/Yale University Press, p. 285.

confirmation testimony, she said that “Afghanistan has turned into a narco-state.”<sup>125</sup> However, it was disputed by the Afghan officials. The Afghan Foreign Minister, Rangin Dadfar Spanta, objected to use of the term “narco-state” to describe Afghanistan and argued that Clinton’s characterization was “absolutely wrong.”<sup>126</sup>

The term “narco-state” is used from time to time mainly by politicians and the media in the context of drug producing countries. However, such characterization is problematic. There is no clear and agreed definition of a narco-state and there is no consensus on the criteria for a narco-state? Is it about the amount of drugs production, level of infiltration of the state institutions by drug mafia, or the level of drugs related corruption and the involvement of officials in drugs? Why are only the drugs producing countries labelled as “narco-states” and not the ones where drugs are consumed, processed and/or trafficked? As Chouvy says, states are not defined and categorised according to their economic resources. He adds that drug producing countries such as Afghanistan “are far from fitting any definition of rentier states” where only between 1 and 5 percent of arable land is used for poppy cultivation.<sup>127</sup> In addition, Goodhand argues that there is little evidence that the state in Afghanistan is subordinate to drugs interest.

Although drug money represents a significant source of rent for military and political entrepreneurs, other (licit and illicit) income streams, including large inflows of foreign aid, play a role in buying votes, positions and favours. Also, because of the overall growth of the licit economy since 2002, the relative size of the drug economy has declined. Finally, political decision-making involves a complex mix of factors in which financial, political and social resources are brought into play. Tribal, ethnic, political and religious allegiances can -- and frequently do -- trump economic self-interest. Thus, although drugs are a factor in political decision-making, the ‘narco-state’ discourse exaggerates their role by raising them to a position of primacy.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Clinton, Hillary, (2009a). Nomination of Hillary R. Clinton to be Secretary of State Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate. 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session. 13 January 2009. Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, p.99. Available online at: <<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-111shrg54615/pdf/CHRG-111shrg54615.pdf>> [Accessed 22 Sep. 2014].

<sup>126</sup> Bhadrakumar, M. K. (2009). Afghanistan caught in friendly fire. *Asia Times Online*, 21 Jan. 2009. Available online at: <[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/KA21Df01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/KA21Df01.html)> [Accessed 22 Sep. 2014].

<sup>127</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2009). *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy*. London: I.B. Tauris, p. 119.

<sup>128</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2008). Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? *op.cit.* p. 413.



## 6.7 Conclusion

There is a strong link between the drug trade, weak state institutions and armed conflicts. Due to its illegality, the narcotics industry undermines governance and corrupts the state and society. On one hand, bad governance and weak state institutions create favourable conditions for the production and trade of drugs. On the other hand, illicit drugs finance crimes and insurgencies who aim to weaken and corrupt the state institutions. Thus the opium industry has a dual role of fuelling the insurgency and organised crime as well as a large portion of the much-resented government corruption.

In Afghanistan, opium production is closely linked with the problems of insecurity, bad-governance, corruption and warlordism. The illicit drug market has not only distorted the country's legal economy; it also plays a major role in corrupting its nascent political system. Funds generated from the drug trade are usually used to buy influence in the government and to undermine state capacities, moves that result in the fragility and even failing of state institutions. State failure occurs when its institutions are unable to fulfil its core functions including securing its territory and providing services to its population. Drugs money weakens formal state institutions, erodes their capacities at different levels and results in three main governance problems; it corrupts the system, distorts the legal economy and undermines the legitimacy and authority of the state at different levels.

Afghanistan has been the world's biggest opium producer since 1990s. Opium poppies are not only a main source of income for many poor farmers, they also bring huge sums of money for warlords, drug traffickers as well as the insurgents. The processes of illegal drug trade contributing to the erosion of state capacities and strengthening insurgent and criminal groups work in a circle. The nexus between drugs, insurgency and state building is generally stronger in weak states. In most cases, the roles of main actors including drug traffickers, insurgents, and corrupt officials are overlapping.

The breakdown of central government power due to invasions and wars led to the emergence of local leaders and warlords who have benefitted from the drug trade and wield power by setting up patronage networks. The overall drug network in Afghanistan is largely dependent on a nexus between the main actors and the patronage network. In addition, the drug trade supports a criminal network of smugglers and corrupt officials. The Taliban have been encouraging farmers to cultivate opium poppies in areas of the country under their influence and thus earn both political and financial capital. The Taliban defy the government in an effort to win the hearts and minds of the population and provide

protection to drug traffickers who pay a percentage of their revenues to the Taliban to cement an alliance of convenience. The country's opium economy provides the insurgents an estimated US\$100-400 million in funding each year.

Although the drug trade represent a big share of the Afghan economy and, as a source of a substantial amount of money, helps in financial stabilise, it distorts and hampers legal economy and have a negative impact on the conduct of other legal economic activities. In addition, illicit drugs damages the social wellbeing of the people and result in high addiction rates. Although Afghanistan didn't have a major addiction problem, more than a million people, including women and juveniles, are now said to be addicted to a variety of drugs including opium and heroin.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Counter-narcotics and Opium Alternatives**

This chapter focuses on the impact of counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan and suggests several policy options. Since 2002, the United States and its allies have spent around US\$10 billion to tackle the drug production, trade and trafficking in Afghanistan. The chapter examines the counter-narcotics policies applied so far and discusses the reason for their failure. The chapter also describes the role of relevant institutions in tackling the narcotics problem and argues that the narcotics industry in Afghanistan is a multi-dimensional and multi-national problem and, therefore, needs a multi-faceted and coordinated strategic framework. The chapter concludes with a discussion about alternatives to opium production and analyses a number of possible policy options to tackle the drug problem in Afghanistan.

The new Afghan government inaugurated after the fall of the Taliban regime in December 2001 renewed the poppy ban. The issuance of a decree on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2002 banning poppy cultivation, heroin production, drug trafficking and drug use was one of the first acts of the leader of the Afghan interim Authority, Hamid Karzai. As the Afghan government institutions were weak or non-existent, different countries involved in the US-led mission volunteered to take the lead role for various sectors in war torn country. In January 2002, at the G-8 meeting, donor countries including Germany, France, Italy, UK and the US, took on responsibilities for the reform and reconstruction of different sectors. The United Kingdom volunteered to be the lead country in tackling the narcotics industry in Afghanistan. This part of the UK's Afghanistan policy was mostly driven by its own domestic concerns as most of the drugs consumed in the UK had been trafficked from Afghanistan. Speaking in the 2001 Labour Party Conference, just three weeks after the 9/11 attacks, the then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, stressed that the US-led invasion of Afghanistan would also destroy the country's illicit drug trade. He told his supporters: "The arms the Taliban are buying today are paid for by the lives of young British people

buying their drugs on British streets. This is another part of the regime we should destroy.”<sup>1</sup>

The international community was heading the counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan while the Afghan government's role was secondary and much smaller in terms of both policy and resources. The UK remained the lead nation until the Afghan government took control, at least on paper, under the 2006 version of the National Drugs Control Strategy (NDCS). However, the UK and the US were still the most influential actors in both formulating and implementing the counter-narcotics strategy. In the first decade after the fall of the Taliban, a number of policy responses have been applied including bans and eradication, containment, building Afghan institutions and security forces, drafting and implementing Afghanistan's National Counter-narcotics Strategy, public awareness campaigns aimed at discouraging drug production and addiction, judicial reforms, developing alternative livelihood programs and interdiction.

The US administration initially considered counter-narcotics as a distraction from its main mission of fighting against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda and ignored poppy cultivation and drug shipments. In addition, the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 shifted more resources from Afghanistan to the new theatre of war. The US officials increasingly saw counter-narcotics as a “drain on resources”<sup>2</sup> and viewed it as a “mission creep.”<sup>3</sup> The Pentagon under the defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, resisted efforts to draw the US military into supporting counter-narcotics campaign. Senior commanders at the Pentagon were concerned that preventing drug trafficking would only antagonize regional warlords and local power brokers who had links with the drug trade but whose support they needed. Meanwhile, they were also worried that it might turn more of the populace against the US troops and drive poppy farmers into the arms of the insurgents.<sup>4</sup>

For a few years, the international community didn't have a clear and coherent counter-narcotics mission in Afghanistan. According to Jean-Luc Lemahieu, head of the UN office on drugs and crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan, counter-narcotics didn't have the right place in the international community's security agenda in the country. The US-led foreign forces

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<sup>1</sup> Rayment, Sean, (2012). Why Britain's Pledge to End Afghanistan's Deadly Heroin Trade Has Failed. *The Telegraph*, 20 May. Available online at:

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/9276037/Why-Britains-pledge-to-end-Afghanistans-deadly-heroin-trade-has-failed.html>> [accessed 15 Sep 2014].

<sup>2</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). Afghanistan's Narco War: Breaking the Link Between Drug Traffickers and Insurgents. US Senate, Washington DC: US government printing office, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). Afghanistan's Narco War. op.cit. p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Risen, James, (2009). U.S. to Hunt Down Afghan Drug Lords Tied to Taliban. *New York Times*, 9 Aug. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/10/world/asia/10afghan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/10/world/asia/10afghan.html?_r=0)> [Accessed 15 Sep 2014].

even blocked counter-narcotics efforts and believed that it “went against their aim of winning hearts and minds.”<sup>5</sup>

### 7.1 Eradication, “a Quick Fix”

The Afghan government continued its fight against the drug industry. Despite concerns about the negative impact of eradication, it became a major pillar of counter-narcotics strategy in the country. However, the Afghan government lacked the resources and manpower to eliminate the drug trade altogether as it was almost fully dependant on international aid and assistance. Meanwhile, the US government was divided on the best strategy to counter the drugs. The State Department and Pentagon repeatedly clashed over drug policy in Afghanistan, with Pentagon leaders refusing to destroy poppy fields, bomb drug laboratories or disrupt opium shipments or capture major traffickers.<sup>6</sup>

After realising the seriousness of the drug problem in Afghanistan the US recognised that the Taliban insurgency was being revived with the help of drug money. Some US officials intensified lobbying for a more robust counter-narcotics campaign in Afghanistan. While Pentagon was still reluctant to get involved in the “war on drugs”, the State Department developed its own counter-narcotics strategy for Afghanistan in 2004 which was focused on five pillars: Poppy elimination and eradication, interdiction and law enforcement, justice reform and prosecution, public information, and alternative crop development. Although the US’s policy to tackle the drug problem in Afghanistan had many pillars, its main focus was on eradication of poppy fields which was seen at the time as “a silver bullet” and “the centrepiece” of the strategy.<sup>7</sup> As the production of opium continuously increased, the US felt the need for a more forceful eradication and directly funded eradication programs in the country. In 2004, the US issued contracts to an American security company, DynCorp International, which was also involved in US backed drug eradication programs and aerial spraying in Colombia, to lead the poppy eradication campaign in Afghanistan and train and supervise Afghan counter-narcotics teams.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Graham-Harrison, Emma, (2014). Drug trade could splinter Afghanistan into fragmented criminal state – UN. *Guardian*, 6 Jan 2014. Available online at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/05/drug-trade-afghanistan-fragmented-criminal-state>> [Accessed 05 September 2014].

<sup>6</sup> Risen, James, (2007b). Poppy Fields Are Now a Front Line in Afghan War. *New York Times*, 16 May. Available online at: <[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/16/world/asia/16drugs.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/16/world/asia/16drugs.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1)> [Accessed 05 September 2014].

<sup>7</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). *Afghanistan’s Narco War*. op.cit. p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> The Economist, (2004). *Afghanistan: After the Taliban. New figures Show Afghanistan’s Opium Output is Rising Fast*. 18 Nov. Available online at: <<http://www.economist.com/node/3407727>> [Accessed 27

On the other hand, several countries engaged in Afghanistan's reconstruction, including the United Kingdom, were reluctant to wage a full blown war against the drug industry in Afghanistan. Soon after the British troops were deployed in southern Helmand in 2006, a radio message broadcast across the province assured local farmers that the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) would not interfere with poppy fields and that growing poppy was understandable and acceptable.

Respected people of Helmand! The soldiers of ISAF and the Afghan national army do not destroy poppy fields...They know that many people of Afghanistan have no choice but to grow poppy. ISAF and the Afghan national army do not want to stop people from earning their livelihoods.

The message, drafted by British officers and carried on two local radio stations in Afghanistan's largest poppy producing province, angered the Afghan officials who reprimanded British diplomats and demanded an explanation. The British officials soon removed the radio message and issued an apology.<sup>9</sup> The mixed messages people were receiving created more confusion and gave birth to a number of conspiracies. On one hand, poppy fields were eradicated and people were told not to grow poppies while on the other, poppy cultivation was encouraged or ignored. A number of people including farmers, journalists and tribal elders in different parts of Afghanistan said that the US and UK were not serious in fighting drugs and, on the contrary, wanted more poppy production in Afghanistan.

However, the US approach became tougher towards the end of the Bush administration (2000-2008) when it focused more on counter-narcotics. In August 2007, the Bush Administration issued a revised strategy in the light of increasing poppy production and introduced financial and development rewards to poppy-free provinces of Afghanistan. More resources were also devoted to support interdiction and eradication activities.<sup>10</sup> Between 2002 and 2014, the US allocated about US\$1 billion for the eradication of poppy fields in Afghanistan; the bulk of which was spent on an independent eradication force operating from 2004 to 2009. The US government contractor DynCorp International operated a Poppy Eradication Force (PEF) from 2004-2009. According to the report by the

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September 2014]. See also Anderson, Jon Lee, (2007). The Taliban's Opium War. *The New Yorker*, **83**, (19),  
<sup>9</sup> July, p. 60. Available online at: <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/07/09/the-talibans-opium-war>> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

<sup>9</sup> Walsh, Declan, (2007). British Military Sanctions Afghan Poppy Cultivation. *Guardian*, 27 April.  
Available online at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/apr/27/afghanistan.declanwalsh>> [Accessed 31 Oct 2014].

<sup>10</sup> Blanchard, Christopher M. (2009). Afghanistan: Narcotics and U. S. Policy. *Congressional Research Service Report for Congress*. Washington DC: Diane Publishing, p.40.

