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“Does the war on drugs help or hurt state-building in Afghanistan?”

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Abstract

The opium economy has plagued Afghanistan in the last 30 – 40 years. Counter-narcotic efforts have been implemented in Afghanistan since 1989. In 2017, the United Nations has recorded an unprecedented level of opium production – 9000 tons of raw opium, which triggered the interest to investigate the topic. Counter-narcotic efforts have been thought to achieve two goals – to reduce the harms inflicted by the illicit economy in Afghanistan and worldwide as well as to help Afghanistan in its state-building process. Hence, the pivotal question of this research project has become the effects of the external counter-narcotics efforts on the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. Specifically, the aim of this research is to determine whether the war on drugs helps or hurts state-building in Afghanistan. The research has focused on the likely net effect on state-building from the counter-narcotic strategies in the provinces Helmand and Nangarhar. The research resorts to extensive secondary source information from researchers on the ground and analysts. Moreover, semi-structured expert interviews have been conducted with specialists on the topic. The results from the research show that the external counter-narcotic interventions have partially helped and partially hurt the state-building process in Afghanistan. Ultimately, the research has found out that counter-narcotic efforts need to be designed and implemented from a wider development perspective.

Abstrakt

Die Opiumwirtschaft hat Afghanistan in den letzten 30 bis 40 Jahren geplagt. Anti-Narkotika-Bemühungen werden seit 1989 in Afghanistan durchgeführt. Im Jahr 2017 haben die Vereinten Nationen ein beispielloses Niveau der Opiumproduktion verzeichnet - 9.000 Tonnen rohen Opiums, das Interesse an der Untersuchung des Themas ausgelöst hat. Gegen Drogenbekämpfungsbemühungen wurden zwei Ziele angestrebt - die Verringerung der durch die illegale Wirtschaft in Afghanistan und weltweit verursachten Schäden sowie die Unterstützung Afghanistans bei der Staatsbildung. Die zentrale Frage dieses Forschungsprojekts ist daher die Wirkung der externen Drogenbekämpfungsbemühungen auf den Wiederaufbauprozess in Afghanistan. Es ist genau das Ziel dieser Forschung, zu bestimmen, ob der Krieg gegen Drogen den Staatsaufbau in Afghanistan unterstützt oder verletzt. Die Forschung konzentrierte sich auf den wahrscheinlichen Nettoeffekt des Aufbaus eines Staates auf Strategien zur Drogenbekämpfung in den Provinzen Helmand und Nangarhar. Die Forschung konzentriert sich auf umfangreiche Sekundärinformationen von Forschern vor Ort und Analysten. Darüber hinaus wurden halbstrukturierte Experteninterviews mit Spezialisten durchgeführt. Die Ergebnisse der Untersuchung zeigen, dass die externen Maßnahmen zur Drogenbekämpfung dem Staatsbildungsprozess zwar helfen, aber ihn auch beschädigen. Letztendlich hat die Forschung herausgefunden, dass Gegen-narkotika Bemühungen aus einer breiteren Entwicklungsperspektive entworfen und umgesetzt werden müssen.

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Introduction

“*Either Afghanistan destroys opium or opium will destroy Afghanistan*” eloquently stated the Afghani President, Hamid Karzai, in 2006.¹ Regrettably, the production of opium poppy in Afghanistan does not seem to sustainably decline. Contrary, in 2017, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) has marked an unprecedented level of opium poppy cultivation. Precisely, the production of opium poppy in 2017 outreaches the highest level hitherto recorded - 224,000 hectares in 2014. The Annual Opium Survey shows that 328,000 hectares have been used for cultivation of poppy in 2017, which generated approximately 9000 metric tons of opium. Statistics show that the cultivation of opium in Afghanistan in 2017 has increased in regions with traditions of poppy cultivation as well as has extended to regions without history of opium production.² In 2015, 80% of the global production of opium poppy was cultivated in Afghanistan. Thus, the Islamic Republic has become the principal producer of opium poppy in the world.³

Since the 1980s, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has been torn by two violent conflicts - the Afghani-Soviet war and a consequent civil war.⁴ Additionally, as a response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the United States (U.S.) invaded Afghanistan. The U.S. forces overthrew the Taliban regime.⁵ On the 5th of December 2001, the negotiations in Bonn achieved an agreement for a peaceful reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Bonn Agreement marked a new stage of the state-building process in Afghanistan.⁶ Nevertheless, Afghanistan has been continuously categorized as a fragile state until today.⁷ The Islamic Republic has been permeated by violence from insurgent groups. These conflicts have obstructed the Afghani state to function adequately

¹ “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006 Executive Summary” (2006). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unodc.org/pdf/execsummaryafg.pdf>

² “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017” (2017). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 4-6. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

³ “Afghanistan National Drug Action Plan 2015-2019” (2015). *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics*. pp. 7. Retrieved from: [http://mcn.gov.af/Content/files/Afghan%20National%20Drug%20Action%20Plan%20\(1\).pdf](http://mcn.gov.af/Content/files/Afghan%20National%20Drug%20Action%20Plan%20(1).pdf)

⁴ “The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem.” (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp.86-93. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

⁵ Glaze, J. (2007). *Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing U.S. Counternarcotic Strategy*. *Strategic Studies Institute*. Retrieved from: <http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/pub804.pdf>

⁶ Rubin, B., (2016). *Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. *Oxford University Press*. pp. 105. Print.

⁷ “Fragile State Index. Download data in Excel” (2006-2017). *The Fund for Peace*. Retrieved from: <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/excel/>

and to guarantee security to its citizens. The Islamic Republic has been failing in providing fundamental public goods. Corruption has undermined the legitimacy of the state. Until today, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan lacks the capability to control its territory and to provide order.⁸

Over the years, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has received billions of dollars to counter the illicit production of opium poppy.⁹ Robust development efforts to contain the opium industry have been implemented in Afghanistan since 1989.¹⁰ Substantial development assistance was conferred to Afghanistan not only for counter-narcotic efforts but also for political, economic and social reconstruction.¹¹ This research project will focus on the connection between the external counter-narcotic control efforts and the state-building process in Afghanistan. Counter-narcotic efforts in Afghanistan have been financed by western governments and international organization.¹² The external intervention has been observed as a positive sum game. On one side, the intervention aimed to reduce the harm inflicted by the illicit economy. On another side, the external counter-narcotic interventions were believed to eliminate a major obstacle, which hampered the efforts for state reconstruction in Afghanistan.¹³ Essentially, the nature of the counter-narcotic aims is not questioned, even though it can be debated how much harm reduction has actually happened. However, the premise that external efforts to curb the opium economy in Afghanistan help the state-building process is highly debatable. Therefore, the problem of whether the external counter-narcotic efforts help or hurt Afghanistan will become a central empirical question of this master thesis.

⁸ “The Failed States Index 2011” (2011). *The Fund for Peace*. pp. 12. Retrieved from:

http://www.pucsp.br/ecopolitica/downloads/failed_states_index_2011.pdf

⁹ “Afghanistan National Drug Action Plan 2015-2019” (2015). *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics*. pp.4. Retrieved from:

[http://mcn.gov.af/Content/files/Afghan%20National%20Drug%20Action%20Plan%20\(1\).pdf](http://mcn.gov.af/Content/files/Afghan%20National%20Drug%20Action%20Plan%20(1).pdf)

¹⁰ Mansfield, D. (2001). *Alternative Development in Afghanistan: The Failure of the Quid Pro Quo*. pp.1.

Retrieved from: <http://scottshelmandvalleyarchives.org/docs/nar-01-03.pdf>

¹¹ Tarnoff, C. (2010). *Afghanistan: U.S Foreign Assistance*. *Congressional Research Service*. Pp. 2. Retrieved from: <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40699.pdf>

¹² “Recipient Country: Afghanistan” (n.d.). *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development*. Retrieved from:

https://public.tableau.com/views/OECDACaidataglacebyrecipient_new/Recipients?:embed=y&:display_count=yes&:showTabs=y&:toolbar=no?&:showVizHome=no

¹³ “The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem.” (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp.209-210. Retrieved from:

https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

Structure of the master thesis

This master thesis will consist of several fundamental parts. Firstly, the master thesis will introduce the readers into the scale of opium poppy production in Afghanistan as well as the political and economic context for the development of the illicit economy. Secondly, the aims of the research will be clearly stated. Thirdly, the master thesis will argue the importance of the topic. Fourth, the methodology of the research will be discussed. Fifth, the definition of state-building in Afghanistan will be provided. Sixth, the master thesis will examine the net effect of the counter-narcotic strategies on state-building in two particular provinces in Afghanistan – Helmand and Nangarhar. Lastly, the final part of the master thesis will aim to provide an analysis on retrieved data and will aim to answer the central question of this research project “Does the war on drugs help or hurt Afghanistan?”.

The opium economy in Afghanistan

Afghanistan as a global supplier of opium today

Map 2: Indicative Afghan heroin trafficking routes

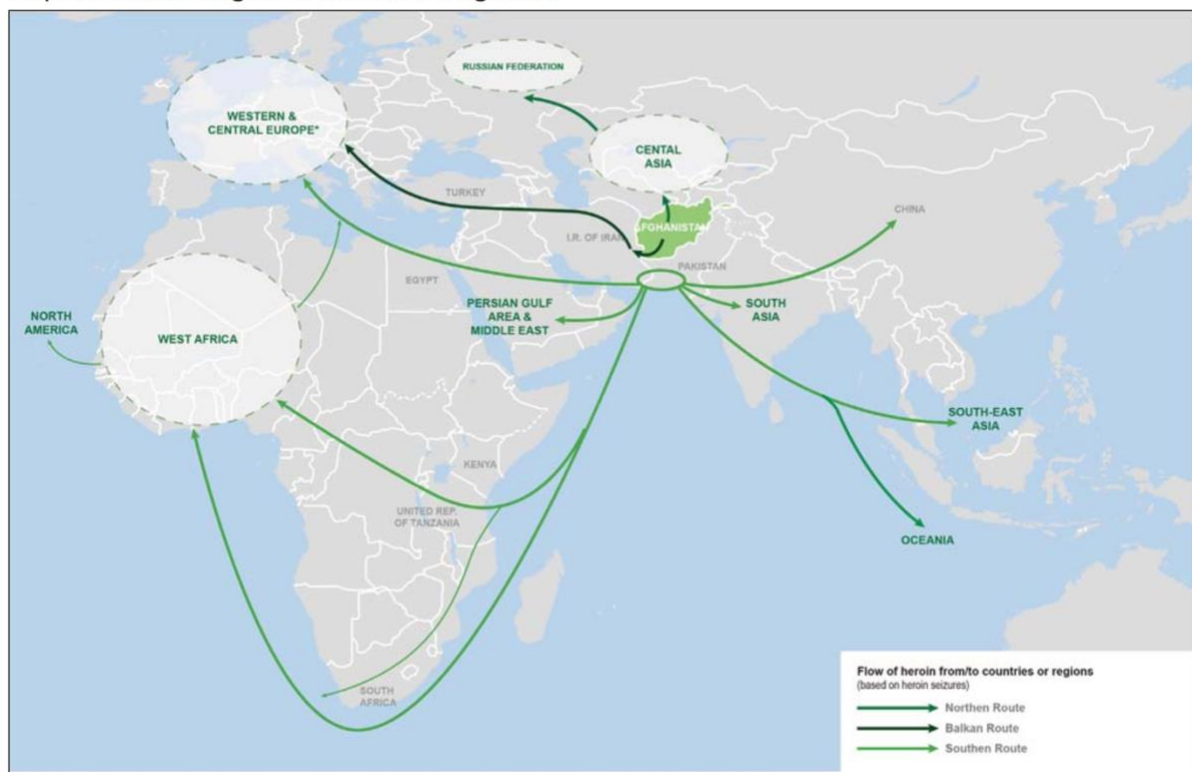


Figure 1, Afghanistan as a global supplier of opium¹⁴

¹⁴ “Afghan Opiate Trafficking Through the Southern Route” (2015). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 13. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghan_opiate_trafficking_southern_route_web.pdf

The World Drug Report for 2010 by the UNODC indicates that Afghanistan has become a central producer of opium in the world. The report has estimated that 85% of the heroin and morphine supplies in the world was cultivated in Afghanistan.¹⁵ Moreover, the report of the Afghan National Drug Action Plan for the period 2015-2019 of the Ministry of Counter Narcotics also points out that Afghanistan has produced more than 80% of the opium in the world. The magnitude has made the Islamic Republic the world's primary supplier of opium.¹⁶ Figure 2 shows Afghanistan's share in the global production of opium over the years. Precisely, the figure displays that Afghanistan's share of opium production has increased over the years. Moreover, the figures show that the production of opium in the rest of the world has decreased. Nevertheless, the figure also reveals one outlier year 2001, when the levels of opium production in the rest of the world was higher than in Afghanistan. Yet, it has to be made explicit that in 2001, the global production of opium was extremely lower than the conventional levels of opium production due to the Taliban opium ban.¹⁷

Fig. 5: Global potential opium production, 1980-2009

Source: UNODC World Drug Report (figure for 2009 based on 2009 Survey results for Afghanistan and 2008 data for the rest of the world)

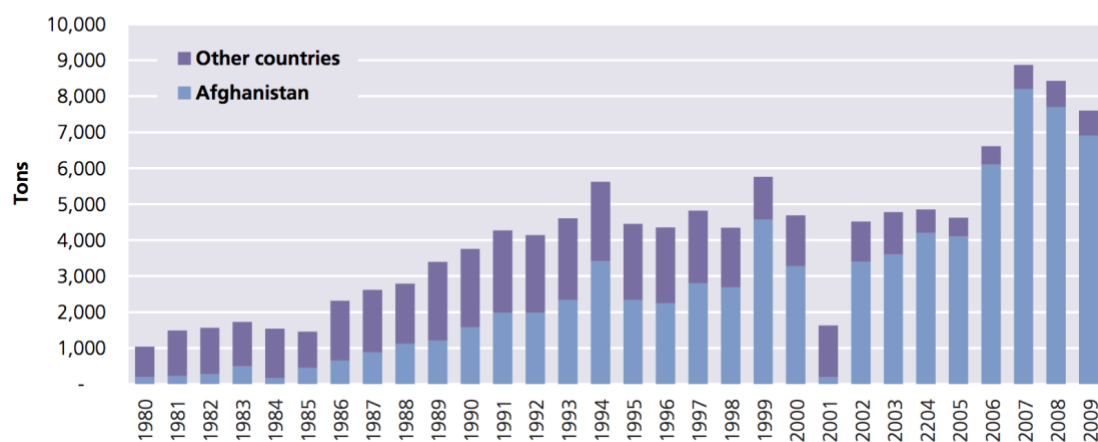


Figure 2, Opium production in Afghanistan and the rest of the world¹⁸

¹⁵ "World Drug Report 2010" (2010). *United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Preventions*. Pp.38. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf

¹⁶ "Afghanistan National Drug Action Plan 2015-2019" (2015). *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics*. pp. 7. Retrieved from: [http://mcn.gov.af/Content/files/Afghan%20National%20Drug%20Action%20Plan%20\(1\).pdf](http://mcn.gov.af/Content/files/Afghan%20National%20Drug%20Action%20Plan%20(1).pdf)

¹⁷ "World Drug Report 2010" (2010). *United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Preventions*. Pp.38. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf

¹⁸ "World Drug Report 2010" (2010). *United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Preventions*. Pp.38. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf

Essentially, heroin from Afghanistan has been trafficked all over the world except in the Latin American countries. Three main trafficking routes were established, through which Afghani opium is globally supplied.¹⁹ Firstly, the northern route, which consists of the Central Asian countries, and the Russian Federation. The drug market in the Central Asian countries - Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kirgizstan - is small. Russia is the main drug market for opium of this route.²⁰ Secondly, the Balkan route, the Balkan route goes through the Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey, the Southeastern European countries until it reaches Central and Western Europe. Sometimes, the Balkan route incorporates Pakistan as well, even though the majority of the heroin from Pakistan is processed from the Southern routes.²¹ The Southern route delivers heroin to a wide number of final destinations, such as East Asia, South East Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Oceania as well as Central and West Europe and North America. The Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan are main transit countries of the Southern route, which make these countries experience serious internal challenges from the illicit trafficking of heroin.²²

Figure 3, shows the levels of opium consumption and heroin consumption supplied by respectively Myanmar, Laos as well as Afghanistan for the year 2008. The opium and heroin consumption are also divided by regions and by country. The figure shows that Europe has become the main consumer of Afghani opium poppy. The Americas and the Russian Federation are respectively the next largest consumers of Afghani opium.²³ Afghanistan has become the central opium poppy supplier in the world today but how did the opium economy evolve in Afghanistan?

¹⁹ "Afghan Opiate Trafficking Through the Southern Route" (2015). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 13. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghan_opiate_trafficking_southern_route_web.pdf

²⁰ "Afghan Opiate Trafficking Along the Northern Route" (2018). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 1. Print.

²¹ "Drug Money: The illicit proceeds of opiates trafficked on the Balkan route" (2015). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. Pp.18-20. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/IFF_report_2015_final_web.pdf

²² "Afghan Opiate Trafficking Through the Southern Route" (2015). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 10. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghan_opiate_trafficking_southern_route_web.pdf

²³ "World Drug Report 2010" (2010). *United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Preventions*. Pp.40. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf

Table 2: Estimated opium and heroin consumption, 2008

Source: UNODC

	Region/ country	Heroin users	Opium users	Heroin consumption (mt)	Opium consumption (mt)	Total opiate consumption (opium equivalent)
Major distribution destinations of Myanmar and Laos heroin production	Myanmar	66,000	67,000	1.3	7.0	20.1
	China*	2,254,000	119,000	45.0	12.0	458.2
	India	871,000	674,000	17.0	67.0	239.8
	Oceania	32,500	52,000	2.0	5.0	23.4
	Asia (except India, China, Myanmar)	852,000	1,118,500	17.0	75.0	245.0
	Sub total	4,075,500	2,030,500	82	166	986.6
Major distribution destinations of Afghan heroin	Afghanistan	47,000	146,000	2.0	80.0	91.8
	Pakistan	547,000	145,000	19.0	80.0	213.8
	I.R. of Iran	391,000	531,000	14.0	450.0	547.0
	Central Asia	283,000	60,000	11.0	33.0	112.2
	Russian Federation	1,490,000	166,000	70.0	58.0	548.6
	Turkey	25,000	25,000	0.8	9.0	14.4
	Europe (except Turkey and Russian Federation)	1,614,000	271,000	88.0	95.0	711.0
	Americas	1,538,000	82,000	26.0	29.0	212.0
	Middle East and South Asia (except I.R. of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan)	63,500	491,000	1.6	16.0	27.2
	Africa	1,240,000	172,000	25.0	60.0	235.0
	Sub total	7,238,500	2,089,000	257	910	2,713
	Total	11,314,000	4,119,500	340	1,075	3,700

Figure 3, Opium consumption by region²⁴

Levels of opium poppy

Opium poppy has not been traditionally cultivated in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. In the 1920s, opium poppy was cultivated on a very small scale in only three provinces in Afghanistan - in Herat, Jalalabat, and Badakhshan. Precisely, estimates show that in 1932, Afghanistan has produced only 75 tons of opium poppy. In 1956, reports reveal that Afghanistan has produced merely 12 tons of opium. Nevertheless, Afghanistan was a crucial transit country, and therefore opium poppy was considered an issue.²⁵ The scale of opium

²⁴ "World Drug Report 2010" (2010). *United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Preventions*. Pp.40. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf

²⁵ "The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem." (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp.86-93. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

poppy cultivation has increased enormously since 1979.²⁶ This section will explicitly reveal the levels of opium poppy production since 1979, illustrated in the following two graphs.

