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DRUG TRAFFICKING IN CENTRAL ASIA
CHALLENGE TO SECURITY

NEERJA AGGARWAL

AFGHANISTAN - CENTRE OF NARCOTICS
PRODUCTION AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

DEEPALI GAUR SINGH

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN PAKISTAN
THREAT TO REGIONAL SECURITY

ASHISH SHUKLA

HIMALAYAN AND CENTRAL ASIAN STUDIES

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Editor's Page

With the onset of the 21st century, drug trafficking has become a global problem affecting all regions of the world. The globalisation process, development of easy communication which brought remote regions closer than ever before, technological advancements which enhanced drug production capacity and involvement of drug mafias, organised criminal and terrorist groups, have contributed to the global reach of the illegal drug trade. At the same time, the increased stress and pressure on individuals due to economic crises, unemployment, decline in the standards of life etc. have led the affected persons to take recourse to drugs thereby pushing up the demand for drugs.

The surge in the illicit narcotics trade has also been fuelled by its tremendous profitability. In 2008, wholesale prices of heroin ranged from less than 3,000 US dollars per kg in Afghanistan to 10,300-11,800 US dollars per kg in Turkey, and average of 44,300 US dollars per kg in West and Central Europe. As per UN World Drug Report, 2010, global drugs trade industry generates over 320 billion US dollars annually, which is about 0.9 per cent of the world's GDP. Afghanistan is the largest cultivator of opium earning over 4 billion US dollars per annum. The global area under opium poppy cultivation in 2009 was 181,400 hectares producing 7,754 metric tons (mt) of opium, which in turn produced 657 mt of heroin. Global opium production increased by 78 per cent from 4,346 mt in 1998 to 7,754 mt in 2009. Between 155 and 250 million people (3.5 to 5.7 per cent of the population aged 15-64) used illicit drugs in 2008. Heroin, which is processed from opium, is the most widely consumed illicit opiate in the world. Afghanistan is the source of most of the world's illicit opiates (6,900 mt of opium or 89 per cent of world's total in 2009), the rest being produced in Myanmar (330 mt) and Latin America. The world's two largest markets for Afghan opiates are the Russian Federation and West Europe, which together consume half of the heroin produced in the world. About 37 per cent of 140 mt of Afghan heroin goes from Afghanistan to West Europe along the 'Balkan route' transiting Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and the countries of South East Europe. Some 25 per cent of Afghan heroin or 95 mt is trafficked each year from Afghanistan to Central Asia and Russia along the 'Northern route'. Drug trade grew strong in Tajikistan during the Civil War (1992-97), and this country having direct borders with Afghanistan continues to be affected

by drug trafficking. And about 40 per cent or 50 mt of Afghan heroin is trafficked to Pakistan via Balochistan province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which share long borders with Afghanistan.

Notwithstanding the efforts of international community and the United Nations and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the menace of drugs production and trafficking continues to pose great challenge to social and political stability and a serious threat to peace and security. Global narcotics market serves as a major source of revenue for organised criminal and terrorist groups. The experience in Afghanistan shows that terrorists, insurgents, illegal armed groups and warlords have been drawing funds or even managing drug production and trafficking. Drug traffickers have become powerful enough to take on the state through violent confrontation or high-level corruption. The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in his Presidential address to the UN Security Council on 8 December 2009, warned that "drug trafficking is fuelling brutal insurgencies in Afghanistan, Columbia and Myanmar; spreading violence in West Africa, Central Asia, Central America and the Caribbean, and threatening to reverse UN peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, Haiti, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sierra Leone and elsewhere." Lamenting that "cooperation between governments is lagging behind cooperation between organised crime networks", Ban Ki-moon called for reinforced coordination of UN actions with Interpol and regional and sub-regional organisations.

Each year the United Nations commemorates 26 June as "International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking". Anti-drug organisations mark the day with activities in order to raise awareness of the problem of illicit drugs. Global challenge of illicit drugs production and trafficking can be met only through concerted and resolute measures by national governments, civil society, regional and international organisations to root out the menace so that there is no such threat to social and political stability, peace and security. Whereas national legislations against all those involved in drugs production, trafficking, organised crime and money laundering need to be strengthened, there is need for greater synergy and cooperation between various governments and also the UN and international agencies dealing with these problems. It is against this background that the Himalayan and Central Asian Studies is bringing out its Special Issue with a focus on drugs trafficking in South and Central Asia.

K. Warikoo

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN CENTRAL ASIA

CHALLENGE TO SECURITY

NEERJA AGGARWAL

The concept of security at the end of the cold war has been widened so as to include environmental, economic and societal issues, transnational threats and human security issues underscoring the need to ensure the tranquility and welfare of the individuals within a nation state. Transnational threats to security, more particularly, drug trafficking has become salient. It has societal, economic and political ramifications, disturbing the social fabric of society, and weakening the conventional economy and governance. It mainly thrives on weak/failed states, promotes corruption at lower and higher levels, enhances shadow economy, poverty and unemployment, impedes development and thwarts formation of human capital due to addiction and disease. Further, the crime and terror nexus threatens the stability and security at national, regional and international levels.

The debilitating effect of drug trafficking on various aspects of security is glaringly visible in Central Asia, which is geographically positioned between Afghanistan and Europe; the centres of narcotics production and consumption. The whopping opium poppy cultivation in the war-torn Afghanistan and northward transshipment of narcotics to Europe and Russia via Central Asia have an adverse impact on the security of the region which clearly demonstrates that the two issues - drug trafficking and security - are enmeshed and cannot be studied in isolation.

The end of the Cold War and collapse of the bipolar world order, ushering in globalisation, has necessitated a new security paradigm. The traditional security threats of military character have receded in the background in the absence of opposing power blocs. New non-military threats have arisen on the horizon: terrorism, transnational organized

crime, environmental degradation, economic concerns, spread of infectious diseases, migration of population, religious fundamentalism and spillover effects of the failed states. These non-traditional threats have disastrous consequences and cause death or lessen life chances on a large scale. The report of High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, presented to the United Nations General Assembly in December 2004 stated:

The biggest security threats we face now and in the decades ahead, go far beyond states waging aggressive war. They extend to poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation; war and violence within states; the spread and possible use of nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons; terrorism and transnational organized crime. The threats are from non-state actors as well as states and to human security as well as state security.¹

The non-traditional security threats are no longer confined exclusively to national borders. The spread of knowledge, the dispersion of advanced technologies and the movements of people have made them global. The developments in one country have spillover effect on others and their spread becomes broad and wide. Human Development Report 2005 of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states: "One hundred years ago states may have had the option of building security at home by investing in military hardware, strengthening borders and treating their countries as islands that could be insulated from the world beyond. That option has gone. In our globalized world, no country is an island."²

Transnational organized crime is a multifaceted phenomenon which manifests itself in different activities: illicit drug trade, trafficking in human beings and arms, and money laundering. But amongst them, drug trafficking, by far, is the most prominent activity of organized criminal groups, enabling them to generate big profits. Drug trafficking is more lucrative than any other form of trafficking. It is difficult to quantify exactly the value of illicit trafficking due to its clandestine nature, at best only rough estimates can be given. The 2005 World Drug Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimated the world narcotics trade at some US\$320 billion; whereas estimates from other major illicit flows are considerably less: value of global human trafficking is placed at US \$32 billion and of the illicit fire arms trade maximum at US\$ 1 billion.³ It is not the quantum of value that makes drug trade a grave threat, rather its tremendous impact on various components of security: political, economic and societal.

CRIMINALIZATION OF STATES

Organized crime flourishes in weak states torn by conflict and instability where it fails to uphold law and order. Criminal groups prevent government intervention through infiltration of the state institutions by means of corruption, and avoid violence as far as possible. Apart from low level corruption, to get going smuggling operations unimpeded, they resort to high level corruption also that seeks to nearly control the judicial system, security, police and border forces, and even financial sector. All this process can be termed as de facto criminalization of the state where the state gets directly involved in organized criminal activities. In Afghanistan, there is widespread corruption at the lower and higher levels including judiciary: "There are government officials at the district, provincial and national levels involved in drug trafficking who are more interested in making money than serving their populations."⁴ It is quite evident that officials are engaged in providing protection to crime groups in return for money and even some may have a direct pie in the drug trade. It may be referred that high level corruption too takes place in Afghanistan in which politicians are involved whereby the organized crime has captured state apparatus: "It is not only a failure of state institutions but also a means for enrichment and empowerment of political elites."⁵

EFFECTS ON ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

Drug trade generates employment and provides income for people in countries of production and transit where other licit economic activity is not available. But in the long run, it has a devastating effect. In drug producing countries, local population gets dependent on food imports as the land is mainly used for cultivation of drugs replacing other crops. This phenomenon is discernible in major producing countries such as Afghanistan, Columbia and Burma, virtually drug economies.

The narcotics trade has also a ruinous effect on the legal economy, particularly in financially weak states. Transnational criminal organisations launder illegal money into legal one, affecting the legal economy adversely in a way that is hard to control. The revenues from increasing drug trade and the investment in the legal market provides narcotics networks' economic clout to enable them to corrupt and co-opt state functionaries. The financial aspects of the international narcotics

trade and money laundering are difficult to be assessed accurately and in many cases are underestimated. There is an estimated minimum of US \$ 300-500 billion laundered internationally through the international financial system.⁶ Raymond W. Baker, a senior fellow at the Centre for International Policy in Washington D.C., believes that most of the money generated by violent, criminal activity is recycled in the West, particularly in the United States.⁷ The Australian Transaction Reports and Analysis Centre estimated that 3.5 billion illegal Australian dollars were recycled through Australia every year. Therefore, it may be surmised that bulk of drug revenues are transferred to the countries other than the producing and transit regions, creating social, economic and political problems for them; their economies gain very little from the narcotics trade.

The spread of HIV / AIDS because of drug use is a human security concern which not only destroys the social structure of society but also threatens the pillars of state economy. Economic production and growth, and availability of human capital along with propitious business environment will suffer tremendously. Industrial and agricultural production will fall. The fall in output and increase in welfare expenses will result in slowdown of business activity and loss of job opportunities. Moreover, declining production numbers and workers productivity will result in lower salaries and higher prices of goods, affecting investment in local business and reduced revenues accruing to the government. According to the International Crisis Group report: "AIDS can effectively destroy national economy, by decimating the food supply, decreasing the productivity of workforce and increasing the cost of doing business."⁸ It will impact the foreign investment as international companies are wary of investing their funds in countries with low health indicators and inadequate health care system.

NEXUS BETWEEN CRIME, DRUGS AND TERRORISM

Transnational organized crime is a web of illegal enterprises which Gus Martin has categorized in two models: profit-motivated traditional criminal enterprises and politically motivated criminal-political enterprises. The former is politically passive. The weak governments that do not interfere in the working of traditional criminal enterprises are unlikely to be targeted with violence. Moreover, the likelihood of anti-state violence by traditional criminal enterprises is not uniform but is subject to social and political environments of the areas of operation. The latter are dissident movements

that are involved in transnational organized crime out of pragmatic necessity to get benefits in the illicit market to fulfill their ideological designs and can indulge in any sort of violent activities.⁹

In the modern era, the distinction between transnational criminal organisations and terrorism has blurred. The advancement of technology and globalisation has enabled criminal organisations to operate at broader scale. Their collusion with the terrorist groups becomes all the more menacing. The activities of transnational criminal syndicates and terrorist groups synchronize: both are against the state in general and its law enforcement agencies in particular, use same types of tactics and engage in cross-border smuggling, money laundering, kidnapping, extortion and various kinds of violence. As is clear from the statement of Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of UNODC, issued in October 2004: "It has become more and more difficult to distinguish clearly between terrorist groups and organized crime units, since their tactics increasingly overlap. The world is seeing the birth of a new hybrid of organized crime-terrorist organisations."¹⁰ Dissidents, terrorists and extremists have profited from the drug trade. The revenue generated from the protection of poppy cultivation and illegal trade in drugs and its derivatives go to the funding of terrorist activities. M. K. Narayanan, National Security Advisor of India, stated at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy held in February 2007: "Funds from drug cultivation and trafficking in narcotics are extensively used to fund terrorist outfits. Both Jihadi outfits and the LTTE rely heavily on such funds for their activities. The sharp rise in opium cultivation in Afghanistan - which had more than doubled during the past few years - raises concerns of more funds becoming available to terrorists."¹¹ This transnational link between drugs, crime and terrorism not only undermines the political and economic stability of the states but also endangers peace and stability of the world.

WEAKNESSES OF CENTRAL ASIAN STATES: CAUSATION OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

The strategic location of Central Asia makes it a hub of drug trafficking. Besides, the prevalent political, social and economic conditions provide propitious ground for it to flourish.

Economic Conditions

Agriculture forms vital component of Central Asian economy providing

roughly employment to 60 per cent of its population except in Kazakhstan. The communist system looked after the interests of the agriculturists with the formation of kolkhozes and sovkhozes. The agricultural entities were privatized in the Central Asian states, after independence, and redistribution reforms were unfair to the rural population. Conventional farmers were bereft of the benefits of this economic liberalization; whereas people occupying some public position or having informal ties with the government garnered profits out of it. Moreover, in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, government regulated production of cotton and paid low remunerative prices, worsening farmers' economic condition. The rural life in Central Asia - excluding Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan where approximate model of Soviet command economy was adopted - could not profit from the privatization of government assets because they lacked entrepreneurial skill. Finding limited earning opportunities, people also got themselves engaged in illegal activities such as drug trafficking. High rate of poverty compels youth and even women to act as couriers for drugs to fend their families ignoring severe punishments for their indulgence in such crimes.

UNDP report mentions that poverty in Central Asian states runs quite high, even in 2003 when their economies had started showing signs of recovery after facing severe economic crisis from the early 1990s. Measured by \$2.15 per day of purchasing power parity, number of people living below poverty line in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan constitute 21, 70, 74, 44 and 47 per cent of the population respectively.¹² Sustainable equitable growth generates employment and reduces poverty whereas low economic development of a nation along with inequality and high rates of poverty can many a time be a substantial cause of social unrest, violence and criminality. Andijan violence in 2005 in eastern Uzbekistan is stated by some analysts as a sequel of endemic poverty and unemployment: "Many see the root cause of the tension in Uzbekistan, as basic economics. The average wage in the country is around \$ 25 per month, one in three adult workers is either unemployed or underemployed -----social anger is a basic fact of life."¹³ The economies of Central Asian States except that of Kyrgyzstan have rebounded after a period of global recession - the period which impeded growth and increased poverty. Trade, agriculture and overall economic growth in Kyrgyzstan is disrupted due to recent events of political instability and civil unrest. This deteriorating economic condition associated with persistent poverty provides fertile ground for drug trade to flourish.

Political Situation

Whereas the former Soviet Union followed communist ideology, this process was reversed by former Russian President Boris Yeltsin's government by allowing privatization of state assets which resulted in the formation of "the new class of businessmen comprised of state officials and those who had connections with the state, or family ties with state officials."¹⁴ Thus a limited group of Russians nouveau riche was created. Later on towards the end of 1990s, this group became powerful and was able to evade taxes and the state was unable to regulate the limits of their personal enrichment. The Central Asian leadership, with the exception of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, adopted similar means of distribution of state assets, though with varying degrees. In Tajikistan this process began after the civil war. Thus with the distribution of state assets, an informal structure within the state, loyal to the state leadership, was created. However, the obliged public officials became averse to the needs and feelings of the impoverished population. During the 1990s, the gap between state and society became wide. The states had no ideology except collection of riches which was against the psyche of the people who were accustomed to communist planned economy. In such a situation, criminal actors sprang to fill this vacuum at places where the state society gap was high. Moreover, radical religious organisations and organized criminal groups replaced state authority in areas where it was weak. *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)* is one such radical organisation which has an ideological base, apart, participation in illegal drug trade.