US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), nearly \$700 million was expended on the PEF and its supporting Special Air Wing between 2004 and 2009. The PEF eradicated 9,946 hectares of opium poppy, at an average cost of \$73,608 per hectare.<sup>11</sup>

Eradication of poppy fields not only failed but also ignited violent strikes and social protests by farmers whose livelihoods were destroyed. Faced with the failure of its eradication efforts and alarmed by the expansion of opium poppy cultivation, the US called for an aerial spraying of poppy fields and put pressure on President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan to accept the new proposal. However, President Karzai consistently opposed the idea arguing that spraying chemicals would negatively impact people, cattle and legal crops. Nevertheless, in 2004, there were reports from eastern Nangarhar province that unidentified airplanes sprayed poppy fields with toxic chemicals which resulted in the poppy seedlings turning yellow and crop dying. Although President Karzai called in the British and American ambassadors, who represented the two main donor countries involved in combating narcotics, for explanation, both countries denied any involvement in the incident.<sup>12</sup>

The US also pushed for a ground based spraying which, a proposal again rejected by President Karzai on the grounds that it will damage the environment. In 2007, as poppy cultivation reached a record-high – 193,000 hectares (477,000 acres) -- the US sent a strong message by appointing William B. Wood, as its new ambassador to Afghanistan. Bill Wood, a former US ambassador to Colombia, was a vocal proponent of aerial spraying of poppy fields and was known in the press as “Chemical Bill.” He went to Afghanistan to implement a strategy of aerial spraying of the kind he had undertaken in Colombia under the US funded “Plan Colombia.” The US planned aerial fumigation in Afghanistan for the Spring of 2008. However, President Karzai again resisted the idea who, along with some European countries, was also worried that chemical spraying might push farmers further into poverty, and into the arms of the Taliban.<sup>13</sup> President Karzai also asserted that aerial chemical spraying would damage other licit crops, pollute water and could further

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<sup>11</sup> SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), (2014c). *Quarterly Report to United States Congress*. 30<sup>th</sup> October. Virginia: p. 9. Available online at: <<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-10-30qr.pdf>> [Accessed 02 Nov 2014].

<sup>12</sup> Gall, Carlotta, (2004b). Afghan Poppy Farmers Say Mystery Spraying Killed Crops. *New York Times*, 5 Dec. Available online at: <<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=980DE4D81731F936A35751C1A9629C8B63>> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

<sup>13</sup> Rubin, Alissa J., (2012). U.S. Efforts Fail to Curtail Trade in Afghan Opium. *New York Times*, 26 May. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/27/world/asia/drug-traffic-remains-as-us-nears-afghanistan-exit.html?pagewanted=all>> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

destabilise rural areas where the support for Afghan government and its international allies was much needed.

In a major policy reversal in mid-2009, the new US administration under President Obama ceased all direct support for and involvement in poppy eradication campaigns and focused on supply reduction efforts. The new US policy centred on an Afghan-run initiative called the Governor-Led Eradication (GLE) program which was administered by the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics (MCN) of Afghanistan. Since 2010, under the Governor Led Eradication (GLE) program, the Afghan Ministry of Counter-Narcotics (MCN) reimburses provincial governors for expenses incurred for eradicating poppy fields. Pursuant to MCN strategic guidance, GLE became the only permissible eradication program in Afghanistan. Under the ministry's guidelines, eradication efforts may only be conducted using manual or mechanical and ground-based methods and governors are prohibited from providing farmers with any financial compensation for destroyed farmland.<sup>14</sup>

Crop eradication has been promoted as an effective way to reduce the overall opium production, sale and consumption. It is also argued that it deters planting in future seasons by changing the risk-benefit calculation to farmers. However, in less secure areas, farmers usually see eradication as a random act that can be managed through patronage and bribery.<sup>15</sup> It is reported from a number of "contested districts" and areas under the Taliban's influence, that corrupt security and civilian officials receive bribes before a promise of non-eradication. In some cases, local officials deliberately avoid eradicating poppy fields fearing that farmers might turn against the government.<sup>16</sup>

Although, counter-narcotics is one of the most important elements of the Afghan government's development and security strategy, the past decade has shown that there is no correlation between poppy crop eradication and the level of poppy cultivation or opium production. Although the US proposed aerial fumigation (which was rejected by the Afghan government), the eradication of poppy crop is done manually or mechanically from the ground. Tens of thousands of hectares of poppy fields are eradicated each year but that usually makes a small fraction of what is planted. On the other hand, poppy cultivation

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<sup>14</sup> Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth, (2014). Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition. *Congressional Research Service Report* (R43540). 9<sup>th</sup> May. pp. 10-11. Available online at: <http://fas.org/srg/crs/row/R43540.pdf> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

<sup>15</sup> Mansfield, David and Alcis, Ltd, (2011). Managing Concurrent and Repeated Risk: Explaining the Reductions in Opium Production in Central Helmand Between 2008 and 2011. Kabul: The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), p 3. Available online at: <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1122E%20Managing%20Concurrent%20and%20Repeated%20Risks%202011.pdf> [Accessed 27 Sep 2014].

<sup>16</sup> Interviews with farmers in Kandahar and Helmand, (F1, F2, F3, F4). Nov. 2011, Nov 2013.



simply moved around and the overall cultivation of poppies continued to increase. In addition, eradication of poppy fields mostly takes place in government controlled and relatively secure areas of the country where the risks of being attacked is lower and access is easier. It is only in such areas that farmers are usually reluctant to plant poppies. In addition, this strategy has displaced drug production into the Taliban-controlled areas and turned many poppy farmers into Taliban supporters. As economist Jeffrey Clemens argues, opium suppression efforts enriched the insurgents by significantly increasing the drug-trade resources flowing to the Taliban and raising poppy prices.<sup>17</sup>

## 7.2 Interdiction and the “Capture or Kill” Mission

Soon after taking charge in 2009, the Obama Administration concluded that the Western counter-narcotics policies in Afghanistan were failing and adapted a more aggressive course of action. The new US government viewed the war on drugs as an integral part of the overall US-led mission in Afghanistan. In March 2009, the US envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, publically acknowledged that the US efforts to eradicate opium poppy crops in Afghanistan had been “wasteful and ineffective.”<sup>18</sup> He declared that eradication of poppy fields had failed to make an impact on the Taliban insurgents’ ability to raise money from the drugs trade. Holbrooke added that the US\$800 million a year the US was spending on counter-narcotics, especially on eradicating poppy cultivation, would be better used in supporting Afghan farmers and to increase the numbers and capacity of Afghan police.<sup>19</sup>

The new US administration thus turned towards a counterinsurgency strategy that hinged on winning hearts and minds of Afghan population. It also stated that previous counter-narcotics policies, which included funding for a centrally directed Poppy Eradication Force (PEF), were alienating those rural Afghans who depended on opium for their families’ subsistence, had the perverse effect of bolstering the insurgency and undermined security and stability goals. It was a clear shift from eradication to interdiction and agricultural development assistance that aims to provide farmers with alternative livelihoods. The US

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<sup>17</sup> Clemens, Jeffrey P., (2013). Evaluating Economic Warfare: Lessons from Efforts to Suppress the Afghan Opium Trade. Available online at: <[http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2201172](http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2201172)> [Accessed 24 September 2014].

<sup>18</sup> BBC News, (2009). Envoy Damns US Afghan Drug Effort. *BBC Newsonline*, 21 March. Available online at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/7957237.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7957237.stm)> [Accessed 31 Oct 2014].

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

troops on the ground once again “made peace with poppies”<sup>20</sup> and left the eradication of poppy fields to the Afghan government.

The 2009 decision to deemphasize opium poppy eradication and to go after the drug runners and drug traders was a major shift in US’s counter-narcotics drive in Afghanistan. The US government put 50 Afghans suspected to be drug traffickers with Taliban links on a Pentagon list of people to be “captured or killed.” That meant they had been given the same target status as insurgent leaders and could be captured or killed at any time. The new strategy, which focused for the first time on breaking the link between the narcotics trade and the Taliban, coincided with the US military expansion in Afghanistan. The strategy reflected a new, interagency approach in which the military, intelligence and law enforcement agencies from the participating countries worked together to identify those individuals linked with drugs and insurgency. In 2009, one of the two US military generals serving in Afghanistan told the US Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee that “we have a list of 367 ‘kill or capture’ targets, including 50 nexus targets who link drugs and the insurgency.”<sup>21</sup> The Taliban insurgency was largely seen as a self-financed insurgency and the aim of the new US strategy was to disrupt the financial network behind the insurgency and break the links between drug traffickers and the insurgents. Under this policy, a several of Afghans suspected of being involved in the drug trade and with Taliban links were killed in raids conducted by US/NATO forces.

Meanwhile, the US government put dozens of Afghan individuals, groups and businesses suspected of being involved in the drug trade on its sanctions list under the “Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act” commonly known as the “Kingpin Act.”<sup>22</sup> The “Kingpin Act” list bans US citizens from doing business with the person/s whose name is on the list and freezes any assets s/he may hold under the US jurisdiction.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the US has arrested and extradited a number of Afghans and Pakistanis suspected of drug production and trafficking.

Haji Bashir Noorzai, a former anti-soviet Mujahideen commander from Kandahar, who later became a confidante of the Taliban Supre Leader, Mullah Omar, was one of those

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<sup>20</sup> Axe, David, (2013). U.S. Kicks Drug-War Habit, Makes Peace With Afghan Poppies. *Wired*, 09 May. Available online at: <<http://www.wired.com/2013/05/afghan-poppies/all/>> [Accessed 15 Sep 2014].

<sup>21</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). *Afghanistan’s Narco War*. *op.cit.* p. 16; Risen, James, (2009). U.S. to Hunt Down Afghan Drug Lords Tied to Taliban. *op.cit.*

<sup>22</sup> For detail of the list, please see US Department of the Treasury, Resource Center, Counter Narcotics Trafficking Sanctions on its website at: <<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Pages/narco.aspx>> [Accessed on 15 Sep 2014].

<sup>23</sup> For more details see the official overview of the US’s “Narcotics Sanctions Program” at the Department of the Treasury’s webpage: <<http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/drugs.pdf>>.

suspected of having links with the narcotics trade. Although he agreed to cooperate with the Americans after the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001, the “ally” soon became a “drug suspect.” In June 2004, he was added to the US government’s drug kingpin list; the first Afghan on the list. In 2005, he was secretly indicted and lured to New York where he was arrested after nearly two weeks of talks with law enforcement and counterterrorism officials in a Manhattan hotel. The US authorities announced his capture in New York in April 2005 and introduced him as a drug lord and a big catch -- the Asian counterpart of the Colombian cocaine legend, Pablo Escobar.<sup>24</sup> The US officials accused him of providing “explosives, weaponry, and personnel to the Taliban in exchange for protection for his organisation’s opium poppy crops, heroin laboratories, drug transportation routes, and members and associates.”<sup>25</sup> Haji Bashir denied his involvement in drug trafficking and pleaded not guilty to charges that he smuggled heroin into the US. However, the judge in New York rejected his pleas for leniency and sentenced him to life in prison in April 2009.<sup>26</sup>

On 24<sup>th</sup> October 2005, the US authorities announced the extradition of an Afghan national, Baz Mohammad, “the first extradition in history from Afghanistan to the United States.”<sup>27</sup> The US government’s Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) called him a “drug lord” and “a Taliban-linked narco-terrorist” and charged him with “conspiring to import more than \$25 million worth of heroin from Afghanistan into the United States and other countries.” The indictment said that his organisation was “closely aligned with the Taliban and other Islamic-extremist groups in Afghanistan” and provided financial support to the insurgents who, in return, protected “its opium crops, heroin laboratories, drug-transportation routes, and members and associates.” Before his extradition to the US, Baz Mohammad had been arrested in January 2005 in Afghanistan in a joint US-Afghan operation codenamed “Marble Palace” and was put on the “Kingpin list” in June 2005.<sup>28</sup> Two years later, on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2007, a US court in New York sentenced him to more than

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<sup>24</sup> Risen, James, (2007a). An Afghan’s Path From U.S. Ally to Drug Suspect. *New York Times*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb. Available online at:

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/02/world/asia/02afghan.html?ex=1328072400&en=5311a28f06cf69cd&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>25</sup> Department of State, (2007). *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) 2007: Drug and Chemical Control*. Washington DC, p. 229. [Online]: Available at:

<<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/81446.pdf>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>26</sup> Weiser, Benjamin, (2009). Afghan Linked to Taliban Sentenced to Life in Drug Trafficking Case. *New York Times*, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2009. Available online at

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/01/nyregion/01sentence.html>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>27</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), (2005). *U.S. Extradites Taliban-Linked Narco-Terrorist*. DEA’s News Release, 24<sup>th</sup> Oct. Washington DC. Available online at:

<<http://www.dea.gov/pubs/pressrel/pr102405.html>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

15 years in prison for “heading a drug trafficking ring” in Afghanistan and Pakistan and using his illicit profits to support the Taliban.<sup>29</sup>

Over the following years, several other suspected drug traders were arrested in Afghanistan and extradited to the US. In November 2007, Khan Mohammad, from Afghanistan’s eastern Nangarhar province, was taken to the US and became the first person to be convicted under a narco-terrorism provision of the USA Patriot Act that went into effect in March 2006 and increased the penalty for a defendant found to be involved with terrorism and distributing illegal drugs. A federal jury found him guilty of drug trafficking and funding “terrorist activity by trafficking in illegal drugs”<sup>30</sup> and, on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2008, was handed the maximum sentence of life imprisonment.<sup>31</sup>

In 2008, Haji Juma Khan, an ethnic Baloch, who was described by the US federal prosecutors as perhaps the biggest and most dangerous drug lord in Afghanistan, was arrested in Indonesia and transported to New York to face charges under a new American narco-terrorism law. According to US authorities, he led an international opium and heroin trafficking group and operated laboratories/factories that produced refined heroin. Haji Juma Khan was also accused of helping the Taliban with a steady stream of money and weapons. According to the New York Times, before he was captured, the CIA and the US’s Drug Enforcement Administration relied on him as a valued source for years in return for what he hoped would be protected status as an American asset.<sup>32</sup> US prosecutors accused him of moving up to US\$1 billion worth of opium a year paying protection to the Taliban and bribes to officials in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.<sup>33</sup> In 2012, another Afghan national, Haji Bagcho, accused of having links with the Taliban was sentenced to life in prison for “narco-terrorism” and conspiring to distribute heroin in the United States. The US authorities called Haji Bagcho, who has been arrested in Afghanistan and extradited to

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<sup>29</sup> Reuters, (2007). *U.S. Court Imprisons Afghan Drug Lord For 15 Years*. 5<sup>th</sup> October. Available online at: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSN0526554220071005?feedType=RSS&feedName=topNews>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>30</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), (2008). *Member of Afghan Taliban Convicted in U.S. Court on Narco-Terrorism and Drug Charges*. DEA News Release, 20<sup>th</sup> May. Washington DC. Available online at <<http://www.justice.gov/dea/divisions/hq/2008/pr052008p.html>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>31</sup> CNN (2008). *Taliban ‘Narco-Terrorist’ Begs for Mercy, Gets Life Sentence*. 22<sup>nd</sup> December. Available online at: <[http://edition.cnn.com/2008/CRIME/12/22/taliban.sentencing/index.html?eref=time\\_us](http://edition.cnn.com/2008/CRIME/12/22/taliban.sentencing/index.html?eref=time_us)> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>32</sup> Risen, James, (2010b). *Propping Up a Drug Lord, Then Arresting Him*. *New York Times*, 11 Dec. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/12/world/asia/12drugs.html?pagewanted=all>> [Accessed 22 Sep 2014].