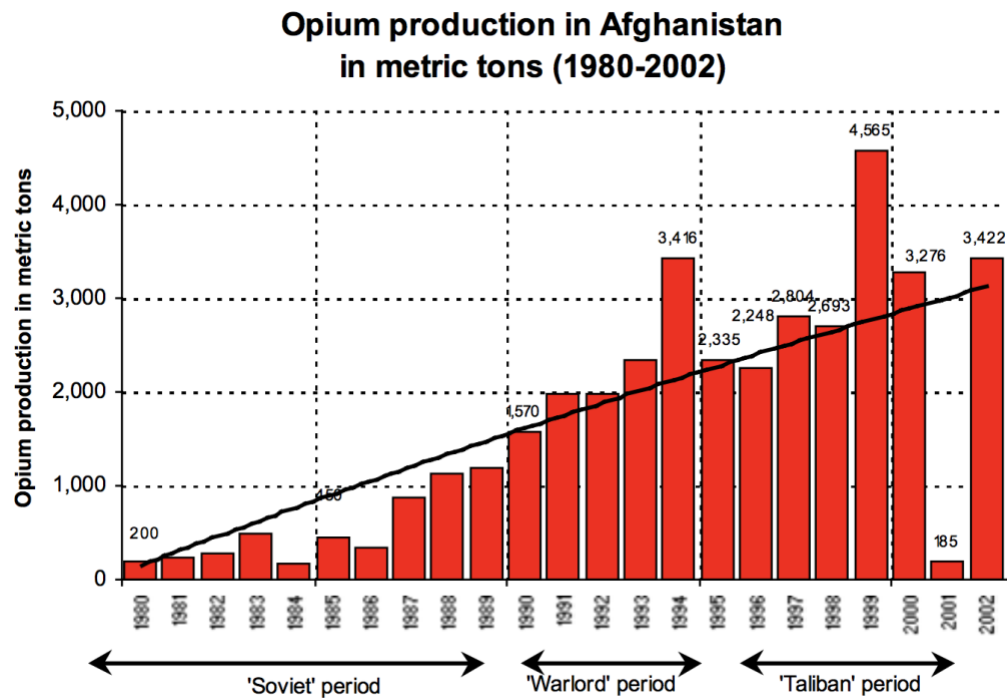


Figure 4, Levels of opium production from 1980-2002²⁷

²⁶ Peters, G. (2009). How Opium profits the Taliban. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved from: https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/taliban_opium_1.pdf

²⁷ “The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem.” (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

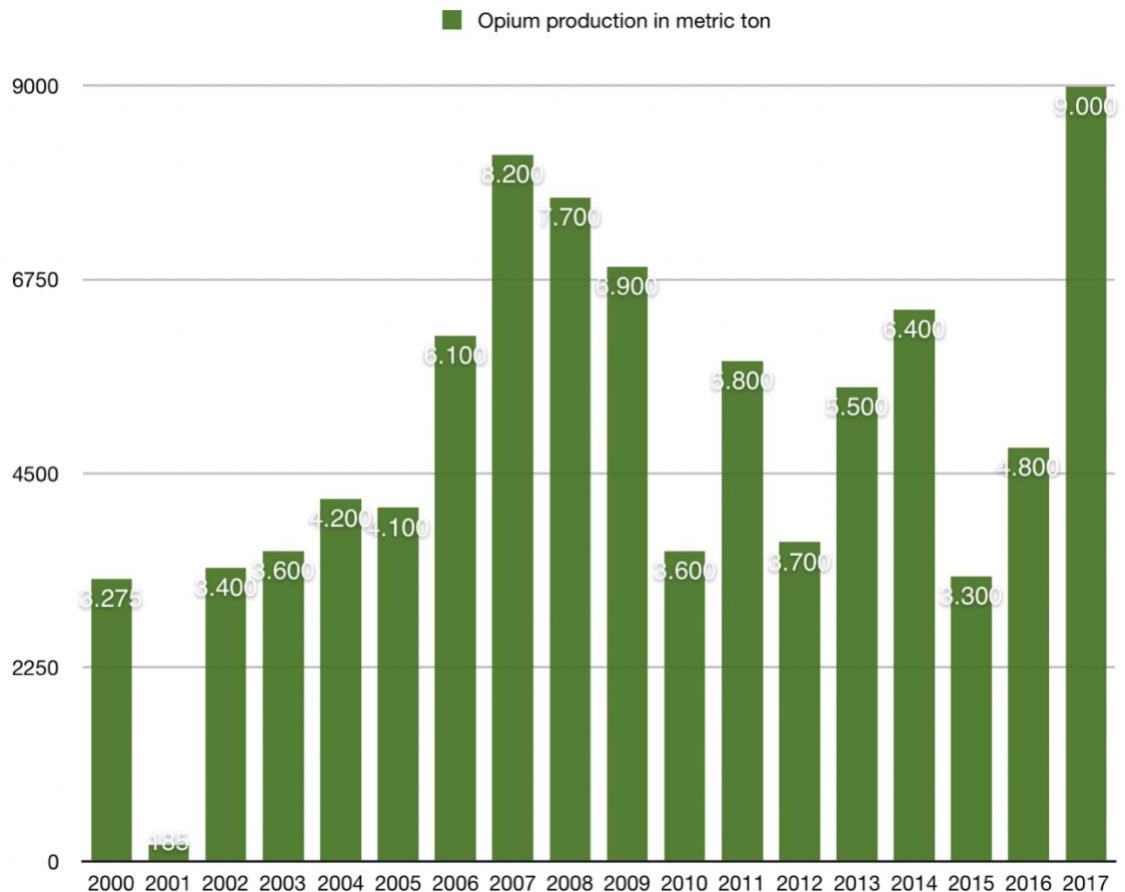


Figure 5, Levels of opium production from 2000-2017²⁸

The subsequent observations about the levels of opium poppy can be made from the data in the figures. The data shows that the production of opium poppy in Afghanistan has increased dramatically since 1970s. However, despite the persistent growth of opium production, there are periods of time with slow or no growth at all. Firstly, the figures show roughly stable levels of production of opium poppy in the early years of Soviet invasion. Secondly, the years after the Taliban assumed power, and specifically the years between 1995 - 1998 no growth of opium production was observed. Thirdly, the figure shows a stunning reduction of opium cultivation in 2001, when the Taliban imposed a national opium ban. Fourthly, the years after the U.S. invasion in 2002, and precisely from 2002 to 2005, there was no growth of opium production. Lastly, the period from 2010 to 2016 shows fluctuations of opium poppy production, and therefore no stable growth of opium production was observed.

²⁸ “UNODC and illicit crop monitoring” (n.d.). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. Retrieved from: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/crop-monitoring/index.html?tag=Afghanistan> The data over the years has been extracted and transformed into a graph

Determinants of opium poppy production

There are numerous factors, which affect the production of opium poppy.

Interrelatedness between these determinants is probable. This section will elaborate on some of the essential factors of opium production in Afghanistan: the global forces of demand and supply, the climate and soil conditions, and the relative strength of Afghan state.

Global demand and supply

The illicit narcotic industry is also governed by the laws of demand and supply.²⁹ The first determinant of opium poppy will be based on the Keynesian doctrine, which asserts that demand creates its own supply.³⁰ Provided that demand create its own supply, an increase in demand will result in an increase in supply. The World Drug Report 2010 has estimated that Afghan opium constitutes 90% of the illegal opium market.³¹ Therefore, the global tendencies of the demand for illicit use of opium will be touched upon. In the late 1990s, statistics show that the number of opiate users in the world has accounted to 13,5 million.³² Opiate is defined as opium and its derivatives morphine and heroin. The World Drug Report has pointed out that the number of individuals with opiate use disorders are more than 15 million in 2000.³³ Individuals with opiate use disorders are people who regularly or occasionally have used opiates. The numbers show an increase in the number of opiate users from the late 1990s to the year 2000. The number of individuals with opiate use disorders reported for 2017 is 17.7 million, which marks a further increase compared to the late 1990s and the year 2000. The overall number of individuals who have used opiates from prescriptions and drug abuse ranges from 28,3 million to 42,7 million. The World Drug Report for 2017 shows that heroin uses in Western and Central Europe as well as in the U.S has recently increased. The increment has reverted the long-term downward trend of heroin use in these regions.³⁴ The data shows that there is generally an increase in the opiate users globally, which means an increase in demand.

²⁹ “World Drug Report 2010”. (2010). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*.pp.38. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf

³⁰ Tucker, I. (2011). *Economics for Today's world*. South-Western Cengage Learning. Seventh edition. Print.

³¹ “World Drug Report 2010”. (2010). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*.pp.37. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf

³² “World Drug Report 2000” (2000). *United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Preventions*. Pp.70. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/pdf/world_drug_report_2000/report_2001-01-22_1.pdf

³³ “World Drug Report 2010”. (2010). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*.pp.37. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf

³⁴ “World Drug Report 2017. Global Overview of Drug Demand and Supply.” (2017). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*.pp.13,15, 32. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/wdr2017/field/Booklet_2_HEALTH.pdf

Climate and soil conditions

Naturally, the yield of opium poppy depends on the climate conditions and the suitability of the soil. Nevertheless, agricultural improvements, such as fertilizers, pesticides as well as the introduction of solar panels for irrigation purposes, have enabled the cultivation of opium in geographically adverse regions. Thus, the improvements of agricultural infrastructure can transform desert regions into areas with fruitful soils.³⁵

Relative strength of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

This sub-section will delineate the determinant factors of opium poppy production within Afghanistan. This sub-section will be further divided into distinct elements, which permit or restrict the production of poppy in Afghanistan.

General political context

Certain correlations between the levels of production of opium poppy and the political context in Afghanistan can be observed.

Afghan-Soviet war

In 1979, Leonid Brezhnev invaded Afghanistan, and imposed the communist, Babrak Karmal, as the Afghani President. The Soviet imposition of government ignited a fervent opposition from the population.³⁶ The population was compelled to decide between the allegiance to the Koran or to the Communist Manifesto, which made the ideology of the resistancy *jihadist*.³⁷ The turmoil resulted in the formation of political groups “*the mujahedeen*” against the communist invaders. The *mujahedeen* were supported by the U.S., Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. The Soviet Union had experienced great human and financial losses in the war. Hence, the Soviet Union planned to leave the Islamic Republic by the end of 1988.³⁸ Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union meant the end of the policy of communist containment. As a consequence of the collapse of the bipolar international system, the United States also withdrew from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.³⁹ In

³⁵ “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017” (2017). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 6-7. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

³⁶ Mansfield, D. (2016). *A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan*. HURST & COMPANY. pp.96. Print

³⁷ “The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem.” (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp.86-93. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

³⁸ Mansfield, D. (2016). *A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan*. HURST & COMPANY. pp.96. Print

³⁹ “The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem.” (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp.86-93. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

particular, in 1989, the Cold war was over. In the period of three years, a number of significant transformations occurred – the fall of the Berlin wall, the dissolution of the communist bloc and the collapse of communism in the USSR. Essentially, the newly established international order made the United States change its interests. Afghanistan was no longer a priority of the U.S. interests. Moreover, these political transformations made the world believe that the United States could cooperate with Russia to end the conflict in Afghanistan. Precisely, a dialogue between the U.S. and Russia took place. The negotiations were supported by the United Nations. The negotiations aimed to impose a temporary government, cease the fighting as well as to stop the supply of arms. The strength of the institutions in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan had already been seriously weakened. However, a peace agreement was not accomplished. Therefore, the conflict was not put to an end, instead the conflict was only transformed.⁴⁰

Civil war

The result of the established situation was a highly fragmented Afghan society and a vacuum of power.⁴¹ In the political condition of vacuum of power, the former *mujahidin* desired to acquire political dominance and material resources. However, none of the *mujahedeen* possessed sufficient coercive capacity to take over. Hence, the aims for sphere of influence and resources resulted in turf wars between the former *mujahideen*. Essentially, “*The pursuit of politics through both peaceful and violent means requires money*” because the acquisition and management of the financial resources determines the political outcome. Therefore, the revenues from the trade of opium poppy became a prime source of finance for the *mujahedeen*.⁴² The political context from 1987 to 1994 explains the transformation of the relatively small-scale opium production in an opium industry.

The Taliban regime

In 1994, the Taliban consolidated power in the provinces Kandahar and Helmand, and eventually reached to the capital Kabul. After the Taliban seized power in Kabul, the construction of new political order commenced and new policies were being drafted. The Taliban regime had a strenuous relationship with the international community due to their

⁴⁰ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.28-29

⁴¹ “The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem.” (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp.86-93. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

⁴² Rubin, B. (2000). The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan. *World Development*, 28(10), pp.1789-1803. Retrieved from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c36f/7be485354bca2bc1991280c4cb5204a3914f.pdf>

implementation of extremely radical policies, such as unacceptable gender policies and serious infringements of human rights.⁴³ However, the consolidation of power by the Taliban was achieved through negotiation and coercion of the population. Many tribes and military groups voluntarily obeyed to the Taliban regime.⁴⁴ In particular, the Taliban regime governed by consensus of regional elites and governors. The Taliban were able to impose an opium ban in 2000-2001 by a combination of persuasion, negotiation and coercion. Hence, the imposition and implementation of the ban was not widely opposed. Additionally, the opium ban resulted in an increase of the price for opium, which made the inventory of opium a highly valuable commodity. Furthermore, the Afghani population expected development assistance to follow once the cultivation of the illicit crop was suspended. The expected development assistance was not provided to the population, and consequently, the ban was short-lived. In particular, the lack of economic growth made tribes, such as the Shinwari, resist the opium ban for a second year.⁴⁵ The results from the opium ban can be clearly seen on the extremely low levels of opium poppy production in 2001 on Figure 4.

The U.S. invasion and the new stage of state-building

In 1996, the Taliban accepted the Islamic fundamentalist - Osama bin Laden because he had financed the seizure of power of Kabul in 1994. The international community was worried about the Taliban connections with the Islamic fundamentalist groups, such as Al-Qaeda.⁴⁶ Eventually, following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001, the United State invaded Afghanistan and removed the Taliban regime.⁴⁷ In December 2001, the United Nations achieved to bring at the negotiating table Al-Qaeda's and the Taliban's opposing groups, which had certain level of power and legitimacy in Afghanistan. However, the Taliban were not represented at the meeting. The Taliban and Al-Qaeda were condemned as outlaw formations in Bonn. The defeat of the Taliban became a fundamental political objective. Moreover, the outcome of the negotiations included: the establishment of an administration, the creation of a supreme court, and the

⁴³ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp.96. Print

⁴⁴ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp.96. Print

⁴⁵ Mansfield, D. (2008). Counter-narcotics in Afghanistan The Failure of Success. *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 5-8. Retrieved from: <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/822E-Counter-Narcotics-in-Afghanistan-BP-2008.pdf>

⁴⁶ Peters, G. (2009). How Opium profits the Taliban. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved from: https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/taliban_opium_1.pdf

⁴⁷ Glaze, J. (2007). Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing U.S. Counternarcotic Strategy. *Strategic Studies Institute*. Retrieved from: <http://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pdffiles/pub804.pdf>

agreement of a pending national council “*Loya Jirga*” in 6 months period.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the aim of the Bonn Agreement was to introduce liberal democracy in Afghanistan. Liberal democracy aimed to include representatives of different ethnic groups and to make Afghanistan more sensitive to gender-issues. The Bonn Agreement achieved the draft of a new constitution and strived to restore the centralization of power in Kabul.⁴⁹ Fluctuation of the levels of opium poppy production can be observed in the new stage of state-building since 2001.

General economic context

The general political context inevitably reflects the economic conditions in a country. The motivations of farmers and the household dynamics will be scrutinized in order to understand the economic context for production of opium poppy. Moreover, the profits of the actors along the opium value chain will be reflected on. Figure 7 shows the four stages of the opium value chain. The four activities in the opium value chain are performed in Afghanistan. Essentially, in 2017, approximately 9000 tons of raw opium was produced in Afghanistan. The statistics also shows that from 48% to 56% of the produced raw opium in 2017 was processed in morphine and heroin within the borders of Afghanistan. Moreover, the statistics reveal that around 1400 tons of raw opium was consumed in Afghanistan in 2017. The rest of the opium is exported to the rest of the world.⁵⁰ This section will elaborate more on the organization of the opium economy in Afghanistan.

⁴⁸Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. pp. 105. Print.

⁴⁹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. Pp. 99. HURST & COMPANY. Print.

⁵⁰ “Afghanistan opium survey 2017. Challenges to sustainable development, peace and security”. (2018). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 4-5. Retrieved from: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Opium-survey-peace-security-web.pdf>

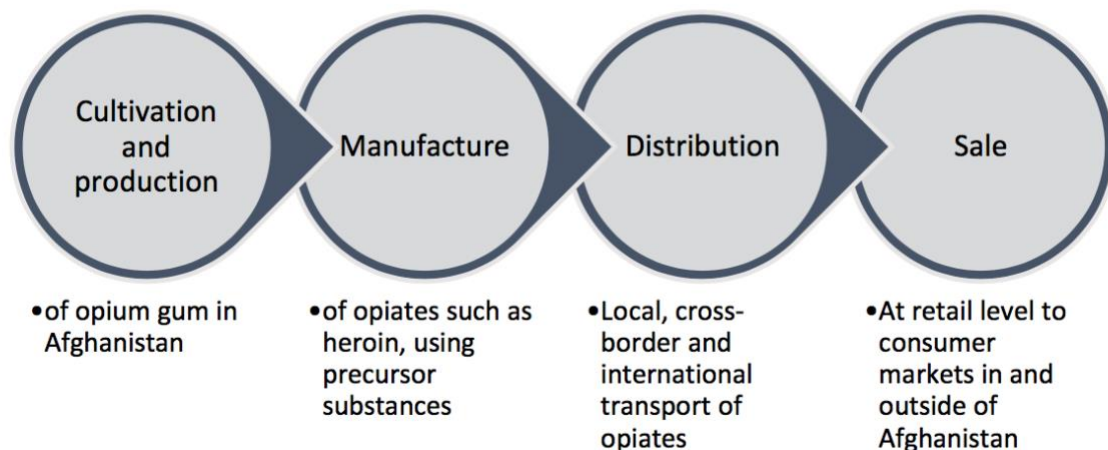


Figure 6, Opium value chain⁵¹

Three central actors have been identified along the value chain of opium poppy in Afghanistan – the farmer, the land owner and the protector. These stakeholders have different tasks and leverage in the drug industry. Essentially, farmers are poor, who usually cultivate the illicit drug for a living. The land owners make a profit from the rent on land and offer certain capital credits. The last pivotal stakeholders in the value chain of the opium industry are the protectors, which are usually government officials, extremist groups or warlords. The protectors are responsible for the physical protection and facilitation of the drug trade.⁵²

Household dynamics

Initially, analysts have concluded that the primary motivation of farmers to grow opium poppy was high profitability. Precisely, the UNODC has argued that farmers compared the prices of different crops and preferred to grow opium poppy because the price of the illicit crop was higher. Consequently, farmers received higher revenues.⁵³ However, further research on the motivation of growing opium poppy shows that crop profitability is not the sole determinant for farmers. Instead, research shows that the precise dynamics of the households have to be scrutinized in order to understand the real motivations behind farmers' decision to cultivate illicit drugs. Particularly, the cultivation of drugs brings advantages to

⁵¹ "Afghanistan opium survey 2017. Challenges to sustainable development, peace and security". (2018). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 50. Retrieved from: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Opium-survey-peace-security-web.pdf>

⁵² Rubin, B and Zakhilwal, O. (2005). A War on Drugs, or a War on Farmers?. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB110540664845122357>

⁵³ "The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem." (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

farmers additional to the income from the illicit crop, such as access to land and access to credit. Essentially, farmers choose to cultivate opium poppy because there is no licit alternative employment, which could guarantee sufficient and sustainable livelihood.⁵⁴ Hence, the production of the illicit crop provided certain levels of economic security to the rural population. Thus, the opium cultivation has become a vital industry for the rural population in Afghanistan over the years.⁵⁵

The businessmen and the protectors

After the invasion of the Soviet Union, a partnership between the businessmen and the political-military leaders occurred in Afghanistan. These actors united around a trade of licit and illicit goods, such as gems, arms, timber as well as illicit drugs. The business needed the political-military leaders for the physical security of the shipments. These political-military leaders were rewarded financially for the services. Essentially, traffickers, protectors, and corrupt government officials acquire 70 to 80% of the gross profits from the drug trade.⁵⁶

The system of the trade is the following. Farmers offer the opium yield at the farm gate to a trafficker. The payment is usually a service of an existing debt of the farmer. The gross profit for farmers is usually 20 to 30%. The price of opium increases substantially as the illicit crop moves to the next steps in the value chain. The picked-up produce is then sold at opium bazaars to larger traffickers or to the laboratories, which process the opium into morphine and heroin. The drug is later on passed to individuals, who are responsible to smuggle the illicit substances across the borders. Along the trafficking, bribes have to be paid to police or other corrupt officials, who provide an umbrella for the transit. However, the profits from the bribes are also shared with government officials at the high levels of Afghanistan's governance, such as members of parliament and officials from the Ministry of the Interior. Furthermore, the owners of laboratories for refinement are also illegally taxed by government officials and powerful insurgent group, such as the Taliban.⁵⁷

The economic context for producing opium poppy shows that farmers resort to the illicit activity to secure a living. In contrast, the production of opium poppy has become a profitable business for the traffickers, the Taliban, and the corrupt officials in Afghanistan.