Structural Weaknesses

Structural weaknesses of the Central Asian states make it vulnerable to transnational crimes led by the drug trade, posing a grave threat to society and governments. The Central Asian states gained independence suddenly and unexpectedly. The foremost challenge of state building and nationalism comes from the legacy of the Soviet delimitation of the national borders. There are many contradictions on the formation of the Central Asian states by the Soviets. "The Soviet regime demarcated, complicated and seemingly irrational borders between the republics cutting through linguistic, ethnic and familial groups, poorly dividing natural resources and complicated trade."¹⁵

The centrally located and densely populated Ferghana Valley is divided in three independent republics - Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan - and their national borders form jigsaw puzzle. In the Osh

and Jalalabad regions of Kyrgyzstan, the ethnic Uzbeks constitute around 25 to 30 per cent of the population. The Sughd region of Tajikistan comprises large percentage of people who are ethnic Uzbeks. In the cities of Uzbekistan - Samarkand, Bukhara and Surkhandarya - Kyrgyz and Tajik minorities live in large numbers. Thus securitization of borders becomes a great problem as is evident from several incidents of incursions taking place since late 1990s.

In Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan territorial enclaves - small territorial units belonging to one state but encircled by another - exist which makes both transit and governance very difficult. Physical unity of the states is restricted because of these enclaves. Moreover, these enclaves suffer from power vacuum as the legally administering states fail to exert strong governmental authority there. All this makes these enclaves major centres of illegal drug activity.

AFGHANISTAN: A SOURCE OF NARCOTICS SUPPLY

The geographical location of Central Asia and its contiguity with certain countries make it a hub for the transportation of narcotic substances. Three of the Central Asian states, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan share their borders with Afghanistan - the ranges of the borders being 1206 kms, 744 kms and 137 kms respectively. China to its west shares about 2800 kms of border with the Central Asian states (414 kms with Tajikistan, 1533 kms with Kazakhstan and 858 kms with Kyrgyzstan).¹⁶ Russia and Kazakhstan are contiguous countries, sharing a common border.

The long war in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union created Mujahideen commanders, later on called warlords, who started asserting their authority to diminish the influence of traditional local elders, thus changing the pattern of Afghan society. After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, fighting ensued amongst these warlords and Afghanistan was fragmented into numerous fiefdoms under the control of warlords. These warlords were deeply involved in drug trade to fend them. When Taliban came to power some warlords were marginalized, some merged with the Taliban and others joined the anti-Taliban alliance. But "drug profit was a factor in warlord's decision on alliances and allegiances."¹⁷ So the Taliban continued with the policy of opium poppy cultivation till the imposition of ban in July 2000. Moreover, as the Afghan war-torn economy was in shambles, they did not stop production of opium in the countryside due to extreme poverty and possibility of its adverse backlash. Production of

drugs constituted a substantial portion of Afghan economy. Some analysts opined that "the ban was done because drugs stocks got so huge that ban would not cut into Taliban's profits."¹⁸

In the post-Taliban period from 2002-2009, the opium cultivation area and production has invariably increased.

TABLE 1
AFGHANISTAN OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION AND PRODUCTION 2002-2009

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Cultivation (In hectares)	74,000	80,000	131,000	104,000	165,000	193,000	157,000	123,000
Production (in metric tons)	3,400	3,600	4,200	4,100	6,100	8,200	7,700	6,900

Sources: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2009*, UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2010*.

According to the UNODC report, in Afghanistan the area under opium poppy cultivation in 2008 decreased by 19 per cent and production was down by 6 per cent as compared to 2007, whereas in 2009 the area under cultivation further fell to 123,000 hectares and production to 6900 metric tons. Cultivation was mainly confined to regions characterized by high levels of insecurity: five of the provinces in the south - Helmand, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Daykundi and Zabul and two in the west - Farah and Nimroz.¹⁹

By earlier 2003, it had become clear that the US troops and NATO led coalition forces forged alliances with many powerful Afghan warlords to defeat the Taliban. These warlords are suspected to be promoters of Afghanistan's drug trade. They control all sort of networks including producers, criminal gangs and even members of the counter narcotics police force to manage the drug related activities.²⁰ Even President Hamid Karzai had brought some of these warlords into his popularly elected government in recognition of their influence; at least 17 of the 249 earlier elected parliamentarians were smugglers.²¹ Joanna Nathan, ICG's Afghanistan analyst states that to solve the drug problem, "You need to tackle the big fish, most of whom are in the government. These are drug lords who constantly subvert laws, rendering large swathes of land cultivable."²² Almost 9 tonnes of opium was discovered in 2005 from the office of Sher Mohammand Akhundazada, former Governor of Helmand - major opium poppy province in south Afghanistan. He was ousted from the post after intense British and American pressure but was given a seat

in the new upper house of the Afghan parliament.²³

In the prevalent situation, the exports of narcotics will continue and the proceeds so generated will fund the criminal and militant organisations and serve ordinary peasants. The situation is unlikely to be reversed unless the government in Kabul establishes de facto control over the whole territory which is an arduous task. There is a proven linkage between opium poppy cultivation and insecurity.

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN CENTRAL ASIA: TRENDS

Opium and its derivatives, mainly, heroin after having been processed in the laboratories of Afghanistan is transshipped through three main routes - Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia. In 2005, a new heroin route via Central Asia to China has also emerged. The objective assessment of the flow of opiates can be made on the basis of volume of narcotics confiscated in Central Asia

The average seizure volumes from 1996 to 2006 have been 9,632kg, with a low of 6,100.2 kg in 1998 and a high of 13,984.0 kg in 2000. It is interesting to note that seizure of 9,393.9 kg in 2006 and 9,155.2 kg in 1996 are fairly close to the average of 9632 kg. The opiate seizure in 2001 dropped due to Taliban's imposition of ban on cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan. After 2002, the opium poppy production in Afghanistan has increased from 3,400 mt. to 6,100mt. in 2006, but correspondingly, no marked improvement in opiate seizures has been noticed in Central Asia.

The proportion of heroin to opium seizures in Central Asia was 2 per cent to 98 per cent in 1996; it increased to 70 per cent to 30 per cent by 2003 and again it fell to 39 per cent to 61 per cent in 2006. The seizures of opium in Tajikistan have increased by 83 per cent from 1,387 kg in 2006 to 2,542 kg in 2007. Whereas in Turkmenistan, opium seizures have more than tripled to 2,656 kg in 2006 from the 748.6 kg level in 2005. This ascendancy in Turkmenistan's seizures may be attributed to the increase in opium poppy cultivation in the west of Afghanistan. As stated by the UNODC, the increase in seizures of opium and decline in heroin seizures appears to have been caused by two factors: closing down of some opiates producing laboratories (269 destroyed in 2006 in Afghanistan) or unavailability of precursor due to improvement in precursor control.²⁴

Tajikistan has emerged as the most favoured north bound transit route used by traffickers for the Afghan drugs. Even after the end of the civil war, illicit drug trade in Tajikistan continued unabated. A close look

TABLE 2
OPIATE SEIZURES IN CENTRAL ASIA 1996-2006
(IN KILOGRAMS)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Kazakhstan	501.5	1043.0	347.0	224.5	398.4	173.0	181.3	899.5	810.5	1,294.5	1,191.4
Kyrgyzstan	1,519.7	1,643.9	196.6	178.0	1,622.0	640.1	380.5	150.3	524.7	319.0	563.0
Tajikistan	3,411.4	3,515.5	1,461.9	1,978.1	6,661.4	7903.3	6,582.3	7,971.3	7,109.7	3,449.0	3,484.3
Turkmenistan	1,839.2	3,358.6	1,907.0	4,840.0	2,619.0	338.0	1,600.0	218.5	931.5	929.4	2,856.8
Uzbekistan	1,883.5	2,434.4	2,187.7	3,617.1	2,683.2	708.3	332.3	487.6	976.5	574.5	1,298.4

Source: UNODC, *Illicit Drug Trends in Central Asia*, April 2008

TABLE 3
RATIO OF HEROIN TO OPIUM SEIZURES IN CENTRAL ASIA 1996-2006
(IN PERCENTAGE)

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Opium	98	82	82	87	77	48	37	30	39	42	61
Heroin	2	18	18	13	23	52	63	70	61	58	38

Source: UNODC, *Illicit Drug Trends in Central Asia*, April 2008

TABLE 4
SEIZURE OF NARCOTIC SUBSTANCES IN CENTRAL ASIA 2004-2007
(IN KILOGRAMS)

<i>Drug Seizures</i>	2004	2005	2006	2007
Opium				
Kazakhstan	352.8	668.9	637	336
Kyrgyzstan	317.5	116.5	302	271
Tajikistan	2315.6	1104.4	1387	2542
Turkmenistan	665.5	748.6	2656	2284
Uzbekistan	384.7	107.7	759	731
Heroin				
Kazakhstan	457.7	625.7	554.7	522
Kyrgyzstan	207.3	202.6	260.8	431
Tajikistan	4794.1	2344.6	2097.5	1550
Turkmenistan	266.0	180.8	201.1	326
Uzbekistan	591.8	466.8	537.1	501
Cannabis				
Kazakhstan	21,348.6	21,732.6	22,868.66	21,794
Kyrgyzstan	2292.1	1983.8	2399.76	-
Tajikistan	1424.9	1164.4	1305.54	-
Turkmenistan	169.5	135.8	154.34	-
Uzbekistan	543.3	449.9	428.62	-

Sources: UNODC, *World Drug Trafficking Report 2008-2009*; UNODC, *Illicit Drug trends in Central Asia*; UNODC, fact sheet of Central Asian countries from the official website of UNODC (Accessed on 3 December 2007)

at the Table 2 shows a steep hike in opiate seizures in Tajikistan from 2000 to 2004, indicative of an increase in trafficking of Afghan drugs through it. In 2005, of the total seizures of heroin from the three Central Asian countries, bordering Afghanistan, Tajikistan's share stood at 78 per cent, and 60 per cent of that seized in Central Asia as a whole. Nevertheless the seizure of heroin in Tajikistan (2,344.6 kg) in 2005 was 51 per cent less as compared to the 2004 seizure (4,794.1 kg). The root cause of this decline in seizure is said to be associated with the withdrawal of Russian border guards from the Tajik-Afghan border. In 1993, Russia signed a ten year agreement with Tajikistan under which Russian troops were given charge of patrolling on almost all of the Tajik-Afghan border. In December 2004, the Russian troops started withdrawing from the Afghan-Tajik border and the process was completed in 2005.²⁵ As stated in the UNODC *World Drug Report, 2007*, the Tajik government cannot afford to fully replace these troops, which cost the Russian government some US\$ 30 million per annum to maintain.²⁶ In 2006, law enforcement agencies seized opiates

in descending order - Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan - highest in Tajikistan and lowest in Kyrgyzstan, equal to 37 per cent and 5.9 per cent of the total opiates seized in the region.

As a matter of fact, the opiate seizures do not reflect the true volume of drug trafficking. *World Drug Report, 2007* states that "only a small share of heroin flow is seized - around 10 per cent. This lower interdiction ratio leaves open the possibility that large shipment are occurring under the protection of corruption and that seizures merely reflect the small fry who attempt to operate without protection."²⁷

Tajikistan is not only one of the biggest trade routes for Afghan drugs in Central Asia but it also produces drugs, though miniscule as compared to world production size. In times of political instability and economic downturn, more and more people turned towards opium production. During the civil war, Tajik region's warlords encouraged production of narcotics to garner huge financial benefits, particularly, in regions of Gorno-Badakhshan, Penjikent, Zeravshan and Leninabad.²⁸ UNDP report 2005 mentions that "although Central Asia is today more significant as a transit route, the countries face a real risk, at least in the case of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, of becoming producer countries in the future ----- with significant amounts of arable land in many parts of the region, high poverty and unemployment, weak local government and law enforcement agencies and strong external demand, the risk of becoming a future drug production hub should not be dismissed lightly."²⁹

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are the largest producers of cannabis in Central Asia. The areas around the lake Issyk-Kul and Chui Valley in Kyrgyzstan and Zhambyl province of Kazakhstan bordering Kyrgyzstan, are the main centres of cannabis production."³⁰

ROUTES

Kazakhstan has been a major terminal country for the Afghan drugs to enter into Russia and onwards to Europe; from here drugs are transited using numerous major road and railway links across the Kazakh-Russia border. Two northern Kazakh cities, Pavlodar and Kustanay, close to the Russian border, are the crucial transit points. It was established in March 2002 by Russian customs authorities that Kazakh-Russia border is the source of 80 per cent of heroin, 70 per cent of opium and 60 per cent of marijuana reaching Russia."³¹ Afghan drugs reach Kazakhstan after traversing other Central Asian states - Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan

and Turkmenistan - following various routes.

The topography of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan is advantageous for drug traffickers to carry on their activities. 93 per cent of Tajikistan and two third of Kyrgyzstan is mountainous. The altitude of mountains in Kyrgyzstan varies from 401 to 7,439 metres above sea level, thereby, guarding drug trafficking difficult.³²

Kyrgyzstan has no common border with Afghanistan. The drugs smuggled in Tajikistan move to the eastern border of Khorog and to Darvaz and onward move western Tajikistan in Dushanbe, its capital. Another route goes from Khorog along the Pamir highway, it passes through Murgab, capital of autonomous oblast of Gorno-Badakhshan in eastern Tajikistan and reaches Osh (Kyrgyzstan). Drug operators operate around Moskovsky in south western Tajikistan; move opiates through this area to Dushanbe. Almost all opiates bound for Kyrgyzstan via western Tajikistan transit Dushanbe and passing north to Ayni; move onwards to Khojand in Ferghana Valley region of Tajikistan. Khojand is connected by several routes to Osh. From Khojand, the movement can easily take place to Batken in Kyrgyzstan and onward to Osh. There is an alternative route to Osh from Khojand through Uzbekistan via Kokand or Andijan in the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan to Osh.³³ Thus opiate trafficking groups easily take advantage of Osh oblast's weak border controls.

Routes from Khorog to Bishkek

- Khorog - Darvaz - Dushanbe - Osh - Bishkek.
- Khorog -Mugrab - Osh - Bishkek.

Routes from Dushabe to Osh

- Dushanbe - Ayni - Khojand -Batken - Osh.
- Dushanbe - Ayni -Khojand -Kokand or Andijan (Uzbekistan) - Osh.

The drug traffickers use the route from Osh to Bishkek, capital of Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz-Kazakh border is very porous, illegal trafficking can take place without detection. As Tajikistan shares no border with Kazakhstan, so the routes from Tajikistan have to pass through the territories of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to reach there. Uzbekistan route connects Dushanbe with Tashkent, capital of Uzbekistan passing through Saryasia and Bukhara and thereon to Shymkent and Taraz in southern Kazakhstan before entering Russia. Another route starts

from Dushanbe to Choroju in Turkmenistan via Bukhara and moves north through Atyrau in Kazakhstan and ultimately to the Russian territory. UNODC publication has mentioned several prominent routes passing through Kazakhstan, paving its ultimate way to Russia:³⁴

- Route 1. Almaty - Ayaguz - Georgievka - Ust-Kamenogorsk - Russia.
- Route 2. Almaty - Saryshagan - Balkhash - Karganda - Astana - Kokshetau - Petropavlovsk - Russia.
- Route 3. Taraz - Shymkent - Kyzylorda - Aktobe - Uralsk - Russia.
- Route 4. Almaty - Semipalatinsk - Novosibirsk(Russia).
- Route 5. Beineu - Makat - Atyrau - Ganyushkino - Russia.



Source:<http://www.eurasianet.org/mapkazakhstan>

Drug traffickers coming from Tashkent cross Shymkent and Taraz to reach Almaty so as to use Route 1 and Route 2, whereas those crossing Bishkek use the first four routes. Route 5 is traversed by traffickers coming from Turkmenistan and Nukus, the capital of Karakalpakstan autonomous region of Uzbekistan .

There are two main routes for drug trafficking that pass through Turkmenistan : one, westward over the Caspian to Azerbaijan and on to Europe; second, northwards through Kazakhstan to Russia.

Uzbekistan has well developed road and railway network through which licit and illicit goods move. One such railway line connects Tashkent to Dostyk on the Kazakh-Chinese border and passes into China. Further expansion of rail link between Kashgar (China) and Andijan is being contemplated;³⁵ on fruition, it will immensely increase flow of goods, licit and illicit.

Apart from the major routes for the flow of drugs, discussed above, there also exists some minor routes as well, and air flights can also be used for the purpose of drug trafficking.

SECURITY IMPLICATIONS

Drugs and Radical Islamists nexus in Central Asia

Narcotics trafficking is carried out by various actors: farmers, criminals at the local level, transnational networks, warlords and ideologically committed militant organisations such as Al Qaeda, Taliban and IMU. They do not work in isolation but in collusion performing various activities by different actors till the end. The activities range from providing protection and creating favourable environment for the consummation of trafficking, using violence, intimidation and corruption. Their activities mutually reinforce their interests. It is very difficult to draw a line between their interests, solely ideological or money considerations or combination of both. The worldwide scenario has changed and so too in Central Asia. The fusion of crime and terrorism or insurgency is closely visible in the activities of IMU.