<sup>33</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). *Afghanistan’s Narco War*. *op.cit.* p. 16.

the US in May 2009, as “one of the world’s most prolific drug traffickers who helped fund the Taliban.”<sup>34</sup>

In addition, the US government put a number of individuals and businesses on its sanctions list who it says are “indirectly linked” to the drug trade and insurgency. In February 2014, the US government designated an Afghan national pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) for being “involved in moving money for the Taliban and other narcotics traffickers using his *hawala*, a value transfer system”, and “for his significant role in international narcotics trafficking.”<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile, the Afghan security forces also captured a number of suspected drug traffickers from different parts of the country. In June 2013, the Afghan Minister of Counter-Narcotics, Zarar Ahmad Muqbel Osmani, announced that the Afghan authorities had arrested seven of the top 10 traffickers, including individuals having significant political and financial power, and called it “a major breakthrough of the Afghan government.”<sup>36</sup>

Although such arrests inside Afghanistan disrupted the drug trade to some extent, the impact of interdiction may be limited for at least these three reasons. (A), Afghanistan’s judicial system is still incapable of bringing high-level drug traffickers to justice. (B), Most major drug traffickers have either fled the country or conduct their business through proxies, labourers. (C), Many big drug traffickers don’t live and operate on permanent basis in Afghanistan. According to Afghan security officials, the biggest narco-traffickers live abroad, mostly in Pakistan, from where they remote control their drug trade.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the Obama administration’s strategy of “killing or capturing” drug traffickers created problems for the narco-industry, the effects were mostly temporary. Moreover, in many parts of the country, the strategy drew the so called drug-lords closer to the Taliban as their reliance on the Taliban for protection increased. A number of them simply moved to neighbouring Pakistan.

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<sup>34</sup> Kuo, Lily, (2012). Heroin Trafficker With Ties to Taliban Gets Life in U.S. Prison. *Reuters*, 12 June. Available online at: <<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/06/13/us-usa-heroin-taliban-idUSBRE85C01G20120613>> [Accessed 15 Sep 2014].

<sup>35</sup> Department of Treasury (2014). *Treasury Designates Afghan Heroin Trafficker: Action Targets Hawaladar with Ties to International Narcotics Trafficking and the Taliban*. Washington DC: Department of the Treasury’s official statement, 11th Feb. Available online at: <<http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/jl2291.aspx>> [Accessed 15 Sep 2014].

<sup>36</sup> Gienger, Viola, (2013). *Top Afghan Officials Appeal for Sustained Help Against Opium*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace (USIP). Available online at: <<http://www.usip.org/publications/top-afghan-officials-appeal-sustained-help-against-opium>> [Accessed 15 Sep 2014].

<sup>37</sup> Interviews with Afghan government officials in Helmand, Kandahar and Kabul, (G2, G5, G7). Nov. 2011, Nov. 2013 and Oct 2014.

The previous US strategy which focused mainly on the eradication of poppy fields also had a limited success as it failed to provide viable and sustainable alternative livelihood options. In addition, the strategy drove a number of poppy farmers and landowners into the arms of the Taliban and started cooperating with the insurgents in exchanging for protecting their poppy fields from the government's eradication police.

Meanwhile, despite eradication of tens of thousands of hectares of poppy fields each year, drug production and poppy cultivation has increased year over year since the fall of the Taliban regime. Like the 2000 US funded campaign to destroy coca fields in Colombia, commonly known as "Plan Colombia", largely failed to achieve its goals,<sup>38</sup> the US strategy to destroy the drug industry and reduce the overall production of opium in Afghanistan has not been successful. Although poppy cultivation reduced in some parts of Afghanistan, it increased in other areas. In many drug producing countries, counter-narcotics campaigns often resulted in a "balloon effect" -- the concept that describes opium cultivators to simply relocate just like squeezing the balloon on one end makes it bulge at the other. In Afghanistan too, several provinces, where poppy cultivation took place for a few years, were later declared "poppy free." However, some of them went back to poppy cultivation and opium production has been moving from one place to another.<sup>39</sup>

### 7.3 Alternative Development and Substitute Crops

Alternative development has been an important part of counter-narcotics strategy in Afghanistan which is intended to help farmers switch from poppy cultivation to licit livelihood options and keep them away from a reliance on opium production as a source of income. This has included a number of initiatives aimed at increasing farmers' employment opportunities while decreasing their expenditures and risk (e.g., by providing licit seeds such as wheat, fertiliser and farming technology) and in the meantime, improving and reconstructing the agricultural infrastructure. As part of the alternative livelihood policy, the Good Performers Initiative (GPI) was designed to reward provinces that successfully reduced or eliminated poppy cultivation with funding for developmental

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<sup>38</sup> Dion, Michelle, and Russler, Catherine, (2008). Eradication Efforts, the State, Displacement and Poverty: Explaining Coca Cultivation in Colombia during Plan Colombia. *Journal of Latin American Studies*. August, vol. **40** (03), 399-421; Isacson, Adam, (2005). Failing grades: evaluating the results of plan Colombia. *Yale Journal of International Affairs*. Fall, pp. 138-155. Available online at: <[http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/yajoinal&div=18&g\\_sent=1&collection=journals](http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/yajoinal&div=18&g_sent=1&collection=journals)> [Accessed 15 Aug 2014].

<sup>39</sup> Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *BBC News*. 26 February. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21548230>> [Accessed 25 Aug 2013].



projects. However, the scheme was not properly implemented and secondly, the money allocated didn't match the needs of the people. In addition, allocations of funds didn't result in robust rural development but were in some cases diverted for personal profit or amounted to one isolated project here and there.<sup>40</sup> For many farmers, especially those living in remote areas, alternative livelihoods and cash-for-work programs never materialised. Alternative development has been very slow and still hasn't reached large areas of the country. Many parts of rural Afghanistan haven't seen its benefits due to limited resources or insecurity that has halted many developmental projects. Electricity, roads and access to market are far from sufficient to convince poppy farmers switch to licit crops. Although poppy cultivation reduced in some parts of the country, such initiatives have not resulted in the overall poppy cultivation in the country.

The US also supported alternative crops as part of its counter-narcotics strategy in Afghanistan and planned to bring in teams from the US Department of Agriculture to help identify what crops to grow.<sup>41</sup> Farmers were told to cultivate crops such as saffron, roses, alfalfa, basil, cotton and pomegranates as substitute to poppies. Farmers were told this would bring them more than opium. In addition, crops with short growing seasons such as onion, tomatoes, and cucumbers were also promoted. Meanwhile, growing vegetables in rotation and, in the meantime, planting fruit trees for the long term on the same plot of land was also seen as an alternative to poppy. Onions got more attention than other vegetables as an alternative to poppies for several of reasons. Firstly, it is considered a high-value cash crop and is traded as an export commodity and secondly, it arguably offers comparable returns.<sup>42</sup>

As opium farmers generally get offers for credit, seeds and fertilisers, the Afghan government and its international backers offered similar incentives to steer farmers toward alternative legitimate crops. The slogans of "Poppies for Peace", "Poppies for Pomegranates" and "Poppy for Medicine" have been used over the past decade as part of possible strategies aimed at tackling the drug problem in Afghanistan. Many promises were made to farmers who switched to legal crops but they found later the money they received from legal crops was not comparable with opium prices.

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<sup>40</sup> Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth, (2014). *Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition*. *op.cit.* pp. 13-14.

<sup>41</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). *Afghanistan's Narco War*. *op.cit.* p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> Minoia, Giulia; Mumatz, Wamiqullah, and Pain, Adam, (2014). *The Social Life of the Onion: The Informal Regulation of the Onion Market in Nangarhar, Afghanistan*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Working Paper 26. Available online at: <file:///C:/Users/w1357496/Downloads/The%20social%20life%20of%20the%20onion%20the%20informal%20regulation%20of%20the%20onion%20market%20in%20Nangarhar,%20Afghanistan.pdf> [Accessed 26 November 2014].

In addition, cultivating several crops is more labour intensive and in the absence of cold storage facilities and a very limited access to foreign market, a significant amount of vegetables and fruits are wasted and rotten every year. Many farmers sell their vegetables in Pakistan on cheap prices where they are kept in cold storage. The same are exported back to Afghanistan in the winter and are sold on higher prices.<sup>43</sup> Afghanistan's export base is already very narrow, with official exports -- mostly dried nuts and fruits, derivatives of legal agricultural production, and carpets -- amounting to only 5.5 percent of GDP in 2012/13. Even factoring illicit exports such as opium and other drugs, Afghanistan underperforms in exports. As a 2014 World Bank report says, countries at similar income level tend to have an export-to-GDP ratio closer to 30 percent.<sup>44</sup>

Lack of storage facilities for fruits and vegetables, absence of easy access to domestic markets and minimal export of licit agricultural products are some of the main factors which make opium the most profitable crop in Afghanistan. Poppy-growing households are usually farther away from markets. Although opium fuels conflict and undermines governance by providing income to insurgents and other criminal groups, it has been Afghanistan's single most important cash crop having significant implications for income and consumption of many rural and poor households. The average cash income of poppy-growing households is 52 percent higher than that of households that had never grown poppy.<sup>45</sup>

Wheat accounts for approximately 60 percent of agricultural output in Afghanistan and is one of the most important crops, next to opium. Around one-third of wheat production is rain-fed, which makes agriculture output highly volatile and dependent on rainfall.<sup>46</sup> In addition, the comparison of the per-hectare income from wheat and poppies, the two crops planted during the same season in Afghanistan, indicates why poppies are more attractive. In 2003, farmers earned 27 times more gross income per hectare of opium than per hectare of wheat. In 2012 and 2013, the ratio between gross income from opium and wheat was at 4:1.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Interviews with farmers in Kandahar, Helmand, Balkh, and Nangarhar, (F1, F2, F6, F7, F9, F10). Nov. 2011 and Nov. 2013.

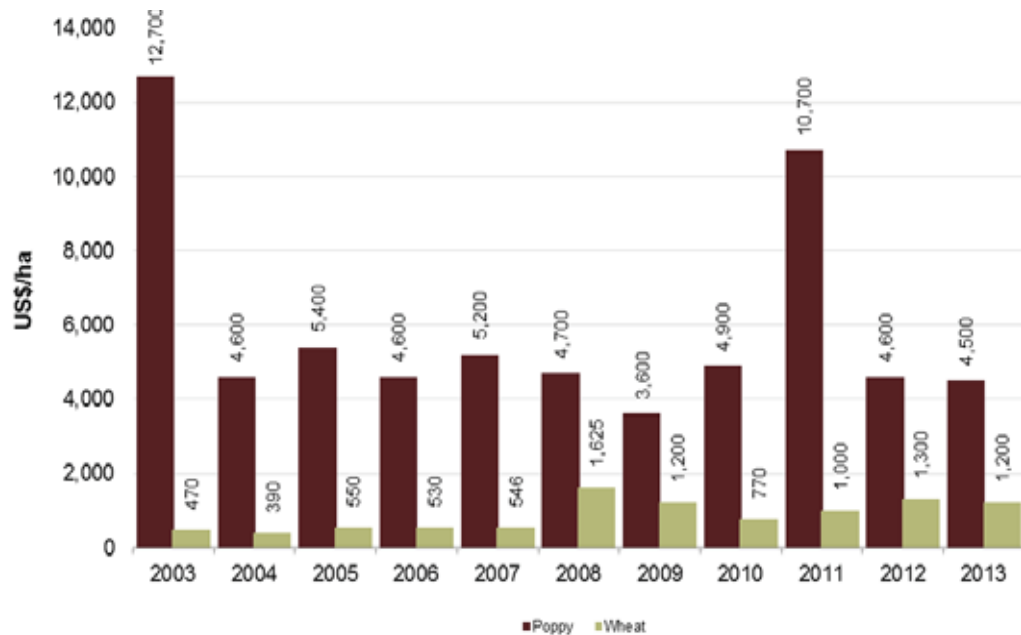
<sup>44</sup> World Bank, (2014). *Islamic State of Afghanistan: Pathways to Inclusive Growth*. Report No: ACS8228. March, p. 4. Available online at: <[http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/06/18/000456286\\_20140618113748/Rendered/INDEX/ACS82280WP0v2000Box385214B00PUBLIC0.txt](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/06/18/000456286_20140618113748/Rendered/INDEX/ACS82280WP0v2000Box385214B00PUBLIC0.txt)> [Accessed 06 December 2013].

<sup>45</sup> World Bank, (2014). *Islamic State of Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> World Bank, (2014). *Islamic State of Afghanistan*. op.cit. p. 23.

<sup>47</sup> UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime) and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, (2013b). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013*. December. Vienna: UNODC,





**Figure 7.1:** Gross income per hectare from opium and wheat, 2003-2013 (US dollars per hectare)<sup>48</sup>

The only other plant that can compete with opium in terms of prices is Saffron which sells high on the international markets. However, the saffron market is dominated by other countries especially Iran, Afghanistan's eastern neighbour. Although many poppy farmers have switched saffron all over the country, it is still not a perfect substitute for opium as many farmers complain they struggle to market saffron on competitive prices. A very small amount of saffron is used inside Afghanistan. As a farmer from northern Balkh province said, "I could only sell a few grams of his saffron to a local traditional medicinal practitioner while the rest is stored in my bedroom."<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the absence of foreign markets for Afghan saffron might decrease its appeal leaving poppy as the most lucrative crop.

#### 7.4 Poppy for Medicine: Legalising Opium Production

As the policies aimed tackling the opium problem in Afghanistan failed to achieve their goals, some started looking for a panacea and advocated using Afghan opium for medicines such as morphine and codeine, which are highly-demanded painkillers globally. In 2005, the Senlis Council, an international drug policy think tank, proposed the "Poppy

p.66. Available online at: <[http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_Opium\\_survey\\_2013\\_web\\_small.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_survey_2013_web_small.pdf)> [Accessed 23 Nov 2014].

<sup>48</sup> UNODC and MCN, (2013b). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013*. December. *op.cit.* p.67.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with a farmer in Balkh province, (F7). Nov. 2011.

for Medicine” program and the creation of a licensing system in Afghanistan which would allow the cultivation of opium for the production of essential pain killers. The Senlis Council argued that in order to break the vicious circle of the drugs economy, opium trade needed to be brought into a legal system controlled by the state. It added that the strategy of destroying poppy crop was destroying people’s livelihoods and encouraging them to support the Taliban. The Senlis Council proposed a village-based licence scheme and a “community co-policing”, intended to prevent individuals selling opium to drug traffickers and to make sure that the opium is delivered to the factory to be converted to morphine.<sup>50</sup>

Legal production of opium is permitted under the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs and other international drug treaties. Legal poppy cultivation is undertaken for pharmaceutical use by at least nineteen countries in the world (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). Only four of them (China, India, Japan and South Korea) produce opium while the others harvest poppies (“poppy straw”), and produce concentrate of poppy straw (CPS) in the context of a modern mechanised agriculture. Two countries, Turkey and India, produce most of the world’s legal opium. India is the only legal exporter of opium and benefits from a preferential access to markets in the US<sup>51</sup> which is the world’s biggest importer of opium.