⁵⁴ Chouvy, P. (2011). Finding an alternative to illicit opium production in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

International Journal of Environmental Studies. 68(3). Pp.373-379. Doi.org/10.1080/00207233.2011.573959

⁵⁵ Mansfield, D. (2001). Alternative Development in Afghanistan: The Failure of the Quid Pro Quo. Retrieved from: <http://scottshelmandvalleyarchives.org/docs/nar-01-03.pdf>

⁵⁶ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.393-400

⁵⁷ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.393-400

Counter-narcotic strategies overview

A wide variety of programs and mechanisms have been implemented in Afghanistan to counter the production of the illicit crop - opium poppy since 1989.⁵⁸ Different approaches have been applied in the battle against the cultivation of the illicit drug. Some actors have based their strategies on tackling the criminal offence, and therefore have advocated for coercive eradication. In contrast, other counter-narcotic actors have preferred an incentive-based approach, which embeds rural development. Over the years, the United Kingdom and the United States have become central counter-narcotic actors in Afghanistan.⁵⁹

Counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan date back to the late 1980s, when crop substitution strategies and rural development initiatives were undertaken.⁶⁰ In particular, the Afghanistan Drug Control and Rural Rehabilitation Program was implemented between 1989 and 1996. The Program was an international counter-narcotic effort and was developed and supported by the United Nations Drug Control Program. Ultimately, the budget of the program amounted to 9,2 million dollars. The purpose of the program was drug supply and demand reduction within the broader framework for reconstruction of Afghanistan. The program consisted of more than 200 minor projects in agriculture, education, infrastructure and health. The program required a clause of conditionality from the community also known as “*poppy clause*”. Essentially, “*the poppy clause*” required the Afghani communities, where such development projects were implemented, to sign a clause that cultivation of poppy would be discontinued. Unfortunately, the program did not achieve a great success.⁶¹

In 1994, the Governor Hajji Qadir imposed a ban on opium in Nangarhar. In 1997, Mullah Omar made the opium ban national. In 2000, the Taliban regime banned the cultivation of opium but still allowed the trade of the illicit drug. The Bonn agreement in 2001 marked another stage in the counter-narcotic efforts because the new authorities of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan committed to the cooperation with the international actors

⁵⁸ Mansfield, D. (2001). *Alternative Development in Afghanistan: The Failure of the Quid Pro Quo*. pp.1 Retrieved from: <http://scottshelmandvalleyarchives.org/docs/nar-01-03.pdf>

⁵⁹ Fishstein, P. (2014). *Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan*. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 11-12. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

⁶⁰ Fishstein, P. (2014). *Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan*. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 13. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

⁶¹ Mansfield, D. (2001). *Alternative Development in Afghanistan: The Failure of the Quid Pro Quo*. pp.3. Retrieved from: <http://scottshelmandvalleyarchives.org/docs/nar-01-03.pdf>

against the production of the illicit drug, against the organized crime as well as against the terrorist organizations and activities.⁶²

In 2002, President Karzai issued three consecutive decrees which banned the cultivation, trade and use of illicit drugs and which introduced eradication and law enforcement initiatives. Over the years, an institutional set up for counter-narcotic efforts was established in Afghanistan, such as the Counter Narcotic Directorate, which turns into the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, as well as Central Poppy Eradication Force. In 2003, the first National Drug Control Strategy was launched in Afghanistan. The strategy was developed with the support of the United Nations on Drugs and Crimes and included law enforcement, reconstruction of institutions and enactment of counter-narcotic legislation, as well as alternative development initiatives.⁶³

USAID has also deployed a counter-narcotic strategy of crop substitution in the early 1990s called Narcotic Awareness and Control Project. The strategy did not accomplish profound achievements because the cultivation of opium poppy was highly profitable.⁶⁴ In 2005, the United States have developed a comprehensive five-pillar strategy of opium poppy control, which include interdiction, law enforcement, eradication, alternative livelihood as well as public awareness strategies. The fundamental objective is a sustainable eradication of the cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan.⁶⁵

⁶² Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 13. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

⁶³ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 13. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

⁶⁴ Mansfield, D. (2001). Alternative Development in Afghanistan: The Failure of the Quid Pro Quo. Retrieved from: <http://scottshelmandvalleyarchives.org/docs/nar-01-03.pdf>

⁶⁵ “Afghanistan Drug Control. Despite Improved Efforts, Deteriorating Security Threatens Success of U.S. Goals” (2006). *United States Government Accountability Office*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0778.pdf>

Five Pillar Counternarcotics Strategy in Afghanistan



Figure 7, Comprehensive five-pillar strategy⁶⁶

In 2007, the U.S. revised the counter-narcotic strategy by focusing primarily on eradication and interdiction. However, three years later the U.S. abandoned its emphasis on eradication and interdiction and focused on providing economic opportunities to the population.⁶⁷

Counter-Narcotic strategies analysis

Different counter-narcotic strategies target a different stage of the opium value chain. Therefore, the strategies have different effects on the quantity of the illicit drug, the prices and generally different implications for the different actors along the value chain.⁶⁸

Crop eradication

Crop eradication is a counter-narcotic strategy, which aims to physically destroy the illicit crop. Firstly, coercive crop eradication initiatives executed by foreign forces have been observed as a state's weakness rather than a state's strength. It has been perceived that the coercive means are carried out due to foreign pressure. Crop eradication has had different

⁶⁶ "Afghanistan Drug Control. Despite Improved Efforts, Deteriorating Security Threatens Success of U.S. Goals" (2006). *United States Government Accountability Office*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d0778.pdf>

⁶⁷ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 13. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

⁶⁸ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.399

implications for farmers, for the businessmen, and for the protectors. Specifically, crop eradication has severely hurt the poorer farmers because of their dependence on opium production for securing a livelihood. Consequently, the strategy of crop reduction has been firmly criticized. The wealthier farmers were able to compensate the losses from the crop reduction with revenues from different economic activities. Additionally, eradication initiatives have constrained traffickers' and protectors' financial resources from the illicit drug.⁶⁹ However, due to the reduced supply of opium, eradication initiatives have a great impact on the prices of opium. Essentially, provided that the demand of opium is inelastic and that the reduction of poppy is sustainable, then the price of poppy increases. Hence, the eradication initiatives will bring higher profits for traders. Therefore, it has been concluded that crop eradication initiatives have to be implemented along with interdiction and alternative development strategies.⁷⁰

Interdiction and law enforcement

Interdiction and law enforcement are essential components of the counter-narcotic efforts in Afghanistan. Interdiction and law enforcement initiatives include arrests of traffickers, and corrupt government officials as well as raids and drug seizures. The trade of opium poppy has to be outlawed, the traffickers have to be caught and put in prison as well as the corruption within the government officials has to be eliminated in order for the opium problem in Afghanistan to move forward. Furthermore, strong institutions need to be established, which will legislate and execute counter-narcotic laws. However, the counter-narcotic measures of interdiction and law enforcement cannot currently tackle the production of the illicit drug in Afghanistan. Holders of power are somehow engaged in the drug trade, and therefore control over interdiction and law enforcement can serve to merely defeat rivals. Moreover, large family networks have been involved in the drug industry. Consequently, the power and family relations need to be investigated by the intelligence⁷¹

Alternative Development

The definitions have been ambiguous about the alternative development strategy. The concept of alternative development has been used as a crop substitution counter-narcotic strategy. However, the strategy has been also used for various agricultural projects. The main

⁶⁹ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.393-400

⁷⁰ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.393-400

⁷¹ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp. 411-412

purpose of the strategy was to substitute farmers' income from the cultivation of the illicit crop with a licit alternative activity. Sometimes, the concept of alternative development has been used interchangeably with rural development.⁷² The problem of the alternative development strategies comes from the absence of a clear strategy and the lack of a thorough analysis of farmers' motivations to grow opium. Specifically, alternative development did not take into account factors for opium cultivation such as farmers' access to land, access to credit as well as return on labor. The experience of alternative development has shown that the mere cultivation of alternative crops will not suppress the production of opium. It has been observed that alternative development strategies need to be defined in a broader development framework.⁷³ Thus, the concept of alternative development was redefined into alternative livelihoods.

Alternative livelihood

The concept of alternative livelihoods means the provision of a legitimate alternative opportunity of livelihood to the involved actors in the opium economy. Alternative livelihood differs from crop substitution and alternative development because the alternative livelihood is a comprehensive strategy, which incorporates policies towards labor migration, wage labor, education and others. The cultivation of opium poppy provides the benefits additional to the sole income of the illicit crop, such as the access to land, access to credit, and food security. The access to land and the credit are usually provided by the land owner. Usually, farmers pay the credits to the landowner with the yield of poppy. Hence, the literature shows that a sound economic environment needs to be established, which will ensure that the rural population gets access to land, credit, food security. Then, cultivation of opium poppy can be reduced. Consequently, alternative livelihood means a wider macro-economic framework for Afghanistan. The elimination of the illicit opium economy with licit economic activities will require the establishment of effective and sustainable security within Afghanistan as well as the construction of its infrastructure. Therefore, the literature suggests that alternative livelihood is the first step to the suppression of the opium cultivation. Once alternatives are available to the population, then crop eradication strategies can be enforced.⁷⁴

⁷² Mansfield, D. (2001). *Alternative Development in Afghanistan: The Failure of the Quid Pro Quo*. Pp. 7-10. Retrieved from: <http://scottshelmandvalleyarchives.org/docs/nar-01-03.pdf>

⁷³ Mansfield, D. (1999). *Alternative Development: The modern thrust of supply side policy*. *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/bulletin/bulletin_1999-01-01_1_page004.html

⁷⁴ Rubin, B., (2016). *Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror*. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.393-400

The success of counter-narcotic efforts has turned out difficult to define and measure. However, what has been observed is that opium poppy has been primarily cultivated in regions with high levels of insecurity. Consequently, it has been concluded that a functioning state is crucial for the success of the counter-narcotic efforts. It has been noticed that the success of counter-narcotic efforts is contingent upon the political commitment to law enforcement and to development. Furthermore, the key to the success in counter-narcotics is the elimination of the money generated from the drug trade, which serve to pay administrative officials, political elite and insurgents to render protection of the drug shipments. The corrupt practices severely undermine the institutions in Afghanistan as well as the development of a licit economic sector.⁷⁵

Aims of the research project

The literature overview indicates that researchers on the topic have observed a strong connection between the relative strength of the state and the levels of opium production. Particularly, the observers have indicated that the success of the counter-narcotic strategies is contingent upon a strong Afghani state. The literature highlights that interdiction, law enforcement and adherence to the rule of law are essential factors in the combat against opium in Afghanistan. Moreover, sound economic conditions are needed to provide farmers with adequate licit livelihood in order to persuade farmers to abandon the cultivation of the illicit crop. Therefore, this research project will hypothesize that a strong state is a necessary but perhaps an insufficient condition for successful counter-narcotic efforts. Hence, a central subject of this research will be the current state of the state-building process in Afghanistan. Specifically, the research will try to examine the likely net effect of the counter-narcotic efforts on Afghanistan's state-building process. The research will try to investigate whether the war on drugs helps or hurts the state-building process in Afghanistan.

Why is the topic important?

The production of opium poppy has undoubtedly serious implications for Afghanistan. However, the thriving opium industry in Afghanistan has also had profound international consequences.

Essentially, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan experiences various harms from the cultivation of opium poppy on domestic level. Firstly, harms in public health have been

⁷⁵ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.390-393, 396.

observed by a widespread drug use in Afghanistan. Secondly, the revenues from the illicit opium production are gained by insurgent groups, which undermine the security within state. Thirdly, the illicit drug industry erodes the rule of law due to corruption practices as well as the social trust in public institutions. Fourth, the illicit opium economy hampers the effective development of a legal economic sector in the country.⁷⁶

The drug industry poses a serious challenge to the security of neighboring countries and the region. Precisely, the war economy has transcended the boundaries of Afghanistan and has penetrated in the neighboring countries – Pakistan and Iran. Historically, the need for resources by the warlords in Afghanistan has triggered regional economic activities in terms of trade of drugs and arms. The illicit economy has weakened the rule of law in the neighboring states and have eroded the legal economic activities in the neighboring countries.⁷⁷ The three established trafficking route of opium poppy from Afghanistan show that today the illicit drug has penetrated almost all over the world. Thus, the fight against the illicit drug trafficking has become an international objective.

Moreover, Afghanistan has become the main global supplier of a highly addictive drug. Heroin has been used by 17,7 million people in the world and has become a social ill for many societies.⁷⁸ Therefore, the reduction of this socially destructive drug by demand or supply-side strategies is consequently imperative.

Additionally, the revenues from the opium poppy has been used to finance terrorist groups.⁷⁹ This argument can be observed as a function of the previously discussed security threat in the region. However, the dangers of a terrorist attack are a global phenomenon, and therefore deserve a special attention. Particularly, extremist groups such as the Taliban and Al-Qaeda have extended their financial assets due to revenues from the drug economy. Precisely, research show that the Taliban obtain a profit of 250 million dollars per year from distinct drug-related activities ranging from production of heroin and morphine in labs, to taxation “*ushr*” of the drug production as well as to physical protection of drug shipments.

⁷⁶ “Afghanistan National Drug Action Plan 2015-2019” (2015). *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Ministry of Counter Narcotics*. Retrieved from:

[http://mcn.gov.af/Content/files/Afghan%20National%20Drug%20Action%20Plan%20\(1\).pdf](http://mcn.gov.af/Content/files/Afghan%20National%20Drug%20Action%20Plan%20(1).pdf)

⁷⁷ Rubin, B. (2000). The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan. *World Development*, 28(10), pp.1789-1803. Retrieved from:

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c36f/7be485354bca2bc1991280c4cb5204a3914f.pdf>

⁷⁸ “World Drug Report 2017. Global Overview of Drug Demand and Supply.” (2017). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp.13, 32. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/wdr2017/field/Booklet_2_HEALTH.pdf

⁷⁹ “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017” (2017). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

Essentially, the illegal drug industry is governed by a powerful network within the borders of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The revenues from the opium economy are transferred within the region by a system “*hawala*” which resembles the system of Western Union. The profits from the opium industry has been used to establish an infrastructure of houses, hotels, cars, and schools “*madrassas*” in Pakistan for recruitment and safe haven of extremists.⁸⁰

Consequently, the reduction and elimination of the production of poppy is crucial not only for the political, social and economic development of Afghanistan but also for the regional security as well as for the international peaceful development. Hence, an examination of the net effect of the counter-narcotic strategies on the state-building process in Afghanistan is worth not only for the Islamic Republic *per se* but also for the regional and international peace. In particular, the suppression of the opium economy will be a positive sum game because many harms inflicted by the opium trade in Afghanistan and world-wide will be tackled.

⁸⁰ Peters, G. (2009). How Opium profits the Taliban. *United States Institute of Peace*. Retrieved from: https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/taliban_opium_1.pdf

Methodology

The research methods for this topic are limited due to the nature of the research problem. Therefore, an extensive overview of secondary data sources will be presented and several semi-structured interviews with expert on the topic will be conducted.

There are multiple reasons for the obstruction of field work in Afghanistan. Firstly, lack of security is one of the central reasons for the obstruction of field work. Secondly, financial resources also play a role in conducting field work. Consequently, an extensive overview and analysis of secondary data sources will be rendered. The research will use empirical data collected from researchers on the ground. However, the research will also use UNODC reports and official reports from the U.S. However, it is necessary to say that the opium economy is not sufficiently investigated and impact assessments from different sources was difficult to find.

Furthermore, empirical data has been extracted from interviews with experts on the drug problems in Afghanistan. Precisely, in total seven of researchers, three government officials of Afghanistan and two diplomats have been approached within the time period March 2018 – May 2018. The approached interviewees have been part of different institutions, such as universities, UNODC, the Paris Pact Initiative, INCB, ISAF (NATO), as well as one NGO. Noteworthy, the access to experts and government official is not easy. Unfortunately, a large number of the approached interviewees have not responded to the emails or have denied the interview. The reasons for the refusal or absence of response are multiple. Some of the reasons for the unconduted interviews are the researcher's personal assumptions. However, the possible reasons will be made explicit. Firstly, lack of time of the academic worker and diplomats have to be pointed out. For example, one of the academic researcher was approached at the end of April. However, the researcher indicated that he was currently overwhelmed with work, and an interview would be only possible in the middle of July. Secondly, experts on the topic were not easy to find. Some of the people, who have been approached answered that they do not have sufficient information on the opium economy despite their Afghani origin or relatedness to the topic. Thirdly, a possible reason for the lack of answers or a refusal for the interview is the sensitivity of the topic. The names of the interviewees, which will be revealed, have explicitly given the consent. The names of two of the interviewees will not be mentioned. The name of the soldier is irrelevant while the name of the expert on the group is hidden due to ethical reasons.

Name	Institution	Interview type	Language of the interview
Soldier 1	Bulgarian Mission to Afghanistan; Part of ISAF, NATO	Answered questions	Bulgarian
Expert 1	Expert on the ground in Afghanistan	Semi-structured personal expert interview	English
Dr. Angela Me	Chief of UNODC Statistics and Surveys; responsible for UNODC publications, among which are Afghanistan Opium Survey and World Drug Report	Semi-structured personal expert interview	English
Major General Masood Ahmad Azizi	Deputy Minister of the Interior Affairs in Afghanistan	Semi-structured personal expert interview	English

Figure 8, Interviewees

State-building

Political thinkers have defined the responsibilities of the “state” differently. Hegel, Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, John Locke, Thomas Jefferson have all developed a different set of beliefs about the arrangements and the responsibilities of the state. Essentially, the relative strength of the state inevitably depends on the purposes ascribed to it as well as on the challenges it faces. This academic work does not aim to defend or prove any of the definitions on the “state”. The following discussion does not aim to exhaustively define the state. Rather, this master thesis will only elaborate on the ascribed purposes of the state, which are relevant to the topic of this academic work, and precisely to the state-building process in Afghanistan. Essentially, the purpose of the definition on the responsibilities and characteristics of a state in this section is merely to set clear criteria on how the effects on Afghan state-building from the international counter-narcotic efforts will be assessed.

Furthermore, the relative strength of a state is a constantly changing variable. Hence, the relative strength of a state is hard to measure. The literature on the relative strength of a state can be confusing in the definition of the terms weak, fragile and failed states as well as collapsed states. Since 2006, the think tank, the Fund for Peace, has developed various social, economic, and political indicators to measure the relative strength of a state.⁸¹ The Fragile State Index of the Fund for Peace is an annual ranking of 178 states’ relative strength. The figure below shows the political, economic and social indicators for the measurement of states’ fragility.⁸² Since the beginning of the ranking in 2006, the Fragile State Index has ranked Afghanistan as one of the counties in high alert for failed states.⁸³ Hence, the definition of state-building in Afghanistan for the purpose of this master was inspired by looking at some of the indicators in Figure 9. The following paragraph will summarize the political, economic and social situation in Afghanistan. Hence, the definition of state-building will encompass the goals for rectifying these political, economic and social ills.

⁸¹ “Fragile State Index. Download data in Excel” (2006-2018). *The Fund for Peace*. Retrieved from: <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/excel/>

⁸² “Fragile State Index 2016” (2016). *The Fund for Peace*. Retrieved from: <http://library.fundforpeace.org/library/fragilestatesindex-2016.pdf>

⁸³ “Fragile State Index. Download data in Excel” (2006-2017). *The Fund for Peace*. Retrieved from: <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/excel/>

 State Legitimacy Corruption and lack of representativeness in the government directly undermine social contract. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Corruption - Government Effectiveness - Political Participation - Electoral Process - Level of Democracy - Illicit Economy - Drug Trade - Protests and Demonstrations - Power Struggles	 Public Services The provision of health, education, and sanitation services, among others, are key roles of the state. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Policing - Criminality - Education Provision - Literacy - Water & Sanitation - Infrastructure - Quality Healthcare - Telephony - Internet Access - Energy Reliability - Roads	 Human Rights & Rule of Law When human rights are violated or unevenly protected, the state is failing in its ultimate responsibility. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Press Freedom - Civil Liberties - Political Freedoms - Human Trafficking - Political Prisoners - Incarceration - Religious Persecution - Torture - Executions
 Security Apparatus The security apparatus should have a monopoly on use of legitimate force. The social contract is weakened where affected by competing groups. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Internal Conflict - Small Arms Proliferation - Riots and Protests - Fatalities from Conflict - Military Coups - Rebel Activity - Militancy - Bombings - Political Prisoners	 Factionalized Elites When local and national leaders engage in deadlock and brinkmanship for political gain, this undermines the social contract. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Power Struggles - Defectors - Flawed Elections - Political Competition	 External Intervention When the state fails to meet its international or domestic obligations, external actors may intervene to provide services or to manipulate internal affairs. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Foreign Assistance - Presence of Peacekeepers - Presence of UN Missions - Foreign Military Intervention - Sanctions - Credit Rating
 Demographic Pressures Pressures on the population such as disease and natural disasters make it difficult for the government to protect its citizens or demonstrate a lack of capacity or will. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Natural Disasters - Disease - Environment - Pollution - Food Scarcity - Malnutrition - Water Scarcity - Population Growth - Youth Bulge - Mortality	 Refugees and IDPs Pressures associated with population displacement. This strains public services and has the potential to pose a security threat. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Displacement - Refugee Camps - IDP Camps - Disease related to Displacement - Refugees per capita - IDPs per capita - Capacity to absorb	 Uneven Economic Development When there are ethnic, religious, or regional disparities, governments tend to be uneven in their commitment to the social contract. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - GINI Coefficient - Income Share of Highest 10% - Income Share of Lowest 10% - Rural v. Urban Distribution of Services - Improved Service Access - Slum Population
 Group Grievance When tension and violence exists between groups, the state's ability to provide security is undermined and fear and further violence may ensue. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Discrimination - Powerlessness - Ethnic Violence - Communal Violence - Sectarian Violence - Religious Violence	 Human Flight & Brain Drain When there is little opportunity, people migrate, leaving a vacuum of human capital. Those with resources also often leave before, or just as, conflict erupts. <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Migration per capita - Human Capital - Emigration of Educated Citizens	 Poverty & Economic Decline Poverty and economic decline strain the ability of the state to provide for its citizens if they cannot provide for themselves and can create friction between "haves" and "have nots". <i>Includes pressures and measures related to:</i> - Economic Deficit - Government Debt - Unemployment - Youth Employment - Purchasing Power - GDP per capita - GDP Growth - Inflation