There has emerged an increasing consensus that IMU was strongly involved in the drug trafficking from Afghanistan towards Osh in Kyrgyzstan. Bolot Djanuzakov, head of the Kyrgyz Security Council, asserted in 2000: "The IMU controlled the majority, perhaps up to 70 per cent, of the heroin entering Kyrgyzstan."³⁶ Ralf Mutschke, of the Criminal Intelligence Directorate of Interpol, labeled the IMU a "hybrid organisation in which criminal interests often take priority over political goals, adding that, IMU leaders have vested interests in ongoing unrest and instability in their area in order to secure the routes they use for the transportation of the drugs."³⁷

The geographical areas targeted and timings of IMU incursions of 1999 and 2000 in Batken (Kyrgyzstan) seem to indicate that the driving motivation was to destabilise border areas, confuse law enforcement agencies and military structure in order to maintain and secure narcotics transportation routes. The incursions took place barely after a month of the last opium harvest in Afghanistan. General Bolot Djanuzakov, stated: "The guerrillas main aim was to expand drug trafficking routes to the north through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The routes through Batken are the shortest."³⁸ So it can be said that the IMU activities in

Central Asia appear partly for money from drug trafficking needed to run the organisation and to create destabilization in the short run.

IMU is a militant organisation with the goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate. It sided with the opposition in a civil war in Tajikistan. After the peace agreement in Tajikistan, it developed closer relations with Al Qaeda and Taliban. It also fought US and its allied forces along with Taliban in Afghanistan. Its military commander Juma Namangani was killed in November 2001 during the US bombing in Mazar-i-Sharif. That IMU is still active, is proved by its involvement in various incidents in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan from 2003 onwards. IMU remains committed to its ideology with an expanded goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate not only in Uzbekistan, but in the whole of Central Asia and China's Xinjiang province.

IMU needs funds to carry out its protracted movement. So, it becomes incumbent for the movement to add anchors to its support base. S. C. Cornell states: "The organisation or movement either gradually shifts its nature to a predominantly criminal one or acquires a criminal nature alongside its ideological nature. Profit through crime, and often specifically the drug trade becomes a motivation in its own right for the existence and cohesion of the movement."³⁹ Thus it is obvious that there is a close link between drug trade, terrorism and insurgency. The failure to curb it poses a danger to the security of the region.

Drug Abuse

The emergence of Central Asia as a transit route for drugs is directly linked to the growing spread of drug addiction amongst the Central Asian people. They are switching from the traditional use of smoking opium or marijuana to easily accessible heroin. UNDP report mentions that Central Asia faces one of the strongest increase in opiate abuse in recent years - a 17 fold increase from 1990 to 2002 particularly in the intravenous use of heroin.⁴⁰

In 2007, UNODC estimated that somewhere between 15.2 to 21.1 million people use opiates globally and more than half of which are thought to live in Asia alone. Moreover, the highest level of opiate use occurs along the main drug trafficking routes out of Afghanistan. The Central Asian region is estimated to have opiate users above the global average levels of 0.3-0.5 per cent of the population aged 15-64; 1 per cent in Kazakhstan, 0.8 per cent in Kyrgyzstan, 0.8 in Uzbekistan and 0.5 per cent in Tajikistan.⁴¹

According to the UNODC, in 2006, there were 90,082 registered drug users in Central Asia except Turkmenistan; out of which 70 per cent (63,296) were opiate users and 76 per cent (47,827) of them were consumers of heroin and 24 per cent (15,469) of opium. The injecting drug users (IDU) comprised of 91 per cent of opiate users. The World Drug Report 2009 estimates that the number of drug users in Central Asia is as high as 3,40,000.⁴²

TABLE 5
HEROIN AND OPIUM USER AMONG REGISTERED DRUG USERS, 2006

	<i>Heroin</i>	<i>Opium</i>	<i>Total Registered Drug Users</i>
Kazakhstan	25,461	9,984	54,411
Kyrgyzstan	2,694	2,186	7,842
Tajikistan	6335	669	7,865
Uzbekistan	13,337	2599	19,964

Source: UNODC: *Illicit Drug Trends in Central Asia*, April 2008

Opiate injecting drug use coupled with unsafe injecting practices such as sharing needles are the contributing factors that put Central Asia at the risk of an expanded HIV/AIDS epidemic. UNAIDS estimates that Uzbekistan has the Central Asia's largest HIV/AIDS epidemic in terms of numbers amounting to 31,000, whereas Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan have 4000, 4900 and 12,000 cases respectively.⁴³ IDU was the predominant cause for HIV/AIDS in almost all the Central Asian states, Kazakhstan having the largest number of IDU users: 66 per cent.

Acceleration in drug addiction and corresponding increase in HIV/AIDS cases in Central Asia has the potential to bring about widespread negative impact on society. Majority of the people infected with HIV/AIDS are young people in the age group of 15 to 49 and more prominently under 30. For example, in Kyrgyzstan 54.6 per cent of all identified HIV/AIDS cases have occurred amongst 15 to 29 years old. This would certainly impact on the population's demographic structure and consequently on the economic health of the states. World Bank estimates that "if unchecked, the growing epidemic in Central Asia would slow economic growth over the next decade, by 20 per cent in Uzbekistan and by 10 per cent in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan."⁴⁴ Moreover, the governments will have to spend more on social programmes such as health care benefits, education

and subsidies - an added pressure on already financially starved economies of Central Asia.

Drugs and State Legitimacy

The infiltration of the organized crime in a state apparatus - even at the highest level - influence administrative decisions, legislative acts, court verdicts or state policies. It undermines the legitimacy of the political system. The state becomes dysfunctional when the principles that govern the behaviour of the state are based on criminal ideas. Resources needed to be used for the deliverance of the society are diverted so as to serve vested interests. So the capacity of the state to deliver basic services and to provide protection to its citizens is reduced. It is a win-win situation for both the criminals and the governing elites. The governing elites are interested in the prolongation of their rule, gathering economic muscle in cooperation with drug syndicates, to bully its adversaries or even getting them exterminated and to get support in the elections to parliament in the periphery. On the other hand, the drug barons want their activities to go unimpeded by establishing formal or informal contacts with the state apparatus to get meaningful economic strength, sometimes converting illegal money to legal one, and even to get elected to parliament.

In Tajikistan, after the end of the civil war (1992-1997), prominent government positions were given to opposition military commanders, having interest in drug trade which facilitated and legitimized their activities. An example of high level involvement in organized crime is that of Makhadsaid Ubaidulloev, speaker of Tajikistan parliament and Mayor of Dushanbe, who commands formal and informal powers. He is one of the wealthiest men in Tajikistan, controlling the cotton monopoly, major aluminum factories, and allegedly major player in the drug trade. Some even aver that he possesses huge de facto power.⁴⁵

Kyrgyzstan's organized crime boss Rysbek Akmatbayev, member of Kyrgyz parliament, a mighty political power was capable of pursuing drug trade with impunity as he enjoyed a huge leverage in Kyrgyz administrative structure. Even his younger brother Tynychbek Akmatbayev, infamous for his criminal activities was elected chairman of a parliamentary committee dealing with organized crime and law enforcement. President Bakiyev used Rysbek as a counterweight to his opposing political and criminal elements.⁴⁶

Certain incidents point to the continuing problem of drug smuggling in Turkmenistan. In 2003, fifteen kilogram of heroin was seized from the

husband of chief prosecutor Kurbanbibi Atajanova, in the border region. She was not relieved of her duties, indicating nexus of government and drug trade.⁴⁷ ICG report mentions: "In Turkmenistan, President Niyazov had personally benefited from drug smuggling. In Uzbekistan, a mafia has reached a compromise with the state that allowed it to operate largely unimpeded."⁴⁸

It all indicates how the combination of formal and informal structures is used to serve criminal interests. Drug cartels have enough leverage within the security organs of all the states in the region.

CONCLUSION

The drug trade has social, economic and political repercussions. They act simultaneously, linked intricately and difficult to be divorced from one another. Afghanistan is the fountainhead of poppy cultivation, thus facilitating drug trade. Afghanistan is a disturbed state, centre's writ does not run throughout the country, certain areas are under the umbrella of militant organisations or warlords. Poppy cultivation is depended upon as it provides them finances in carrying out their activities. Prevalent widespread poverty, corruption, easy accessibility or co-option of the ruling elites, all these facilitate production and transit of drugs through the territory. The US and its allies have failed to deliver, war appears to them unwinnable. They plan to withdraw after handing over charge to Afghanistan's national security force and making them capable of governing the country. The situation is unlikely to improve in Afghanistan after foreign forces quit, looking to the turbulent historical past, ethnic division of population, cross-cutting interests of warlords and militant organisations, extreme poverty and dismal economy. Drug trafficking gets nourished on the weaknesses of the states: economic, political structural or others. Poor surveillance, ill-equipped and deficit border guarding, widespread corruption, poverty, co-option of high-ups with drug criminals facilitate drug trafficking in Central Asia. The environment in Central Asian states is quite congenial for drug trade to go unimpeded. It is more prominent in the economically and politically weak states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Drug trade is a security threat to Central Asian states as viewed in a comprehensive sense. It impairs human health, generates corruption, weakens governance, strengthens criminal organisations with potential to disturb peace and stability of the states and thus of the region.

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AFGHANISTAN - CENTRE OF NARCOTICS PRODUCTION AND DRUG TRAFFICKING*

DEEPALI GAUR SINGH

Even as various groups worked to ensure that poppy production in Afghanistan grew in mammoth proportions within a short span of half a century, it is often the vagaries of weather and 'natural disasters' that have over the years contributed to drop in production of opium. The cultivation of opium - raw material for the world's deadliest drug, heroin - in Afghanistan was predicted to drop in 2010 by the UNODC against the background of predictions of bad weather during the country's growing season.¹

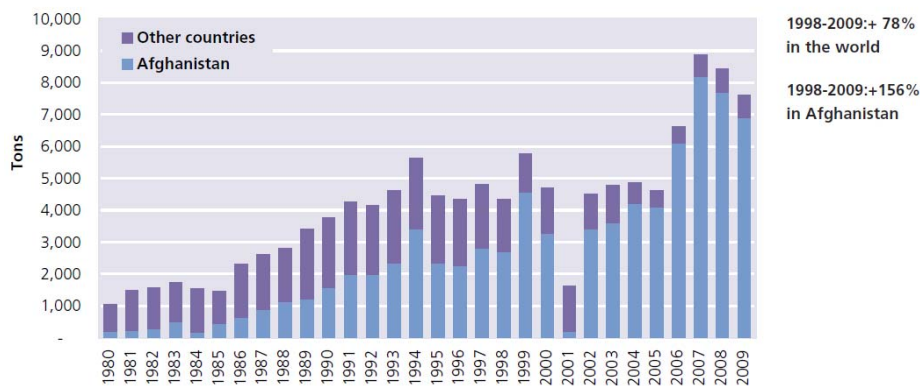
From an extremely modest production of 12 metric tonnes of opium in 1956 to the epithet of the opium granary of the world by the next millennium has been as swift and sudden as the political events guiding the narcotics industry in the Afghanistan. By the year 2000, 70 percent of the global opium was already coming from Afghanistan reaching an overwhelming 90 percent even nine years after the ISAF-led NATO entered the country on the pretext of the 'war against terror' and the 'war against drugs'. What has changed since the ISAF-led NATO troops have been present in the country is the correlation between insurgency and high cultivation, with nearly 80 per cent of villages with very poor security conditions growing poppies but in only 7 per cent of villages untouched by violence. The UNODC report pointed out that in parts of Afghanistan where the Government is more able to enforce the law, nearly two thirds of farmers said they did not grow opium because it is banned, whereas in the southeast, where authorities' reach is weaker, just under 40 per cent

* This paper is revised and updated version of a chapter in author's book *Drugs Production and Trafficking in Afghanistan*, (Published by Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation in 2007).

of farmers cited the ban as a reason for not cultivating poppies.²

In fact, just prior to the coup of 1973 at the height of 'flower power' and the hippie culture in the west, at least 5,000 to 6,000 'flower children' or hippies were believed to have been living in Kabul, mostly Europeans and Americans. Today, nearly ninety percent of the heroin consumed in the United Kingdom (UK) originates in Afghanistan and hence the British government's commitment to reducing drug cultivation in Afghanistan and thereby drug-related crime in Britain.³ By the year 2004, over 60 percent of the global drug-related treatment demand in Europe and Asia was for opiates and Afghanistan continues to be the largest contributor to this global opiates market.⁴

GRAPH 1
GLOBAL POTENTIAL OPIUM PRODUCTION, 1980-2009



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p. 31

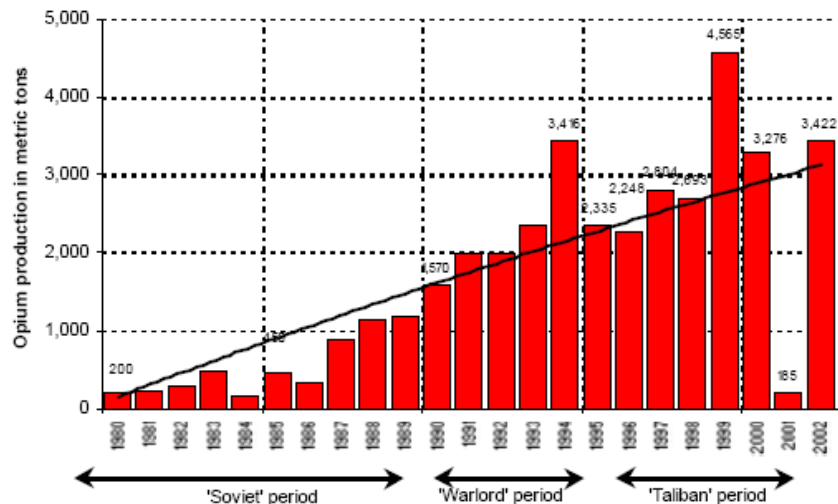
That it took a little less than a quarter of a century for Afghanistan to move to the position of the most important source of global narcotics production can be gauged from the graph above that depicts the comparative growth in production vis-à-vis the global growth trends. Opium production in Afghanistan grew at the rate of 15% per annum between 1980-2000 - almost twice as fast as the global opium production rate of 8%.⁵ It was during the *jihad*, itself, Afghanistan had grown into the top heroin producer in the world and was catering to 60 percent of the American demand.⁶

The various debates centring around the factors that turned the country into the centre of the global narcotics trade in a matter of two decades have pointed to four aspects to be responsible by way of an

understanding for the expansion and subsequent entrenchment of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, dominant being the prolonged absence of effective central control; the devastation of the agrarian economy and its accompanying infrastructure due to more than twenty years of conflict; the acceptance of opium poppy cultivation as a livelihood strategy by many rural households; and the final yet equally important link in the trade which was the consequent development of a thriving commodity trade in opium in rural markets.

The graph below illustrates the tremendous success that the production of opium enjoyed in Afghanistan - more than any other crop in any part of the world. And this is one of the symptoms of the industry that became well-established in the region with Afghanistan taking over the ignoble mantle of being at the centre of this illicit trade.

GRAPH 2
OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN FROM 1980-2002 (IN METRIC TONNES)



Source: UNODC, *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem*, UN, New York 2003, p.6.

With three main sources of opium production - Iran, Pakistan and Turkey - already enforcing bans or severe drug control laws in the decade between 1972 and the early 1980s it opened doors to the possibility of other sources of opium from south west Asia. Around the same time the government in Afghanistan's eastern neighbour was engaged in the same political duplicity that the American policy at home and overseas was entangled in and was, in fact, matching them step for step.