Opium licensing has been used in India to curb illegal opium production for several decades where tens of thousands of farmers, most of them in the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, are permitted to grow opium under the supervision of Central Narcotics Bureau, a branch of the Indian Finance Ministry. India exports hundreds of tonnes of opium annually mainly to US, UK and Japan.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Turkey, which has a long history of illicit opium production and remained a major source of narcotics smuggled to Europe and US for decades, overturned the poppy ban in 1974 and allowed licensed growing for medical uses.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, some experts and politicians thought that liscensing

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<sup>50</sup> Spencer, Metta, (2008). Poppies for Medicine: An interview with The Senlis Council’s Norine MacDonald. *Peace Magazine*, Jul-Sep. Available online at: <<http://peacemagazine.org/archive/v24n3p08.htm>> [Accessed 01 Nov 2014].

<sup>51</sup> Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2008). Licensing Afghanistan’s Opium: Solution or Fallacy? *The Caucasian Review of International Affairs (CRIA)*, Germany, 2 (2): 101-106 – Spring. Available online at: <[http://www.cria-online.org/3\\_6.html](http://www.cria-online.org/3_6.html)> [Accessed 01 Nov 2014].

<sup>52</sup> Sharma, Shantanu Nandan, (2007). India’s Opium Trade in Red; Annual Loss at Rs 20 cr. *The Economic Times*, India, 30 Sep. Available online at: <[http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Economy/Indias\\_opium\\_trade\\_in\\_red\\_annual\\_loss\\_at\\_Rs\\_20\\_cr/articleshow/2415291.cms](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Economy/Indias_opium_trade_in_red_annual_loss_at_Rs_20_cr/articleshow/2415291.cms)> [Accessed 01 Nov 2014].

<sup>53</sup> Hurst, Lynda, (2007). Turkey did it. Can Afghanistan? *The Star*, Toronto, 25 Feb. Available online at: <[http://www.thestar.com/news/2007/02/25/turkey\\_did\\_it\\_can\\_afghanistan.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/2007/02/25/turkey_did_it_can_afghanistan.html)> [Accessed 01 Nov 2014].

the opium production would also work in Afghanistan. Aslan, for example, argued that the licensing scheme and regulating poppy cultivation might turn Afghanistan, one the poorest countries in the world, into “the Saudi Arabia of morphine” and that it could create stability and economic development, as well as sap support for the Taliban.<sup>54</sup>

However, the Senlis Council’s proposals were condemned by the US, UK and the Afghan government. The US has been at the forefront for opposing the legalisation of opium production in Afghanistan. The idea of a liscensing scheme was rejected first and foremost on the grounds that the political conditions and regulatory framework required for the implementation of such a plan were missing in Afghanistan. It was argued that the legalisation of opium would speed up the transformation of Afghanistan into a narco-economy and would legitimise the position of the drug-lords.<sup>55</sup>

The British government, which led the counter-narcotics campaign in Afghanistan for many years, also insists that legalisation is not an option. The US and UK position has been that the law and order needed to have a licit poppy cultivation doesn’t exist in Afghanistan and that violations will be common. They also argue that the Afghan opium industry will be impossible to monitor because of insecurity, corruption and harsh landscape. They are also concerned that such a scheme will put the Afghan government in competition with the drug traders and that there might be a competition between farmers to supply both licit and illicit opium. Even if the scheme was approved, the country will need clean facilities to produce medical grade opiates.<sup>56</sup> Some have suggested that even if Afghanistan were allowed to join the ranks of licensed producers of opiates for medical use, the country’s tiny farm sizes, highly labour-intensive technology and poor infrastructure mean that costs would be about 10 times higher than those of Australia, a major exporter.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Aslan, Reza, (2008). How Opium Can Save Afghanistan. *Daily Beast*, 19 Dec. Available online at: <<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2008/12/19/how-opium-can-save-afghanistan.html#>> [Accessed 01 Nov 2014]. See also Ham, Peter van and Kamminga, Jorrit, (2006). Poppies for Peace: Reforming Afghanistan’s Opium Industry. *The Washington Quarterly*, **30**, (1): 69-81.

<sup>55</sup> Grare, Frédéric, (2008). *Anatomy of a Fallacy: The Senlis Council and Narcotics in Afghanistan*. The Centre for International Governance Innovation, Working Paper #34. Available online at: <[HTTP://WWW.CIGIONLINE.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/WORKING\\_PAPER\\_34\\_WEB.PDF](http://WWW.CIGIONLINE.ORG/SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/WORKING_PAPER_34_WEB.PDF)> [Accessed 01 Nov 2014]. See also Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud, (2008). Licensing Afghanistan’s Opium. *op.cit.*; Mansfield, David, (2001). *An Analysis of Licit Opium Poppy Cultivation in India and Turkey*. Available at: <<http://www.davidmansfield.org/all.php>> [Accessed 01 Nov 2014]; Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (2007). *Opium Licensing in Afghanistan: Its Desirability and Feasibility*. Brookings Institute Policy Paper No. 1, August 2007. Available online at: <<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Research/Files/Papers/2007/8/afghanistan%20felbab%20brown/felbab%20brown200708.pdf>> [Accessed 01 Nov 2014].

<sup>56</sup> US Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, (2009). *Afghanistan’s Narco War*. *op.cit.* pp. 25-26.

<sup>57</sup> Byrd, William A. and Mansfield, David, (2014). *Licensing Afghan Opium for Medicinal Use: Why It Won’t Work*. Washington DC.: United States Institute of Peace. Available online at: <<http://www.usip.org/publications/licensing-afghan-opium-medicinal-use>> [Accessed 02 Nov 2014].

Nonetheless, the notion of legalising/licensing opium production in Afghanistan got support from a wide range of circles. In 2007, The British Medical Association (BMA) proposed a radical solution to the Afghan poppy problem by harnessing the Afghan opium-poppy crop to alleviate a shortage of painkillers in Britain's National Health Service (NHS). Dr Vivienne Nathanson, the BMA's head of science and ethics said: "If we actually were harvesting this drug from Afghanistan rather than destroying it, we'd be benefiting the population of Afghanistan as well as helping patients and not putting people at risk."<sup>58</sup> Responding to the proposal, Mark Malloch-Brown, the then British minister of state for Africa, Asia, and the UN, acknowledged that "the UK has repeatedly considered legal poppy cultivation" but argued against such a move by saying that "unless the Afghan government can control the size of the crop, legal opium will supplement and not substitute illegal opium production."<sup>59</sup>

In June 2014, Sir William Patey, the former UK ambassador to Afghanistan (2010-2012), became one of the highest-profile figures in Britain to back legalising and regulating of opium in Afghanistan. After acknowledging the failure of British-led efforts to eradicate poppy crops in Afghanistan over the past 10 years, Patey said: "If we cannot deal effectively with supply, then the only alternative would seem to me to try to limit the demand for illicit drugs by making a licit supply of them available from a legally regulated market."<sup>60</sup> However, Karl Eikenberry, the former US ambassador to Afghanistan (2009-2011) while reacting to his British counterpart's comments warned against such a move and equated the opium legalisation in Afghanistan with "more havoc on the streets of Moscow, London and the US."<sup>61</sup>

The notion of legalising/licensing opium poppy cultivation remains problematic and controversial. Neither the Afghan government nor its main international backers, especially the US and the UK, are willing to give it a try. The US administration is also concerned that such a scheme would contradict America's avowed "war on drugs." In addition, finding a market for legal Afghan opium will be another problem. Two major exporters of

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<sup>58</sup> Beckford, Martin, (2007). Use Afghan Opium for NHS Drugs. *Telegraph*, 23 Jan. Available online at <<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1540269/Use-Afghan-opium-for-NHS-drugs.html>> [Accessed 31 Oct 2014].

<sup>59</sup> Malloch-Brown, Mark, (2008). Opium Production in Afghanistan. *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*, 01 May, 2008; **336**:972. Available online at <<http://www.bmj.com/content/336/7651/972>> [Accessed 31 Oct 2014].

<sup>60</sup> MacAskill, Ewen, (2014). Former UK Ambassador to Afghanistan Calls for Legalisation of Drugs. *Guardian*, 25 June. Available online at: <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/25/former-uk-ambassador-afghanistan-legalisation-drugs-william-patey-poppy-crops>> [Accessed 31 Oct 2014].

<sup>61</sup> Eikenberry, Karl (2014). *The End of America's Long War and the Future of Post-Election Afghanistan*. Lecture delivered at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, on 25 June 2014. Video available at: <<http://www.iiss.org/en/events/events/archive/2014-0f13/june-d70b/the-end-of-americas-long-war-9a6f>> [Accessed 05 September 2014]. (Comments about Afghan poppy production start at 00:58:35).

legal opiates, India and Turkey, both recognised by the United Nations as traditional supplier countries, continue to cultivate opiates on smaller farms with some leakages into the illegal market. India's raw opium extraction makes leakages into the illicit market easier, making it the fourth-largest global producer of illegal opiates.<sup>62</sup> The huge quantities of Afghan opium in the legal markets would have a negative impact on prices in the industry. Countries that cultivate opium poppies legally, especially India and Turkey, are defending their market share and don't want another major producer to take their place.

## **7.5 Counter-narcotics: Institutions and Policies**

Afghanistan has been part of a multilateral drug control framework, described as the Global Drug Prohibition Regime (GDPR), aimed at preventing the non-scientific and non-medical production, supply and use of drugs. The country is a party to the 1988 UN Drug Convention, the 1971 UN Convention, and the 1961 UN Single Convention on Psychotropic Substances. The Afghan government does not have a formal extradition or legal assistance arrangements with the United States but Afghan counter-narcotics legislation allows the extradition of Afghan drug offenders under the 1988 UN Drug Convention. Over the past decade, the US Department of Justice extradited several Afghans believed to be major drug traffickers.<sup>63</sup>

The first government institution to tackle the drug problem in post-Taliban Afghanistan was the Counter Narcotics Directorate (CND). Established in October 2002 under the National Security Council, the CND became fully operational in January 2003. In early 2005, it was replaced with the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics (MCN) which has been the lead government agency for developing counter-narcotics policy, coordinating activities with other governmental bodies and international agencies as well as implementing various drug interdiction and reduction programs. It also takes the governmental lead for gathering and analysing data in the production, trafficking and consumption. The Ministry is guided by the following Mission Statement:

Based on the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Counter Narcotics and Intoxicants Law of Afghanistan and the designation of counter narcotics as a crosscutting issue in the Afghanistan National Development Strategy; the Ministry of

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<sup>62</sup> Byrd, William A. and Mansfield, David, (2014). *Licensing Afghan Opium for Medicinal Use*. *op.cit.*

<sup>63</sup> Risen, James, (2009). U.S. to Hunt Down Afghan Drug Lords Tied to Taliban. *op.cit.* ; See also. Andreas, Peter and Nadelmann, Ethan, (2006). *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations*. New York: Oxford University Press, p. 38.

Counter Narcotics will: lead counter narcotics policy and program formulation; coordinate the counter narcotics budget with the Ministry of Finance; coordinate relevant counter narcotics efforts with the line ministries and organisations; and monitor and report on the implementation of the National Drug Control Strategy. The MCN will work with other partners to create a secure environment for a healthy society with a strong licit economy, through evidence-based policy-setting, effective coordination and full accountability to the people of Afghanistan and their government.<sup>64</sup>

Afghanistan's Ministry of Counter Narcotics has eight pillars of activity under the National Drugs Control Strategy (NDCS) including: Institution Building, Law Enforcement, International and Regional Cooperation, Eradication, Public Awareness, Alternative Livelihoods, Criminal Justice and Demand Reduction. The MCN does not have implementing authorities or agencies and relies on other 'Line' Ministries for the application of its programmes including the ministries of Agriculture; Irrigation and Livestock; Rural Rehabilitation and Development; Public Health; Education; Hajj and Religious Affairs and the 'Ministry of Labour. However, the MCN's key 'line' ministries are the Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI) and the Ministry of Defense (MoD) upon which it relies for enforcement support. In terms of policy formulation, the MCN also retains a close relationship with international non-governmental organisations (I-NGOs), the United Nations' Offices and the US and British Embassies -- the two principle national level actors working on counter-narcotics.

In May 2005, the Afghan government established the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) which investigates, prosecutes and tries major narcotics and drugs-related corruption cases. CJTF includes a Central Narcotics Tribunal, investigators from the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA), prosecutors from the Attorney General's office, and Judges from the Supreme Court. They jointly investigate and prosecute trials of serious drug-related offences all over the country.<sup>65</sup> The international community, especially the US and UK, have supported the development of Afghan capacity to investigate and prosecute narcotics and narcotics-related corruption cases through the training and mentoring of specialised investigators, prosecutors and judges. In addition, they have provided support to facilitate linkages between Kabul-based investigations and provincial justice centres. The Counter Narcotics Justice Centre (CNJC), opened in Kabul in 2009, includes a forensics laboratory, narcotics-specific primary and appellate narcotics courts (Counter

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<sup>64</sup> Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN), Government of Afghanistan, (Not Dated). Official website: <<http://mcn.gov.af/en>> [Accessed 24 Sep 2014].

<sup>65</sup> Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF), Government of Afghanistan. (Not Dated). Official website of CJTF. [Online]: <<http://cjtf.gov.af/en/page/6001/6017>> [Accessed 27 September 2014].

Narcotics Tribunal (CNT), and a detention centre. The investigators, prosecutors, and judges, who are co-located at the CNJC, encompass the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF).<sup>66</sup> The Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA), a specialist unit of the Afghan National Police (ANP) under the Ministry of Interior (MoI), has officers in all 34 provinces of the country to enforce drug laws by means of investigations and operations including interdiction and crop eradication.

Among the international bodies involved in Afghanistan's drug sector, are a number of governmental and non-governmental agencies that have played an important role in countering narcotics in the country. Although the UK took the lead for counter-narcotics in Afghanistan for the first few years after the fall of Taliban, the US remained at the forefront of a multifaceted effort and poured in numerous resources. The Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) is the central US body on counter-narcotics effort in Afghanistan. The US's Drugs Enforcement Administration (DEA) reopened its country office in Kabul in 2003 and, through working closely with the Counter-narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA), has been at the forefront of interdiction. Meanwhile, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has financed numerous developmental projects in poppy cultivating areas of the country. The UN's engagement is much older than that of the US and UK and has been involved with drug policy and programs in Afghanistan for decades. The United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), which defines itself as "a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime", serves as a coordination platform and provides policy advice.<sup>67</sup>

In order to enhance international and regional cooperation on counternarcotics issues, a range of initiatives have been created. In 2011, the Central Asia Counternarcotics Initiative (CACI) was launched by the US's State Department which is aimed at providing specialised training, mentoring, and equipment to enhance regional law enforcement capacity and promote cooperation among counternarcotics units among Central Asian countries. In addition, Pentagon plans to establish a Regional Narcotics and Analysis and Illicit Trafficking Task Force (RNAIT-TF). There are several other international and regional arrangements and organisations including: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and its Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre;

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<sup>66</sup> Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth, (2014). Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition. *op.cit.* p. 17.