Figure 9, Indicators of Fragile State Index⁸⁴

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan occupies a special geographical place in Asia. Afghanistan is situated in the middle of three different cultures, ethnicities, and areas – the Iranian plateau, the Central Asian countries, and the Indian sub-continent. For centuries Afghanistan has struggled with invasions, migration, political battles and ethnic conflicts which hampered its consolidation. In the 1980s and in the early 1990s, Afghanistan experienced two decades of violent and calamitous armed conflicts – the Soviet-Afghanistan war and the subsequent eruption of a civil war.⁸⁵ The armed conflicts caused a severe

⁸⁴ "Fragile State Index 2016" (2016). *The Fund for Peace*. Retrieved from:

<http://library.fundforpeace.org/library/fragilestatesindex-2016.pdf>

⁸⁵ "The Opium economy in Afghanistan. An international problem." (2003). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp.82, 86-93. Retrieved from:

https://www.unodc.org/documents/afghanistan/Counter_Narcotics/The_Opium_Economy_in_Afghanistan_-_2003.pdf

damage to almost all of the functions of the Afghani state. As a result, the legitimacy of Afghanistan has been seriously undermined. Afghanistan's security has been hurt by insurgent groups until today. The insurgency weakens Afghanistan's ability to control its territories.⁸⁶ Afghanistan has lost the specific prerogative of the modern state described by Weber as "*the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force*"⁸⁷ Corruption practices have permeated Afghanistan, which erode the legitimacy of the state.⁸⁸

The devastating armed conflicts have created an economy of production and trade of illicit goods.⁸⁹ The UNODC has estimated that the opium economy in Afghanistan in 2017 is worth around 4.1 to 6.6 billion U.S. dollars. The opium economy constitutes approximately 20 to 32% of Afghanistan's Gross Domestic Product.⁹⁰ The majority of the economic activities in Afghanistan are not reported to the government. Financial resources are transferred by the "*hawala*" system.⁹¹ Today, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has a weak economy. Afghanistan offers narrow economic opportunities to its citizens. Afghanistan has found it difficult to create job opportunities to the growing demographical trends in the recent years. Economic activities have slowed down in the recent years. Statistics show that 39% of the Afghani population lives under the poverty line. Households are at a high risk for shocks caused by economic fluctuation or other sudden natural occurrences, such as death or natural disasters.⁹²

⁸⁶ "The Failed States Index 2011" (2011). *The Fund for Peace*. pp. 12. Retrieved from:

http://www.pucsp.br/ecopolitica/downloads/failed_states_index_2011.pdf

⁸⁷ Weber, M. (1921). Politics as a vocation. Pp. 1. Retrieved from: <http://anthropos-lab.net/wp/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Weber-Politics-as-a-Vocation.pdf> and "Afghanistan – State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty" (2005). *The World Bank*. Pp. 43-45. Retrieved from:

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/0821360957_Afghanistan--State_Building.pdf

⁸⁸ "Afghanistan – State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty" (2005). *The World Bank*. Pp. 43-45. Retrieved from:

http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/0821360957_Afghanistan--State_Building.pdf

⁸⁹ Rubin, B. (2000). The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan. *World Development*, 28(10), pp.1789. Retrieved from: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c36f/7be485354bca2bc1991280c4cb5204a3914f.pdf>

⁹⁰ "Afghanistan opium survey 2017. Challenges to sustainable development, peace and security". (2018). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 50. Retrieved from: <https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Opium-survey-peace-security-web.pdf>

⁹¹ "Afghanistan – State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty" (2005). *The World Bank*. Pp. 33. Retrieved from: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/0821360957_Afghanistan--State_Building.pdf

⁹² "Afghanistan Poverty Status Update. PROGRESS AT RISK" (2017). *The World Bank*. Pp. 7, 36, 44. Retrieved from: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/667181493794491292/pdf/114741-WP-v1-P159553-PUBLIC.pdf>

State-building in Afghanistan *per se*

Derived from the political, economic, and social conditions in Afghanistan, the definition of “state-building” for the purpose of this academic work will encompass the following features. Firstly, the state building process in Afghanistan includes the establishment of the legitimacy of the official authorities. Secondly, the reconstruction of the state encompasses Afghanistan’s grasp over the monopoly of the use of force within its boundaries. In particular, the state reconstruction will include the establishment of capable military, police and intelligence forces to ensure the rule of law. Thirdly, part of the reconstruction process is Afghanistan’s obtainment of full control over its territories. This means that insurgent antigovernment groups are defeated and that security is guaranteed to the population. Afghanistan reconstruction also includes the formation of a functioning state apparatus, which will make decisions and which will be able to enforce these decisions. Containment and elimination of the corruption practices is central for the establishment of the Afghani state. However, in order to secure the borders, deploy army and fight corruption, and generally perform any state operations, the state needs to build capabilities and resources. Therefore, an effective tax collection system and capacity-building are pivotal goals of the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. Food security and a reasonable standard of living, which will make households withstand shocks is another component of state-building. The stimulation of economic activities and the availability of licit economic opportunities are vital for the further reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's administrative governance

The Bonn agreement from December 2001 still provides the legal framework in Afghanistan. The agreement refers to the constitution of Afghanistan from 1964. Precisely, the constitution establishes Afghanistan as a centralized unitary state. The state is divided into 32 provinces.⁹³ Figure 6 shows the territorial division of the provinces and the level of opium poppy production in each province. The higher the intensity of the red color of the province, the higher the level of opium poppy cultivation in the province.⁹⁴ Moreover, the 32 provinces are further divided into smaller districts. The number of the districts is contested because over the years, new districts were established. The districts were also divided into sub-districts. There are urban and rural municipalities as well. The President and the Minister of the internal affairs appoint the governors of the provinces and the district commissioners.⁹⁵

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan (by province), 2017

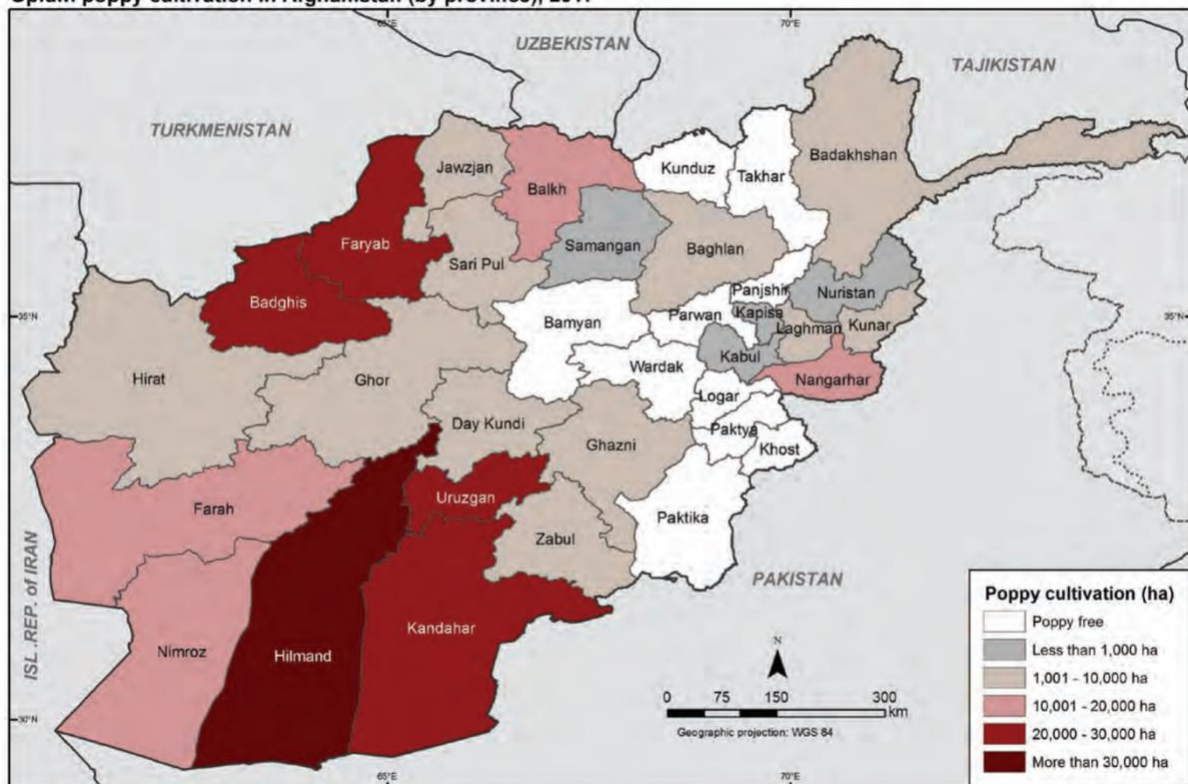


Figure 10, Production of poppy by province⁹⁶

⁹³ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. Oxford University Press. Print. pp.109,110

⁹⁴ "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017" (2017). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes. pp. 4-6. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

⁹⁵ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. Oxford University Press. pp.109,110 Print.

⁹⁶ "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017" (2017). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes. pp. 4-6. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

Noteworthy, Governors of the provinces have no legal powers. Their responsibility is merely cooperation with Kabul.⁹⁷ Afghanistan is administratively, fiscally and politically centralized. *De jure*, the administrative, fiscal, and political decisions have to be made in Kabul. The provincial Governors have officially accepted the authority of the central government.⁹⁸ Moreover, the local governance of *jirga or shura*, whose purpose is to dispute resolution has no legal authority. Customary law is also not legal. Rather, the judiciary branch is also centralized and the laws are applicable to all provinces.⁹⁹

Nevertheless, the exercise of the administrative system is far from the exercise of power in reality. Afghanistan is currently partially centralized. Some territories are governed by armed groups, which were formed during the wars. Therefore, leaders and figures of influence in such regions exercise powers beyond the legal framework. These armed groups advocate for a decentralization of Afghanistan. Currently, the President of Afghanistan has officially appointed all of the Governors of the provinces and other government officials. However, the appointed Governors are usually not the real preference of the President. In reality, Governors are appointed because they possess military power and exert control over the territory. Very often, Governors are former war commanders.¹⁰⁰ *De facto*, the provincial leaders do not abide to the strong centralization of power. For example, provincial Governors sometimes appoint senior officials in the provinces even though the appointment has to come from Kabul. Instead, the local leaders appoint individual on nepotistic manner. Furthermore, *de facto* there is a large amount of unreported revenues.¹⁰¹ This section aimed to provide the general administrative conditions under which Afghanistan is governed. The reality shows that the state has been incapable to enforce the laws of its written constitution, which indicates the weakness of state power in Afghanistan.

The next section will elaborate on the political and economic context of two provinces, Helmand and Nangarhar. The provinces will serve as case study of the

⁹⁷ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. pp.109,110 Print.

⁹⁸ “Afghanistan – State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty” (2005). *The World Bank*. Pp. 47. Retrieved from: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/0821360957_Afghanistan--State_Building.pdf

⁹⁹ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. pp.109,110 Print.

¹⁰⁰ Rubin, B., (2016). Afghanistan from the Cold War to the War on Terror. *Oxford University Press*. Print. pp.122

¹⁰¹ “Afghanistan – State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty” (2005). *The World Bank*. Pp. 47. Retrieved from: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTAFGHANISTAN/Resources/0821360957_Afghanistan--State_Building.pdf

investigation of the likely net effect of the counter-narcotic strategies on state-building in Afghanistan.

Opium poppy production by province

There are explicit explanations for the choice of the selected provinces in focus of this research. Firstly, there is generally a lack of empirical data and analysis on the opium economy in Afghanistan. The provinces, Helmand and Nangarhar, were selected because the academic literature has some information on. Over the years, the largest portion of opium poppy in Afghanistan has been produced in the province - Helmand.¹⁰² Consequently, Helmand has become a central province of research on the opium economy, and hence will be described in this master thesis. Additionally, Nangarhar has also been a province with traditions of poppy cultivation. Yet, the levels of poppy cultivation in Nangarhar have varied over the years. In 2008, Nangarhar has been declared free of poppy cultivation.¹⁰³ However, in 2017, the levels of opium production have returned to the highest levels recorded in the province - 18,976 hectares have been cultivated with opium in 2017.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, the negative development of is an interesting case to observe.

The elements in the structure of the discussion of the two provinces Helmand and Nangarhar will aim to be identical. Firstly, the political and economic context of the provinces will be examined. Secondly, the implemented counter-narcotic strategies will be described. Lastly, the likely net effect of the counter-narcotic strategy on the state-building process will be discussed.

¹⁰² Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 7. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

¹⁰³ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 11. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017" (2017). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 4-6. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

Table 2: Main opium-poppy-cultivating provinces in Afghanistan, 2012-2017 (Hectares)

Province	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Change 2016-2017	2017(ha) as % of total
Hilmand	75,176	100,693	103,240	86,443	80,273	144,018	79%	44%
Kandahar	24,341	28,335	33,713	21,020	20,475	28,010	37%	9%
Badghis*	2,363	3,596	5,721	12,391	35,234	24,723	NA	8%
Faryab*	PF	158	211	1,160	2,923	22,797	NA	7%
Uruzgan	10,508	9,880	9,277	11,277	15,503	21,541	39%	7%
Nangarhar	3,151	15,719	18,227	10,016	14,344	18,976	32%	6%
Farah	27,733	24,492	27,513	21,106	9,101	12,846	41%	4%
Balkh	PF	410	PF	204	2,085	12,116	481%	4%
Nimroz	3,808	16,252	14,584	8,805	5,303	11,466	116%	3%
Badakhshan	1,927	2,374	4,204	4,056	6,298	8,311	32%	3%
Rest of the country	5,475	7,553	7,647	6,089	9,771	23,499	140%	7%
Rounded Total	154,000	209,000	224,000	183,000	201,000	328,000	63%	100%

Figure 11, Cultivation of poppy by province in hectares¹⁰⁵

Helmand Province

Economic context

Helmand is Afghanistan's largest province, where 1,4 million Afghans reside. Helmand is situated in the south-west of Afghanistan and shares a 160 km border line with Pakistan. In the 1980s, the desert areas were land grabbed by the *mujahedeen*. Once the land was settled, substantial investments in agriculture were made. Irrigation system by wells were developed. The terrain was divided and later on sold to various tribal groups. Other sectors of the economy were not developed in the province. However, a very small fraction of the soil in the province is arable – merely 4% and only 2,5% of the land is irrigated. In the north, the soil is rocky while in the south the soil is dry and sandy. To date, the majority of the agricultural land is around the Helmand river. Agriculture still remains the main economic activity of the population in the province. Among the grown crops are wheat, opium poppy, alfalfa, and seasonable vegetables.¹⁰⁶

Helmand's central districts have been agriculturally developed and politically strong. The central districts have been considered as areas where the state has been strong and has

¹⁰⁵ "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017" (2017). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes. pp. 4-6. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

¹⁰⁶ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 209-215. Print.

the ability to control the territory.¹⁰⁷ The central districts include Lashkar Gah, which has a border line with Kandahar and which can be seen on the central east side on Figure 12. Nahre Seraj is situated above Lashkar Gah while Nade-e-Ali occupies the central west side of Helmand. Nawa Barakzai is located below Lashkar Gah, and lastly Marjeh.

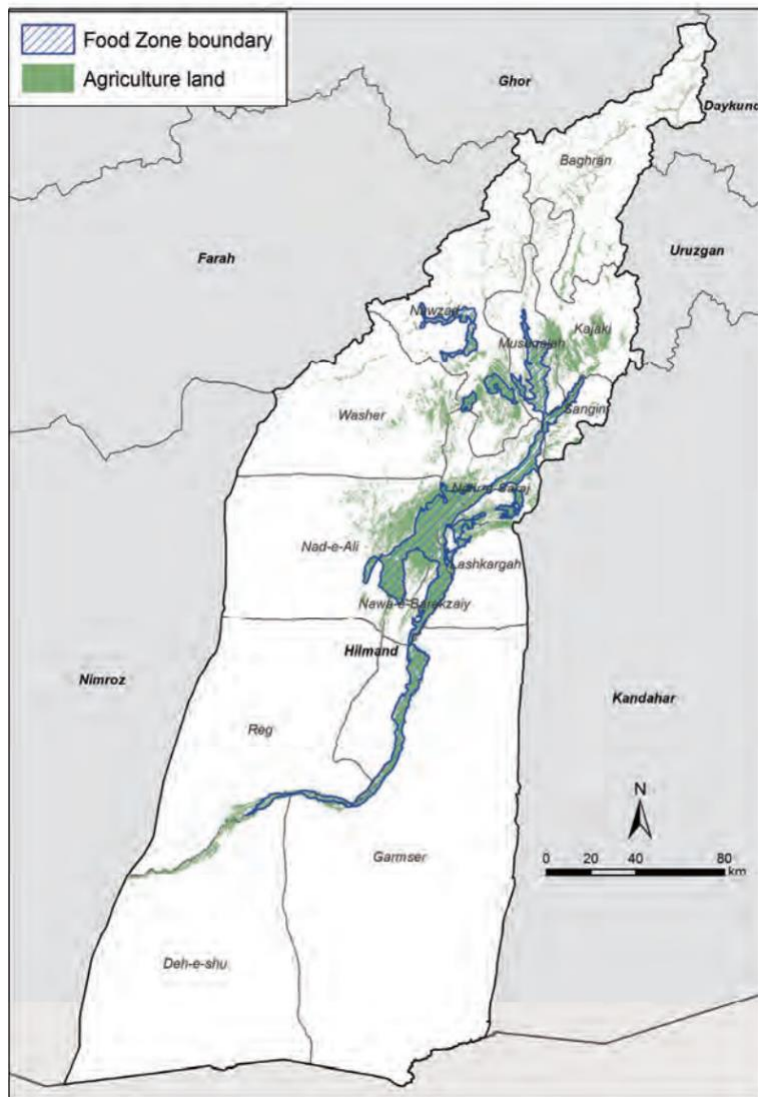


Figure 12, Helmand province map¹⁰⁸

Nevertheless, Helmand's agricultural potential has not been completely developed. The neighboring province, Kandahar, has become a larger agricultural market. The

¹⁰⁷ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 246. Print.

¹⁰⁸ "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017" (2017). United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes. pp. 4-6. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

movement of goods from Helmand to Kandahar has been difficult due to insecurity issues at the main road from Helmand to Kandahar – from Gereshk to Kandahar city.¹⁰⁹

Helmand's border with Pakistan is not patrolled by police officers. There is no official border crossing between the two states. Therefore, the movement of drugs, guns, and armed groups is free from Helmand to Pakistan. Afghanistan's government do not collect any taxes from the movement of goods.¹¹⁰

Political context

Prominent *mujahedeen* in Helmand were removed from power by the Taliban regime, such as Adbul Rahman Jan known as Noorzai, Dad Mohammed Khan and Mohammad Daoud. After the Taliban were ousted in 2001, these powerful *mujahideen* regained their influence in the province. The *mujahedeen* were given official positions in the governance. However, these *mujahedeen* were already involved in the drug trade and were considered as corrupt and violent. Consequently, the rural population opposed the seizure of power by the *mujahedeen*. The rural population had been previously supported by the Taliban and were marginalized by the *mujahedeen*. Additionally, the lack of development in the province made the rural population believe that the government was focused on the accumulation of personal wealth rather than on the provision of public goods.¹¹¹

As a consequence of the reduction of development assistance in 2006 and 2007, Helmand was permeated with acute security problems triggered by the heavy Taliban presence.¹¹² In 2008, Helmand was torn by violence between the Taliban and the forces of the Afghan National Security and Defense Forces (ANDSF) supported by international military forces.¹¹³ A number of operations were conducted since 2009 to accomplish three goals “clear”, “hold”, and “build” the province. Central and south Helmand were “cleared” from

¹⁰⁹ Goodhand, J. and Mansfield, D. (2010). Drugs and (Dis)order: A study of the opium trade, political settlement and state-making in Afghanistan. *London School of Economics*. Pp.20. Retrieved from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-working-papers-phase-two/wp83.2-drugs-and-disorder.pdf>

¹¹⁰ Goodhand, J. and Mansfield, D. (2010). Drugs and (Dis)order: A study of the opium trade, political settlement and state-making in Afghanistan. *London School of Economics*. Pp.20. Retrieved from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-working-papers-phase-two/wp83.2-drugs-and-disorder.pdf>

¹¹¹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 215. Print.

¹¹² Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 211. Print.

¹¹³ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.11. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

the Taliban by the operation Panther's Claw and Khanjar in 2009. The military offensives were joint operations, where British, Dane, Estonian marines and soldiers helped the Afghanistan's national army and police as well as NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The operation Moshtarak in 2010 was the final effort of the first goal of the operation, when the districts Nad e Ali and Marjah were cleared.¹¹⁴ The final outcome of the operation was a substantial shrink of the Taliban influence in the canal area. The Taliban were ousted except in some remote areas. Hence, the Taliban could not collect taxes anymore.¹¹⁵

The goal to "build" the province included several activities. Firstly, the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP) were trained. Afghan Local Police was established as well as check points were introduced. Secondly, the goal to "build" the province was addressed by investments in rural development, in the private sector as well as in infrastructure. These investments strived to generate economic growth.¹¹⁶ An estimate shows a tremendous increase in investment of financial resources in the province. Approximately 259 million dollars have been invested in Helmand between 2009 and 2011.¹¹⁷

Counter-narcotic strategy

Since the 1990s, the largest volume of opium in Afghanistan has been cultivated in Helmand. Therefore, Helmand became a large recipient of development assistance and a special province for counter-narcotic efforts. Crop eradication was primarily implemented in Helmand. However, rural development initiatives were also undertaken in the province. Unfortunately, the results of the efforts were unsatisfactory. In 2008, the levels of opium poppy cultivation in the province were not declining.¹¹⁸

In 2008, a new governor was appointed to Helmand, Mohammad Gulab Mangal. He was determined to reduce the opium poppy cultivation. Thus, the initiative, Helmand Food

¹¹⁴ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 217. Print.