Simultaneously, the political events in Afghanistan exacerbated the situation as the PDPA government had lost control of the countryside after resistance to the Soviet occupation began in 1979. With this they also lost effective control over the, albeit limited, poppy growing areas as well. The rural economy was the first to feel the impact of the war causing food production to fall by half compelling the people to rely even more on government aid.⁷ The Soviet troops followed a deliberate program of crippling the agrarian economy through heavy mining and destroying farmlands and killing livestock. This was the decade - of the 1980s - that was the critical period in the history of Afghanistan's dramatic rise to the centre of the global opium stage as external factors, too, ensured the viability of Afghanistan's opium production with major markets opening up. With Iran having effectively prohibited poppy cultivation after the 1979 revolution, the shrinking sources of illicit opium for the international market set the stage for Afghanistan to fill the vacuum as the only alternative and ready source of supply. The destruction of the rural economy provided an upswing in the production of Afghan opium production as fighting the war and poppy production became the only possibilities for economic relief. Additionally, regional commanders started using opium production for generating funds to purchase weapons creating a drugs-for-guns economy. Circumstances, both within and beyond Afghan boundaries, thus, sucked the country deeper into the narcotics cesspool.

The American administration's Afghan policy, between 1979 and 1989, was very much in confluence with its earlier efforts in the 1950s to contain the spread of communism in Asia. They had gone to the extent of forging alliances with tribes and warlords inhabiting the areas of the Golden Triangle thus, giving them not just accessibility to, but also protection along the south-eastern border of China. The common anti-communist agenda of the Americans and French ensured a continuous supply of ammunition, arms and even air transport to these drug warlords and their armies. That its corresponding effect would be an explosion in both the availability and illegal flow of heroin in not just their area of operation as well as within the US and into the hands of drug dealers and addicts was only to be expected. Besides, the increase in heroin addiction the US itself studies at this time also revealed that 34 percent of US troops in Vietnam commonly used heroin during their tour of duty.⁸ For many the recent strategies pursued by the foreign troops independently inside their own zones of control have had pretty much the same effect as poppy protection for information policy has been followed by some troops in

complete violation and at cross purposes with the narcotics eradication strategies of other participating nations.

It would, however, be highly simplistic to explain away the heroin explosion in the region of the Golden Crescent as the response to a drop in production in another region. Like a replica of the old "Great Game" it was part of a well-planned and concerted effort on part of numerous parties involved who had important stakes in getting the largest piece of the political pie in Afghanistan. These actors were both regional and extra-regional and in this context it becomes even more important to understand the political manoeuvrings of the time to get a clearer understanding of the dividends that the intentional entrenchment of this drug trade was supposed to yield for all the parties involved - the United States, Pakistan and of course Afghanistan, which was the stage for this to be played out; besides all the other regional actors who were to be subsequently affected by this.

REGIONAL POLITICS

In the first few weeks of its proxy war against the Soviets, the Americans under Carter with his allies in Egypt's Sadat and Pakistan's Zia -ul Haque had already laid the foundation for the jihad. The popular belief behind the CIA-ISI sponsored jihad by the mujahideen has been the unpopular invasion by the Soviets into Afghanistan. But some facts told another story. The first significant face-to-face contact between the CIA and the mujahideen had already occurred in May 1979 in Peshawar, more than six months before the actual Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and one month after the execution of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto.⁹ At around the same time, in midsummer 1979, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's national security advisor, grasping the opportunity Afghanistan's political situation was giving him, convinced the president to sanction some initial aid to the Afghan rebels. The shipment included amongst other things old British .303 Lee Enfield rifles, which was enough to alarm the Kremlin.¹⁰ What the Soviet invasion of December 1979 did for Pakistan was to be the catalyst that catapulted its importance as a vital partner for the Afghan¹¹ *mujahideen* to a much higher level. Nearly 5 million Afghans - a quarter of the total population of the country at the time - took refuge in Pakistan and the bulk of the refugees resided either in refugee camps as they mixed with the Pakistani population.¹²

A telling comment on the policies followed by the Americans during

the phase and the extent of their stakes in the region was reflected in the thoughts of an influential school of thought in the United States during the last phase of the Cold War who felt that if the Soviet aggression had not happened then it would have been invented.¹³

With nearly 5 million Afghans outside the country's borders almost simultaneously mujahideen political parties set up their headquarters in these refugee camps. Soon Peshawar too found itself from a quaint backwater of Pakistan with a population of 500,000 thrust to the centre of the jihad hosting twice the residents. While millions of weapons and tonnes of ammunition flooded the region, in view of the volatile situation in the country and the potential for its regional implications, many international and non-governmental agencies opened offices there too. Apart from the flood of weapons, this era in the history of the country (Pakistan) also witnessed some of the most hectic, intense and active military activities and military appearances. With the region literally under a global microscope and large national and international concentration here the role of the Pashtuns assumed far greater significance in both political and military events in Afghanistan.

What is important to understand is that the explosion in heroin in this region began from Pakistan and not Afghanistan. By the 1980s Pakistan had already become a huge opium cultivator, producing about 70% of the world's supply of high-grade heroin in 1984.¹⁵ The covert supply line set up by the CIA and ISI for ferrying arms and aid to the *mujahideen* is what provided the legitimising umbrella for this narcotics trade to thrive and subsequently grow into an industry of colossal proportions with immense global implications.

Pakistan had already made itself something of an international pariah for many as a militarist Islamising state, meaning that assistance would have to come from the west and not the Soviet bloc or the non-aligned bloc. It had been General Zia's dream to "recreate a Sunni Muslim space between India, Iran and Russia" and the Afghan *mujahideen* could be the foot soldiers to spread this message to revive Islam in Central Asia creating a Pakistan-led Islamic block of nations.¹⁶ The emergence of *Jamaat-i-Islami*, an Islamic movement, at this opportune moment played a significant role in trying to create a Muslim society thereby making the country an appropriate base to launch an Islamic *jihad*, towards the end of the 1970s, against the Soviets and communism. The *Jamaat* was inspired by the teachings of its founder - the Islamic revivalist, Maulana Abul Alaa al-Mawdudi. Mawdudi's writings gained greater significance with relation

to the Taliban especially in reference to the introduction of the *zakat* or obligatory alms tax for charity, which the militia optimally exploited in collecting revenues from the poppy farmers.¹⁷ What was interesting is that it saw no contradiction between the radical Islamists hatred for the Russians in Chechnya and their hatred for the Americans everywhere else as both were reactions to a challenge from the impure west.

US-PAK ALLIANCE: A BACKGROUND

The American alliance with Pakistan had begun as early as 1951 coinciding with the developing standoff between India and Pakistan. The seal on the Pak-US military relationship came in 1954 when the former joined the US sponsored SEATO alliance making Washington its primary military supplier, partly as a quid pro quo for the intelligence facilities provided to them. This was followed closely by their entry into the secret US network, which included the CIA and the National Security Agency (NSA), for global electronic spying on the Soviet Union, like monitoring Soviet nuclear and missile tests in Kazakhstan. The U-2 reconnaissance flights, an important component of this network, would lead to a major diplomatic standoff between Pakistan and the Soviet Union as the latter, in May 1960, shot one down, an indication of their consternation. It resulted in the immediate suspension of a joint petroleum exploration project.¹⁸

Surveillance had been an important component of this joint activity of the US services and Pakistan's powerful ISI. The information gathered watching the tribes on adjacent Soviet-Afghan and Chinese territory yielded background information crucial in planning and waging the Afghan resistance. This assistance was briefly suspended due to the Soviet-brokered peace in Tashkent following the Indo-Pak war of 1965. But it would be just a matter of another decade and a half before the ISI was to work intimately with the CIA, the largest intelligence organisation in the world. From the time when its annual budget never exceeded a few million dollars, the ISI was to make a very dramatic jump into the big league, with the big players, as it became the conduit for, at least, US \$2 billion worth of supplies, cash and weapons.¹⁹

The fragility of the Pak-Afghan relationship was rooted in the Pashtunistan issue and Pakistan is believed to have already drawn up a 'forward policy' on Afghanistan in anticipation of a revival of this bone of contention. The potential threat of a 'Greater Pashtunistan' continued to be their Achilles' heel and guided many policies with regard to their western

neighbour. Between 1973 and 1977, they clandestinely trained a military force of 5,000 Afghan opponents of the Daud government in secret camps in Pakistan.²⁰ This military force was used under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar in 1975, which though suppressed then, played an important role in bringing Daud to the negotiation table the following year to accept the Durand line as the formal international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. A special directorate outside the authority of the ISI was responsible for the creation of this force, which had been a deeply guarded and completely independent Pakistani operation. The meeting between the CIA, ISI and the Afghan exiles in 1979 was to set the stage for one of the largest American covert intelligence operations since the Vietnam War.

THE ISI CONNECTION

Prime Minister Bhutto created the ISI, in 1971, after Pakistan's defeat to India following the loss of eastern Bengal and the creation of an independent Bangladesh. Initially charged with sourcing raw materials and technical knowledge for the country's nuclear programme the agency could never really stay completely out of the politics of the country. This apart as far as the Afghan *jihad* was concerned the ISI was not just a weapons distributor, trainer and all-round political and military guru to the holy warriors. It was also controlling and massively profiting from the fast growing - to a large extent sponsored by them - drug trade, which flourished with each passing year of the Afghan war. Their policies at the time became the determinants of not just the course of the Afghan war but also shaped the post-war events. The potential of the warfare in the region to unleash an unprecedented flow of drugs towards the west was not hidden from them and it took a little over a decade for the narcotics bomb to barrage the region.

The ISI, which was at the heart of the national security state that General Zia had hoped to build along the lines of Israel, was also the executive agency for the *jihad*. The power of Pakistan's military in politics was increasingly embodied in the rising potency of the ISI, which participated in national politics more and more, and as an ally of Washington turned out to be the driving force in the Afghan war of 1979-1989. What this meant was that the more the anti-Soviet *jihad* grew the closer it brought the ISI to the seat of governmental power in Pakistan. Besides, the Soviet invasion presented General Zia with the dual

opportunity of positioning himself as the saviour for both Islam and the West, on the one hand leading the *jihad* against the infidels and on the other a crusade against the communists. Besides, his military acumen gave him the foresight to grasp the chance to play a pivotal role in this last and biggest battle of the Cold War.

Hand-picked by the President himself, General Akhtar Abdul Rehman Khan was made ISI's new chief immediately after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. He was the chief architect of Afghan *jihad* for eight years till his death, in 1988, in the same mysterious plane crash that killed President Zia-ul Haq. Aided by a handful of his own young officers, he trained the Afghans in firing rockets and the most advanced 'Stinger' missiles - which reached the Afghans only in 1986 - so skilfully that it proved to be one of the fatal cuts inflicted by the *mujahideen*, of the 'thousand cuts' prophetically alluded to by the French intelligence. His immediate subordinate, Brigadier Mohammad Youssaf, was directly responsible for training and operational strategies of the *mujahideen* from 1983 to 1987, as was very candidly said by the brigadier himself. "I was now cast in the role of the overall guerrilla leader."²¹ It was General Zia, who had acted upon Akhtar Khan's advice to back the Afghan resistance.

As proposed by General Akhtar one of the guiding rules of the alliance was that at all times Pakistan was to be the conduit between America and Pakistan. That all arms supplies, finance and training of the fighters had to be routed through Pakistan and not directly by the CIA. This suited the Americans too, as having soiled their hands during the Indo-China Wars they needed the involvement of second, third and possibly even a fourth party to create as much distance from the theatre of their covert military operations. By the time the Soviets withdrew from their overt invasion and the Americans from their covert war the region was awash with the most sophisticated weaponry available globally.

The military hardware would either be shipped through international waters by the Americans from Israel, the US or wherever they were bought from, to the Karachi port. From here it became the responsibility of the ISI for distribution. Depending on the destinations for dumping the arms - whether it was the arms dumps at Ojhri or Peshawar, or the party offices - the ISI used the army transport trucks, as already mentioned, or even shipped them by train.

The three conditions put forth by President Zia for the shipment of arms, irrespective of where they were coming from - Egypt, China or even the United States - were firstly, that all countries concerned would

cooperate in maintaining absolute silence about the shipments. Secondly, arms and other supplies were to be shipped to Pakistan by the fastest mode possible. The early airlifts from American facilities in Sadat's Egypt were to meet this condition set by the ISI. And finally, the shipments by air - as opposed to overland shipment from China and Iran and the bulk shipments, which came by sea to Karachi - were not to exceed two planeloads a week.²² Though the military was involved in keeping a rigid control over these shipments but the route was so cumbersome that it became prey to corruption.

It might be important to mention at this juncture that this pipeline, which was primarily operationalised to ferry supplies to the *mujahideen*, served a plethora of purposes for both the Americans and the Pakistani administration involved in this proxy war, especially when it came to diversion of shipments. Between 1984 and 1986 it is believed that Israeli military logistics and advisory team were secretly stationed in Pakistan to oversee millions of dollars worth of weapons to Iran from Pakistan's army depots in its war against Iraq. Pakistan is believed to have been returning a favour as Iran had acted as a similar covert arms transfer channel for Pakistan in 1965 when it was suffering from an international arms embargo. The Israelis stationed in Peshawar, simultaneously, played the role of trainers in military tactics and the use of sophisticated weapons and advisors to the *mujahideen* groups, particularly Hekmatyar's *Hizb-e-Islami*. This was indeed ironical given the philosophical credentials of the *Hizb*. According to Ben-Menashe, an Israeli intelligence officer, "Hekmatyar knew exactly who he was working with." Many Israeli Defence Force (IDF) members are believed to have even died in operations with the *mujahideen* units. Once again the NLC was the main courier when the shipments to Iran were made by road.²³

The Pak-American alliance during these years was never a smooth affair, at least, as far as the interactions of both the country's premier intelligence agencies was concerned. The US intelligence analysis, in 1979 itself, had voiced its concerns about the Pak-Afghan region's drug potential, something that was later echoed by the American DEA. Thus, apart from Pakistan's unstinting pursuance of their nuclear programme, another thorn in the side in US-Pak relations was seen to be the unchecked expansion of opium poppy production in the tribal areas of Pakistan, along the Afghan border. One of the primary reasons for this was that these tribal areas were a government unto themselves making it extremely difficult for Pakistan's administration to execute effective control here.

Besides, with the insurgency on the Afghan side of the border exacerbating the problem, their diktat was practically ineffective over opium production and smuggling. Simultaneously Pakistan's refining capacity had also become increasingly sophisticated. As a result, the output of the Pakistani area had reached close to 400 tonnes in the previous year and this combined with Afghanistan's production surpassed that of the 'Golden Triangle' (Thailand, Laos and China).²⁴ The Pakistan government did take legislative action to check the drug problem like the Islamic Ordinance that was introduced in February 1979 banning all intoxicants; but this, paradoxically, threw the narcotics control apparatus into shambles when it removed existing enforcement mechanisms without substituting them with new ones. This once again highlights the concerns faced by drug-enforcement agencies even in the present-day scenario as forced control has invariably had an opposite effect in most areas under cultivation. During the time the warning signs of the impending doom that such unabated narcotics production and trafficking would cause was already there. Yet, neither the American or Pakistani planners of the holy war did much to curb or control it. On the contrary they used it to saturation point towards the achievement of their collective as well as individual goals.

THE ARMS TRADE

This was also the time when hand-made weapons produced by Pashtun gunsmiths from the NWFP were already reaching the warriors who has started engaging in hit-and-run guerrilla tactics with the Soviets. The gun industry was not new to Darra, a Pakistani village along the Pak-Afghan border, as the British gave this 'art' of making guns to the tribesmen here to stop them from stealing their rifles way back in the nineteenth century.²⁵

The troubled relationship between the US and Pakistani administration was already reflected in independent programmes that the Americans had simultaneously embarked upon, like their top-secret programme codenamed SOVMAT.²⁶ A brainchild of CIA Director, Stansfield Turner, in the Carter's administration, the programme aimed at acquiring huge caches of Soviet and Soviet-bloc arms for use by the Afghan holy warriors - and as an ironical and unfortunate twist of fate for the West - for their terrorist successors worldwide once the war was over.²⁷ The programme was driven by the need to acquire state-of-the-art war material by any means to supplement the older genuine captured

Soviet weapons supplied by Egypt, Israel and others and even the cheaper replicas coming from Egypt. Interestingly the programme threw up strange bedfellows as the CIA, using a plethora of false corporations, bought weapons from members of the Warsaw pact who enjoyed access to Soviet equipment. Many of these clandestine deals, some even with groups of dubious credentials, would surface during the course of the BCCI scandal. Hence, the more sources or fronts the CIA established for access to weapons and resources, the more their control loosened over whose hands they were finding their way to.