<sup>67</sup> United Nations Offices on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), (Not Dated). About UNODC. Vienna: UNODC's official website. [Online]: <<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/index.html?ref=menutop>> [Accessed 24 Sep 2014].



International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) and its Project Cohesion on precursor chemical control, which Afghanistan joined in August 2013; Paris Pact Initiative, which launched its fourth phase to combat Afghan opium and heroin trafficking in June 2013; the Colombo Plan, an Asia-Pacific regional collective, which has conducted work on Afghan demand reduction; and the US-Russia Bilateral Presidential Commission Working Group on Counter-narcotics.<sup>68</sup>

In his report to the US Congress in October 2014, John Sopko, the Special Inspector General in charge of assessing American reconstruction programs in Afghanistan, said that the US alone spent approximately \$7.8 billion on counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan in the first twelve years (2002- June 2014) since the fall of the Taliban. The money was mostly spent on the development of Afghan government counter-narcotics capacity, operational support to Afghan counter-narcotics forces, encouragement of alternative livelihoods for Afghan farmers, financial incentives to Afghan authorities to enforce counter-narcotics laws, and counter-narcotics operations conducted by US authorities in coordination with their Afghan counterparts.<sup>69</sup> However, he acknowledged that the program to combat Afghanistan's opium production failed as "production and cultivation are up, interdiction and eradication are down, financial support to the insurgency is up, and addiction and abuse are at unprecedented levels in Afghanistan."<sup>70</sup>

## 7.6 The Way Forward

The narcotics industry constitutes a large portion of Afghanistan's GDP and has played a major role in the country's political economy since 1990s. As the biggest contributor to the Afghan GDP, the opium economy in general has had a positive and stabilising effect on the GDP growth, currency and the balance of payments. The drug industry has resulted in significant increases in rural wages and serves as an important source of credit for poor rural households. Although opium crop has occupied only 3% of land under cultivation, it is Afghanistan's most valuable cash crop, and opiates (opium, morphine, and heroin) are its largest exports, with an estimated value of US\$3 billion at border prices. In 2014, the

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<sup>68</sup> Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth, (2014). Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition. *Op.cit.* p. 18.

<sup>69</sup> SIGAR, (2014c). *Quarterly Report to United States Congress*. 30<sup>th</sup> October. *op.cit.* pp.112-113.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* See also New York Times, (2014). Editorial: Afghanistan's Unending Addiction. *New York Times*, 27 Oct. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/27/opinion/afghanistans-unending-addiction.html>> [Accessed 02 Nov 2014].



opium economy directly provided up to 411,000 full-time-equivalent jobs -- more than the entire Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).<sup>71</sup>

Although much of the drug profits are made outside Afghanistan, the money spent inside the country has created a lot of economic opportunities. Opium supports hundreds of thousands of additional secondary-effect jobs in the licit economy. In total, the opium industry has created around a million direct and indirect jobs. As I observed during my ethnographic research in different parts of Afghanistan, the impact of the drug industry is very tangible on the construction boom and has fuelled consumption of domestic products (such as carpets, furniture, fruits) and high-value goods imported from abroad (such as cars, watches, gold rings, fridges, air-conditioners, television sets, mobile telephone sets, and solar panels). The drug producing regions as well as those areas which lay on the drug smuggling routes have seen visible signs of inward investment. The drug money is regularly recycled into legal businesses resulting in overall development. In addition, the illicit drug trade has created a true “national market”, involving multi-ethnic networks and strong intra-regional integration.<sup>72</sup>

In many ways, the lines between licit and illicit markets in Afghanistan are blurred as many actors are involved in both formal and illicit economic activities at the same time. As Lister and Pain says, “[e]ven if traders have not themselves been involved in the illicit economy, they require good relationships with those who are because this latter group controls the supply routes and transport systems.”<sup>73</sup>

At the moment, there are very few incentives for tackling the drugs economy. Wages are generally low in Afghanistan and opium remains the most lucrative crop. Meanwhile, poppy farmers do not have real alternatives that would bring them the same amount of money as opium. Several licit crops have been promoted as alternative to opium poppies but none of them could compete with drugs in prices. Corrupt officials do not want to be deprived of the easy money they receive from poppy farmers and drug traders. The warlords-cum politicians are not willing to give up a lucrative source of income. The

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<sup>71</sup> SIGAR, (2014c). *Quarterly Report to United States Congress*. 30<sup>th</sup> October. *op.cit.* p.3.

<sup>72</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2008). Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan. *International Peacekeeping*, **15** (3), 405-423. (Quote from p. 415). Available online at: <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13533310802058984>> [Accessed 7 Aug 2014].

<sup>73</sup> Lister, Sarah and Pain, Adam, (2004). *Trading in Power: the Politics of Free Markets in Afghanistan*. The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), Kabul, p3. Available online <<http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/423E-Trading%20in%20Power%20BP.pdf>> [Accessed 27 Sep 2014].

Taliban insurgent are not yet ready to divest themselves from of the drug industry which brings them tens of millions of dollar annually.

There is a need for a three-pronged strategy involving the Afghan government, regional countries and the rest of the international community. Domestically, building government capacity, tackling corruption and curbing warlords' powers would prove effective in controlling the opium economy. In addition, raising national income level in general would encourage many opium producers to switch to legal economy. Historically, Afghanistan has been an agrarian economy and even today around 70% of Afghans rely on agriculture. No amount of aid and investment can contain opium production unless the agricultural sector, which was severely and continuously damaged in wars and invasions, is galvanised. Building storage facilities and processing and packaging plants inside the country would be a good first incentive for many poppy farmers to switch to legal crops.

At the moment, opium is the only Afghan commodity which a market abroad. The solution to Afghanistan's poppy problem lies in access to international markets. As long as Afghan farmers don't have access to regional and international markets, no licit crop can become a real alternative for opium poppies. Millions of tons of fruits and vegetables are wasted or rotten every year due to limited or no access to regional and international markets. Linking Afghan farmers with foreign supermarkets such as Sainsbury's, Walmart and Tesco is the cheapest and easiest way of discouraging opium production. If the West scraped tariffs on Afghan agricultural products and regional countries allowed the transit and entry of Afghan fruits and vegetables to their markets, the drug production will not make any sense for majority of poppy farmers.

Drug trade is a multi-dimensional and multi-national problem; therefore, tackling it needs a multi-faceted strategic framework and an integrated and multi-national response. There has been a lot of blaming but very little coordination among countries involved in the production, transiting and consumption of drugs. Regional cooperation is fraught by high levels of corruption, low or mixed enforcement capacities, and political sensitivities in a number of countries surrounding Afghanistan. There are serious shortcomings in controlling borders from Afghanistan all the way to Western Europe. While drugs are smuggled out of Afghanistan, chemicals used to convert opium into heroin are smuggled into the country from abroad. The UN estimates that some 475 metric tons of commercially produced chemical, acetic anhydride, is illegally imported into Afghanistan

each year for use in some 300 to 500 clandestine laboratories.<sup>74</sup> Therefore, Afghanistan alone cannot tackle the drug problem as it involves not only poppy farmers in the field, but also heroin laboratories and traders with regional networks and ready access to the international banking sector.<sup>75</sup> Drugs consuming countries are also responsible to reduce demand, crack down on drug mafia in their own jurisdictions and control borders. It is a shared responsibility of all those countries where drugs are consumed, processed, smuggled/trafficked and produced. It is a regional and international problem and requires a multi-national and coordinated solution.

Domestically, the Afghan government lacks the capacity and resources to put an end to the drugs industry by force. Eradicating poppy fields, destroying drug processing laboratories and interdicting drug trafficking need a force of tens of thousands and costs hundreds of millions annually. The Taliban government managed to enforce the ban on poppy cultivation in 2000 with a total success. As most of the opium is produced in areas under the influence of the Taliban, therefore, the cooperation of the insurgents is needed in dealing with the problem. Given their record of enforcing the ban and proximity to the drug producing areas, the Taliban are in a much better position to prevent drug production, processing and trafficking. As the Afghan government has been talking to the Taliban and has invited them to join the political process, tackling the drug problem can be made part of the deal with the insurgents.

Ending the drug problem is generally a gradual and long term process and requires both consistency and creativity. Given the destruction Afghanistan has experienced over the past four decades, the country would depend on international community for assistance and cooperation in responding to the drug problem for many years to come. The issue of drug production in the country is likely to remain an acute problem in the near future and the transformation of the corrupt economy could take up to two decades.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Rosen, Liana and Katzman, Kenneth, (2014). Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking and the 2014 Transition. *op.cit.* p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Abbas, Hassan, (2014). *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier*. Wales: Gomer Press, p.174.

<sup>76</sup> Graham-Harrison, Emma, (2014). Drug Trade Could Splinter Afghanistan Into Fragmented Criminal State – UN. *op.cit.*; Azami, Dawood, (2013). Why Afghanistan May Never Eradicate Opium. *BBC News*, 26 February. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-21548230>> [Accessed 25 Aug 2013].

## 7.7 Conclusion

Tackling Afghanistan's drug problem has been one of the main objectives of the US-led campaign in the country. Since 2002, the US and its international allies have spent around US\$10 billion to halt the production and trade of drugs in Afghanistan. However, policies applied so far have not resulted in the intended outcome and the production and cultivation of drugs has expanded. The counter-narcotics strategy has evolved involving several elements including alternative livelihood initiatives, crop eradication and interdiction.

In the first five years of the US-led intervention in Afghanistan, the US military was not involved in poppy eradication and considered fighting the drugs as a distraction "from fighting terrorists." However, in 2007, the Bush administration concluded that poppy and insurgency were inseparable and joined the Afghan government in the destruction of poppy fields while offering farmers help with alternative crops. The backlash to poppy eradication was violent and poppy-growing regions became more unstable and many farmers and drug traders sought protection from the Taliban. In 2009, in a major policy reversal, the Obama administration stopped the eradication of poppy and focused mainly on interdiction by killing and capturing major drug traffickers. Meanwhile, the Afghan government continued the implementation of its eradication strategy.

The narcotics industry constitutes a large portion of Afghanistan's GDP and plays a major role in the political economy of the country. Although opium crop has occupied only 3% of arable land, it is Afghanistan's most valuable cash crop with an estimated value of US\$3 billion at border prices. In 2014, the opium economy directly provided four hundred thousand full-time-equivalent jobs -- more than the entire Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and resulted in significant increases in rural wages.

Drug production is a multi-dimensional and multi-national problem involving local, regional and international actors and processes such as production, trafficking and consumption. Therefore, the Afghan government cannot tackle it on its own. Therefore is a need for a multi-national and multi-faceted strategic framework embedded in a long-term development and institution-building agenda. Building the Afghan economy, giving farmers access to international markets and building the government's capacity to tackle corruption and curb warlords' influence will prove effective in controlling some of the domestic drivers of the drugs industry. There is no quick fix. To deal with the drug problem, the Afghan government will depend on international community's assistance and cooperation for many years to come.

## CONCLUSION

Conflict and violence has been part of human society throughout the history. Scholars from the ancient times to the present have presented a number of perspectives and theories on the causes of violent behaviour. Aristotle, while assessing the causes of social conflict in his own society over 2000 years ago, noted that the Athenian conflict was the result of the unequal nature of society, frustration at the rulers' incompetence and the desire for acquiring wealth and privilege. As understanding of human society and psychology increased, the role of several other elements was also examined as part of conflict studies and the social sciences in general.

Comparatively, more attention was paid to the study and understanding of conflictive behaviour in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, the field of conflict studies expanded vastly after the Second World War (1939-1945). Depending on their scholarly background and academic approaches, social scientists have tried to understand the motivation and causes of conflict and suggested different ways to tackle the problem. Some scholars call violence as innate and part of human nature while others argue that it is a socially acquired phenomenon. On the other hand, the relative deprivation theory is based on the concept of grievances and says that violence is the result of deprivation and inequality. It argues that frustration of economic and/or political needs causes collective action. Conversely, the greed-model stresses the importance of resources and material gains, both as an instigator and an objective, and argues that material gain and remuneration drive social mobilisation. In recent decades, the greed model has become more popular attracting the attention of many scholars as well as policy makers.

Although these models and frameworks have played an important role to understand different aspects of conflict, they mostly focus on individual elements while overlook other important factors. These approaches either downplay or overplay the role of certain actors and factors in both initiating and prolonging the conflict. Empirical and historical evidence show that these approaches (discussed in detail in Chapter One) do not always correspond to the dynamics of conflicts in all types of societies. Although there appears to be a link and continuity between different approaches adopted to analyse and understand conflictive behaviour, there is no one size fit all explanation or solution. Different conflicts have

divergent dynamics and no single cause can give an account of all types of conflicts. Conflict is as complicated and contingent as the human psyche and society. That is why, the occurrence of a conflict, its intensity and duration depend on the convergence of a number of different factors and conditions rather than one single cause.

In an increasingly globalising world, conflicts are becoming more and more complex involving multiple actors at local, regional and international level and consisting of a combination of causes and motivations. Therefore, I have suggested the “Hybrid Framework” of conflict which takes into account a variety of causes and overlapping motivations as well as the complex web of actors and factors at different levels and stages. The “Hybrid Framework” is an integrated and comprehensive approach to understand and analyse conflict by bringing all factors (including ideology, proxy, nationalism, criminality) and actors (including local and transnational) together. These actors and factors not only play an instrumental role in causing a conflict, they also transform the polity and society and result in the sustainment and prolongation of conflict. Hybrid Framework can be applied to almost any conflict, especially contemporary conflicts, which generally have multiple drivers.

The conflict in Afghanistan, like many other cases elsewhere in the world, demonstrates the multiplicity of state and non-state actors and the overlapping nature of their motivations. As demonstrated in the thesis, the Afghan conflict is neither just a terrorist/extremist problem, nor a confrontation between different ethnic groups. The conflict in the country is the outcome of a combination of more than a dozen factors including strategic, proxy, nationalist, economic, religious, identity and criminal. The April 1978 Communist coup and the 1979 Soviet invasion the following year turned Afghanistan into a theatre of war where different local and foreign actors started a competition for influence and dominance. Although the resistance against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s was a war of independence for Afghans in general, many foreign state actors used it as an opportunity to settle historic scores with each other and extend their influence to a strategically important part of the world. The two super powers, the US and the USSR, each leading the Capitalist and Communist blocs respectively, chose Afghanistan as a battlefield to conduct a bloody proxy war. Over time, the conflict in the country became more complicated attracting a variety of new local, regional and international actors who had overlapping interests and motivations.