¹¹⁵ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.11. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹¹⁶ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 217, 218. Print.

¹¹⁷ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.11. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹¹⁸ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 210. Print.

Zone, was developed. The anti-drug initiative was designed in a Western technocratic counter-narcotic model.¹¹⁹

Helmand Food Zone is a counter-narcotic initiative, which was implemented in Helmand from 2008 to 2012. The aim of the Food Zone was a quick reduction of opium poppy cultivation. The initiative was essentially a crop substitution counter-narcotic strategy. The rural population was given an alternative crop for cultivation. The Food Zone was funded by the United Kingdom and the United States. The implementation was carried out by the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Helmand and Helmand's governor Mohammad Gulab Mangal. In 2008, 40,000 farmers were given wheat crops and fertilizers. In the agricultural year 2009-2010 vegetable seeds were distributed to farmers. In 2010, farmers were again offered a mix of either wheat seeds and fertilizers or vegetable seeds and fertilizers. Farmers were also required to sign a "*poppy clause*", which would ensure that the cultivation of poppy would be halted.¹²⁰

Helmand Food Program included also law enforcement measures and crop eradication initiatives in case the illegal crop was still being cultivated. Public awareness initiatives were also undertaken in terms of radio and television broadcasts as well as billboards. Public awareness initiatives strived to encourage farmers to cease the cultivation of opium. The implementation of crop eradication was carried out by Eradication Force, which was under the orders of Helmand's Governors.¹²¹ The Poppy Elimination Force, which was directed by the Ministry of Interior, which however was instructed by the U.S. International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Bureau (INL) also executed eradication initiatives.¹²²

The net effect on state-building from the Helmand Food Zone

Figure 13 presents the levels of opium poppy cultivation in Helmand in hectares by the U.S. government and UNODC since 1999 and during the Helmand Food Zone. The estimates of the U.S. and the U.N. are in close agreement. The figure shows that from 2001-2002 to 2007-2008, the production of opium increased dramatically. The figure also shows

¹¹⁹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 211. Print.

¹²⁰ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 1-5. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹²¹ Greenfield, A. V., Crane, K., Bond, C., Chandler, N., Luoto, J., Olikar, O. (2015). Reducing the Cultivation of Opium Poppies in Southern Afghanistan. *RAND Corporation*. Pp. 185-187. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1075/RAND_RR1075.pdf

¹²² Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.6. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

that after the Food Zone Program began, the levels of opium poppy have declined. The figure shows that more than half of the decline in total opium production in Helmand in the period 2008 – 2011 is due to lower production in the Food Zone. Specifically, the opium production was reduced from 40,000 hectares to around 25,000 hectares. However, the figure also reveals that cultivation of opium poppy started to increase again in 2011-2012. The figure also suggests that in the period from 2011 to 2015, the production of opium in the province returned to 40,000 hectares. In particular, poppy production has returned to Helmand but not in the Food Zone according to the U.S. estimates around 15,000, and has returned not so much in the Food Zone according to the U.N. The graph clearly shows the spread of opium cultivation beyond the Food Zone since 2011. It has to be made explicit that the data might vary because the areas under the Helmand Food Zone was increasing.¹²³

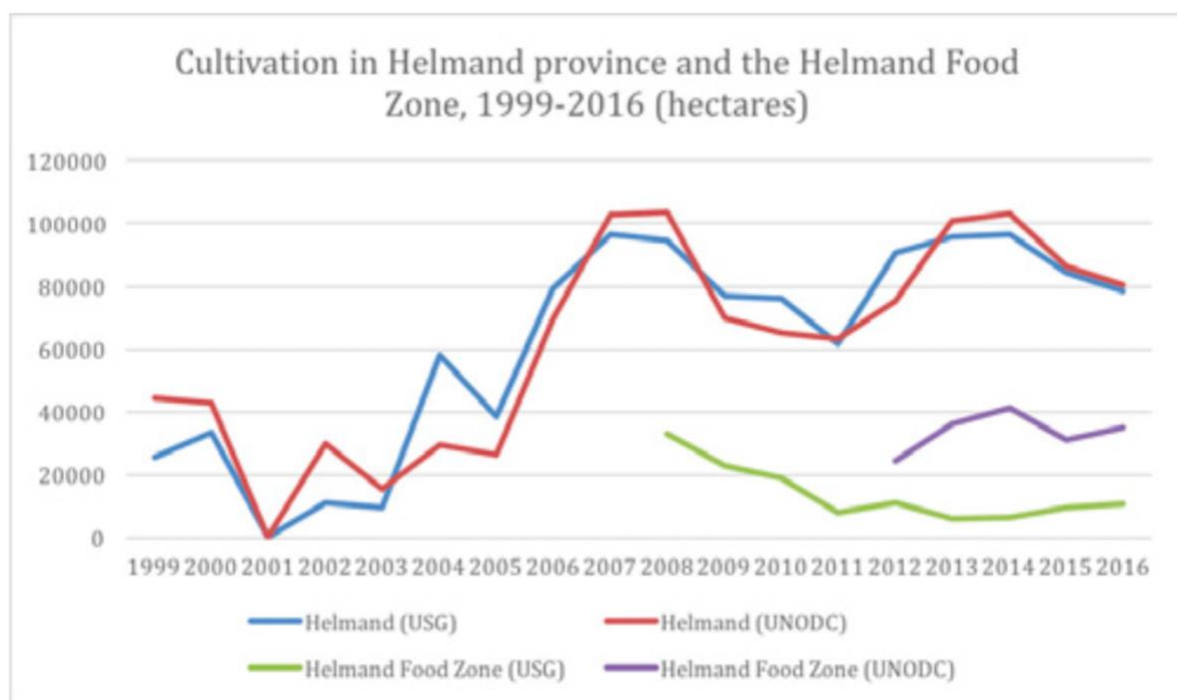


Figure 13, Levels of poppy cultivation in Helmand¹²⁴

Cultivation of poppy in Helmand

As a function of the discussion on the determinants of opium poppy in general, there are a wide number of economic, political, and geographical factors that affect the production

¹²³ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.14. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹²⁴ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.14. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

of opium poppy over different areas even in the various districts within the provinces.¹²⁵ Among these factors are alternative labor opportunities to farmers, access to market of licit crops, the physical infrastructure in terms of roads, level of insecurity, access to water and irrigation as well as the conditions of the soil.¹²⁶ Figure 15 divides the province into three fundamental areas and characterizes these areas according to geographic, economic and security variables. The figure shows that the land fields of the “Canal 1” are irrigated by the Boghra canal. Canal 1 is also characterized with improved security after the military initiatives. The area has a good physical infrastructure and easy access to the markets. Development assistance has been delivered in the recent years to Canal 1. The figure also shows that eradication of opium in Canal 1 was limited during the Food Zone. In the area Canal 1, the socio-economic conditions of the households improved and diversification to non-farm activities was observed. Hence, Poppy cultivation did not return. The experience of the Canal 1 reveals that the combination of improved security and conducive economic conditions has made farmers suspend the poppy cultivation and engage in licit economic activities.¹²⁷ Canal 2 is situated in proximity to the canal. Generally, the security situation has improved in Canal 2. However, physical infrastructure is not as developed, and access to the markets is harder. In the area of Canal 2, crop eradication was most aggressive, and the opium ban had the greatest impact. The figure shows that the opium ban has hurt the socio-economic status of households in the area.¹²⁸ Helmand Food Zone substituted the cultivation of opium poppy with staple crops. However, the alternative crops changed the labor inputs required for the cultivation. Wheat as an alternative crop requires less labor input than opium. The change in labor inputs had socio-economic effects. Essentially, land owners did not need additional labor to cultivate the land because they could manage the cultivation of wheat

¹²⁵ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 15. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

¹²⁶ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 15. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

¹²⁷ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 34, Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

¹²⁸ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 34, Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

themselves. Thus, the landless farmers were negatively affected by the Food Zone. New employment opportunities for the landless were created in larger cities, such as Lashkar Gah and Gereshk. However, the movement to the city required accommodation and seemed hard to accomplish without the help from relatives in the city. Hence, the landless were indirectly forced to resettle to the Helmand's desert areas. The result of the expulsion of the landless was animosity towards the government. Essentially, the perception of the landless was that the government is corrupt and acts as an instrument of the Western interests.¹²⁹ The figure shows that the development assistance did not reach the rural population. Rather, development assistance was acquired by the rural elite. Hence, the rural population was hostile to the government authorities. The opium ban was seen as a weakness of the state because it was believed that it is imposed to Afghanistan by the foreigners. Lastly, the area "dasht", which means deserts is not controlled by the state. The area is characterized with increased insecurity. The area is dependent on well for irrigation. The Helmand Food Program deteriorated the socio-economic situation. The change from opium to wheat required less labor input. The change in labor input requirement hurt particularly the landless and poor farmers. There are only limited alternative opportunities. However, the reason to move from the canal areas to the "dasht" areas was also the accumulating insecurity. Hence, farmers had flown from the canal areas to the desert lands in order to cultivate poppy. The higher prices of opium made farmer compensate the costs for buying additional inputs such as wells. The settlers were extremely hostile towards the government, and therefore cooperated with the Taliban. The population even paid taxes to the Taliban on the production of opium.¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.16-17. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹³⁰ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 34, 45-47, Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

Variable	Canal 1	Canal 2	Dasht
Access to water	Close to river, fed by canals	Not as close to canal or river; some areas (former desert) require tubewell (high running costs)	No river or canal irrigation; dependent on tubewell (with high running costs)
Landholdings	- Land holdings from 6 to 10 jeribs - Few tenant farmers & sharecroppers since ban on opium poppy	- Landholdings from 6 -15 jeribs - Few tenant farmers & sharecroppers since opium ban - sharecroppers receive only 1/5 of low return legal crops	- Landholdings from 5-30 jeribs - Limited settlement until 2002 (834 ha cultivated in 1999, 33,500 ha in 2011) - Land rental cheap, but production costs high - Sharecroppers typically receive 1/4 or 1/5 of crop, primarily opium
Cropping choices	- Multi-cropping - Diversification (orchards, vegetables for sale), including slow-maturing investments	- Double crop with wheat but single crop with many of the spring cultivars that prevail; e.g. cotton, melon, water melon - Continued reliance on low risk/ low return crops (e.g. wheat, cotton, maize & mung bean) - limited diversification; reduction in land cultivated	- Single season - Low wheat yields - Limited variation - Some mono-cropping poppy -- some don't grow any wheat - Idle land in 2013 due to fall in poppy yield
Opium poppy	- None, previously widespread - Limited eradication, coercion not to plant	- Some, small amounts in household compound or in areas where security challenging, such as northeast of Girishk - Aggressive eradication, albeit with some corruption - High impact of ban	- Extensive, high dependence - some mono-cropping - Some cross-canal eradication, - Low yields due to disease, rumours of "spray" persist
Security	Improvement from "chronic insecurity" after 2010-11	General improvement from "chronic insecurity" after 2010-11	- Increasing insecurity from ANSF & helicopter forays in 2012-13 - Insecurity due to Canal area ALP
Roads	Proximity to markets, asphalt roads & low transport costs	Limited - high transport costs	Limited - high transport costs, high distances
Markets	- Close to provincial & district centres - Good access to markets	Limited access to markets due to high transport costs	Very limited access to markets due to distance & high costs

Development assistance	• Yes, increased in recent years	• No, seen as captured by rural elites	• No, as “no-go” area for state • No clinics, very limited schools
Other economic opportunities	• Increase in non-farm income from daily wage work in Lashkar Gah & Girishk • Higher wages due to demand for labour for opium poppy elsewhere • Increased commercial trade due to demand from <i>dasht</i> • Improved services, more patronage jobs	• Limited off-farm employment from urban centres (trade, ALP) • Some transport income from vehicles (bought with past opium proceeds) • Reduction in commercial trade due to crop failure in <i>dasht</i>	• Very limited
Economic situation	• Economic situation improved - households mostly able to adapt to ban	• Economic situation deteriorated - most households hurt by ban • Reduced diet, distress sales of livestock	• Economic situation deteriorated due to low yields, after doing well in 2010-11 • Livestock distress sales
Relationship with state/ AGEs	• Less critical of state, even positive • Enrolment in ANSF & other government employment • Limited Taliban influence	• Hostile, although less than previous; ban seen as predation, corruption, evidence of state failure • Greater influence of ALP • Residual Taliban presence - nostalgia for Taliban & payment of 1 khord opium per jerib where opium crop persists	• Hostile - support for Taliban - payment of 1 khord of opium per jerib cultivated • Many had been pushed out of Canal areas - see campaign as predation • No maliks, as no state to liaise with
Population/ settlement	• Less opportunity for tenancy/sharecropping since ban	• Less opportunity for tenancy/sharecropping since ban	• Larger household size • Huge growth in population over 10 years • Land-poor from Canal area from 2009 as sharecroppers or tenants due to ban

Figure 14, Characteristics of areas in Helmand¹³¹

There are a number of confounding variables, which have had an impact on the connection between the Helmand Food Zone initiative and the decline in cultivation of opium poppy.

The Political counter-narcotic commitment

Firstly, the governor's, Mohammad Gulab Mangal, commitment to the counter-narcotic efforts plays an essential role in the reduction of opium poppy cultivation in Helmand.¹³² The declining levels of opium poppy cultivation in Helmand were considered as a tremendous success. Therefore, Afghanistan's Minister of Counter Narcotics was able to

¹³¹ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 16-17. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

¹³² Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 237. Print.

convince the United States to further invest in Food Zones. Thereby, Kandahar's Food Zone was developed.¹³³ In Kandahar, similar conditions were implemented but the results from the Food Zone were considerably different. The cultivation of opium poppy in Kandahar was increasing despite the same counter-narcotic stimuli. A confounding factor for the difference is believed to be Kandahar's governor, who showed no interest and commitment to counter-narcotics efforts.¹³⁴ Consequently, the replicability of the Food Zone initiatives was questioned. The reduction of opium poppy in Helmand required a more elaborate approach of analysis.¹³⁵ Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al. have tried to assess the impact of the counter-narcotic strategies on the factors which affect farmers' decision to grow opium poppy in Southern Afghanistan. The impact of the Helmand Food Zone is one of the focus in their academic work "Reducing the Cultivation of Opium Poppies in Southern Afghanistan". Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al. have identified four factors, which have affected the levels of poppy cultivation in Helmand: the influence of Governor Mangal, the influence of the religious leaders, the input costs as well as the associated risk of eradication.¹³⁶

Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al. analyze the fervent devotion of Governor Mangal to the containment of opium production. According to the authors, the program would not have been implemented without Mangal's efforts. Moreover, the research shows that the district and provincial officials greatly affect farmers' decision to cultivate opium. The local religious leaders can have a great influence on farmers' decision to grow opium. The research of Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al. shows that farmers, who participated in the Helmand Food Zone and promised to suspend the cultivation of opium actually did not grow poppy. Nevertheless, the suspension of opium cultivation lasted only as long as the program was implemented. The research also shows that the Taliban can also influence farmers' decision of poppy cultivation and encourage farmers to grow the illicit crop.¹³⁷

¹³³ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.14. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹³⁴ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 237. Print.

¹³⁵ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.14. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹³⁶ Greenfield, A. V., Crane, K., Bond, C., Chandler, N., Luoto, J., Olikar, O. (2015). Reducing the Cultivation of Opium Poppies in Southern Afghanistan. *RAND Corporation*. Pp. xiv. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1075/RAND_RR1075.pdf

¹³⁷ Greenfield, A. V., Crane, K., Bond, C., Chandler, N., Luoto, J., Olikar, O. (2015). Reducing the Cultivation of Opium Poppies in Southern Afghanistan. *RAND Corporation*. Pp. 192. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1075/RAND_RR1075.pdf

Prices of opium and wheat. Food security

The prices of opium and wheat need to be examined in order to observe the change in farmers' decision. Essentially, since 2007 and precisely 2008, food prices increased exponentially. Contrary, the price of opium was decreasing.¹³⁸ Particularly, the price for opium dropped from 120 U.S. dollars to 70 U.S. dollars in the period from July 2007 to December 2008. The prices for opium continued its downward trend, and in 2010 a kilo of opium could be bought for 40 U.S. dollars. In contrast, as a consequence of the increase of the international cereal prices, the price of wheat in Afghanistan increased from 15Afs per kilo to 35 Afs per kilo. As a response to the increase in the global prices for cereals, Pakistan imposed restrictions on its wheat exports. Thus, Afghan farmers decided to cultivate wheat instead of opium.¹³⁹ The next argument is a derivative of the changing relationship between the price of wheat and opium.

The dynamics of the relationship between poppy and wheat cultivation has to be observed in the context of food security. The data shows that opium poppy cultivation declined in Helmand Food Zone. Statistics show a 37% reduction of opium poppy cultivation within the Food Zone. However, cultivation of opium poppy increased by 8% in areas, which are not part of the zone. Moreover, the cultivation of wheat increased in and outside the Food Zone. The data shows two times more hectares of wheat cultivation in and outside the Zone. The increase of wheat cultivation was caused by the decrease of the price for opium as well as by food security concerns.¹⁴⁰ Advocates of the Helmand Food Zone argue that the efforts of the counter-narcotic strategy were successful due to the decrease of cultivation of opium poppy within the Food Zone. However, the percentages show that the increase in cultivation of wheat was not precisely due to the stimuli triggered by the Helmand Food Zone.¹⁴¹

Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al. point out that in the later years of the program, farmers were asked to pay 20% of the input costs. Yet, the practice was not regular. The authors conclude that the allocation of wheat, vegetable seeds and fertilizers stimulated farmers to avoid the cultivation of poppy because of the lower input costs paid. Moreover, the high

¹³⁸ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 211. Print.

¹³⁹ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.14. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁴⁰ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 238. Print.

¹⁴¹ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.15. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

quality of the wheat and vegetable seeds made farmers prefer the cultivation of the licit seeds because of higher yields. The higher yields were especially attractive for farmers with larger land fields. The results of research show that the majority of farmers, who received the alternative seeds did not cultivate opium poppy. Yet, the reasons from the refrainment of opium cultivation are various ranging from religious convictions, eradication risk, as well as societal pressure.¹⁴²

Military presence

Military operations, such as Panjai Palang, Khanjar and Moshtarak were implemented during the Helmand Food Zone. Hence, a heavy military presence was observed during the Helmand Food Zone, which improved security infrastructure of the province.¹⁴³ Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al have acknowledged that the decline in opium cultivation in the Helmand Food Zone was also due to the increased military presence of International Security Assistance Force and Afghan National Army. The military presence has discouraged farmers to cultivate the illicit crop.¹⁴⁴ The effects on poppy cultivation from the heavy military can be observed in the area of Marjah. Essentially, the intensity of the number of checkpoints was tremendous, which seriously discouraged farmers from growing poppy. In 2010, 60% of the arable land in Marjah was cultivated with opium poppy. In 2011, 15 000 soldiers were deployed in the area. The result from the military presence was a dramatic reduction of poppy cultivation – only 5% of the cultivated land was used for poppy. Crop destruction initiative in Marjah for the same period of time were very few.¹⁴⁵ However, farmers in the areas with limited security, had managed to avoid the eradication of their poppy fields through corruption practices or patronage. Farmers believed that eradication initiatives could be avoided. Hence, farmers perceived crop eradication as random in areas where corruption was common, and especially outside the canal area. Therefore, eradication in insecure areas triggered the hostility of the rural population towards the government as well as the foreign

¹⁴² Greenfield, A. V., Crane, K., Bond, C., Chandler, N., Luoto, J., Olikar, O. (2015). Reducing the Cultivation of Opium Poppies in Southern Afghanistan. *RAND Corporation*. Pp. 184, 190. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1075/RAND_RR1075.pdf

¹⁴³ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. *HURST & COMPANY*. pp. 238. Print.

¹⁴⁴ Greenfield, A. V., Crane, K., Bond, C., Chandler, N., Luoto, J., Olikar, O. (2015). Reducing the Cultivation of Opium Poppies in Southern Afghanistan. *RAND Corporation*. Pp. 184, 190. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1075/RAND_RR1075.pdf

¹⁴⁵ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.15. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

executors. Farmers also perceived the foreign military assistance as a weakness of the state because of the state's inability to enforce its laws.¹⁴⁶

Development assistance and economic growth

Helmand has received large amounts of development assistance over the years. However, from 2009, the intensity of development assistance has increased even further through various development initiatives in construction projects, health and education.¹⁴⁷ USAID and DFID invested in the development programs, such as Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture Plus (AVIPA Plus), Helmand Agriculture and Rural Development Program (HARDP), Afghan Stability Initiative (ASI), and National Priority Programs (NPP). The intensity of the assistance from USAID in the time span 2008 – 2011 was assessed to be 489.9 million U.S dollars. The development assistance created new employment opportunities and also increased the wage labor.¹⁴⁸ The establishment of security enabled new opportunities for investments in agriculture, trade and entrepreneurship.¹⁴⁹

Corruption

However, the implementation of counter-narcotic strategies in Afghanistan, such as the Helmand Food Zone, were accompanied with corruption practices. The system was the following. The Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Teams would deliver the inputs to distribution centers. District officials and tribal leaders were entitled to nominate households, which would be granted crops. Farmer on the list would go to the distribution center to pick up the crops. The names on the lists would usually be relatives or favored individuals by the district officials. The names on the lists would usually be the richer farmers. Thus, nepotism and favoritism were part of a clientelist network to get the benefits from the Food Zone.¹⁵⁰

Numerous bribes and frauds were reported. High administrative officials were accused of corruption. Among the accused official was even the counter-narcotic advisor of the Governor Mangal. The frauds were different in nature. Essentially, corruption of the distribution did not include only crops but also additional inputs, such as water pumps and

¹⁴⁶ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 238. Print.