Operation Mosquito and the use of opiates by the Americans, in this proxy war had not missed its target as corruption and demoralisation coupled with drug abuse had slowly crept into the Soviet units in Afghanistan.²⁸ So pervasive was the problem some of the Afghan intermediaries were able to purchase unpacked crates of new weapons - still in their grease and wrapping - directly from the quartermaster of the Soviet 40th army in Kabul, invariably the modus of exchange being large caches of narcotics. Hence, the drugs for barter system gave the Afghans access to Soviet weaponry. The Afghan fighters were encouraged by the CIA and ISI to carry out clandestine raids on Soviet supply depots and search battlefields for the desired weapons and devices, which were later used as part of the CIA's research on counter-weapon systems. For the Americans these proved to be important in developing counter arsenal against the Soviets. Among these weapons were defensive flares used by the Soviet pilots to counter the Stinger missiles once they came into use. These flares were tested by the US military to research ways to counter its effectiveness. In a sense, the Americans used the mujahideen as foot soldiers to gather samples for their defence Research and Development and Afghanistan was the ground for testing the technology that they developed.²⁹

Initially, the fear of even one Stinger Missile being captured by the Soviets thereby exposing the technology to them is what had prevented the Americans from sanctioning the missiles to the *mujahideen*. Moreover, with the *mujahideen* having gained infamy for pawning their weapons in the open weapons market, they questioned the sagacity of placing these in the hands of the warriors. In a cruel twist of fate, but as is true of any proxy war, while they were successfully deployed against the Soviets these weapons also escaped the control of the CIA and ISI and found their way into the hands of such adversaries of the United States as Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a *mujahideen* group 'accidentally' lost four firing

tubes and sixteen missiles to the Iranians when they unintentionally wandered across the border.³⁰ Some reached the hands of maverick *mujahideen* in the aftermath of the pullout of the Soviet troops. That the Russians were simultaneously pursuing a similar policy was evidenced when the defensive flares, already mentioned, surfaced to counter the Stingers that were used in 1986. As was the case, three of the weapons (Stingers) had already fallen into the hands of the Russian Spetsnaz commandos.³¹

THE DRUG TRADE

The ISI did not remain untouched by the corruption and leakages within its organisation. In the early phase of the holy war itself - as early as 1983 - General Akhtar Khan found himself compelled to remove the entire ISI staff in Quetta as they were mired amidst accusations supported by irrefutable proof of their direct involvement in profiting from the drugs trade and the siphoning of CIA-supplied weapons that were meant for the *mujahideen*.³² The dramatic arrest and even more mysterious release or disappearance of two officers from Pakistan's defence forces in 1986 carrying identical quantities - 220 kilograms - of high-grade heroin was a critical reflection of the extent of involvement of Pakistan's political and military elite in the highly profitable yet murky narcotics trade and pointed to the existence of some kind of a heroin syndicate within the army and the ISI. The cache valued at US \$600 million, competed with the total amount of US aid to Pakistan the following year.³³

Despite having identified forty different heroin syndicates in Pakistan, the DEA, who had 17 full-time officers in the country during the time, including some headed by top government officials, were able to make little headway with respect to actual convictions. That the American drug control agencies and their intelligence agencies were clearly working at cross purposes with each other can be judged from what was a popular belief of the time - that several DEA officials resigned as the CIA refused to allow them to out their duties. The CIA clearly wanted no embarrassing disclosures about its drug links between the heroic *mujahideen*, the Pakistani officials and traffickers, and the DEA.

During the holy war both the *mujahideen* and the officers in the communist army in Kabul seized the opportunity that came their way by virtue of the sudden escalation in poppy production in Afghanistan after the fall in Mexico. The donkey, camel and truck convoys that carried

weapons into Afghanistan that earlier used to come back empty now carried raw opium on their return trips. The same tribal chiefs who had been paid off by the CIA-ISI bribes to allow weapon-laden convoys to pass through their tribal areas did the same with heroin runs along the same route. And the same NLC trucks provided by an army-run trucking company, which was used to transport CIA weapons from the Karachi port to Peshawar and Quetta, now did the dual duty for well-connected dealers. The drugs came sealed in the trucks as part of the rest of the cargo like sacks of grains and were delivered to the government go-downs, unchecked by the police.³⁴ The heroin pipeline of the 1980s could not have operated without the knowledge, if not the connivance, of officials at the highest level of the army, the government and the CIA. The end justified the means. Everyone chose to ignore it in the face of the larger task at hand - getting rid of the communists and the defeat of the Soviet Union.

TABLE 1
COMPARATIVE OPIUM PRODUCTION IN PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN (IN TONNES)

	1979	1987	1997	1999	2004	2009
Pakistan	300	165	24	2	40	44
Afghanistan	270	600	2,804	4,565	4,200	6,900

Source: Lawrence Lifschultz, *The Heroin Empire*, p. 342-343 in McCoy and Block (ed.), *War on Drugs: Studies in the Failure of US Narcotics Policy*, Westview Press, USA, 1992; UNDCP, *Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey, 2004*, Afghanistan Programme, Islamabad, 2004; UNODC, *World Drug Report, 2010*.

Though it was commonly said that the heroin explosion in the region really started from Pakistan but within a short span of eight years Afghanistan was all set to wear the mantle as poppy cultivation steadily rose with the promise of lucre, which the cultivation of wheat, or for that matter any other crop, could not even match up to. Besides, as many of the *mujahideen* commanders themselves cultivated poppy on their lands, it did not take much time for them to turn to the heroin trade to fund their war. The 'Golden Crescent' countries of Afghanistan-Pakistan together were destined to become a top global heroin source as the *mujahideen* warlords established vast opium plantations in their zones of control.

A massive guns-for-opium trade was active through the Khyber Pass, with the crop processed in heroin labs at Peshawar, the northern Pakistan city where the holy warriors' re-supply was coordinated. It is the events

towards the end of the 1970s that were responsible for turning Peshawar from a quaint backwater to a geopolitical fault zone. The Islamic revolution had resulted in the plugging of an important trade route for international drug smugglers. Hence, the opium extracted from locally grown poppies could no longer move west from Pakistan prompting the setting up of laboratories in the barren mountains on either side of the Khyber Pass. Hidden from the authorities, behind these mud brick redoubts opium was refined into billions of dollars worth of heroin before being trucked or shipped to the port of Karachi and then moved further west to Europe and America. The ISI, on their part, established a smuggling network to deliver heroin to the global markets. By the time the Soviets left, the seven major mujahideen groups alone were responsible for producing twice the national annual opium production of both Pakistan and Iran combined - 800 metric tonnes in 1989 alone. They were effectively meeting 70 percent of the world's heroin supply.³⁵

From almost no production of heroin in 1979, Afghanistan, in the company of Pakistan in the span of a decade had become the largest producer of opium for the global market by the time the Soviets left the country. But it is believed that the big push in the trade came in 1985 at the height of Zia's regime in Afghanistan.

TABLE 2
PAK-AFGHAN REGION'S CONTRIBUTION TO GLOBAL OPIUM
PRODUCTION, 1980-2009

<i>Decade</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2009</i>
Percentage of global total	5%	71%	87%	89.5%

Source: United Nations International Drug Control Programme 2001 and UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, 2010, p.137

Though the new Pakistan army chief, General Asif Nawaz did make a concerted effort to root out the narcotics mafia from the armed forces, in 1992, but heroin money had by now penetrated Pakistan's economy, politics and society. Though Pakistan was no longer producing opium to make a global impact but it was very heavily involved in the trafficking of narcotics. By the early nineties the narco-mafia and political elite were getting increasingly enmeshed with each other to the extent that they even became members of the National Assembly during the first governments of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto (1988-90) and Nawaz Sharif (1990-93). With an evident nexus between the two - drug lords and the

politicians - it was therefore, not uncommon that drug lords also funded candidates to high office in both Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Sharief's Pakistan Muslim League. The democratic governments that followed President Zia's dictatorial regime were not very different in their dealing of the big drug offenders. The lethal cocktail of the drug money mixed with politics meant that now industry and trade was not just heavily subsidised by drug money but became increasingly financed by laundered drugs money and black money, which accounted for an astounding 30-50% of Pakistan's total economy.³⁶

The Saudi Arabian kingdom's connections with the trade could be traced to the *jihad* and their close business dealings, like private arms and oil deals, with the ISI and Lieutenant General Fazl Haq, the military governor of Pakistan's NWFP who was known to be heavily involved in the region from his province. In fact many in Pakistan including former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto were of the opinion that he even protected heroin refiners who processed Afghan opium. But the political vagaries did not allow her to pursue a case against him. She had to face a formidable coalition in the form of the ISI, the drug mafia and the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) boss Agha Hassan Abedi who was also a prominent and evidently influential Pakistani businessman; a clear indication of the clout and power they enjoyed in the politics of the country.

According to a landmark 1992 study on the failure of the US Narcotics policy, by this time corruption, covert operations and narcotics had enmeshed with each other in a manner that separating narcotics trafficking in Pakistan from other more complex issues of regional security and insurgent warfare had become difficult.³⁷ The American policy slate has also not been clean in this regard. On the contrary, if anything, they condemned themselves to repeating the same mistakes they had made in Vietnam where, too, the CIA had chosen to ignore the trade in drugs by anti-communist guerrillas, which they had been financing. Similarly, in Afghanistan too the US chose to ignore the growing collusion between the *mujahideen*, the Pakistani drug traffickers and elements in the military.

Though the Pak-Afghan frontier shares common ethnic features yet the choice of Pakistan as the army base was imposed, not just by the warlike propensities of the tribes spread through the Pakistan-Afghanistan border regions, but also by the facts of geography, not to forget history. In its Cold War with the Soviet Union, Pakistan's strategic importance was not missed by the United States and Pakistan, in turn, did not miss a chance at exploiting it to the hilt. Using the close ties between the US

administrations, especially the Pentagon and the CIA, and Pakistan's military rulers, they built a strategic relationship with the other communist superpower - China, the Soviet Union's great Asian adversary, whose assent and active help was sought for the Afghan adventure. Poppy production had already grown to such an extent in the provinces of Afghanistan that it was commonly heard in Pakistan political circles that, "if you control the poppy fields, Karachi, and the road which links the two; you will be so rich that you will control Pakistan."³⁸

THE GROWTH IN OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN

By the 1990s, at a time when instability reigned supreme against the background of the Soviet withdrawal and the devastating civil war the only stable factor was the cultivation of the poppy plant which did not waver. On the contrary, the areas under cultivation maintained a steady rise. As a result, Afghanistan had firmly placed itself in the unenviable position of the largest source of illicit opium and its derivative heroin and had become the supplier of 70% of the illicit opium production, well ahead of Myanmar's 22%.³⁹ By 2009 at 330 metric tonnes Myanmar had a four percent share in global opium cultivation compared to Afghanistan's 89%.⁴⁰

TABLE 3
POPPY CULTIVATION IN AFGHANISTAN, 1994-2009 (IN HECTARES)

1994	1999	2000	2002	2004	2007	2009
71,470	91,000	82,000	74,000	131,000	193,000	123,000

Compiled from: UNODC, *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2003*, UN New York, 2003; UNODC, *World Drug Report 2005*, and *World Drug Report 2010*, UN Publication, 2005 & 2010.

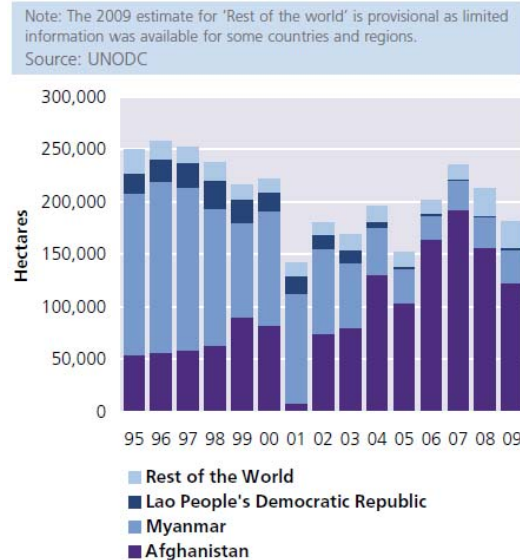
Statistics compiled by the UNDCP show that in the early 1990s opium was cultivated over 41,300 hectares of land and by 1994 the figures shot up dramatically to 71,470 hectares. Cultivation during this time was impacted directly by the policies of the militia group as the drop in production was following their first campaign into Kandahar in 1994 as it aimed at increasing its areas of control. The atmosphere of uncertainty impacted production especially in the light of the Taliban's ambiguous stand on poppy cultivation complicated by their rather strident measures against any one who did not comply with their diktats. But by 1996 once they had consolidated substantial areas they did not follow up on their promises of a poppy ban and cultivation picked up again. It was only in

2000 that with the lure of international recognition the militia group announced a fresh ban on poppy harvesting. Feeling the effects of this decree, the year 2001 saw a decline in production with only 8,000 hectares of land under poppy cultivation. And most of this cultivation was recorded in the province of Badakhshan which had constantly eluded the Taliban. This pushed the demand for poppy up the following year - in 2002 - bringing the levels at par with production prior to the ban in 2000. By this time the political climate had undergone a dramatic change as the Americans following the events of 9/11 chased the Taliban to the peripheries of the political environment. And yet a year after the Taliban ban, the production matched the levels of the year that the Taliban first appeared on the Afghan political arena in 1994 (71,000 hectares).⁴¹ A clear indication that there had been forces before the Taliban and were forces even after the Taliban all of whom had acted in much the same manner in exploiting the gains of poppy cultivation and trafficking of the processed narcotics. In a span of another 48 months, the area under cultivation was to reach levels unrecorded in Afghanistan's opium poppy history. But again since 2007 market forces have played a major role in influencing farmers' decisions against opium cultivation. There has been a drop by one-third in opium cultivation over the past two years, as local community-inspired measures have ensured that a majority of the Afghan provinces are poppy-free. And yet, even in 2009 two thirds of the global opium poppy cultivation is concentrated in Afghanistan. While Pakistan maintained the same levels of under 2,000 hectares as before, Myanmar, the second largest opium poppy cultivating country at 17% of global cultivation has been showing an increase in cultivation over the past three years even though the level remain much lower than in the 1990s and early 2000s.⁴²

The table below shows the pattern of growth in opium production which from 1,570 metric tonnes rose to 3,416 in 1994 corresponding with the growth of areas under cultivation. Ironically, the production levels achieved in 1999 under the militia, that had seemed phenomenal at the time, were doubled in 2007 and even today, nine years into the US-led intervention remain quite high.

The potential opium production for 2004, at 4,200 metric tonnes, was 17 percent higher than the previous year but still lower than the harvest of 1999. The 4,600 metric tonnes was from a cultivation of 91,000 hectares as opposed to 131,000 hectares in 2004. The low yield per hectare was largely due to unfavourable weather conditions like less rainfall, low

GRAPH 3
GLOBAL OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION, 1995-2009 (IN HECTARES)



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p.137

TABLE 4
OPIUM PRODUCTION IN AFGHANISTAN, 1994 TO 2009 (IN TONNES)

	1994	1999	2000	2001	2004	2007	2009
Total	3400	4600	3300	185	4,200	8,200	6,900

Source: UNODC, *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2003*, p.172, UNODC, *Global Drug Report 2010*, p. 260.

temperatures and disease. And this is what could also determine the harvest for 2010 as the winter has had less snow in the northern region which could mean a lack of water for irrigation. These drought like conditions would adversely effect both irrigated and rain-fed opium cultivation. However, in terms of cultivation in 2009, the area continues to be high at approximately 68% of global cultivation even though it registered a 36 percent drop from 2007 - the highest levels ever in Afghanistan's poppy cultivating history, covering an area of 193,000 hectares. Yet, the state of the poppy economy was reflected in the fact that 92 percent of the opium poppy cultivation had taken place on irrigated land in 2004, which had come at the expense of cereal cultivation, notably wheat which declined significantly in 2004. None of Afghanistan's licit agricultural products can currently match the gross income per hectare

from opium, although the difference is not as high as it used to be some years ago. During the period between December 2009 to 2010, wheat prices decreased much more than opium prices. Potentially, this development renders opium cultivation more attractive to farmers as they usually cultivate crops twice a year in irrigated areas. They grow maize, rice, vegetables or cotton after harvesting opium or wheat. Some farmers grow cannabis after the first summer harvest.⁴³ Already by the 1990s Afghanistan had established itself as the largest source of illicit opium and its derivative, heroin.⁴⁴ By 2007 Afghanistan had almost doubled its opium production from the 2004 figures to 8,200 metric tonnes. The figures for 2009 were still twice the amount produced in 2000.⁴⁵

In 2009, the area under cultivation was 123,000 hectares despite the fact that up to 25 Afghan provinces could become poppy-free in 2010. The three provinces of Helmand, Nangarhar and Badakhshan alone were contributing 56 percent of the total area under cultivation. Even though cultivation levels in Helmand decreased in 2009 to around 69,833 hectares as compared to 103,590 hectares in 2008 it continues to be one of the main opium zones in Afghanistan. In contrast, even though poppy cultivation in Badakhshan increased sharply by 179% in 2009, it was just over 557 hectares of land. The cultivation level is expected to be low in 2010 in Nangarhar province as well which could once again be poppy-free with effective information campaigns and eradication efforts. Cultivation and processing are now concentrated in the southern provinces of Helmand, Kandahar and Nimroz, with insurgency and lack of government control providing the ideal cover.