The conflict in Afghanistan was created by international factors in the first place i.e. the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the resistance to it. The Afghans who were fighting the

Soviet occupation were mainly motivated by nationalism and ideology. On the other hand, Western powers and their allies were mainly driven by the desire to defeat the communism USSR and, therefore, supported the Afghan Mujahideen. With the passage of time, a variety of transnational factors changed the internal dynamics of the Afghan conflict contributing to its complexity and perpetuity. Following the withdrawal of the Soviet forces, the factions involved in the internal war in the 1990s were again supported by various regional powers. Pakistan was one of the main supporters of the Taliban government in Afghanistan. Even after the fall of the Taliban regime as a result of the US led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Pakistan “continued supporting the Taliban insurgents” to gain influence at the expense of its arch rival, India.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the Taliban’s main goals include the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan, recapturing of the government in Kabul and the enforcement of their interpretation of Islamic in the country. The interests and motivations of these two actors seem to be overlapping here. For the Afghan Taliban, it is mainly an issue of religion (creed), nationalism (identity) and grievances. However, Pakistan’s policy is rooted in the desire to increase influence in Afghanistan and instal a “friendly” regime in Kabul. On the other hand, India and Iran supported the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance during the 1990s factional war as part of a regional competition to dominate Afghanistan. Internationally, Afghanistan became a major theatre of the US led “War on Terrorism” where a number of regional and international militants had established bases since 1980s.

Afghanistan has thus become the centre of several proxy wars including Pakistan-India rivalry, Iran-Saudi confrontation, Pakistan-Iran competition and US-Russia discord. In addition, the country has also become a battlefield for several international and regional militant groups such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS/ISIL and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) – groups that are mainly driven by ideology and fight against the Afghan government and its foreign allies. Meanwhile, criminals groups such as drug mafia/cartels and illegal armed groups that are motivated by greed also benefit from chaos and instability and exploit the weakness of state institutions. As the interests and motivations of

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<sup>1</sup> Boone, Jon, (2015). Musharraf: Pakistan and India’s Backing for ‘Proxies’ in Afghanistan Must Stop. *Guardian*, Friday 13 February. Available online at: <[http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/13/pervez-musharraf-pakistan-india-proxies-afghanistan-ghani-taliban?CMP=share_btn_tw)> [Accessed 13 Feb 2015]; Gall, Carlotta, (2014). *The Wrong Enemy: America in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*. New York: Harcourt Publishing Company; and Waldman, Matt, (2010). *The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan’s ISI and Afghan Insurgents*. Crisis States working papers series no.2, no. 18. Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science; Abbas, Hassan, (2014). *The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier*. Wales: Gomer Press; Dalrymple, William, (2013b). *A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India*. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press. Available online at: <<http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c>> [Accessed 15 Dec 2014].

most of these actors overlap, there is a degree of cooperation and collaboration. These conflicts now determine the course of events in Afghanistan. Although the Afghan actors on different sides of the conflict play an important role in prolonging the conflict, they are not fully in charge of the situation. While local actors have their own motivations, the slogans they raise are mainly aimed at justifying their causes and rationalising the policies and decisions of their external patrons.

Conflicts generally transform political and economic realities and are closely linked with the expansion of illegal economic activities including illicit drug production and the looting of natural resources. The initiation of many intra-state conflicts, including the Afghan conflict, is not linked to the production and trade of illicit drugs; it was the war that paved the way for the drugs economy to flourish. As observed in nearly all drug producing countries, some sort of instability including coup d'état, revolution, tribal tensions, violent ethnic and/or religious protests, invasion and/or guerrilla warfare preceded the entrenchment of narcotics. The conflict in Afghanistan, which was primarily caused by foreign interferences and interventions, resulted in the collapse of the state and, in turn, created a suitable environment for the production of drugs and expansion of other criminal activities. The initiation of many intra-state conflicts, including the conflict in Afghanistan, is not linked to the production or trade of illicit drugs; it was the war that paved the way for the drugs economy to flourish. However, the drugs economy generally makes a conflict more intractable and harder to resolve due to vested interest of relevant actors.

In order to understand the geopolitics of opium in Afghanistan, it is important to locate the country in the geographical context of south-west Asia. The meteoric rise in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan since the 1979 Soviet invasion is neither an isolated event nor can it be solely attributed to one single factor. A number of internal factors supported the trend of opium production in the country such as: (a) more income from opium crops than legitimate crops, (b) rural poverty, (c) destruction of agricultural infrastructure due to war and (d) weakness or absence of state institutions, especially in remote country side, to enforce law. The opium economy firmly established in Afghanistan in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and flourished in conditions of war and anarchy. Opium production in Afghanistan grew at an average rate of 15% per annum over the 1980-2000 period, almost twice as fast as the global opium production growth rate of 8%. While Afghanistan



produced about 19% of world opium in 1980, this proportion grew to 52% by 1995, the year prior to the Taliban takeover of Kabul, and rose to 79% by 1999.<sup>2</sup>

Illicit drugs have been associated with a number of conflicts in different parts of the world. The illegality and high demand make narcotics a valuable commodity for both the insurgents and criminals. Drugs play a significant role in financing a number of insurgent groups and warring factions in several countries including Burma, Colombia and Afghanistan. With the passage of time, the drug trade permeated various levels of state and society undermining legal economy and health of the society in general. Although drug trade is a local factor, it affects many other regional and international actors and connects them in many levels. Illicit drug trade is usually associated with four major developments; a), it strengthens the insurgents, b), inhibits state-building by weakening and corrupting institutions, c), increases criminality and addiction, and d), distorts the legal economy.

The nexus between drugs, insurgency and state building works in a circle and the link is generally stronger in weak states. In most cases, the role of main actors including drug traffickers, insurgents and corrupt officials is overlapping. As explained through the “Patronage Pyramid”, the drug trade is largely dependent on a nexus between the main actors and the patronage network. The patron-client relationship in the drugs economy creates and cements structural corruption. Drug trade breeds corruption at every level from eradication of poppy fields to processing and trafficking and provides multiple opportunities and incentives for government officials in the local civilian administration, security forces and judiciary to receive bribes. In most drug producing and drug transit countries, narcotics trade is the most common reason of corruption in the government institutions.

Drugs became more attractive for both the insurgents and criminal groups after the end of Cold War. With the demise of the bipolar confrontation, fighting a communist or non-communist regime no longer translated into financial support from a superpower or its allies. The loss of state support resulted in many rebel groups resorting to the illicit drugs to finance their activities. The relationship between illicit drugs and insurgent groups stands out for a number of reasons. First, compared to many other resources, drugs are immensely profitable, especially in the processed form. Second, they are renewable as the same plant

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<sup>2</sup> UNODC, (2003). *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem*. Vienna/New York, pp. 88-89. Available online at: [http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter\\_Narcotics/The\\_Opium\\_Economy\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_-\\_2003.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf) [Accessed 06 Dec 2013]; IRIN (Integrated Regional Information Networks), (2004). *Afghanistan: Chronology of Opium Through History*. 2<sup>nd</sup> August. Available online at: <http://www.irinnews.org/indepthmain.aspx?InDepthId=21&ReportId=63040> [Accessed 06 Dec 2013].

can be cultivated year after year, bringing continuous profits. Third, drugs are illegal and it makes them more demanding, especially in consuming countries. Fourth, illegal drug trade is a more enduring source of income than other activities such as kidnapping and bank robberies. Fifth, drugs can be taxed in several stages – farming, trafficking and processing. Sixth, unlike minerals, oil, gas and timber, drugs are “lootable” and easy to appropriate by individuals and small groups of people. Seventh, drugs are comparatively easy to hide and smuggle in a variety of ways. Eighth, as the demand for drugs is high, they are sold at farmgate and farmers don’t have to take them to far away markets. Ninth, opium/coca farmers usually get advance credit from traffickers before their yield. Tenth, unlike most other agricultural products, drugs can be easily stored for years and can be sold at anytime by farmers and traders. Eleventh, drugs can be cultivated in almost all kinds of climates and weather conditions. In addition, compared to many other traditional legal crops, drugs, especially opium poppies, need less water and less time.

Insurgent by their nature are usually very entrepreneurial and exploit whatever is available in the environment they operate in. They are involved in a number of fund-raising activities including the smuggling of drugs, ancient artefacts, cigarettes and timber as well as extraction of oil, gold and diamonds. Natural resources generally play an important, if not the vital, role in almost all conflicts. Certain natural resources including drugs can be easily exploited, looted and sold for big profits. It is in such cases where the issues of greed and need and the roles of criminal groups, so called conflict entrepreneurs and war profiteers become relevant. Illicit drug trade has been described as the main source of income as well as a major motivation for insurgent groups. However, this study’s findings indicate that drugs are not the main cause and motivation of all conflict even in drug producing countries. Evidence shows that greed alone does not always cause conflicts; however, it generally plays an important role in the perpetuity of a conflict. Rather than generated by drug production, armed conflicts qualitatively and quantitatively transform the existing drugs economy by strengthening the capacity of insurgent groups, attracting organised crime and conflict entrepreneurs while weakening the state institutions.

Many insurgencies including Colombia’s Marxist rebel group, FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia); Turkey’s Kurdish separatist group, PKK (Partya Kerkeren Kurdistan); and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka; are/were not initiated for economic benefits and were/are not wholly driven by financial gains. Evidence shows that their interaction with drugs came much later. The drugs economy already existed and was autonomous before the emergence of these groups. The origins of these

three insurgencies were based on grievances and were launched with a clear political vision and ideology. However, as this study found, the involvement of these groups in the drug trade didn't have a major impact on their overall motivation or organisational structure. Although it is possible that certain elements within the insurgencies might have had an economic agenda, the general goals of the groups remain the same. Despite profound changes in global geo-politics and the emergence of new sources of funding, the primary demands and major goals of these groups have been consistent and their support still stems from an ideological framing of grievances. Their original agenda and political objectives have not been fully hijacked by greed despite the illegal nature of narcotics trade and the huge sums of money involved in it.

In Afghanistan too, the main insurgent groups are primarily motivated by creed and not by greed. Although the Taliban banned opium production a year before the removal of their regime by the US led coalition, the insurgent group reversed its poppy ban and once again started benefiting from the drugs economy. The Taliban's relationship with the narcotics trade predates the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. This study found that the Taliban's involvement in the drugs economy is much deeper and more complicated than is usually understood. The Taliban have developed a sophisticated and well organised mechanism to extract money at different stages of the drug trade chain including the cultivation of poppies and production, processing and trafficking of opiates.

The Afghan Taliban group charge poppy farmers a 10% religious tax called *ushr* usually at the farm-gate and in kind. In addition, the Taliban fighters and foot soldiers augment their pay by working in the poppy fields during harvest. The Taliban also receive money for protecting laboratories where opium is converted into heroin. Moreover, drug traffickers and truckers pay them a transit tariff for the drugs smuggled out of the Taliban controlled territory or areas under their influence. Big drug traffickers make regular payments to the Taliban mostly to earn their favours. Some local Taliban commanders have a share in the drug trade and get the money when the drugs reach their intended destinations. Over the past two years, the Taliban have been renting out some of the government land in areas they control to poppy farmers and, in several districts of Helmand province, local Taliban commanders have hired local villagers as sharecroppers. Like other crops, rent farming is also common in poppy cultivation and both sides get their due share of the produce depending on the amount of investment they make. Some local Taliban commanders have also rented the plots of those landowners who have left their villages because of their association with the government or animosity towards the Taliban.

The drug trade has become a quadruple-pronged tool for the Taliban. Firstly, the group receives tens of millions of dollars annually from the drugs economy and comprises a major source of its income. Secondly, the expansion of the poppy cultivation after the fall of the Taliban regime has a propaganda value for the group. They take pride in their successful ban on poppy cultivation and highlight the weakness of the government in Kabul and its international allies and their inability to tackle the problem. Thirdly, the Taliban (and drug traders) also use the drug money to corrupt Afghan officials, weaken government institutions and challenge its legitimacy. Fourthly, some Taliban commanders see the drug trade as part of their overall insurgency against the “occupying” US/NATO forces and some even consider narcotics as a tool to weaken Western societies. Meanwhile, by protecting poppy fields from the government’s eradication campaign, the Taliban earn political capital and good will of all the actors involved in the drugs economy. They portray themselves as the protectors of poor farmers whose livelihood are being threatened and destroyed by the Afghan government and its US/NATO allies.

In addition to drugs, the Taliban have a number of other sources of funding. Since the launch of their insurgency in 2003-04, the Taliban have diversified like a successful business enterprise and, with the passage of time, developed multiple income streams. During my field work, I discovered more than ten major sources of income for the Taliban including donations, drugs, US/NATO supply convoys and construction companies and NGOs. Moreover, the group has increased its involvement in the extraction of mines and minerals and receive tens of millions of dollars annually by taxing the industry and allocating contracts in areas it controls. Like several other successful insurgencies, the Taliban have relied on both local and foreign financial sources.

The Afghan Taliban’s total annual revenues have been estimated to be around US\$400 and around a quarter (US\$100-150) of it is said to be from the drugs industry. However, some estimates put the Taliban’s drug revenues much higher than that. The total annual value of the opium economy within Afghanistan has been between US\$3-4 billion. It shows that the Taliban receive less money than other major actors in the drugs economy especially drug traffickers and corrupt government officials. According to a 2012 UN report, the Taliban share is not particularly large in percentage terms and that they could have earned much more by exploiting this potential source of revenue.<sup>3</sup> My field work and interviews

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations Security Council, (2012). *First report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Implementation Monitoring Team Submitted Pursuant to Resolution 1988 (2011) Concerning the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities*. 5 September. New York: United Nations. Available online at: [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2012\\_683.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2012_683.pdf) [Accessed 30 Dec 2013].

indicated that the Taliban think that taking full control of the drugs industry would damage their reputation. It is for that reason that the group has not publically acknowledged its involvement in the drug trade. As compared to organised and professional armies, insurgencies generally cost much less. Meanwhile, the cost of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan is lower than other major insurgencies as its fighters live in villages among ordinary people and don't wear special uniforms and boots.

Since 2011, the Taliban's reliance on the drug trade has gradually increased. Foreign donations, mainly from the Gulf countries, have decreased due to the Arab Spring as wealthy donors switched the flow of their money to militant groups fighting in the Middle East. Meanwhile, the huge amount of money the Taliban received for years from private security companies escorting US/NATO supply convoys inside Afghanistan has also reduced after the withdrawal of most foreign forces from the country. The Taliban, like other successful insurgent groups, have been adapting to new realities and are quick to exploit and replace the means and sources of income.