¹⁴⁷ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 239. Print.

¹⁴⁸ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.16. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁴⁹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 239. Print.

¹⁵⁰ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.12-13. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

greenhouses. Substitution of poor quality crops for high quality crops in the distribution was also reported.¹⁵¹

Furthermore, corruption with the eradication initiatives was observed. Essentially, eradication of opium poppy was implemented to the fields of the most vulnerable and poor farmers. In contrast, the poppy fields of wealthier farmers, who have strings in the government, would not be targeted as hard by the eradication initiatives. Thereby, the corruption practices have had a negative impact on the population's perception about the provincial governance and the government in Kabul. It was believed that the individuals, who are engaged in the opium trade, implemented the eradication campaigns. Hence, the population's resentment towards the Afghan governance and the international presence was increasing.¹⁵² Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al. observe that the risk of eradication is another factor, which affects the cultivation of opium. Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al discovered that farmers with larger land fields are discouraged to cultivate opium in case there is a higher risk of eradication.¹⁵³

In 2010, the corruption practices seemed to decline. The International Security Assistance Force and the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces succeeded in taking over central Helmand. Hence, certain levels of security and order were established. The implementation of crop eradication became systematic and fairer. The presence of the armed forces of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan National Defense and Security Force (ANDSF) made corrupt officials reluctant to take bribes. The eradication of the illicit crop in all farmers' fields was carried out regardless of their socio-economic status or relations to the governance.¹⁵⁴

Welfare of the rural population during and after the Food Zone

Helmand Food Zone brought negative consequences for farmers within the Food Zone. Specifically, the ban of opium poppy cultivation made farmers move to the north from the Boghra canal. The region is a desert land, and therefore the opium yields were low. Hence

¹⁵¹ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.12-13. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁵² Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.12-13. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁵³ Greenfield, A. V., Crane, K., Bond, C., Chandler, N., Luoto, J., Oliker, O. (2015). Reducing the Cultivation of Opium Poppies in Southern Afghanistan. *RAND Corporation*. Pp. 184 -190. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1075/RAND_RR1075.pdf

¹⁵⁴ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.13. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

some farmers returned back to the central area. Usually sharecroppers and tenants decided to go back in the central areas in the hope that they will grow again opium poppy on someone else fields. The landowners were usually to stay in the desert. What has been observed is that wealthier farmers invested in buying solar powered deep wells. The wells did not have much additional costs but improved the capability of growing poppy in the desert areas. Farmers invested also in buying pesticides, which aimed to keep the pests away from the opium bulb.¹⁵⁵

In 2017, opium poppy was already cultivated in former areas of the Helmand Food Zone. Specifically, opium poppy was being cultivated in the areas Qala Bost and Bolan, which are areas close to the capital Lashar Gah. The Afghan National Defense and Security Forces have failed to secure these areas. Hence, the Taliban have reoccupied the territories and even imposed again taxes on land as well as taxes on opium and wheat production. Cultivation of opium poppy was observed in the districts of consolidated state power, part of the Helmand Food Zone, such as Nad e Ali and Marjah. Farmers' properties, such as the greenhouses, have been destroyed in the violence between Afghan National Defense and Security Force (ANDSF) and the Taliban.¹⁵⁶

Additionally, abandonment of the previously established checkpoints has been reported. It has been claimed that corruption has triggered the desertion. It has been claimed that the Taliban have paid the government officials to leave the checkpoints. The government officials had left all of the arms inside the checkpoints. However, the Afghan National Defense and Security Force had further tried to regain the control. The violent conflicts occurred during the opium harvest, which deteriorated farmers ability to irrigate and collect the opium bulb. As a result of these actions, the population had resentful feelings towards the government. The unsuccessful military actions made the Afghan state appear weak in the eyes of farmers. The rural population was also not very accepting of the Taliban. However, the Taliban appeared less corrupt for farmers as well as the Taliban allowed the production of opium.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.23-33. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁵⁶ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.19.Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁵⁷ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.19-21. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

Many of the opium fields in Marjah and Nad e Ali were abandoned by farmers due to the ongoing fighting between the Taliban and the government. Farmers shared the opinion that if the government cease the fighting and leave the area, the situation would be better off because stability would be established. Moreover, the situation for farmers was further deteriorated because of cold weather in the early 2017, which harmed the yield of opium. Consequently, farmers' welfare in the former Food Zone worsened. The unfavorable situation forced farmers to sell their property, which resulted in worsened their livelihood in the long run, which in turn ignited resentment towards the government.¹⁵⁸

General critique on the counter-narcotic strategy

Helmand Food Zone was criticized on a macro-level, which targets the nature of the counter-narcotic strategy *per se*. Essentially, the idea behind the crop substitution strategy of the Helmand Food Zone was perceived as an inappropriate counter-narcotic strategy. Crop substitution strategies have been implemented in the 1980s in drug cultivating countries, such as in Latin America and in Southeast Asia. The drug control community has observed that crop substitution is a necessary albeit an insufficient condition to eliminate the cultivation of the illicit drugs. It was observed that physical and market infrastructures as well as health and education are vital component for making farmers cease the drug cultivation. Crop eradication and law enforcement counter-narcotic strategies were supposed to be simultaneously implemented. Crop eradication was expected to be firstly implemented and afterwards the development support was supposed to be administered. Thus, the concept of alternative development was developed as a response to these observations. The alternative development aimed to invest in strengthening and diversifying the income of farmers. Moreover, the results of the alternative development programs implemented in Afghanistan in 1980s and 1990s showed no positive effects. Therefore, the concept of alternative livelihood was developed. The alternative livelihood included development in a broad sector of programs. Programs in health, education, rural development, were intended to be implemented by the government ministries and institutions. The purpose of the alternative livelihood was to address all of the causes for the opium poppy cultivation. Hence, the

¹⁵⁸ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 20-22. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

programs were embedded into the national development strategies.¹⁵⁹ As a result of the unsuccessful experiences with crop substitution, experts were skeptical about the initiative.

Helmand Food Zone was criticized for a number of reasons. Firstly, Helmand Food Zone was believed to merely change the geographical position of opium poppy cultivation. Essentially, the opium ban made farmers cultivate the illicit crop outside the Food Zone. The number of the people, who inhabited the new lands is assessed to 250,000. Estimates show that 44,000 hectares, which had not been previously cultivated, were turned into arable land. It has been observed that the reason of sharecroppers from the Food Zone to resettle to the desert lands was to cultivate the illicit crop.¹⁶⁰ Of course, it can be argued that cultivation of opium shifted from areas, where farmers had low costs and high yields to areas where costs were higher and yields were lower. Greenfield, Crane, Bond, et.al. argue that the geographical shift was feasible because of farmers' technological improvements, such as the use of drills. The shift was also due to the increased associated risks of eradication in the canal areas, and a relatively low risk of eradication in the desert areas.¹⁶¹

Secondly, "*The poppy clause*" has been firmly criticized as well. Conditionality was criticized because of the terms of the conditions were unrealistic. Essentially, if the conditions required from the populations are unrealistic, these conditions will be disregarded, and consequently the strategy is doomed to fail. There was scarce evidence that the "*poppy clause*" would be adhered to. The initiative of the Helmand Food Zone made only land owners be granted crops. However, the most vulnerable sharecroppers and tenants were not entitled to the inputs. Hence, the most dependent actors on cultivation of opium poppy were not considered.¹⁶²

The reality shows that at the end of the Helmand Food Zone, the increase of opium poppy cultivation outside the Food Zone was larger than the destruction efforts within the zone. The numbers show that in 2013, the levels of opium poppy cultivation in the province Helmand increased to the cultivation levels before implementation of the counter-narcotic

¹⁵⁹ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.7-9. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁶⁰ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.16-17. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁶¹ Greenfield, A. V., Crane, K., Bond, C., Chandler, N., Luoto, J., Olikar, O. (2015). Reducing the Cultivation of Opium Poppies in Southern Afghanistan. *RAND Corporation*. Pp. 195. Retrieved from: https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1000/RR1075/RAND_RR1075.pdf

¹⁶² Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.10. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

strategy. Empirical evidence shows that in 2017 opium poppy was grown in former areas of the Helmand Food Zone. Specifically, opium poppy was grown in peripheral areas of the capital city of Helmand – Lashkar Gah. The fields, where alternative crops had been cultivated in the Food Zone were turned again into opium fields. Opium poppy was grown even in the capital city of Helmand, where there was an unmet demand for wage labor. The results from the Helmand Food Zone shows that the counter-narcotic strategy was not only unsuccessful to suppress the production of opium but farmers' settlement in the desert areas actually increased the capacity of opium production in the province. Consequently, the record levels of opium production in the province recently can be explained by the effects from the Food Zone.¹⁶³

Nangarhar Province

Economic context

Nangarhar has a population of 1,8 million people. To the east, Nangarhar shares a border with Pakistan. To the west, Nangarhar is situated to the province – Kabul.¹⁶⁴ Nangarhar's capital city is Jalalabad. Jalalabad occupies a special geographic place because it is where the rivers Kabul and Kunar merge together. In the 1960s, the Nangarhar canal was built on the Kabul river. Today, the Nangarhar canal provides irrigation for approximately 35,000 hectares.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Mansfield, D. (2017). Truly unprecedented: How Helmand Food Zone supported an increase in the province capacity to produce opium. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp. 16, 17, 19, 40. Retrieved from: https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Helmand-food-zone_English_12.pdf

¹⁶⁴ Mansfield, D. and Pain, A. (2007). Evidence from the field: Understanding Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan. *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 5. Retrieved from: <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/722E-Evidence-from-the-Field-BP.pdf>

¹⁶⁵ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 141. Print.

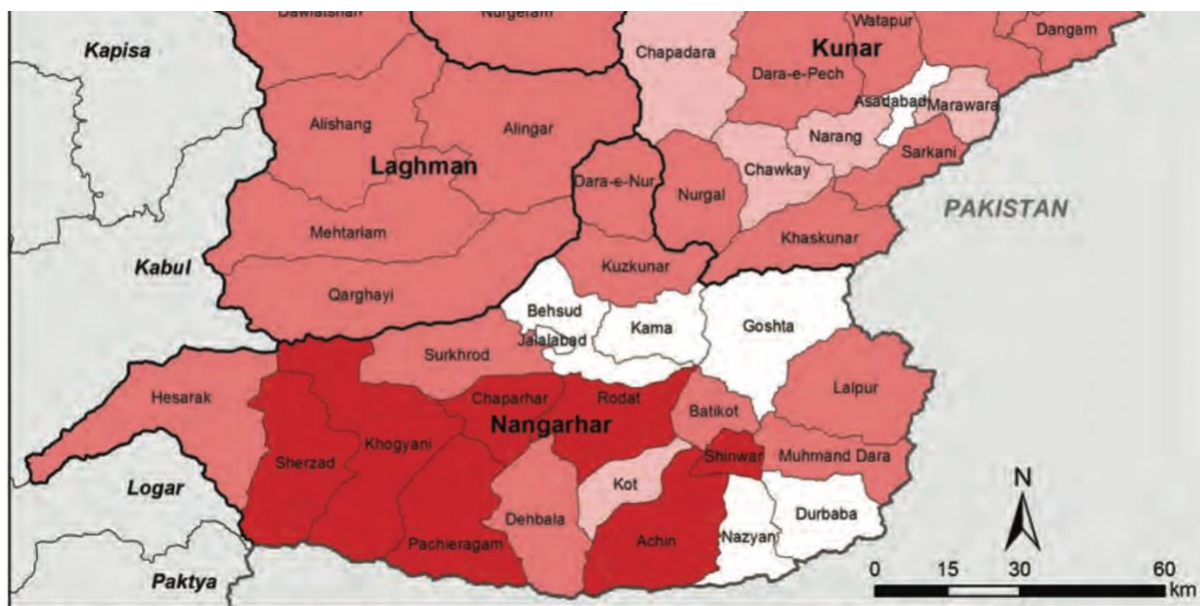


Figure 15, Cultivation of opium in Nangarhar by districts¹⁶⁶

Nangarhar's climate predispose for cultivation of a large variety of agricultural crops, especially in the irrigated regions. Winters in Nangarhar are mild while the summers are hot. Typical agricultural crops for the regions are olive and citrus trees.¹⁶⁷ The economy in Nangarhar is relatively developed. Intense trade flows between Afghanistan and Pakistan can be observed especially through Torkham, which is the official border crossing between the two countries.¹⁶⁸

Nangarhar generates a large amount of government revenues. Statistics show that the province has collected 66 million dollars in import and export taxes in the financial year 2008-2009. Hence, the province has contributed tremendously for the state budget – approximately 101 million dollars. Nangarhar has become a vital economic region for Pakistan because of the large volumes of export and import. The numbers show that the Pakistani exports to Afghanistan amount to 489 million U.S. dollars. The province has also become a central trade region of opium poppy.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017" (2017). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 22. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

¹⁶⁷ Mansfield, D. and Pain, A. (2007). Evidence from the field: Understanding Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan. *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 5. Retrieved from: <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/722E-Evidence-from-the-Field-BP.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ Mansfield, D. (2016). *A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan*. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 142 Print.

¹⁶⁹ Goodhand, J. and Mansfield, D. (2010). *Drugs and (Dis)order: A study of the opium trade, political settlement and state-making in Afghanistan*. *London School of Economics*. Pp.12. Retrieved from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-working-papers-phase-two/wp83.2-drugs-and-disorder.pdf>

Nangarhar has been crucial for the distribution of aid to Afghanistan. Therefore, the province has received a large amount of financial aid since 1980s and 1990s. In 2001, the U.S. invested heavily in the province's infrastructure. In 2005, the U.S. implemented a program of Alternative Development. The program had two objectives. Firstly, it aimed to make farmers substitute the cultivation of the illicit crop. Secondly, the program strived to restore stability in the region. From 2005 to 2009, the U.S. invested around 118 million dollars. The European Union also took part in the reconstruction of the province. The EU invested in rebuilding physical infrastructure and in health care. Among the projects were Commanders Emergency Response Program (CERP) and Comprehensive Rural Agricultural Development Facility (CARD-F).¹⁷⁰

Political context

This section will only summarize the political dynamic in Nangarhar. The section will only set the general political framework in the province because the details will be elaborated on later.

Former *mujahedeen*, such as the Arsala family, were powerful figures in Nangarhar. Nangarhar's Governor Hajji Din Mohammad and the member of parliament Hazrat Ali provided a shield to the activities of these *mujahedeen*. However, in 2005 Gul Agha Sherzai was appointed as the new Governor of Nangarhar. The new Governor changed the dynamics of the province, which created instability in the province. The governance of Gul Agha Sherzai was heavily supported by the U.S. military. The U.S. military and financial support established a competitive environment, which triggered a sense of winning or losing in farmers. The competitiveness in turn triggered a fierce rent seeking behavior in the province. Informal politics became a central factor of the results of the counter-narcotic efforts in Nangarhar.¹⁷¹ Therefore, the relations between the different actors will be discussed in the next section too.

Counter-narcotic strategies

Opium poppy was largely cultivated in Nangarhar. 15,000 to 20,000 hectares were usually used for poppy cultivation. After the Taliban opium ban, the levels of cultivation

¹⁷⁰ Goodhand, J. and Mansfield, D. (2010). Drugs and (Dis)order: A study of the opium trade, political settlement and state-making in Afghanistan. *London School of Economics*. Pp.13. Retrieved from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-working-papers-phase-two/wp83.2-drugs-and-disorder.pdf>

¹⁷¹ Jackson, A. (2014). Politics and governance in Afghanistan. The case of Nangarhar Province. *Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium*. pp.6-7. Retrieved from: <https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/Politics-and-Governance-in-Afghanistan-the-Case-of-Nangarhar-Province.pdf>

started to increase. Particularly, in 2003-2004, it was estimated that 28,213 hectares were used for opium cultivation in Nangarhar.¹⁷²

In 2004-2005, the Afghani President Hamid Karzai was committed to reduce significantly the cultivation of opium, and therefore embarked on a fierce war against the opium production in Afghanistan. The President questioned the positions of politicians and governors if they do not cooperate. Thereby, Nangarhar has experienced two successful opium bans since 2004. The first opium ban was carried out by the governor, Hajji Din Muhammad in 2004 and 2005. The second opium ban was implemented in 2007 and 2008 by the Governor Gul Aga Shirzai.¹⁷³ Therefore, this section will be divided into two sub-sections. Firstly, the opium ban imposed by Governor Hajji Din Muhammad will be described. Secondly, Gul Aga Shirzai successful counter-narcotic results will be elaborated on. Figure 16 shows the levels of opium cultivation from 2001 to 2014 in the province measured in hectares of cultivated land. The figure reveals that opium production was significantly reduced in 2005 after the first opium ban of Governor Hajji Din Muhammad. In 2006, opium production increased slightly, and spiked in 2007. In 2008, when Governor Shirzai imposed an opium ban opium production was completely eliminated. However, the complete suppression of poppy cultivation did not last long. From 2009 to 2012, opium production was present but rather low. The figure shows that since 2012, there was a new sharp increase of opium production.

First Opium ban

The opium ban imposed by Hajji Din Muhammad in 2004-2005 had a great success. Hajji Din Muhammad achieved to reduce the cultivation of opium poppy drastically for a short period of time. In the agricultural year 2003-2004, 28,321 hectares were cultivated. In 2004-2005, the cultivation of poppy decreased to 1,093 hectares. Low opium poppy cultivation was only observed in the district Achin.¹⁷⁴

The success of opium cultivation was not a result of a coercive eradication initiative. Rather, it was the farmers, who decided not to engage in poppy cultivation. Hajji Din

¹⁷² Goodhand, J. and Mansfield, D. (2010). Drugs and (Dis)order: A study of the opium trade, political settlement and state-making in Afghanistan. *London School of Economics*. Pp.14. Retrieved from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-working-papers-phase-two/wp83.2-drugs-and-disorder.pdf>

¹⁷³ Goodhand, J. and Mansfield, D. (2010). Drugs and (Dis)order: A study of the opium trade, political settlement and state-making in Afghanistan. *London School of Economics*. Pp.14-15. Retrieved from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-working-papers-phase-two/wp83.2-drugs-and-disorder.pdf>

¹⁷⁴ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 146, 147. Print.

Muhammad did not have the means of coercion to implement the ban. Instead, the Governor's accomplishment was to persuade the rural upper strata to cease the opium production. Farmers, the rural elite as well as members of the local *shura* were gathered and were told that it is forbidden to grow opium poppy. The stakeholders were warned that police arrests would be undertaken if poppy cultivation was observed on their lands. Consequently, fear among the poorer farmers was circulating that if the poppy fields of the rural elite were going to be destroyed, poorer farmers' fields would not be omitted. Eradication strategies had been previously implemented at the end of the harvest season. However, now farmers were told to destroy the crop themselves. The new eradication strategy had two implications. Firstly, logistical burdens of tractors and police authorities were avoided. Secondly, farmers had control over the destruction of the crop and did not feel as hostile towards the authorities. Means of coercion were used marginally only when farmers refused to eradicate the illicit crop.¹⁷⁵

Hajji Din Muhammad complied with the vows of President Karzai, who warned to change Governors in case poppy cultivation persisted. The rural elite such as the Arsala family in Nangarhar also respected the new counter-narcotic orders because of fear to lose the leadership in the province.¹⁷⁶ The initiative of Hajji Din Muhammad was supported by President Karzai. Consequently, new development projects were being implemented in Nangarhar.¹⁷⁷ For example, a large reconstruction project was undertaken to restore the road between Kabul and Torkham. Projects in health care and education were also implemented. More development assistance was expected to be received in the future.¹⁷⁸

Additionally, farmers' suspension of poppy cultivation was expected to be rewarded by the international community with development assistance.¹⁷⁹ Governor Hajji Din Muhammad prepared a plan, which outlined development assistance projects. Hajji Din Muhammad worked to ensure that the connection between the rural elite and the development assistance donors. Thereby, the population of Nangarhar felt supported. However, these

¹⁷⁵ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 152, 154-156. Print.

¹⁷⁶ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 152-153. Print.

¹⁷⁷ Mansfield, D. and Pain, A. (2007). Evidence from the field: Understanding Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan. *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 6. Retrieved from: <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/722E-Evidence-from-the-Field-BP.pdf>

¹⁷⁸ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 152-153. Print.