TABLE 5
NO. OF PROVINCES SHOWING POPPY CULTIVATION

1999	2000	2003	2004	2009
18	23	28	32	14

Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2005*, p.177

Even though opium poppy cultivation had touched all the provinces of Afghanistan by 2004, it is normally a handful of provinces that contributed most of the opium production.⁴⁶ The prominent poppy-producing provinces of Helmand, Nangarhar, Badakhshan, Uruzgan and Kandahar, contributed to nearly 95% of the Afghan production. Close to 70% of the country's production came from the combined production of

just the two districts of Helmand and Nangarhar. In 2009 too, in keeping with the earlier patterns it was a handful of provinces like Helmand and Kandahar - along with Day Kundi, Farah, Uruzgan - that continue to be the largest producers of the poppy crop even as 20 Afghan provinces were poppy-free. What this meant is that it was these provinces alone that were turning out to be the watering hole for opium poppy production for the world. In fact, Helmand is at the core of the global trade in Afghan opiates. Besides cultivation it is also the location of large, fixed heroin processing facilities. In 2008, Helmand province alone accounted for almost 50% of Afghanistan's opium seizures.⁴⁷ Today, heroin production is strongly associated with insurgent activity: In 2009, Afghanistan was responsible for 90% of global opium production, and 99% of all opium produced there came from just seven provinces in southern and western Afghanistan, where the rebel groups are strongest. But the insurgents do not control the trafficking activity. While the drug trade provides some funds for the conflict, more significant is the cover the conflict provides for the drug trade. Those who profit most from heroin trafficking are professional criminals and their network of corrupt officials.

In recent years all along the trafficking chain at least half a million people have been involved in the trade of illicit Afghan opiates. According to the UNODC the overall turnover of the illicit international trade in Afghan opiates is close to US\$25 billion annually. Following the ban imposed by the Taliban in 2001 and other natural factors affecting poppy production, like the drought of 2000 in Afghanistan, an abrupt decline was registered. But this only contributed in pushing the prices up which meant that growing poppy became an even more lucrative enterprise the following year thereby resulting in more provinces coming under the poppy crop carpet. Besides post-September 11, 2001 the power vacuum allowed the farmers to go ahead with poppy cultivation in the absence of any government and by the time the Afghan Interim Administration (AIA) issued a ban on poppy cultivation, processing, trafficking and consumption on 17 January 2002, most opium poppy fields were already sprouting.

Afghanistan leads the pack as far as opium production is concerned, way ahead of all the countries, and has been consistently on the rise. In fact, in 2004 it had gone ahead of Myanmar in the area under poppy cultivation. Pakistan, which once was the epicentre of the explosion that gripped the Golden Crescent, registered a slight shift and showed a steady decline. With the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the end to the Cold War their immediate objectives achieved in Afghanistan, Washington

TABLE 6
COUNTRY-WISE ILLICIT POPPY CULTIVATION AND OPIUM
PRODUCTION (IN TONNES)

<i>Countries</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2009</i>
Cultivation In Hectares					
Afghanistan	41,300	53,759	82,171	131,000	123,000
Pakistan	7,488	5,091	260	1,500	1,779
Myanmar	150,100	154,070	108,700	44,000	31,700
Laos	30,580	19,650	19,052	6,600	1,900
Mexico	5,450	5,050	1,900	-	-
Potential Production In Metric Tonnes					
Afghanistan	1,570	2,335	3,276	4,200	6,900
Pakistan	150	112	8	40	44
Myanmar	1,621	1,684	1,087	370	330
Laos	202	128	167	43	11
Mexico	62	53	21	-	-

Source: Compiled from data in UNODC, *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2003*, UNODC, *World Drug Report 2005* and *World Drug Report 2010*

withdrew from direct interest in the affairs of the region leaving the mujahideen and warlords to take over from where they had left off. This is what really gave the trade the extra fillip required for it expands at the pace that it did.

Till the mid-1990s the area under cultivation in Myanmar was three times the levels achieved in Afghanistan. Yet, the well-established opium refining capacities in the Golden Crescent region ensured that the levels of opium production in 1990 were almost at par with the region of the Golden Triangle. Even though Myanmar has shown an increase in recent years its no where near the levels of the 1980s and 1990s.

TABLE 7
TOTAL GLOBAL POPPY CULTIVATION AND OPIUM PRODUCTION

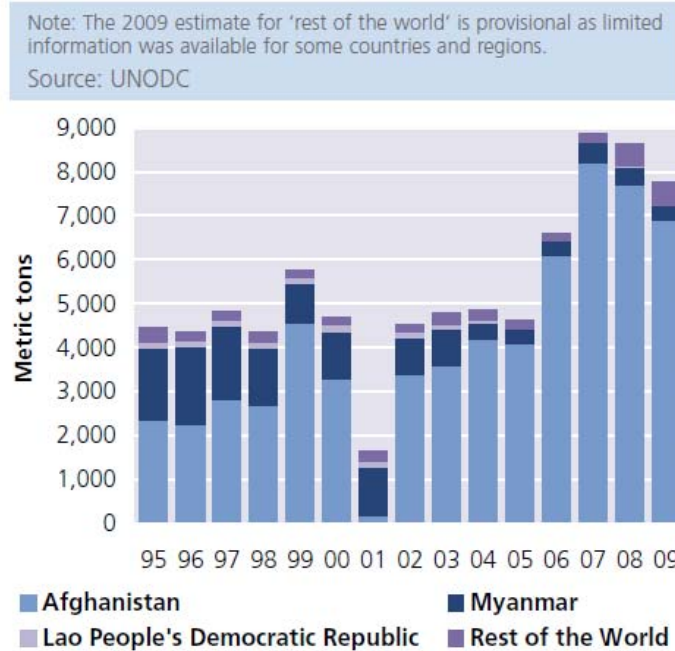
<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2009</i>
Poppy cultivation (in hectares)					
238,000	222,000	144,000	180,000	195,940	181,373
Opium production (in metric tonnes)					
4,346	4,700	1,600	4,500	4,850	7,754

Source: Compiled from UNODC, *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2003*, UNODC, *World Drug Report 2005*, and *World Drug Report 2010*.

The graph 4 below more clearly depicts the changes in the patterns

GRAPH 4

GLOBAL POTENTIAL OPIUM PRODUCTION (METRIC TONNES), 1995-2009



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p. 21

in poppy cultivation as Myanmar, over a longer period of time gradually started losing its position to Afghanistan. Afghanistan by 2004 has become the largest cultivator of the illicit crop but what is more interesting is that while the global area under cultivation has gone down, the area under cultivation in Afghanistan has registered an increase. This means more and more opium by this time was actually coming from Afghanistan to meet the demands of the global market.

The global poppy cultivation in 2000 was 222,000 hectares and the following year it came down by 78,000 hectares to 144,000 hectares, which almost completely could be attributed to the ban on cultivation that the Taliban tried to enforce that year.⁴⁸ Ironically while global opium cultivation has declined by 18 percent since 1998, Afghanistan has shown a continuous pattern of increase. This is a worrisome trend as it reflects clearly on the failure of crop control or eradication measures in the country. In 2009, the global area under opium poppy cultivation declined to 181,400 hectares, a drop of 23% since 2007. Patterns of cultivation in Afghanistan had come to be reflected globally, which was a clear indication of the

critical importance of Afghanistan as a source country for the international narcotics trade.

In 2002, the relative distribution of illicit opium production among the main source countries was Afghanistan at 76%, Myanmar at 18%, Laos at 2% and Colombia at 1%. The remaining 3% came from other countries like Mexico, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam where only marginal production was reported.⁴⁹ The dramatic increase in area under cultivation in Afghanistan for 2004 and the simultaneous decrease in areas under cultivation in Myanmar would mean that this percentage would be higher. But in reality 67 percent of the global poppy cultivation took place in Afghanistan.⁵⁰ Myanmar contributed 22 percent, Laos- 3.3 percent and Colombia - 2 percent.⁵¹ The remaining countries make up the rest. Production of opium is bound to reflect the same trends as it is closely related to the crop yields of poppy and areas under cultivation. In comparison in 2009, Afghanistan's share was 89%, Myanmar's 4.2%, Laos 2%, Colombia and Mexico contributed 4% to the global opium production the rest distributed amongst the remaining countries. And yet 68% of the global cultivated area was in Afghanistan.⁵² While opium production in Myanmar in the past decade has reflected erratic patterns it has not reflected pre-2004 figures. Afghanistan has contrastingly increased production especially in its ability to bounce back after the bad harvest of 2001 with the exception of the past two years.

In line with declines in the area under cultivation, global opium production fell from 8,890 metric tons in 2007 to 7,754 in 2009 (-13%). About 4,400 metric tonnes of illicit opium were produced globally in 1998. By 2002 this figure had not gone up that significantly as 4,500 metric tonnes were produced.⁵³ However, this apparent stability of global production is in no way a reflection of the shifts that are at work. While global opium production remained basically stable for a four-year period and have risen consistently since 2006 the actual cultivation of the crop globally had gone down by 25% in 2005 and in the 2009 it dipped again by 14% from the previous year. There has been a considerable shift in production from South East to the South West of Asia as is reflected in 81 percent reduction in the areas under opium poppy production in the region of Laos and Myanmar between 1998 and 2009 and in the same period a 93% increase was recorded for South West Asia.⁵⁴ The higher productivity of the irrigated opium poppy fields in Afghanistan is the reason why the global production remained stable even when cultivation levels went down. Besides for the same years Afghanistan has shown some amount of

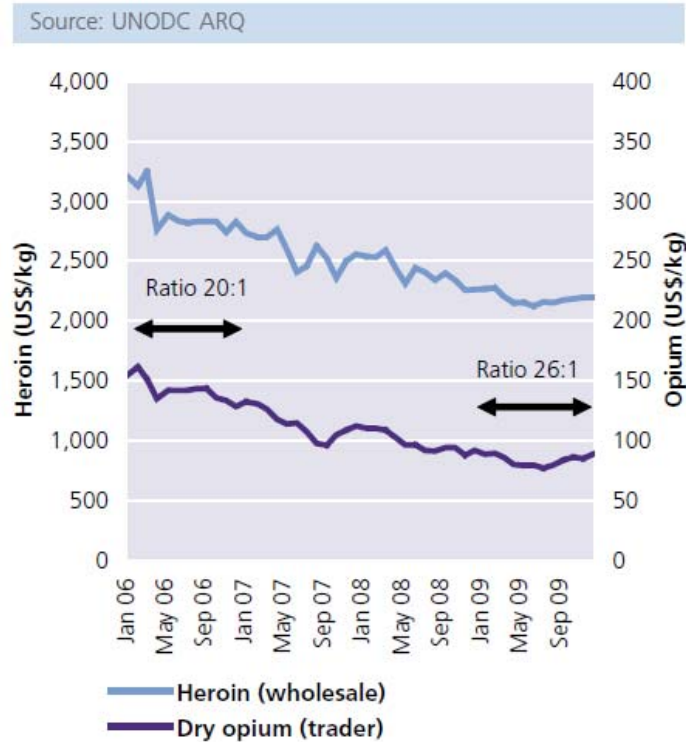
variation moving from between 2,700 metric tonnes to 8,200. In 2004 Afghanistan would contribute nearly 90 percent of the global production and even five years later the share stands at 89 percent of the global total.

The average opium yield for the year 2002 was 46 kilograms per hectares (kg/ha) doubling from the previous year's 24 kg/ha primarily because - as already mentioned - cultivation of poppy was back on track in southern and eastern Afghanistan which are also traditionally more productive areas.⁵⁵ In 2009, the yield was 56.1 kg/ha, a 15% increase from previous year's 48 kg/ha.⁵⁶ The drug economy of Afghanistan had not taken very long to recover from the terrible slump that it had seen in 2001 or the subsequent droughts. Besides, the yields in Afghanistan are much higher than what was registered in Myanmar for the same period.

Of the 9 million strong work force, it is estimated that, at least, 50 percent earn their livelihood from cultivation of the illicit crop as well as the trade in opiates. This would include a sizeable population of itinerant labourers who bring their much in demand skills to cultivation of the crop. In the early 1990s itself poppy was drawing close to half a million such labourers and the figures are bound to have risen correspondingly with more areas under cultivation.⁵⁷ This is without taking into account the secondary, ripple effects engendered by this cash crop and its derivatives. In a country burdened with chronic unemployment, just one hectare of poppy cultivation generates 350 days of labour as opposed to 41 days for wheat.⁵⁸ And more importantly, it meant in pure economic terms. For the year 2004, the annual gross income per opium growing family for 2004 was 1,700 US dollars. This was still 12 times higher than what a farmer could expect from the cultivation of wheat on a patch of land the same size, at \$390.⁵⁹ In 2009, it has remained the same at \$1,786, a 10% decrease from the previous year. While the gross income from opium per hectare was in the range of 3,600 correspondingly for wheat it was 1,200.⁶⁰

In the period from 2002-2004, while international aid to developments projects had been to the value of US\$3.3 billion, during the same time period the opium trade had generated US\$8 billion.⁶¹ Afghanistan's official GDP for 2003 was \$4.6 billion, as compared to the opium GDP for 2003, which at \$2.4 billion amounted to 52 percent of the legitimate economy. And in 2004 this rose to \$2.8 billion.⁶² At the time of the civil war in 1992-1993 the opium trade had generated \$128 million which witnessed a sharp rise in a matter of half a decade notching up to \$2.5 billion in 1997.⁶³ According to the Afghanistan Opium Survey 2009 the export value of opiates dropped from \$3.4 billion in 2008, or one-third of Afghanistan's

GRAPH 5
AFGHANISTAN, WHOLESALE OPIUM AND HEROIN PRICE, 2006-2009



UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p. 149.

GDP, to \$2.8 billion in 2009, equivalent to one quarter of GDP. That study attributed the decline to lower opium cultivation, lower production, lower prices and relatively higher GDP. Juxtaposed against the global trend where the estimated size of the global illicit drug market is less than one percent - 0.9 percent - of the global GDP at retail value, then it seems to be a sizeable amount.⁶⁴ But in 2009 the total farm-gate value of opium production was US\$438 million amounting to 4% of GDP.⁶⁵

Presently, the UNODC estimates the retail value of the narcotics market at close to US\$ 322 billion. Cornering 20 percent of this huge retail market is opiates, with the share of this variety of narcotics being US\$ 65 billion. As the single largest producer of opium, accounting for a huge 87 percent of global production, Afghanistan is a major concern for those seeking to eradicate heroin supply.⁶⁶

The value of the illicit global drug market for the year 2003 at the production level was US \$3 billion, which became US \$4 billion at the

GRAPH 6



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p.259

GRAPH 7

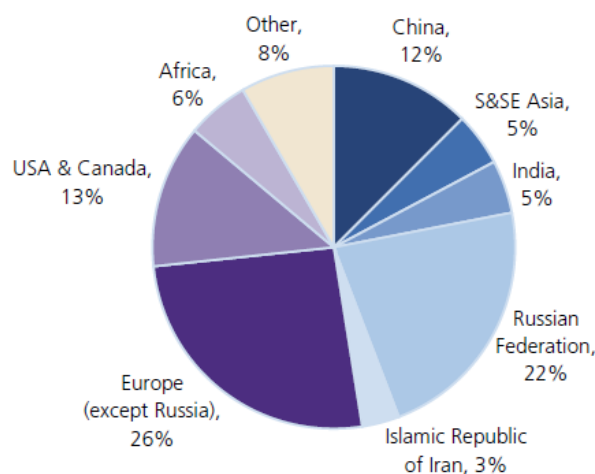


Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p. 270

wholesale level and at the retail level it was a whopping US \$22 billion clearly indicating that despite seizures and losses the value of the drugs sees a substantial increase as it moves from the producer to the consumer. Wheat, a staple diet for large sections of the global population generated US\$16 billion in export revenue. But nothing seems to whet the global appetite like narcotics as is reflected in the US\$94 billion wholesale value of all drugs. The opiate market generates an annual turnover of up to US\$65 billion, of which some US\$ 55 billion for heroin alone. And this

opiate market is interlinked with severe national and international security problems, particularly in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

GRAPH 8
GLOBAL HEROIN/OPIUM MARKET DISTRIBUTION (US\$ 65 BILLION) IN 2008



UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, UN Publication, 2010, p.42

According to the UN Development Programme, Afghanistan is the second poorest country in the world.⁶⁹ When talking basic economics, it is beyond doubt that the opiate industry has actually enjoyed tremendous success in Afghanistan. The opiates sector is the backbone of the Afghan economy and this is despite the fact that a major chunk of the shares from profits do not go to the farmers and labourers but the larger players engaged in cross-border and global trafficking networks. In a country crippled by unemployment, it provides livelihood to a large section of the people. Just as it had happened under the Taliban, the villages and towns surrounding the areas, which produced poppy were also the areas, which witnessed the bulk of the reconstruction activity because of the revenue coming from opiates.