So far, the Taliban's involvement in the drug trade has been mostly facilitative; not determinative. The Taliban's original goals and grievances have not disappeared with their deepening involvement in the drugs economy. There are no indications that the group's main goals have been affected by its involvement in the illicit drug trade or that it is now collectively motivated by greed. As the Taliban control some parts of Afghanistan, drug traders living or operating in these areas either join the group or liaise with it in order to have the freedom of conduction their business. As a result, the narcotics industry brought the Taliban and the drug traders closer due the overlapping nature of their interests. Narcotics finance insurgents while their violence weakens government control and encourages poppy cultivation. Although eliminating Taliban's access to narco-profits will be very difficult, it would prove disruptive and would deprive the insurgent group of a major source of income. However, the destruction of the drug industry in Afghanistan would not ruin the insurgency financially so long as other funding sources and motivating factors remain intact.

The narcotics industry constitutes a large portion of Afghanistan's GDP and has played a major role in the country's political economy since 1990s. The drug trade has had a positive and stabilising effect on the GDP growth, currency and the balance of payments and resulted in significant increases in rural wages. Afghanistan is a mountainous country and only around 12% of its land is arable while farming remains the primary means of existence for around 70 percent of Afghans. Although opium crop has occupied only 2-

4% of land under cultivation, it is Afghanistan's most valuable cash crop. Opiates (opium and heroin) are its largest exports, with an estimated value of US\$3 billion annually at border prices. In 2014, the opium economy directly provided up to 411,000 full-time-equivalent jobs -- more than the entire Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the opium economy supports hundreds of thousands of additional secondary-effect jobs in the licit economy thus creating nearly a million direct and indirect jobs in total. Meanwhile, the drug trade has created a true "national market", involving multi-ethnic networks and strong intra-regional integration.<sup>5</sup>

Afghans earn relatively little from the illegal drug trade as the greatest proportion of profit is accrued by foreigners. Big profits are made in drug consuming wealthy societies, especially Europe. There is a huge demand and an open market for Afghan drugs in several countries. On the other hand, a small quantity of Afghan fruits and vegetables are exported. Although several crops have been promoted as alternatives to opium poppies, none of them could compete with opium in prices. Finding markets for other agricultural products is the most effective way of tackling the drug problem in Afghanistan. As long as farmers don't have access to regional and international markets, most licit crops cannot become real alternatives for opium. Linking poor Afghan farmers with foreign supermarkets is one of the cheapest ways of discouraging opium production. If rich countries scraped tariffs on Afghan agricultural products and regional countries allowed the transit and entry of Afghan fruits and vegetables to their markets, drugs will lose its attraction and many opium producers will switch to legal economy. In addition, raising national income level will also discourage those poppy farmers who produce opium because it brings them more money than licit crops.

Between 2002 and 2015, the international community, in particular the United States, has spent around US\$10 billion<sup>6</sup> to tackle the drug production, trade and trafficking in Afghanistan. However, the illicit opium production not only persists, it increased with

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<sup>4</sup> SIGAR, (2014c). *Quarterly Report to United States Congress*. 30<sup>th</sup> October. *op.cit.* p.3.

<sup>5</sup> Goodhand, Jonathan, (2008). Corrupting or Consolidating the Peace? The Drugs Economy and Post-conflict Peacebuilding in Afghanistan. *International Peacekeeping*, **15** (3), 405-423. (Quote from p. 415). Available online at: <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13533310802058984>> [Accessed 7 Aug 2014].

<sup>6</sup> In his report to the US Congress in October 2014, John Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, said that the US alone spent approximately \$7.8 billion on counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan from 2002- June 2014. Other donors also spent money to tackle the drug problem in Afghanistan. See, SIGAR (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction), (2014c). *Quarterly Report to United States Congress*. 30<sup>th</sup> October. Virginia. Available online at: <<http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2014-10-30qr.pdf>> [Accessed 02 Nov 2014]; See also, New York Times, (2014). Editorial: Afghanistan's Unending Addiction. 27 Oct. Available online at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/27/opinion/afghanistans-unending-addiction.html>> [Accessed 02 Nov 2014].

more hectares of land being used to cultivate opium poppies. At the moment, there are very few incentives for tackling the drugs economy in Afghanistan. Corrupt government officials do not want the flow of drug money they receive in bribes to stop. Warlords-cum politicians are not willing to lose a valuable source of income from the drug trade. On the other hand, the Taliban are not interested to give up one of their biggest sources of revenues. Meanwhile, poppy farmers do not yet have real alternatives as other crops cannot compete with opium in prices and market. Therefore, building government capacity, eliminating corruption and curbing warlords' powers will prove effective in controlling a thriving opium economy. Domestically, the resolution of the drug problem requires mainly a political and economic rather than a military solution. As most of the drug production takes place in areas controlled by the Taliban, the insurgents are in a better position to tackle the problem. Therefore, it is suggested that resolving the drug problem should be made part of the peace talks and political settlement with the Taliban who have shown in the past a willingness to crack down on the opium trade.

The four main stages of the drug trade – production, processing, trafficking and consumption – work in a cycle in which actors in regional countries and other parts of the world are involved. The expansion of drug trade further impinges on regional security especially when it becomes a two-way traffic. In most cases, precursor chemicals required for converting raw opium into more potent drugs are smuggled to drug producing countries from abroad. In other cases, raw material is exported from the drug producing countries for conversion in drug laboratories in neighbouring/regional countries. As long as the demand in the drug consuming countries remains high and trafficking of narcotics through the borders of several transit countries is easy; criminal groups and international drug mafia will keep exploiting the situation. In addition, political unrest and weak state institutions in Afghanistan and its immediate neighbours provide a conducive environment for drug dealers and corrupt officials.

Tackling the Afghan drug problem in Afghanistan is a gradual and long term process and requires both consistency and creativity. The ongoing conflict, poverty and poor agricultural infrastructure means that the Afghan government will be depending on international community for assistance and cooperation for many more years to come. The illicit drug trade is a regional and an international problem and needs a comprehensive and coordinated approach. Therefore, the Afghan government, regional countries and the rest of the international community need to work together to make Afghanistan free of drugs. Finally, as seen in many countries, once the drug cultivation becomes popular in a conflict

stricken country, it largely outlasts the war and becomes part of a circle, contributing to the perpetuation of war and anarchy. Therefore, time as well as a multi-national and coordinated approach is needed for war-torn countries to achieve transition from war economy to peace economy.



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## **II. Primary Sources (Interviews, Conferences etc.)**

### **II (A). Personal Interviews**

During the course of this study, the author had interactions and discussions with hundreds of people about the topic. Several of them were formally and informally interviewed. Given the sensitivity of the topic, and as requested by the University Ethics Sub-Committee, anonymity and confidentiality was offered to all participants. Every participant was assured about the confidentiality of the interviews and prior approval was also taken from each individual for recording. Therefore, names and titles of some of the informants and interviewees have only been included, where this has been agreed beforehand. Those interviewees who wanted to remain anonymous (due to the sensitivity of the topic and the potential risks they might face) have been mentioned with their profession such as farmer, smuggler/drug trader and journalist with the names of the province of Afghanistan they reside in. They have been given codes such as “B1, B2 and B3...” for businessmen; “D1, D2 and D3...” for Afghan diaspora members/labourers in Gulf countries mainly in UAE and Qatar; “G1, G2, G3...” for government officials; “F1, F2, F3...” for farmers; “J1, J2, J3...” for local journalists; “P1, P2, P3...” for politicians; “S1, S2, S3...” for smugglers/drug traders; “T1, T2, T3...” for Taliban members/supporters; and “V1, V2, V3...” for local villagers including tribal elders.

#### **Afghan Government Officials**

Abdali, Colonel Mohammad, (Counter-narcotics chief of Helmand Province, Afghanistan). Kabul, Oct 2014.  
Angar, General Hakim, (Police chief of Helmand province). Dec 2012.  
Baluch, Mohammad Naeem, (Governor of Helmand province). Jan 2014.  
Daudzai, Umer, (Minister of Interior Affairs, Afghanistan), Kabul, Nov 2013.  
Farahi, General Abdul Manan Farahi, (Head of Counter-Terrorism at the Afghan Ministry of Interior). Kabul, Oct 2012.  
Government official (G1), Nangarhar Province, (who didn't want to be identified), Oct 2014.  
Salangi, General Ayub, (Deputy Minister of Interior, Afghanistan), Kabul, Oct 2014.  
Sherzad, Haroon Rashid, (Deputy Minister for Policy and Coordination, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Afghanistan), Kabul, Feb 2013.  
Wafa, Assadullah, (Former Governor of Helmand Province). Nov 2011.  
Wesa, Tooryalai, (Governor of Kandahar province). Oct 2012.  
Government Official 1 (G1). Kunar province. Nov 2013.  
Government Official 2 (G2). Helmand province. Nov 2013.  
Government Official 3 (G3). Nangarhar province. Nov 2013.  
Government Official 4 (G4). Nangarhar province. Nov 2013.  
Government Official 5 (G5). Kandahar province. Nov 2011.  
Government Official 6 (G6). Badakshan province. Nov 2011.  
Government Official 7 (G7). Kabul. Oct 2014.

#### **Experts/Analysts**

Sedney, David, (Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia (2009-2013); London, 14 May 2014.

Felbab-Brown, Vanda, (Senior Fellow Foreign Policy, The Brookings Institution, Washington DC.); London, 01 Aug 2013.

Londoño, Daniel Mejía, (Director of the Research Center on Drugs and Security, University of the Andes, Colombia); London, 01 June 2012.

Uribe, Alejandro Gaviria, (Dean of the School of Economics at the University of the Andes from 2006 to his appointment as Minister in 2012); London, 01 June 2012.

Jalali, Ali Ahmad, (Interior Minister of Afghanistan (Jan. 2003-Sept. 2005); currently serving as a Distinguished Professor at the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies (NESA) of National Defense University (NDU), Washington DC.), Oct 2014.

### **Tribal Elders/Villagers**

Dastgiri, Haji Agha Lalai, (Tribal elder and member of Kandahar Provincial Council). Oct 2014.  
Rahmat, Haji, (Tribal elder in Helmand province). Nov 2013.  
Ismail, Haji Muhammad, (Tribal elder in Helmand province). Nov 2013.  
Villager 1 (V1). Kunar province. Nov 2013.  
Villager 2 (V2). Nangarhar Province. Nov 2013.  
Villager 3 (V3). Badakhshan Province. Nov 2012.  
Villager 4 (V4). Panjsher Province. Nov 2012.  
Villager/Tribal Elder 5 (V5). Kandahar province. Nov 2011.  
Villager/Tribal Elder 6 (V6). Helmand province. Nov 2013  
Politician 1 (P1). Kabul. Oct 2014.  
Politician 2 (P2). Kabul. Oct 2014.  
Politician 3 (P3). Kandahar province. Nov 2011.  
Politician 4 (P4). Helmand province. Nov. 2013.  
Politician 5 (P5). Nangarhar province. Oct 2014.

### **Diaspora/Labourer**

Afghan Labourer/Diaspora member based in UAE (D1). 2014.  
Afghan Labourer/Diaspora member based in UAE (D2). 2014.  
Afghan Labourer/Diaspora member based in UAE (D3). 2013.  
Afghan Labourer/Diaspora member based in Qatar (D4). 2013.  
Afghan Labourer/Diaspora member based in Saudi (D5). 2012.

### **Afghan Farmers**

Farmer 1 (F1). Kandahar province, Afghanistan, Nov 2011.  
Farmer 2 (F2). Kandahar province, Afghanistan, Nov 2011.  
Farmer 3 (F3). Helmand province, Afghanistan, Nov 2013.  
Farmer 4 (F4). Helmand province, Afghanistan, Nov 2013.  
Farmer 5 (F5). Urozgan province, Afghanistan, Oct 2014.  
Farmer 6 (F6). Balkh province, Afghanistan, Nov 2011.  
Farmer 7 (F7). Balkh province, Afghanistan, Nov 2011.  
Farmer 8 (F8). Badakhshan province, Afghanistan, Nov 2011.  
Farmer 9 (F9). Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, Nov 2013.  
Farmer 10 (F10). Nangarhar province, Afghanistan, Nov 2011.

### **Afghan Taliban members/Sympathisers/Supporters**

Taliban member/Sympathiser, (T1). Kandahar province, Nov 2011.  
Taliban member/Sympathiser/Supporter, (T2). Helmand province, Nov 2011.  
Taliban member/Sympathiser/Supporter, (T3). Helmand province, Nov 2011.  
Taliban member/Sympathiser, (T4). Kandahar province, Nov 2011.  
Taliban official, (T5). 2013.  
Taliban member (T6). Jan 2015.  
Agha, Akbar, (former Jihadi and Taliban commander), Kabul, Oct 2014.  
Mutawakil, Mawlawi Wakil Ahmad, (former Taliban foreign minister), Kabul, Nov 2013.  
Zaeef, Mullah Abdul Salam, (a founding member of the Taliban and former Taliban ambassador to Pakistan), Kabul, Nov 2011.

### **Drug traders/smugglers**

Drug Trader/ Smuggler, (S1). Kandahar Province, Nov 2011.  
Drug Trader/ Smuggler, (S2). Helmand Province, Nov 2011.  
Drug Trader/ Smuggler, (S3). Helmand Province, Nov 2011.  
Drug Trader (former), (S4). Kabul, Oct 2014.

### **Journalists/ Civil Society Members/ Businessmen/ Politicians**

Businessman in Kabul (B1). Kabul, Nov 2013.  
Businessman in Kabul (B2). Kabul, Nov 2013.  
Businessman in Kabul (B3). Kabul, Nov 2013.  
Durrani, Mamoon (Journalist in Kandahar province). Nov 2013.

Hejran, Abdul Wadood (Journalist in Helmand province). Nov 2012.  
 Local Journalist (J1), Balkh province. Nov 2011.  
 Local Journalist (J2), Helmand province. Nov 2013.  
 Local Journalist (J3), Kandahar province. Nov. 2011.  
 Local Journalist (J4), Kabul. Nov 2013.  
 Local Journalist (J5), Kabul. Nov. 2013.  
 Politician/Political Activist (P1), Kabul, Nov 2011.  
 Politician/Political Activist (P2), Kabu, Nov. 2013  
 Politician/Political Activist (P3), London, Jan 2015  
 Patsoon, Ahmad Shah (Journalist in Helmand province). Nov 2013.  
 Shafi, Aziz Ahmad (Journalist in Helmand province). Oct 2014.  
 Yusufzai, Rahimullah (Peshawar based journalist), Oct 2014.

### **Turkey/PKK**

Turkish academician on PKK and Kurdish activism (K1). London, February 2014.  
 Kurdish activist from Turkey who didn't want to be named, (K2). London, April 2014  
 Kurdish activist from Turkey associated with/sympathetic to the PKK (K3). London, July 2014.