¹⁷⁹ Mansfield, D. and Pain, A. (2007). Evidence from the field: Understanding Changing Levels of Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan. *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 6. Retrieved from: <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/722E-Evidence-from-the-Field-BP.pdf>

circumstances also create a sense that termination of poppy cultivation would be executed if development assistance was provided.¹⁸⁰

The implementation of the opium ban in 2004-2005 was facilitated by conducive economic conditions. Firstly, the prices of wheat have increased dramatically in this period. The price of wheat increased by 49 % in the province. Hence, the population was overwhelmed by a fear of food shortages. Import of wheat flour from Pakistan to Afghanistan was about to decline because of the decision of Pakistan to restrict the trade. Secondly, the prices of opium declined in the same time period in Nangarhar. The price for a kilo of opium in 2003 was approximately 320 U.S. dollars. In 2004, the price per kilo dropped to 136 U.S. dollars.¹⁸¹ Consequently, the prices of wheat and opium played a huge role in the decline of opium poppy cultivation.

Second Opium ban

Gul Aga Shirzai was three times Governor in Kandahar. In 2005, Gul Aga Shirzai moved to Nangarhar to replace Hajji Din Muhammad. Gul Aga Shirzai was not warmly welcomed in Nangarhar. Firstly, under the governance of Gul Aga Shirzai opium poppy cultivation in Kandahar increased, which established a bad image for him. In Kandahar, in 2003-2004, poppy cultivation in hectares was 4,969 while it increased to 12,990 in 2004-2005. The new Governor did not possess the same means of persuasion, which Hajji Din Muhammad used to cease the cultivation of poppy. Nangarhar's district officials have already developed a stable relationship with Hajji Din Muhammad. The provincial authorities were perceived as not possessing the power to impose a ban. Essentially, the failure to negotiate the destruction of the illicit crops in some areas made farmers think that they can get away from the eradication initiatives. As a result, cultivation of opium poppy in Nangarhar began to increase again. In 2006, 4,871 hectares were used for opium poppy cultivation in Nangarhar. Contrary to farmers' voluntary crop destruction under the governance of Hajji Din Muhammad, the rural population revolted against the opium eradication of Gul Aga Shirzai. The rural population actually fertilized the destroyed opium fields in 2006-2007 in order to revive the growth of the leftover seeds. In 2007, the levels of opium poppy cultivation spiked to 18,739. Poppy cultivation was not observed only in three districts – namely Kama, Behsud, and Surkhud. The return to opium cultivation in Nangarhar indicated

¹⁸⁰ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 154-156. Print.

¹⁸¹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 152-153. Print.

the fragility of state power. In order to gain control over the recurrent poppy cultivation Gul Aga Shirzai warned to use NATO forces to subdue the resistance against the eradication.¹⁸²

The pressure of Gul Aga Shirzai to curb the escalation of opium production was accumulating because of his desire to run for President in the coming elections in 2009. Governor Shirzai aimed to consolidate his power in Nangarhar. Over time, he succeeded to attract the former *mujahedeen* on his side. Essentially, these *mujahedeen*, who would previously receive patronage from the Arsala family, were hired in official governing authorities in Nangarhar. Tribal elders were also appointed by Shirzai to positions in the governance. Informally, Governor Shirzai developed strong relationships with the businessmen. Governor Shirzai also achieved to take under his control the security structure. He restructured and established new ad hoc structures, such as the Military Commission, which merged the forces of the police, military and the intelligence.¹⁸³

In 2007-2008 the United States have significantly increased its military in the province. The military presence was especially observed in the areas close to the Pakistani border, which had a history of resistance against the opium ban. The projects undertaken by Hajji Din Muhamand were completed. The movement of goods was enabled by the improvement of the physical infrastructure, which opened new market opportunities.¹⁸⁴

The political and economic conditions in the province were conducive for an implementation of an opium ban by Governor Shirzai. The prices of foods and opium also played a role. In 2007, the prices of cereals increased tremendously. A 183% increase of the prices of cereals was observed. Contrary, the prices of opium decreased. These economic and political conditions enabled Gul Aga Shirzai to convince farmers to grow wheat crops instead of opium crops. Hence, Hajji Din Muhammad and Gul Aga Shirzai used similar methods to reduce the opium cultivation – persuasions and warnings of arrests. Yet, the opium ban imposed by Governor Shirzai was more successful than Governor Hajji Din Muhammad. Essentially, under Shirzai, the cultivation of opium was extremely low that the province was declared “poppy free” by UNODC. The difference between the opium bans of Shirzai and Hajji Din Muhammad lie in the factor – security. Governor Shirzai managed to exert state power in the peripheral areas. The U.S. military support as well as a wide number of security

¹⁸² Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 156-157. Print.

¹⁸³ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 160-161. Print.

¹⁸⁴ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 160-161. Print.

measures, such as Forward Operating Bases, checkpoints, and household raids created the perception that the Governor possessed strong power to impose the ban. The purpose of the U.S soldiers was counterinsurgency. However, during the military operations and household raids in search of insurgents, the opium was confiscated and the people arrested. Therefore, the counterinsurgency initiative turned into a counternarcotic action. Hence, the perception that was established was that Afghani farmers would not be able to escape from the law enforcement of the U.S. military.¹⁸⁵

The key success factor in the declaration of the province “poppy free” was the consent of the rural elite in Achin district. The rural elite in Achin agreed to cease the cultivation of opium in case the U.S. military was not permanently present in the district. The rural elite and tribesmen agreed to restrict the access to the Taliban to cross the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The consent of the district to cease poppy cultivation triggered the consent of other farmers to suspend the cultivation of opium, such as in the Mahmand valley.¹⁸⁶

As a result of the counter-narcotic efforts, in 2008, Nangarhar was declared “poppy free”. Nevertheless, the province did not maintain the status “poppy free” in 2009. The rural population had generally adhered to the opium ban. In 2009, opium cultivation was estimated to 294 hectares in the southern districts of the province. In 2010, the levels of opium cultivation were still extremely low despite the further increase. Specifically, 719 hectares of poppy cultivation were observed in 2010. The areas of poppy cultivation were more remote, such as Khlogiani, Achin, Lalpoor and Sherzad. Yet, the opium ban by Governor Shirzai achieved to sustain low levels of opium cultivation for three consecutive years.¹⁸⁷

The net effect on state-building from the opium the two opium bans in Nangarhar

The figure below shows the levels of opium production in Nangarhar measured in the level of hectares used for poppy cultivation. The figure eloquently reveals the sharp and dramatic drops of opium cultivation after the bans were imposed. However, the figure also shows that the cultivation of opium started to increase since 2010, and especially since 2012. In 2011-2012, opium cultivation was already observed in Achin, Shirzad and many other southern districts. In 2012-2013, opium production in Nangarhar sharply increased. The

¹⁸⁵ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 162-163. Print.

¹⁸⁶ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 162-163. Print.

¹⁸⁷ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 164. Print.

figure displays that the levels of poppy cultivation in Nangarhar in 2014 reached above 15,000 hectares.¹⁸⁸ In 2017, UNODC has estimated that 18,976 hectares have been used for opium cultivation in Nangarhar.¹⁸⁹ This section will try to explore why the sustainability of the bans was not achieved. The failure of sustainability of the opium bans can be explained by the changing political dynamics and by the changing economic conditions.¹⁹⁰ Therefore, this section will elaborate on the number of political and economic factors which undermined Governor Shirzai's power to sustain the low levels of opium cultivation in the province.

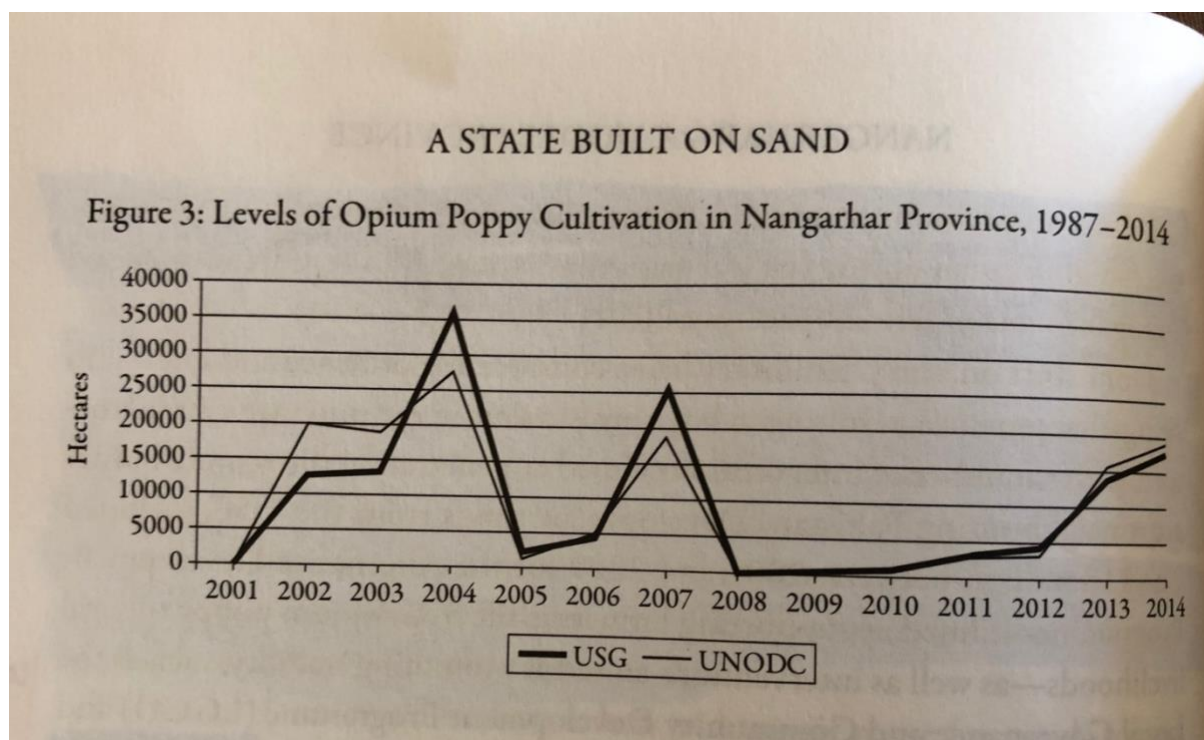


Figure 16, Levels of opium in Nangarhar¹⁹¹

The opium bans imposed by Governor Hajji Din Muhammad and Governor Shirzai have similarities and one significant difference. Firstly, the implementation of the bans was influenced by international actors. Secondly, the reduction of poppy cultivation was conditional upon development assistance from the international community. Thirdly, the

¹⁸⁸ Mansfield, D. (2016). *A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan*. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 144. Print.

¹⁸⁹ "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017" (2017). *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes*. pp. 4-6. Retrieved from: https://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_opium_survey_2017_cult_prod_web.pdf

¹⁹⁰ Mansfield, D. (2016). *A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan*. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 169. Print.

¹⁹¹ Mansfield, D. (2016). *A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan*. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 144, 170. Print.

opium bans share the same means. Specifically, the two Governors relied on convincing the rural population to cease the cultivation of opium. However, the implementation of the opium bans was different in nature. The opium ban under Hajji Din Muhammad was carried out by the Afghani police and military forces. Consequently, the implementation was governed by the local norms. In contrast, Governor Shirzai resorted to the military help of the United States. The U.S military assistance helped Governor Shirzai exert power in areas deprived of strong statehood. The U.S. military assistance created a distorted perception that Governor Shirzai had the power to exert control. Thereby, Governor Shirzai's legitimacy was eroded by the U.S. law enforcement.¹⁹²

Political affairs – province and government

Governor Shirzai became alienated by the higher government officials in Kabul and especially President Karzai. Governor Shirzai was rumored to run for President in 2009. The rumor was further asserted due to the developing relationship between Senator Obama and Governor Shirzai. In particular, Senator Barack Obama's visit in Jalalabad in 2008 and the attendance of Governor Shirzai at the Obama's inauguration were strong signs that Obama would support a potential candidacy of Shirzai. However, Governor Shirzai dismissed the speculation and declared that he would not be running against President Karzai in the pending elections. Governor Shirzai did not succeed to take on a new position in the governance in Kabul. Consequently, Shirzai's provincial power seemed to be based merely on foreign support. Shirzai's fragility of power within the province sparked demands to be transferred. Yet, Shirzai seemed to persist his governance in Nangarhar despite the popular discontent and the isolation from President Karzai.¹⁹³

Nangarhar has experienced a four-year period of relative stability and security. In 2009 the stability in the province was being shattered by the accumulating resistance of the rural population against the foreign invaders. The fragility of the security made Governor Shirzai resort to the U.S. military force more. Shirzai was reluctant to travel without the protection of the foreign military forces. Hence, the legitimacy of Governor Shirzai was being challenged by the strong presence of the U.S. forces.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 165-167. Print.

¹⁹³ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 171. Print.

¹⁹⁴ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 169-170. Print.

Political affairs within the province

Former *jihadi* groups were not satisfied with the allocation of rents, government positions and patronage. The insurgency started to regain influence within the countryside, especially in the district of Sherzad in 2010, due to inadequate eradication initiative. Hence, the *jihadi* formed new alliances against Governor Shirzai. The *jihadi* commanders aligned with the prominent Arsala family in their opposition to Governor Shirzai. In 2009 and 2010, the *jihadi* commanders increased their political power, when many of them were elected to official position in the provincial governance. The rise of the *jihadi* commanders in official government positions made the opposition against Shirzai strong.¹⁹⁵ The Arsala family actively worked against Governor Shirzai through waging proxy wars, such as land grabs as well as organization of protests against the Governor. Eventually, the Arsala family was successful in regaining provincial control and in regaining control over the provincial resources. Hence, Governor Shirzai resigned from his position in 2013.¹⁹⁶

Rural population and Cultivation of poppy in Nangarhar

An essential component of the political affairs in Afghanistan is the rural population. The rural population in Afghanistan is usually armed. Consequently, the rural population can provide political and military support for the political elite, and the relationship between the two is pivotal for the political stability and the economic development. The welfare of the rural population plays a critical role in withstanding political and economic disturbances. The experience in the different districts in Nangarhar show the interplay and the implications from these factors.¹⁹⁷

Welfare of the rural population

The economic conditions in the districts played a role in the successful implementation of the opium bans. The imposition of opium bans coincided with promises of development assistance. It was the tribal chieftain or also known as *maliks*, who were offered development assistance from which the rural population would also benefit. Provincial authorities would also provide gifts and sometimes payments to the *maliks* in order to support

¹⁹⁵ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 172-173, 175-176. Print.

¹⁹⁶ Jackson, A. (2014). Politics and governance in Afghanistan. The case of Nangarhar Province. *Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium*. pp.7. Retrieved from: <https://securelivelihoods.org/wp-content/uploads/Politics-and-Governance-in-Afghanistan-the-Case-of-Nangarhar-Province.pdf>

¹⁹⁷ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 177-178. Print.

the opium ban.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, the interests of the rural population were neglected. The rural population accused the *maliks* of being servants of the provincial governance.¹⁹⁹

The experience of counter-narcotic efforts in Nangarhar reveals that there is a wide number of conditions which affect the cultivation of poppy even within the territory of one province. What could be observed is that the levels of poppy cultivation were different in the productive and state-controlled areas compared to the southern deprived of state control area. In particular, the experience has shown that the districts with strict state control, such as Kama and Surkhrud had advantages such as physical infrastructure which allows access to markets of goods and labor as well as larger landholdings with fruitful lands and abundant water resources. In contrast, the southern districts, such as Achin and Khogiani, are under bad conditions. The areas are mountainous and hardly accessible, which makes the areas distant from the possibilities of the markets. The soil in the areas are unproductive for agricultural development. Alternative livelihoods are hardly available. The lack of security in the areas has also hampered the reach of development assistance. Road construction has been the only development activity. Nevertheless, the construction of infrastructure was perceived to be a negative development because roads enabled the access of the foreign forces and the Afghan forces access to the area.²⁰⁰

Research shows that in Achin, the cultivation of wheat and maize would generate less revenues than opium and marijuana and would not suffice the basic needs of a household. Hence, non-farm livelihood was an alternative option. However, development construction projects offered only temporary occupation. The locals believed that the improvement of the physical infrastructure is not adequate since there is no legal market for crops to be traded. Thus, many young men applied to serve in the Afghanistan National Army and Afghanistan National Police due to larger salaries. The job paid well. However, the salary would become scarce when it was allocated by the number of the family members in the household. Serving in the ANA or ANP meant being away from the family and was a risky undertaking. In

¹⁹⁸ Goodhand, J. and Mansfield, D. (2010). Drugs and (Dis)order: A study of the opium trade, political settlement and state-making in Afghanistan. *London School of Economics*. Pp.14. Retrieved from: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/PDFs/csdc-working-papers-phase-two/wp83.2-drugs-and-disorder.pdf>

¹⁹⁹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 194. Print.

²⁰⁰ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 18-19. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

contrast, cultivation of opium would not force the young men to leave home and would provide an adequate income for sustainable livelihood.²⁰¹

The political and economic conditions made the rural population cultivate opium again. In 2010-2011, the return of opium production was a fact in the Mahmand valley. Moreover, next year the cultivation of opium was two times more and appeared in the lower areas of Achin. The district Shinwar, where opium cultivation was not present since 2007, relapsed. The response of the government to the reoccurring opium cultivation was intense eradication efforts in 2012. However, the *maliks* did not cooperate with the government, and defended the rural population in the illicit activities.²⁰²

Vanda Felbab-Brown, who has conducted research on the ground indicates, that Shirzai's eradication and strong law enforcement greatly deteriorated the socio-economic situation of the household in the province. In particular, the household had to bear the burdens of debts due to declining incomes and to failed efforts to stimulate economic activities. Specifically, the dire economic activities compelled the local population to seek employment opportunities in Pakistan and Helmand. The population dissociated with the government authorities and allowed the Taliban to gain the control over the territories. As a result, the Afghani military and NATO forces were expelled from the districts - Achin, Khogiani and Shinwar.²⁰³

There are a number of factors, which led to the failure of the opium ban imposed by Governor's Shirzai. The aggressive eradication initiatives in conjunction with no economic opportunities for alternative livelihood have been pivotal factors. Moreover, the extensive resort to the U.S. military forces for coercive measures resulted in higher levels of insecurity in the province. In the situation, the rural elite was torn between the Governor's interest and the interest of the rural population as well as the pressures of the insurgent groups. As the state of Afghanistan weakened, the rural population relapsed to poppy cultivation in 2012-2013. The rural population assessed that the risk involved in poppy cultivation was lower. In particular, the rural population compared the eradication initiatives in the previous years.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 195-196. Print.

²⁰² Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 196-197. Print.

²⁰³ Felbab-Brown, V. (2009). U.S. Counter-narcotic Strategy in Afghanistan. Speech to the *International Narcotics Board*. Retrieved from: <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/u-s-counternarcotics-strategy-in-afghanistan/>

²⁰⁴ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 42-43. Retrieved from:

The local population of Sherzad had asked the Taliban to come and protect their poppy fields from the coercive eradication. Research shows that the population in Achin and Khogiani has observed the invasion of Taliban as a consequence from the negative effects of the opium ban. The population has blamed the government for the situation. As a result, the population strived to distance from the government and rearrange the political affairs. The Taliban were considered to be more understanding of the economic situation of the rural population. Therefore, the taxes collected by the Taliban varied according to the economic conditions.²⁰⁵

Kama and Surkhrud

The districts, Kama and Surkhrud, have been characterized as areas which can be controlled by the state powers and where law enforcement could be carried out. The interest of the rural population and the political elite have coincided. The political elite has developed a relationship with the tribal aristocracy in the region due to the geostrategic location of the districts. One of the leading family in the Kabul river basin – the Mohmandi tribe - was situated in the districts Kama, Goshta and Lalpura. The family had developed a strong relationship with the governance in Kabul. Similar social and political arrangement has been observed in the district Surkhrud. The Arsala family have developed strong connections to the political elite in Jalalabad and have been a strong economic driver. The Arsala family has rented out its land. The population of Kama and Surkhrud was relatively obedient due to a strict social hierarchy. The population was afraid of the use of coercion and of restriction to resources. The strong political arrangement between the rural population and the political elite have made the international community to focus on less politically stable areas.²⁰⁶

It is worth mentioning that the economic conditions have had a vital role for the consolidation of power. The district Kama and Surkhrud have been well-irrigated due to their situation in the Kabul River basin. After the opium ban of Hajji Din Muhammad, farmers in the districts switched the cultivation of opium with another crop. Farmers in Kama grew green beans, while the farmers in Surkhrud focused on growing onions. Yet, the mono-cropping patterns led to overproduction, which resulted in a decrease of prices. Therefore,

<https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

²⁰⁵ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 49, 51. Retrieved from:

<https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

²⁰⁶ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 178-179 Print.

since 2008, farmers adopted a more sophisticated farming approach. A wide number of crops were planted as well as off-season cultivation was undertaken. For instance, onion, wheat and maize were being cultivated in Surkhrud in 2005. In 2012, farmers reported to grow onions, spinach, coriander, tomato, and marrow. Furthermore, the improvement of physical infrastructure and transport facilitated farmers' access to agricultural markets.²⁰⁷ Hence, farmers could explore the different options and take advantage of better market opportunities of their produce. Agricultural produce was transported to Kabul and Jalalabad. It has been also observed that farmers in Kama diversified in the production of by-products. In particular, cheese, yoghurt, and milk became typical goods sold on the market in Jalalabad. Jobs opportunities were created by the construction work.²⁰⁸

The economy in Kama and Surkhrud has diversified due to the increasing employment opportunities. The ongoing infrastructural projects created a demand for workers. Service providers were also being demanded. It is important to say that Kama and Surkhrud are close to the capital city – Jalalabad. Thus, Afghani could travel to work during the day and return home at night. The proximity eliminated any additional accommodation costs. Over time, the Afghani started to also look for better paid jobs.²⁰⁹

The strategic geopolitical location as well as the conducive economic conditions have made it easier for the Afghani government to solidify power and control. In 2007 and 2013 after the collapse of the opium bans, opium cultivation was not observed in the districts of Kama and Surkhrud.²¹⁰

Southern districts of Nangarhar

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan has failed to consolidate its power in the southern districts of Nangarhar. A consolidation of the means of coercion in the southern districts of Nangarhar was not achieved even with the foreign support. The United States accomplished a short-lived consent from the population in Spingahar piedmont. The area is inhabited by two dominant tribes – the Shinwari and the Khogiani. The Shinwari tribe has

²⁰⁷ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 180-182 Print.