While globally viewed as an illicit crop for many of the poor farmers of Afghanistan, it has helped them get out of the clutches of the cycle of poverty. In the 2000-2001 cultivating period, the Taliban used violent reprisals and severe punishment to cause opium production to plummet from 3,276 metric tonnes in 2000 to only 185 metric tonnes in 2001. But why did they chase this policy so fervently at this juncture and not earlier? The Taliban, by virtue of its near medieval policies especially with regard to women, their education, health and employment opportunities, had

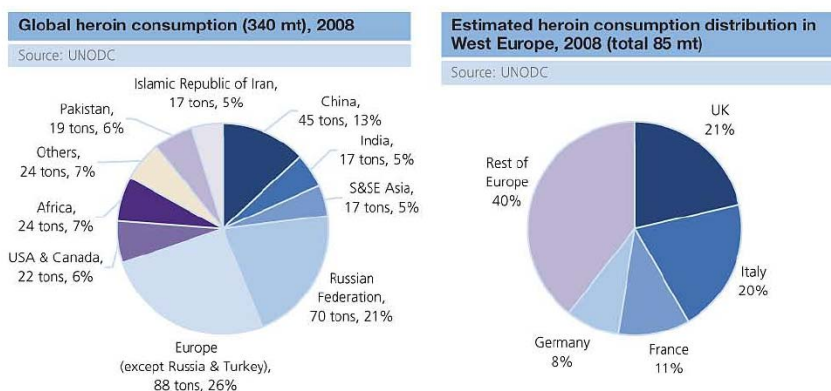
earned itself terrible disrepute. As a result international recognition as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan by the global community continued to evade them. The eradication of poppy seemed to be the only trade off that the Taliban was prepared to pull off in return for the acceptance by the global community. This offer had been put forward earlier also but the Taliban had reneged on its promise. This time they seemed more serious to honour their commitment even at the cost of domestic reprisals. This must have been the first time in history that such a trade-off was globally witnessed - if it had been successful - when Mullah Omar offered the US and UN to put an end to poppy production in Afghanistan in return for international recognition at a point when they were controlling nearly 90% of the country. But the events of September 11 were to play spoilsport for the Taliban as the suicide attacks on the twin towers were to rewrite the history of Taliban's future in Afghanistan.

REGIONAL CONSUMPTION AND ABUSE

In terms of consumption the world's two largest markets for Afghan opiates are the Russian Federation and West Europe, which together consume almost half the heroin produced in the world. In West Europe about half of this market is contained in just three countries - the United Kingdom, Italy and France. In Asia opiate consumption has continued to increase in the countries located on the Afghan heroin trafficking route towards Russia and Europe. Most of the heroin dispatched from Afghanistan to West Europe proceeds overland along the so-called 'Balkan route', transiting the Islamic Republic of Iran (or Pakistan to the Islamic Republic of Iran), Turkey and the countries of South- East Europe. It is estimated that 37% of all Afghan heroin departs Afghanistan along this route, to meet demand of around 85 metric tonnes.⁷⁰ And this is despite the fact that over the past few years poppy production levels have shown a downslide. It is the conflict that has increasingly provided the environment for the industry to flourish exacerbated by the absence of not just a stable government but the stark non existence of the political will coupled with a financial and development infrastructure required to weed out the poppy economy and be able to replace it with a more stable and sustainable economic structure.

While in recent months the increase in the number of poppy-free provinces to 20 points to the success of campaigns their sustainability will only reflect in a corresponding dip in opium production levels which has evaded the country so far. According to the UNODC there are indications

GRAPH 9



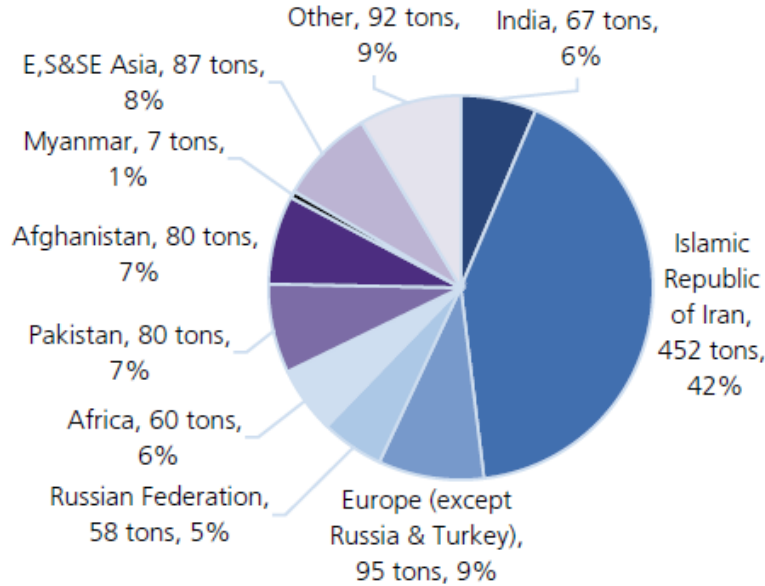
Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p. 21

that the downward trend in global opium production over the 2007-2009 period will continue in 2010.⁷¹

Around 200 million people in the world - around 5% of the world population aged between 15-64 - abuse illicit drugs.⁷² Heroin, derived from opium, is the most widely consumed illicit opiate in the world. Other opiates are also abused, including various poppy straw concoctions and prescription opioids, but heroin remains the most abused opiate internationally. The global number of opiate users has been estimated at more than 15 million in the recent period. In opium equivalents, opiate demand could be estimated at 3,700 metric tones worldwide indicating to the imbalance between the demand and supply with relation to the quantity of opium coming out of Afghanistan - 6,900 metric tones in 2009.⁷³ Of the opium that is not converted into heroin, two thirds is consumed in just five countries all of which are in the neighbourhood of the source country, Afghanistan. There are an estimated 4 million opium consumers worldwide. Unlike the heroin demand, which is more evenly distributed around the world, opium consumption is concentrated in Asia, where it has also been consumed traditionally.⁷⁴ Thus, a large percentage of the abuse is related to local consumption, that is, addiction is prevalent in the region where the opiates were cultivated and produced and a part of the abuse could also be located along the transit routes before the narcotics actually reached the markets.

Consumption in the countries bordering Afghanistan, with the exception of China, is approximately 60% of global consumption. While

GRAPH 10
ESTIMATED GLOBAL OPIUM CONSUMPTION IN 2008



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p.41

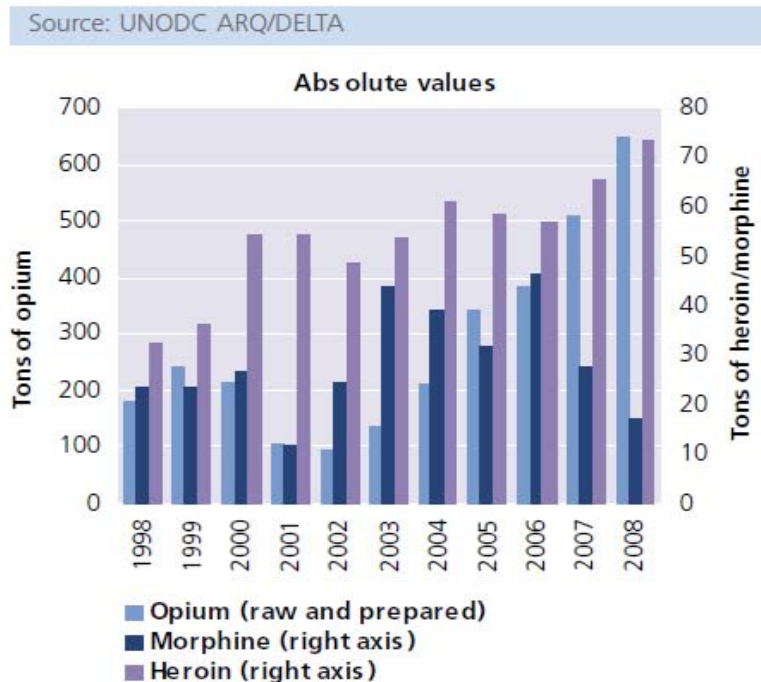
small levels of cultivation are evidenced in these countries, such as in Pakistan and Central Asia, Afghanistan continues to be the main supply source for the region's opium abusers. In terms of volumes the Islamic Republic of Iran consumes 42%; 7% in Afghanistan and Pakistan which translates into 80 metric tonnes a year, for an estimated 150,000 users in 2008 (and are expected to show a rise to between 200,000-250,000 in 2009);⁷⁵ while India and the Russian Federation consume 6% and 5% respectively.⁷⁶ In terms of heroin consumption though India, at 17 metric tonnes in 2008, had the highest level of consumption in South Asia.⁷⁷

Apart from consumption seizures in a region are also critical indicators of the manner in which the narco-economy managed to sustain itself. Hence, countries have consistently gathered data on drug seizures since the time of the League of Nations as they represent the most comprehensive data on the presence of drugs.

According to the UNODC, to satisfy global demand in 2008 around 5,000 metric tonnes of opiates would have needed to enter the market.⁷⁸ If one follows the trend of opium production in Afghanistan then one can see that its share globally rose from around 20% in 1980 to 70% in 2000, and to more than 90% since 2006. A strong increase was also reported in

heroin seizures in the last two decades. And a bulk of the heroin and morphine seizures were made by Iranian authorities. However, Central Asia and Pakistan are also important outlets for Afghan heroin.

GRAPH 11
GLOBAL OPIATE SEIZURES, 1998-2008



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p.141

In terms of trafficking the importance of Afghanistan can be gauged from the statistics of seizures made for 2001, which show that even seizures of opiates saw a 23% decline in 2001 due to the considerable decline in opium production in Afghanistan the same year. Most opiate seizures happen in Asia given that the two largest producers of illicit opium are located in the region. In 2001 it was 69 percent of all opiate seizures. The sub-region of South-West Asia, which includes Iran and Pakistan, accounted for 40 percent of the global opiate seizures.⁷⁹ For opium, in 2008, Helmand province alone accounted for almost 50% of Afghanistan's opium seizures.⁸⁰

Between 2000 and 2008, seizure data provided to UNODC indicated negligible opium and morphine seizures in European countries (including Turkey). There were, however, sizeable opium seizures reported by countries north of Afghanistan. In 2008, approximately 4.5 metric tonnes

TABLE 8
OPIATE SEIZURES (IN KGS) 1996-2001

<i>Country</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2001</i>
Kazakhstan	500	1000	296.5	170	136	36
Tajikistan	3405	3455.5	1190.4	1269.2	4778.4	3664
Uzbekistan	1865	2364	1935	3292	2008	241.6
Turkmenistan	-	1410	1412	4600	2300	-
Kyrgyzstan	1489.6	1639.4	171.8	151	1405	469.2
Pakistan	7422.7	7300	5021.7	16319.9	8867	5175
Iran	149577	162413.9	154453	204485	179053	81061
India	2867	3316	2031	1588	2684	2533

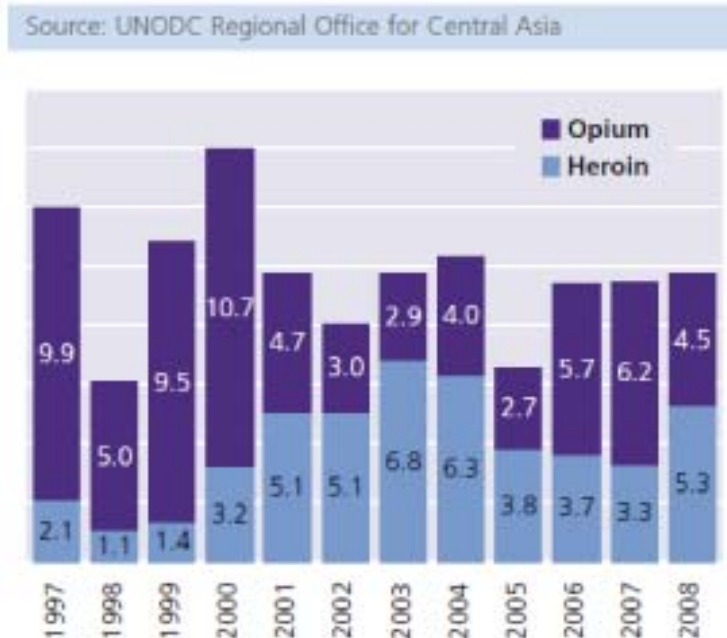
Source: Compiled from data in UNODC, *Global Illicit Drug Trends 2003*, p. 214-5

of opium were seized in Central Asian countries. Moreover, there is a general absence of morphine seizures in this region.⁸¹ Seizures are reflective not just of the presence of narcotics in the region but also of the route frequented for in the commerce of these illicit products. A large percentage of seizures, in particular, of opium are within the orbit of the Golden Crescent countries, thereby placing Afghanistan at the centre of the trade and transit routes.

The rise in seizures is reflective of the rise in poppy production as witnessed in 2003 which showed a rise in opiate seizures sharply from the previous year reflecting a revival in the opium poppy production. The global heroin market once again saw a rise in the production of opium in Afghanistan and the countries surrounding it. While the following year the yield had gone down due to drought and other plant diseases, the cultivation had increased by 64%.⁸² The growth in the areas coming under poppy cultivation point to the fact that while the trade started as a corollary of the Afghan jihad to sustain the war, it had become so entrenched as a parallel economy that irrespective of who ever was at the helm of political power in the country the trade out of Afghanistan continues unabated even today.