### **Sri Lanka/LTTE**

Tamil diaspora member sympathetic to the LTTE cause (Tamil 1), London, Feb 2013.  
 Tamil political activist sympathetic to LTTE (Tamil 2). London, Feb 2013.  
 Tamil Journalist from Sri Lanka (Tamil 3). London, March 2013.  
 Sinhala journalist based in London on Tamil-Sinhalese tensions (Tamil 4). London, March 2013.

## **II (B). Conferences and Seminars:**

During the research period, I attended a number of speeches, seminars, conferences and workshops, which informed the research.

- *The End of America's Long War and the Future of Post-Election Afghanistan*. Karl Eikenberry, former US ambassador to Afghanistan (May 2009 until July 2011), currently serving as a Fellow in International Security at Stanford University. Discussion at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, 25 June 2014.
- *Prospect roundtable meeting on Afghanistan*. Richard Stagg, UK Ambassador to Afghanistan, as the guest speaker. Discussion at the Prospect Magazine, London, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2013.
- *Anti-drug policies in Colombia: Successes, failures and lost opportunities*. Event organised by the Embassy of Colombia at Canning House, London, with guest speakers Daniel Mejía Londoño and Alejandro Gaviria Uribe (University of the Andes, Colombia), 29 May 2012.
- *Colloquium on counter-narcotics policy in Afghanistan: transition and beyond*. off-the-record event of which I was the author was a participant. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London, 28 May 2012.
- *Making Sense of Afghanistan: Competing narratives and their impact on future policy*. Round Table at Chatham House, London, 28 April 2014.
- *Drugs, Insecurity and Failed States: The problems of prohibition*. Nigel Inkster and Virginia Comolli as speakers at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), London. 23 April 2012.
- *Ideology versus Profit: Drugs and Insurgencies in Afghanistan and Colombia*. My public talk at the Mershon Center for International Security Studies, the Ohio State University, Columbus, USA. 2 April 2012.
- *Funding the Insurgencies: The impact of illicit drugs on the structure, political goals and ideologies of insurgent groups*. My talk at the Department of Politics and International Relations (DPIR), University of Westminster, DPIR conference, London, 12 Nov 2014.
- *The Afghan Mission: Achievements of the US-led intervention and the Prospects of Peace and Prosperity in Afghanistan*. The Mershon Center for International Security Studies, the Ohio State University, Columbus, USA, 23 January 2014.
- *Mission accomplished? Weak police as the allies retreat from Afghanistan*. My talk at the Front Line Club, London, 25 Feb 2013.
- *Where has war left the people of Afghanistan? 10th Anniversary of the US-led invasion*. My talk at the Front Line Club, London. 5 October 2011.
- *The Challenge of Change in Afghanistan*. Guest speaker Muhammad Daud Yaar, Afghan Ambassador to the UK. Event at the Department of War Studies, King's College London, 1 October 2014.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix I:

#### Taliban's Drugs Decrees

During the Taliban rule in Afghanistan (1996-2001), the Taliban's Supreme Leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, issued several *Farmans* (decrees/executive orders) banning and regulating the production and trade of opium and other drugs in the country. Following is the English translation of Mullah Omar's "opium decrees" as well as material illustrating Taliban's attitude towards opium before and after their regime was toppled by the US-led intervention starting on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2001. This section also includes the English translation of Mullah Omar's decree in which he banned the smoking of cigarettes for his followers and government employees.

1. **Text of the Taliban government's decree banning the cultivation of cannabis. Dated 13 Muharram 1420 (29 April 1999) and published in the *Official Gazette* # 788 on 5 Jumad-al-Akhir 1420 Islamic Lunar Year (15 September 1999), p. 90.** (Translated from Pashto and Dari by the author.)

#### **Decree of the Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan regarding the ban on the cultivation of marijuana/cannabis.**

Serial No: (2)

Date: 13/1/1420 [29 April 1999]

#### **First Article:**

- (1). The cultivation of marijuana/cannabis is absolutely banned throughout the country.
- (2). Those people who cultivate cannabis will be given severe punishment based on *Sharia* (Islamic Law).

#### **Second Article:**

Provincial governors are required to take necessary measures in their concerned provinces to prevent the cultivation of cannabis.

#### **Third Article:**

This decree is enforced from the date of its signing and should be published in the official gazette.

*Wassalam*

Servant of Islam

Amir-ul-Mumineen Mullah Muhammad Omar 'Mujahid'

2. **Text of the Taliban government's decree ordering all of its employees and fighters not to smoke cigarettes. Published in the *Official Gazette* # 788 on 5 Jumad-al-Akhir 1420 Islamic Lunar Year (15 September 1999), p. 8.** The decree itself doesn't have a serial number or the exact date of issuance. (Translated from Pashto and Dari by the author.)

**Message of the Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Regarding ban on the smoking of cigarettes.**

To all respected officials and mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan!

*Assalam-u-alaikum wa rahmat-Ullah-e wa barakaatuh.*

All respected officials are informed that smoking cigarettes is absolutely banned from now on. There will be no discussion about its religious permissibility or impermissibility.

Every official should monitor and track his subordinates. This is a serious order, aversion is not allowed. Conduct is to be carried out according to the above guidance.

*Wassalam*

Servant of Islam

Amir-ul-Mumineen Mullah Muhammad Omar 'Mujahid'

3. Scanned image of Mullah Omar's 2000 decree (*Farman*) banning opium poppy cultivation as published in the Official Gazette.

رسمي جريده	(۳۰۸)
<u>فرمان</u>	<u>د کونارو د کښت د مخنيوي په هکله</u>
<u>مقام امارت اسلامي افغانستان در</u>	<u>د افغانستان اسلامي امارت د مقام</u>
<u>مورد جلوگيري از کشت کونار</u>	<u>فرمان</u>
شماره: ( ۲۲ )	کڼه: ( ۲۲ )
تاريخ: ۱۳۲۱/۵/۲۱	نېټه: ۱۳۲۱/۵/۲۱
ماده اول:	لومړۍ ماده:
(۱) در تمام کشور کشت کونار مطلقاً منع است.	(۱) په ټول هېواد کې د کونارو کرل مطلقاً منع دي.
(۲) اشخاصيکه به کښت کونار مبادرت ميورزند و از امر فوق سرکشي نسايند جزاي سخت شرعي به ايشان داده خواهد شد.	(۲) کوم اشخاص چې د کونارو په کرلو لاس پورې کوي او له پورتنۍ امر څخه سرغړونه وکړي، سخت شرعي سزا به ورکړل شي.
ماده دوم:	دوه يمه ماده:
مسولين مربوط امارتي مکلف اند، تا درمنا طبق مربوطه خویش، غرض جلوگيري از کشت کونار تدابير لازم اتخاذ نمايند.	اړوند امارتي مسولين مکلف دي چې په خپلو مربوطو سيمو کې د کونارو د کرلو د مخنيوي په خاطر لازم تدابير ونيسي.
ماده سوم:	درېمه ماده:
اين فرمان از تاريخ توشيح نافذ و در جريده رسمي نشر گردد.	دغه فرمان د توشيح له نېټې څخه نافذ دی او په رسمي جريده کې دې خپور شي.
والسلام	والسلام
خادم اسلام	د اسلام خادم
امير المؤمنين ملا محمد عمر (مجاهد)	امير المؤمنين ملا محمد عمر (مجاهد)

Image 1: Scanned image of Mullah Omar's 2000 decree (*Farman*) banning poppy cultivation as published in the Official Gazette. (See next page for English translation of the decree.)



**3 (b). Text of Mullah Omar's *Farman* (decree) banning opium poppy cultivation. Dated 21 Jumad-Al-Awwal 1421 of Islamic Lunar Hijri Year (21 August 2000) and published in the *Official Gazette* # 795 on 12 Shawal 1421 Islamic Lunar Year (7 January 2001), p. 308.** (Translated from Pashto and Dari by the author.)

**Decree of the Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Regarding the Ban on the Cultivation of Opium Poppies**

Serial No: (22)

Date: 21/5/1421[21 August 2000]

**First Article:**

- (1). Opium poppy cultivation is absolutely prohibited throughout the country.
- (2). Those people who cultivate poppies and violate the order above will be given a severe punishment based on *Sharia* (Islamic Law).

**Second Article:**

Relevant employees of the Emirate [The Taliban Government] are responsible to take necessary measures in their concerned areas.

**Third Article:**

This decree is enforced from the date of its signing and should be published in the official gazette.

*Wassalam*

Servant of Islam

Amir-ul-Mumineen Mullah Muhammad Omar 'Mujahid'

4. **Text of the Taliban government's decree ordering district governors to implement the poppy ban. Dated 14 Rajab 1421 of Islamic Lunar year (11 October 2000) and published in the *Official Gazette* # 795 on 12 Shawal 1421 Islamic Lunar Year (7 January 2001), p, 310-312.** (Translated from Pashto and Dari by the author.)

**Message of the Amir-ul-Mumineen Regarding the Cultivation Opium Poppies**

Serial No: (95)

Date: 14/7/1421 [11 October 2000]

To the respected district governors in the provinces!

*Assalam-u-alaikum wa rahmat-Ullah-e wa barakaatuh!*

Although the ban on the cultivation of opium poppies has been announced many times on the radio and all the people are aware about it, but now, as it is the poppy cultivation season, you should start action in your relevant area immediately. You yourselves should go to every area and village, collect information, and, if someone had violated the ban, [and] had cultivated poppies; detain him until he has eradicated his poppies. If he didn't eradicate his poppies despite his detention, then you should eradicate them through a tractor or other methods. Take the cost [of eradication] from him. This activity should continue until the end of the poppy cultivation season. We are monitoring the progress [of this task] and are collecting information. If any poppy field remained intact in any district or province, the responsibility will be on the official of that area. Then he doesn't have the right to complain.

To implement the above order, collect the people in different areas [and] hold gatherings. Also convey to them this message from us that we have not banned the poppy cultivation for our [Taliban regime's] recognition or on the asking or help of the foreigners. We have not been given any help [aid] and, even if we ask [for it], they will not help. We have banned it [cultivation of poppies] only and only with the intention of the welfare of the Muslim nation of Afghanistan. Only a few people bear its benefit [but] many people have become indebted or addicted [to drugs]. The number of its [opiates] addicts increases year over year. If all of youngsters become addicted, then you will regret.

You see [it for yourself], those provinces that do not cultivate poppies, have poor people but they do not have that many indebted and addicted people as there are in the poppy cultivating provinces. If you look carefully, its harms are far greater than benefits. Don't seek any more information about its [religious] permission and prohibition. The ban has been ordered for the sake of expediency and its implementation is obligatory on all. Opposition is not allowed. No one should defy.

Nor can one guaranteed the food/provisions himself neither can we [for him]. This [provisions/sustenance] is provided only and only by God. Opium is not the only means of [provisions/livelihood], there other means too. We ask the Lord Almighty to provide provisions/sustenance from another means.

*Wassalam*

Servant of Islam

Amir-ul-Mumineen Mullah Muhammad Omar 'Mujahid'

5. Text of the Taliban government's decree asking ulama (religious scholars) to convey the message of poppy ban to people. Dated 14 Rajab 1421 of Islamic Lunar year (11 October 2000) and published in the *Official Gazette # 795 on 12 Shawal 1421 Islamic Lunar Year (7 January 2001)*, p, 309. (Translated from Pashto and Dari by the author.)

**Decree of the Office of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Regarding the Ban on the Cultivation of Opium Poppies**

Serial No: (48)

Date: 14/7/1421 [11 October 2000]

To the provincial and district councils of honourable *ulama* (religious scholars)!

*Assalam-u-alaikum wa rahmat-Ullah-e wa barakaatuh.*

Regarding the order issued by the Office of the Emirate about the ban on the cultivation of opium poppies, we have issued a message and instructions to district governors/administrators (*Wulaswal*) and told them that the implementation and pursuance of the order was their responsibility. We are also sending [you] a few pages/copies of that message to communicate and disseminate it to the people through the honourable *ulama*, because you will be more effective in this task than others.

*Wassalam*

Servant of Islam

Amir-ul-Mumineen Mullah Muhammad Omar 'Mujahid'

## 6. Taliban's Drugs Policy

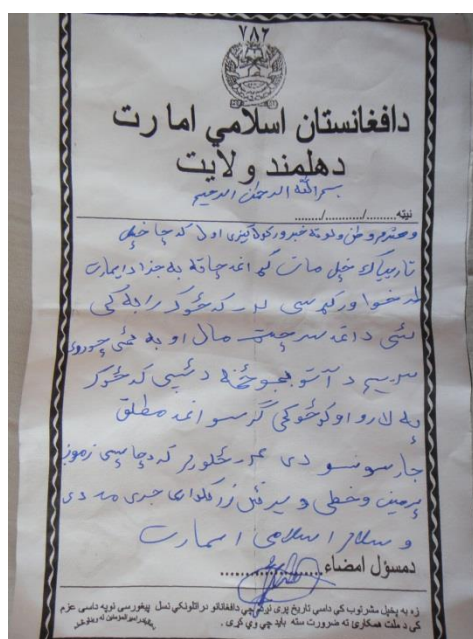


**Image 2:** A sign board in Pashto and English from the narcotics control department of Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province at the time when the Taliban were in government (1996-2001). (Source: BBC Website: [Online] : <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/2361453.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/2361453.stm)>)

The text reads:

*“The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan not only considers illegal things forbidden but launches effective struggles against illicit drugs as these drugs are great threat to personality, wisdom. Life, health, economy and morality.”*

## 7. Taliban's Post 9/11 Drug Policy



**Image 3:** Night Letter Attributed to the Taliban Warns Against Eradication

The letter written in Pashto language warns people not to eradicate their poppy fields and threatens them with punishment otherwise. The letter is on the official letter pad of the Taliban's governor for Helmand province. It was obtained by a villager in Helmand province. (Note: The Taliban have not confirmed the authenticity of the letter.)

**Appendix II:**  
**Drugs Related Images From Afghanistan and Beyond**



**Image 4:** Poppy field in Helmand province (Afghanistan). (Source: Author's photo)



**Image 5:** Poppy field in Helmand province (Afghanistan). (Source: Author's photo)





**Image 6:** Author in a ceremony where the seized drugs were burnt in the remote North-East Badakhshan province (Afghanistan). (Source: Author's photo)



**Image 7:** Author with heroin addicts in a drug rehabilitation centre in Quetta (Pakistan). (Source: Author's photo)



**Image 8:** Drug addicts having lunch in a drug rehabilitation centre in Balochistan Province (Pakistan). (Source: Author's photo)



**Image 9:** Author with drug addicts in a drug rehabilitation centre in the remote North-East Badakhshan province (Afghanistan). (Source: Author's photo)