²⁰⁸ Fishstein, P. (2014). Despair or Hope: Rural Livelihoods and Opium Poppy Dynamics in Afghanistan. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. pp. 30. Retrieved from: <https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/resources/attachments/AREU%20Despair%20or%20Hope%20Web%20Version.pdf>

²⁰⁹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 180-182 Print.

²¹⁰ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 183. Print.

been politically active in the province. However, the Shirwari tribe has traditionally opposed the consolidation of power by the Afghani government in these districts.²¹¹

In the south central and south western districts of Nangarhar reside the Khogiani tribe. Similarly, the Khogiani tribes have also opposed any state interference in their sphere of influence, just like the Shinwari. The tribes refused to pay taxes to the state authorities. There was a persistent hostility between the two tribes. The districts could be characterized with a numerous small landowners and unestablished political elite. The Afghani authorities have accepted that the region is uncontrolled. The official authorities of the Islamic Republic had to make agreements with the tribes for access to the areas. The Afghani authorities did not achieve control over the territories even when coercive means were applied. Hence, the region has become a central place for smuggling and cultivation of opium and cannabis. During the first opium ban, the production of opium remained intact in the northern parts of Khogiani and Shinwar. The production of opium in these districts actually increased in the second year of the ban. In contrast, during the second opium ban, Governor Shirzai resorted to the U.S. support, which turned the counterinsurgency initiative into a counter-narcotic. Therefore, the suspension of production of opium in these unruly areas was achievable and the province was declared “poppy free”. However, the revival of the insurgency in the following years after the second ban made these southern districts return to poppy cultivation. Empirical research shows that the opium bans had serious negative impact on the welfare of the rural population in Achin and Khogiani. Essentially, farmers did not find an alternative livelihood, which could substitute the revenues from poppy cultivation. The decreasing welfare of the rural population led to open rebellion. In order to suppress the uprising, the Afghani administration relied on foreign military support. However, the military initiatives proved unsuccessful. In 2013, the violent conflicts erupted.²¹²

The experience shows that the reach of state power in the Afghani districts was ensured by the tribal elite, which served as mediators between the state and the rural population. The help of these tribal leaders allowed the consolidation of power. Thus, the cultivation of poppy was eliminated. In contrast, the districts, where the population was resistant to the government authorities, did not accomplish to eliminate the production of

²¹¹ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 183. Print.

²¹² Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 183-186. Print.

poppy. Hence, the limited state control in the regions precluded the enforcement and sustainability of the ban.²¹³

The return of opium cultivation in the southern districts of Nangarhar shows the inability of the official authorities in the Islamic Republic to sustain an opium ban in areas where the means of coercion were not consolidated. The lack of success in counter-narcotics further undermined the legitimacy of the state.²¹⁴

²¹³ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 192-193. Print.

²¹⁴ Mansfield, D. (2016). A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. HURST & COMPANY. pp. 191. Print.

Does the war on drugs help or hurt Afghanistan?

This section will serve as an analysis of the central empirical question of this research project “Does the war on drugs help or hurt state-building in Afghanistan”. The logic of the section is an analysis of the content of the conducted semi-structured expert interviews and the content of the secondary sources on the counter-narcotic efforts in Helmand and Nangarhar. The conducted interviews were transcribed and read multiple times. Certain categories have been developed according to which this analysis will be structured. The analysis will revolve around the categories: security and foreign military; legitimacy; interdiction and crop eradication; foreign economic assistance; and a concept of the broader counter-narcotic perspective. Firstly, the results from the interviews will be discussed according to the afore mentioned categories. Secondly, the content from the secondary sources will be reflected on.

Security and Foreign military presence

The research has discovered that the presence of foreign military has an equivocal effect on the state-building process in Afghanistan. The presence of foreign military can help as well as hurt the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. Dr. Angela Me has identified multiple drivers of the opium production in Afghanistan. The first discussed cause was the problem of security. Dr. Me argued that the cultivation of opium is situated where the anti-government forces are. The lack of security leads to the population’s perception that there is no control and respect for the rule of law. Therefore, the lack of risk association make farmers cultivate opium freely ²¹⁵ Major General Masood Ahmad Azizi has also emphasized on the connection between instability and opium cultivation. In particular, Azizi talked how the anti-governmental forces are “*trying to make Afghanistan weak and an ungoverned space in order to let the poppy cultivation happen*”. Furthermore, Azizi argued that international cooperation and assistance is necessary in order for Afghanistan “*to learn how to fight and to build capacity of the security forces*”.²¹⁶ Major General Azizi clearly expressed that the presence of foreign armed forces can contribute to the state-building process. The presence of foreign security forces can contribute to the reconstruction process in Afghanistan in multiple ways. Firstly, foreign armed forces can help Afghanistan’s forces “*learn how to fight*”. This means that foreign troops can teach Afghanistan’s armed forces tactics, discipline, training, preparedness as well as the ability to collect and analyze intelligence data. Secondly, foreign

²¹⁵ Me, A. (2018). Personal Interview

²¹⁶ Azizi, A.M. (2018). Personal Interview.

military presence can provide temporary security. During the time of stability and safety the Afghan state can focus on other vital problems, which would have been impossible to deal with in case peace was not established, such as building capabilities or improvement of the performance. As it has been previously shown, the presence of foreign troops established a temporary security and order in the Helmand Food Zone. The improved security in conjunction with development assistance created a conducive environment for economic activities in Canal area 1, which even led to non-farm diversification, trade and opportunities for entrepreneurship. Moreover, the improvement of security in the Helmand Food Zone made officials refuse to take bribes. Hence, corruption practices declined. Eradication initiatives and allocation of development assistance became fairer. The experience in the area, Canal 1, clearly shows that foreign military presence has contributed to improvement of security as well as to the stimulation of the economy. It can be argued that the even a temporary enforcement of fair practices can make the population learn and entrench the good practice as a habit.

William Byrd has recently reflected on the unprecedented levels of opium cultivation in Afghanistan in 2017. Byrd argues that the levels of poppy cultivation are abnormally high compared to the previous years. Byrd argues that the new record levels of poppy cultivation is the consequence from the declining state power in Afghanistan. Byrd says that the state has been losing control even in provinces with consolidated coercive means, such as Helmand and Nangarhar. Byrd argues that the loss of government control in provinces with strong state power results in a return to opium cultivation. Byrd highlights that the withdrawal of foreign military forces has also allowed the return of opium cultivation. Yet, Byrd points out that the proliferation of opium cultivation is not the result of the foreign withdrawal but more of the exacerbating security in the state.²¹⁷ Byrd's analysis hints a possibly negative impact of the foreign armed forces presence on the state-building process in Afghanistan. The presence of foreign armed forces may create a distorted perception that the Afghan state has the coercive means and capability to enforce laws. However, the withdrawal of the foreign military forces may leave behind a incapable coercive apparatus. In case the state is not able to exert control and to sustain the peace and security, disorder and lawlessness may return. This situation makes Afghanistan appear weak, which further delegitimizes the Afghan authorities. Dr. Me

²¹⁷ Byrd, W. (2017). Disease or symptom? Afghanistan's burgeoning opium economy in 2017. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.2. Retrieved from: <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1733E-Disease-Symptom-PN.pdf>

has argued that the lack of capabilities to enforce the laws makes the rural population believe that the cultivation of opium does not carry any law enforcement risks. Therefore, the rural population returns to poppy cultivation.²¹⁸ Dr. Me's argument shows that the perception of risk is very important to the abidance of laws. If the withdrawal of foreign presence decreases the perception risk, then farmers may return to poppy cultivation. Afghanistan needs to step in and exert its coercive capabilities to ensure the rule. The inability of the Afghan authorities to exert control in case of disobedience, undermines the legitimacy of the state. As it was shown earlier, Governor Shirzai relied heavily on U.S military support. The presence of foreign troops created a perception that Shirzai has the means of coercion to impose a ban. However, once the foreign forces withdrew, Shirzai was not able to sustain the ban, which undermined his legitimacy.

The results of the research undisputedly corroborate the assumed hypothesis that a strong Afghan state is a necessary albeit an insufficient condition for the successful implementation of counter-narcotic strategies. The research shows that foreign military presence can help the reconstruction process in Afghanistan by establishing security and building capability. On another side, the withdrawal of foreign military presence can hurt the process of state-building in Afghanistan by leaving a vacuum of power, which may re-introduce disorder and which may further undermine the legitimacy of the state. T

Legitimacy

The previous section hints the negative effects of the military interventions on the legitimacy of the Afghan state. This section will try to show that the effects of the external counter-narcotic interventions on the legitimacy are difficult to determine. However, the research tends to observe more negative effects. Specifically, the soldier has argued that the popular opinion about foreign military presence in Afghanistan varies greatly. The soldier has explicitly stated that the opinion of the population about the foreign presence ranges from complete cooperation and acceptance to complete apathy to strong resistance. The soldier added that there are a wide number of factors, which affect the popular opinion, such as employment, socio-economic status, tribal attribution, level of education, and many others.²¹⁹ Hence, legitimacy is a spectrum of "feeling", which is determined by a wide number of factors. The spectrum of feelings about legitimacy ranges from population's minimum deference to the state authorities to apathy to strong the strong acceptance and support.

²¹⁸ Me, A. (2018). Personal Interview

²¹⁹ Soldier. (2018). Answered Questions, and a follow-up email discussion.

Strong resistance means that the population has no deference for the state authorities and is disobedient to the laws. Hence, the process of legitimization will be increasing the respect of the local population to the Afghan government.

The Bulgarian soldier indicated that stability, the rule of law as well as control in Afghanistan need to be ensured by a “*legitimately elected government*”. The interviewee added that the elected government has to be supported by the tribal chiefs, the *maliks*, and the religious leader, the *mullah*. The soldier explicitly pointed out that the “*rule of law and control should not be imposed externally*”. The soldier argued that foreign military presence can often lead to negative consequences for Afghanistan’s security and legitimacy.²²⁰ The soldier clearly highlights that legitimacy is crucial for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The soldier makes it clear that foreign intervention is not the right means for the reconstruction process, even though it is sometimes necessary. The experience from Helmand and Nangarhar reveal that the tribal chieftains have had a crucial role in the implementation of counter-narcotic strategies. The case studies of Helmand and Nangarhar show that the *maliks* show to have a great influence on the farmers’ decisions to cultivate poppy. The alignment of the *maliks*’ interests with the interest of the external counter-narcotics efforts has appears crucial for the suppression of poppy cultivation. However, the experience in Nangarhar shows that negotiations and persuasion of the tribal chieftains could be an exhausting political bargain. As it was discussed earlier, in Nangarhar Governor Shirzai has lost its legitimacy as he was unable to sustain the order and peace in the province. Moreover, the research eloquently shows that the population was disobedient to the prohibition of poppy cultivation and even sought the support of the Taliban to protect the poppy fields. Hence, the legitimacy of the orders is established. However, the research also shows that as the foreign military withdraws and the state cannot sustain the established order, the legitimacy of the Afghan state becomes shattered. The legitimacy of Afghanistan is undermined because the established order, and therefore expectations of order are not satisfied.

Interdiction and crop eradication

The research has discovered that forced eradication does not help the state-building process in Afghanistan. The research has found out that eradication makes sense when alternative livelihoods are provided to the population and when the population is persuaded to cease the cultivation of the illicit drug. Major General Azizi has argued that “*crop*

²²⁰ Soldier. (2018). Answered Questions, and a follow-up email discussion.

eradication is definitely not the way” to tackle the opium economy. Major General emphasized that forced crop eradication is contra-productive.²²¹ The experiences in Nangarhar and Helmand show that coercive crop eradication initiatives do not contribute to the suppression of opium cultivation. Rather, coercive eradication initiatives trigger the population resentment towards the foreign executors or the government. As the research of Helmand shows the eradication initiatives in areas where order and security were not established, the population perceived the executors as a villain, who come to destroy their property. Jelena Bjelica has reflected on the effects from the eradication initiatives, on which the U.S. has focused from 2003 to 2009. She observes that crop eradication has had a negative effect on the state-building in Afghanistan. Bjelica argues that the local population perceived that the physical eradication of the illicit crop was not compensated by the foreign invaders. Bjelica elaborates that the result from the destruction of crops is alienation of the local population from the provincial and government authorities. Bjelica observes that as a consequence of this alienation, the population turned to support the anti-government elements – the Taliban.²²² However, the research of Helmand and Nangarhar shows that persuasion of the rural population to cease the opium production in conjunction with alternative economic livelihood can be sometimes successful. The research shows the Governor Hajji Din Muhammad convinced the rural population to engage in licit economic activities. Thus, the population did not feel resentful towards the government or the executors. However, the experience from Governor Shirzai shows that strong law enforcement measures can only make farmers hostile towards the authorities.

Foreign economic assistance and development interventions

The research shows that the successful implementation of opium bans is heavily dependent on foreign economic assistance. However, the research also reveals that foreign economic assistance can help state-building in Afghanistan. The research has shown that the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure facilitates farmer’ access to the market places. Economic assistance can help invigorate the licit economy. The experience in Canal 1 in Helmand shows that development assistance helped create new economic opportunities, which eventually diversified the economy. Development initiatives, such as road

²²¹ Azizi, A.M. (2018). Personal Interview.

²²² Bjelica, J. (2018). From Bad to Bombing: U.S. counter-narcotic policies in Afghanistan. *Afghanistan Analyst Network*. Pp.5-6. Retrieved from: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/from-bad-to-bombing-us-counter-narcotics-policies-in-afghanistan/>

construction, has created non-farm employment opportunities, even though temporary. What has become conspicuous in the case studies of Helmand and Nangarhar is that the relative price of the produced crops is pivotal. The research has discovered that farmers are willing to switch to the cultivation of licit crops in case they can make a better living. The research has shown that development assistance need to take into account that prices, costs, demand are more often volatile than stable variables. The research has also shown that farmers are rational economic actors, who seek to take advantage in various licit or illicit activities in order to make a living.

Dr. Me argues that development interventions work sometimes and sometimes not. For example, Dr. Me said that long time ago in Nangarhar there were development interventions for constructing irrigation system. However, at some point, farmers lost their socio-economic development, and relapsed to the cultivation of opium. Farmers used the irrigation systems for the opium fields. Dr. Me concluded that the problems were not solved indeed. Consequently, Dr. Me argued that “*development interventions need to understand narcotics*”.²²³ Dr. Me elaborated that the problem of opium production need to be tackled from a broader development perspective, which encompasses improvements in all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Dr. Me explained further that a wide number of factors need to be considered when development interventions are carried out in order to be successful. Dr. Me’s argument is supported by the experience in Helmand. Essentially, crop substitution has made some farmers switch from cultivating opium to growing vegetables. As it was elaborated before, the cultivation of opium within the Helmand Food Zone has been reduced. However, some farmers have moved out of the Food Zone to the desert areas to cultivate the illicit drug. One of the reasons for farmers’ resettlement was the change in the labor input required. Opium is labor intensive. Therefore, when opium was changed with wheat, which requires less labor, many farmers became jobless. The result of the Helmand Food Program was a balloon effect of the production of opium. Dr. Me also argued that the balloon effect has improved farmers’ cultivation capabilities and has become one of the reasons to have such unprecedented levels of opium cultivation in 2017. William Byrd also blames the inappropriateness of the counter-narcotic efforts for the unsustainability of the opium bans and actually the increasing levels of opium cultivation. Byrd explicitly blames the Helmand Food Zone, which expelled sharecroppers and landless farmers out of the Zone in order to cultivate opium in the desert lands. Hence, Byrd criticizes the implementation of counter-

²²³ Me, A. (2018). Personal Interview

narcotic efforts in regions, which lack to offer an alternative livelihood. Byrd says that the results of the efforts will only be short-lived.²²⁴

Broader counter-narcotic perspective

Dr. Me has explicitly pointed out that the opium economy in Afghanistan needs to be tackled by a broader counter-narcotic approach. For example, she elaborated that alternative development programs have a good impact only locally. Alternative Development cannot change “*the macro-picture*” of opium production added Dr. Me.²²⁵ The soldier expressed similar view on the shortsightedness of the counter-narcotic efforts. The soldier argued that the counter-narcotic efforts have only a short-term effect. The soldier elaborated that in the long-run counter-narcotic efforts do not sustainably reduce the production of opium. The soldier determined the counter-narcotic efforts as “*sometimes inadequate*” to the local needs.²²⁶ Similar opinion was expressed by Major General Masood Ahmad Azizi, who argued that crop eradication alone is not the way to tackle opium production in Afghanistan. Azizi said that opium production needs a comprehensive approach eradication alone will not solve the problem. Major General Azizi reflected on economic empowerment of the population which would reduce poverty. For example, Azizi elaborated that there are a number of factors, which affect opium production, which have to be addressed. For example, Azizi talked about providing alternatives to opium cultivation, constructing irrigation systems, giving fertilizers and providing access to markets. Major General Azizi argued that it is a combination of conditions, which need to be addressed together. Of course, Major General Azizi argued that the counter-narcotic initiatives need to be adapted to the different needs across the provinces and districts.²²⁷ In the same sense, Dr. Me has also stated that the conditions of the context are essential. For example, Dr. Me explained that opium in the north, and specifically in the province Badakhshan has been cultivated due to poverty. In contrast, farmers in Nangarhar have been financially better off. Therefore, cultivation of opium in Nangarhar is more a result of political problems, such as lack of governance and disrespect of the rule of law. In Helmand, opium cultivation is the result of the Taliban presence and the Taliban influence.²²⁸

²²⁴ Byrd, W. (2017). Disease or symptom? Afghanistan’s burgeoning opium economy in 2017. *The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit*. Pp.3. Retrieved from: <https://areu.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/1733E-Disease-Symptom-PN.pdf>

²²⁵ Me, A. (2018). Personal Interview

²²⁶ Soldier. (2018). Answered Questions, and a follow-up email discussion.

²²⁷ Azizi, A.M. (2018). Personal Interview.

²²⁸ Me, A. (2018). Personal Interview

The expert on the ground has also expressed a comprehensive approach to curbing the opium economy in Afghanistan. Specifically, the expert stated that the efforts to reduce opium need to be observed from two perspectives – a development perspective and a crime perspective. The expert elaborated that the rural population needs livelihood but also the crimes such as money laundering need to be dealt with. Moreover, the expert elaborated that the opium problem cannot be tackled as merely a matter of “*giving crops and fertilizers*”.²²⁹ As it has been argued in the experiences of the Helmand Food Zone, the allocation of crops does not guarantee that farmers will eventually choose to grow licit crops. Rather, “*giving crops and fertilizers*” in Helmand resulted in a balloon effect and the expansion of opium fields in the desert areas of Helmand. The expert also argued that it is looking at the full economic spectrum, such as health and education, as vital components of counter-narcotics. Counter-narcotics should be “*a collective effort*” argued the expert, and that numerous other efforts need to be put in conjunction.²³⁰ What seems conspicuous from the persistent argument that opium production has to be tackled comprehensively, is that the implementation of the strategies of eradication, alternative development or interdiction alone do not massively contribute to the state-building process in Afghanistan. Rather, the research shows that the success of counter-narcotics which will ultimately help reconstruction in Afghanistan, is contingent upon a comprehensive development approach.

Conclusion

The outcome of this research project has shown that the external counter-narcotic efforts have ambivalent effects on the state-building process in Afghanistan. External counter-narcotic efforts have partially helped and partially hurt state-building in Afghanistan. In particular, external counter-narcotic strategies have shown positive effects such as the establishment of temporary security, the creation of alternative licit economic livelihoods, the diversification to non-farm employment. However, the strategies have also revealed that in the long-run counter-narcotic strategies can have negative effects on the reconstruction efforts of Afghanistan, such as deterioration of security after a foreign military withdrawal or exacerbation of socio-economic conditions due to the loss of revenues or inadequate crop substitution. Crop eradication seem to show only negative impact on the state-building process. The impact of counter-narcotic strategies on Afghan legitimacy is difficult to determine, even though the research has shown a stronger negative influence. Ultimately, the

²²⁹ Expert (2018). Personal Interview.

²³⁰ Expert (2018). Personal Interview.

research has discovered that the international drug control community has been trying to embrace a more comprehensive counter-narcotics approach, which situates counter-narcotics within the broader perspective of development. The broader counter-narcotic approach is necessary to rectify the inadequateness of the strategies and ultimately to help Afghanistan in its reconstruction.

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