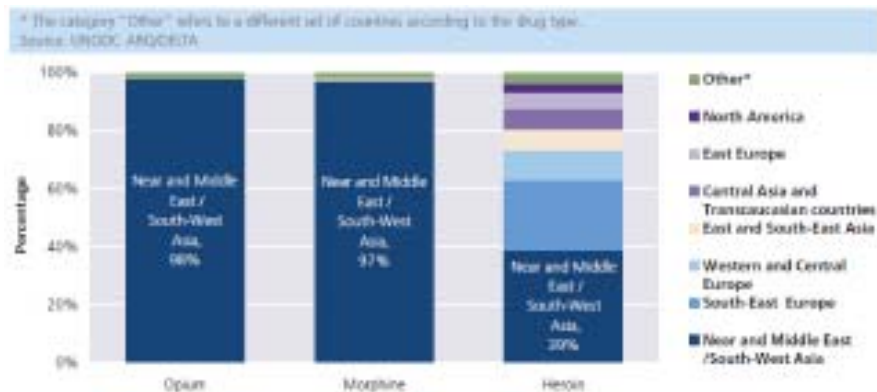
However, it is the abuse of opiates which continues to be the main problem of drugs even world wide. And the fact that half of the opiate users of the world are from Asia is a telling statement of the source of these opiates, which is Afghanistan. Most of the consumption is concentrated along the trafficking routes emanating out of Afghanistan, in particular, Iran and Kyrgyzstan and the highest levels of opiate abuse have been recorded in the Russian Federation with 1.5 million addicts. In the Central Asian Republics, nearly 15 years of continuous heroin transit

GRAPH 12
OPIATE SEIZURES IN CENTRAL ASIA, 1997-2008 (IN METRIC TONNES)



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p.50

GRAPH 13
DISTRIBUTION OF OPIATE SEIZURES WORLDWIDE (PERCENTAGE), 2008



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, p. 142.

has created a local market of 282,000 heroin users and the local consumption levels have put some of the Central Asian states on par with countries with the highest global opiate abuse prevalence. And as in Russia, heroin use in Central Asia has also escalated the HIV cases among injecting

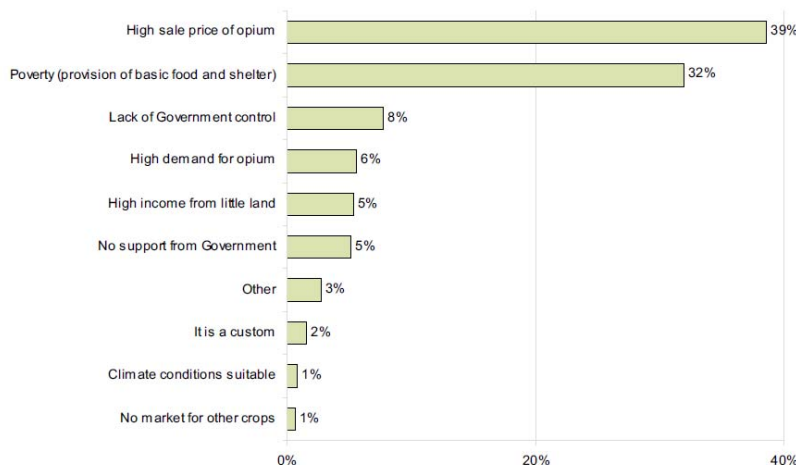
drug users with the total number of officially registered HIV cases in Central Asia having increased 19-fold in the last decade: from 1,641 cases in 2000 to 30,993 cases in late 2008.⁸³ The rise in opiate abuse in the regions of Central and West Asia, Eastern Europe, South-west Asia have all been linked to this bumper crop.

The question is why did one particular country rather than any other, become the world's biggest opium producer in the short span of two decades? Many arguments have been put forth like the 'climatic conditions' in Afghanistan suited the production of poppy. But not only can poppy be cultivated in other parts of the world but farmers there can also obtain yields as high as the Afghan farmers. Moreover succumbing to the lure of cultivating higher income-generating illicit narcotic crops rather than legitimate ones is also not peculiar to just Afghanistan. It is the protracted crisis in the country's political system, civil society and economy where one needs to look for the answers. While twenty years of war might have been the crucible for distorting the economy and civil society the conditions for it were more than two centuries in the making. With the various actors playing out their interest on the Afghan political stage the Afghan nation state could never really consolidate itself collapsing under the strains of foreign intervention and then the civil war.

The total increase in opium output in Afghanistan for the year 2004 was 17 percent from the previous year while in Myanmar the production in the same time had fallen drastically by 54 percent. By 2007 Afghanistan had doubled that production. The Afghan economy far from learning from the regional partner is showing the signs of increasingly filling every inch of space vacated by the drop in production in the Golden Triangle.⁸⁴

At one time the remote signs of hope were based on the belief that Afghanistan was hopping back to normalcy reflected in the parliamentary elections of September 2005 which presented a window of opportunity, albeit a small one, for nation-building and consolidation. The production levels since those elections have shown no signs of going down. The last quarter of a century of conflict in a convoluted way equipped the poppy farmers to turn every situation into a solution. Hence, when the British government came up with a plan to compensate the farmers for lands where poppy was eradicated at the rate of \$350 per square metre, it actually served to push levels to cultivation even higher since compensation against eradication was a still more lucrative option than any food crop. According to the governor of Nangarhar, Haji Din Muhammad, the British still owe them \$850,000.⁸⁵

GRAPH 14
REASONS FOR OPIUM CULTIVATION IN 2010 IN OPIUM GROWING VILLAGES



Source: UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2010, p. 9.

In 2010, Antonio Maria Costa, UNODC Executive Director, noted that market forces have swayed producers from opium, but cautioned that the prices of wheat and other legal crops is falling faster than the price of opium.⁸⁶ And this explains why often despite bumper crop coupled with the fall in opium prices, wheat continues to be an unattractive cash crop alternative for farmers. Earnings from wheat and other legitimate crops are often just a fraction of what they can earn producing the illicit but highly lucrative opium. This steep differential was highlighted by the National Crop Output Assessment released in mid-2003. According to this joint government and donor-financed project, the farmers sowing wheat earned approximately US \$222 per hectare from an average yield of the crop. The equivalent area of land under poppy cultivation earned the farmer an average of \$12,700. In 2010, wheat at US \$0.34/kg and rice at US \$1.03 was competing with opium at approximately US \$80/kg.⁸⁷ Thus, even though farmers' share of profits forms barely one percent of the entire trade, the income is still significantly higher than any other crop. Legitimate income generating measures, therefore, stand little chance of survival, especially since the narcotics industry has become so entrenched in the setup of the country. Local commanders and warlords who profited from the trade - some of whom today even occupy the corridors of political power - are bound to come to the defence of their business interests. Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Antonio, Maria Costa very aptly placed the paradox of the situation that

was Afghanistan in the midst of the quicksand of drugs that it had created and the challenges any efforts to pull it out posed.⁸⁸

"In counter-narcotics, there is no silver bullet. The opium economy in Afghanistan has to be dismantled with democracy, the rule of law and economic improvement. It cannot be done ruthlessly as it was done by the Taliban, nor with mindless disregard for the country's poverty. It would be a historical error to abandon Afghanistan to opium, right after we reclaimed it from the Taliban and Al Qaeda."

At the London Conference President Karzai acknowledged that the Afghan authorities must show leadership and ownership to wean Afghanistan's farmers off the world's deadliest drug. Pointing to the criticality of tackling the problem where it is most acute - in the south - attention cannot be diverted away from the eight swing provinces either that are on the verge of becoming poppy-free. And it is this approach that would turn result in more sustainable longer trends for recent improvements.

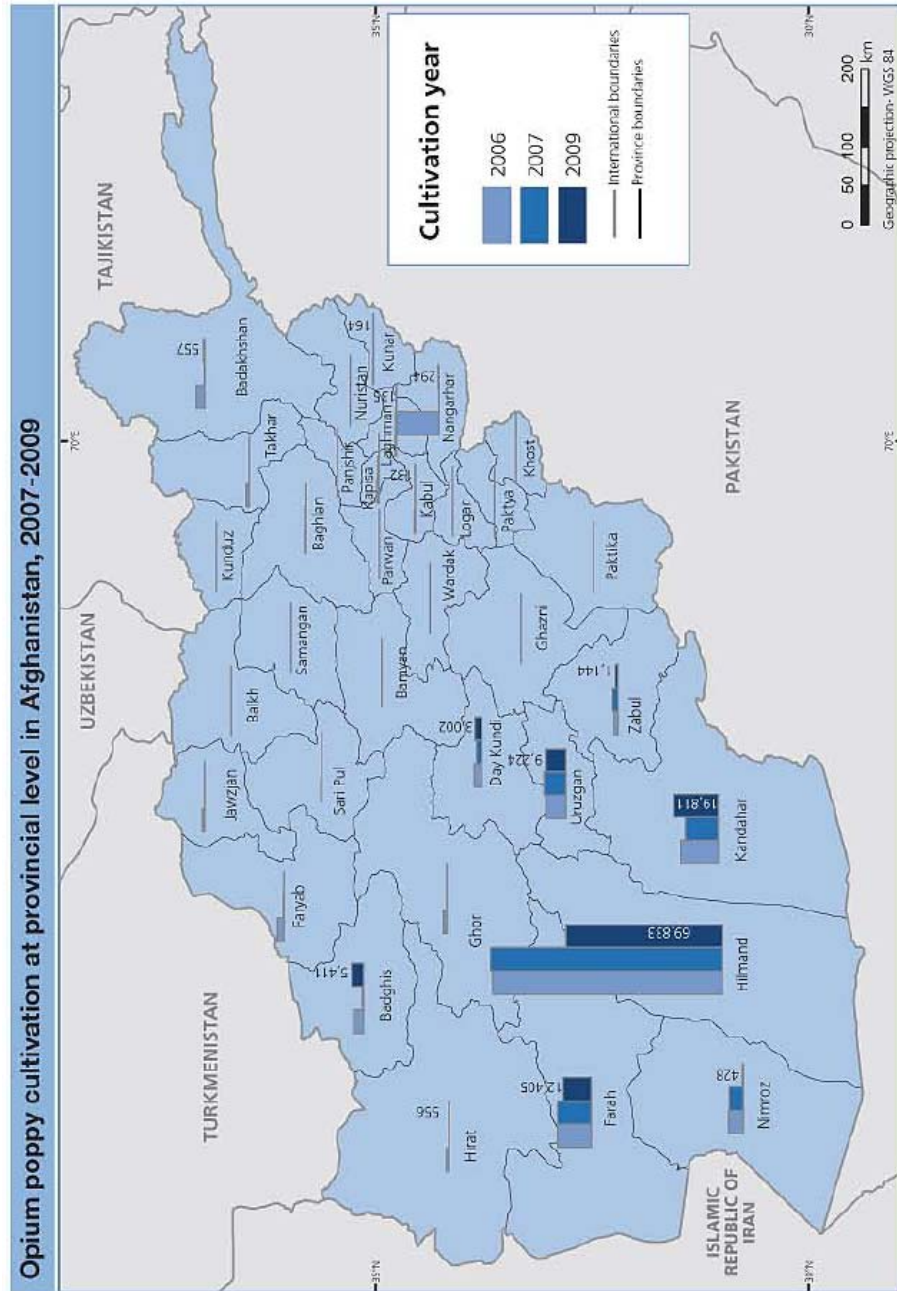
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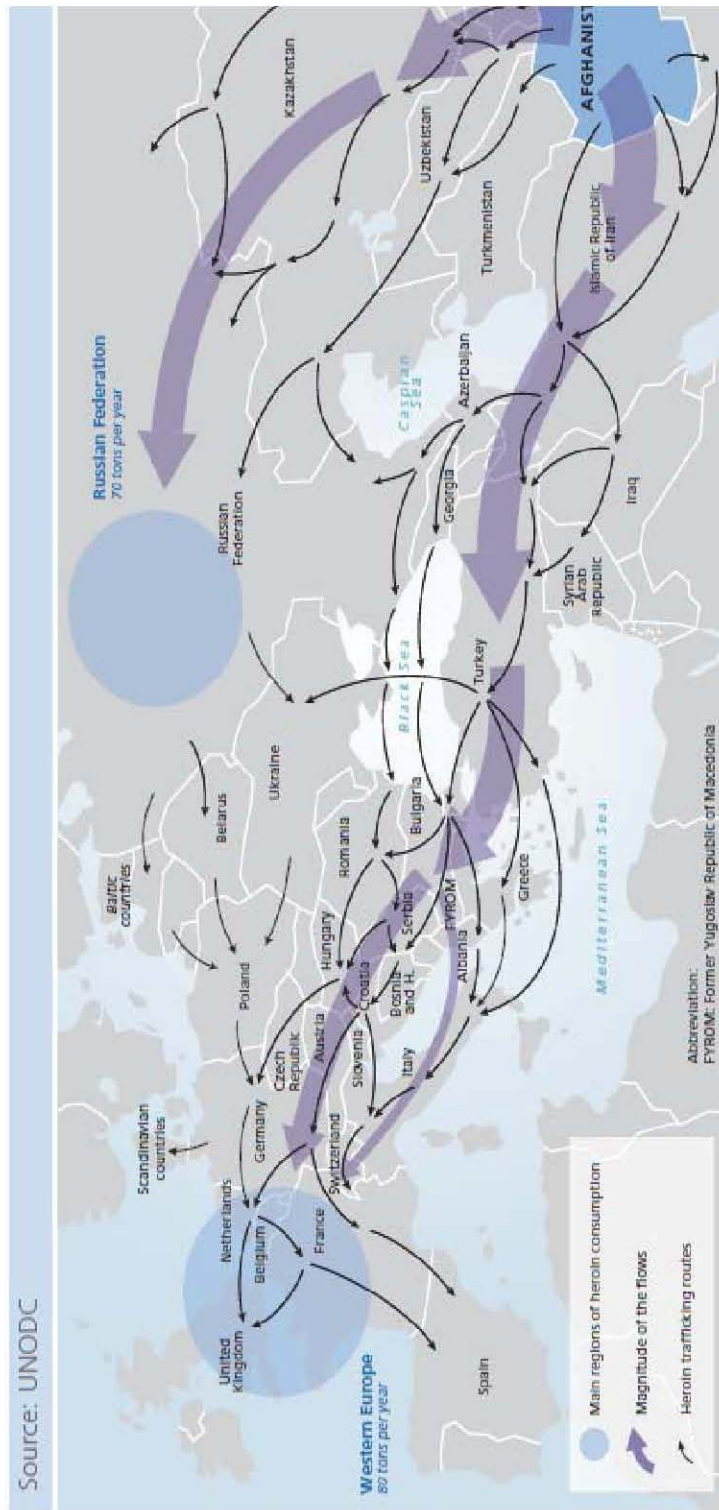
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MAP 1



MAP 2: THE NORTHERN AND BALKAN ROUTES



Source: UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, UN Publication 2010, p.54

DRUG TRAFFICKING IN PAKISTAN *THREAT TO REGIONAL SECURITY*

ASHISH SHUKLA

Peace, security, stability, and economic development are some of the celebrated and undisputed objectives of the states, existing in international system, which every state wants to realise internally as well as externally. Pakistan, by no means is an exception of it. However, in present circumstances, Pakistan is being considered as a potential threat to the realisation of these objectives in the world in general, and region in particular. The world in which we live has been dominated, by the realist school of thought and is more concerned towards traditional security threats rather than the non-traditional ones. But in recent years there occurred a shift which emphasised equally on both, traditional and non-traditional security threats and penetrated the iron structure of realism. The idea behind it was that states will no longer be able to sustain themselves if traditional and non-traditional security threats got together. Drug menace, is one such non-traditional security threat which is on the way to merge with the terrorism, the traditional one, and if it happens it will become a lethal mixture too deadly to defeat.

The problem of drug in the world is primarily threefold- production, trafficking, and abuse and it becomes more complicated when all three comes together to form a deadly composition, which is what has happened in the case of Pakistan. Drug trafficking in today's world is considered as the most lucrative business in which profits are much higher than the entire oil industry and second only to arms trade.¹ Golden Crescent (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran) and Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos) have been traditionally responsible for the world's heroin supply. 'Golden' here, does not reflect the economic conditions of the region's poverty ridden opium growing hill tribes.² But, it is referred

as 'Golden' due to the money made by the international traffickers involved in the illicit business in the region. Illicit drugs, more specially the opium, are produced in economically disadvantaged and politically turbulent areas of the world where it offers a unique and lucrative opportunity in the absence of similarly attractive options.³ In Pakistan, the inaccessibility of production areas coupled with weak administration has provided conducive atmosphere to drug traffickers.⁴

Pakistan, at present is a major trafficker, processor, and to some extent producer of illicit opium which has involved thousands of Pakistani citizens in the high profiting drug business. A CIA report on heroin, published in 1998, had stated that heroin is becoming the life blood of Pakistan's economy and political system. The assessment proved correct overtime and recently released World Drug Report-2010 has claimed, on the basis of latest assessment (2006), that there are 628,000 chronic opiate users of which 500,000 are heroin user.⁵ Musa Khan also suggests that Pakistan is a victim of the drug culture which emerged after 1979 and from almost zero, it marched to a substantial number (500,000) of heroin addicts.⁶ The high amount of opiates consumed in Pakistan tells the story itself that Pakistani domestic market has become a determining factor in driving opium production in the region.

TRAFFICKING ROUTES

Pakistan has a long coastal belt and porous borders with Iran and Afghanistan which make it vulnerable or an ideal place for drug trafficking to the great consumer markets of the west. Pakistan shares a 2,430 Km long border with its neighbour Afghanistan, world's no.1 illicit drug producer, with three official crossing points (Torkham in Nangarhar, Ghulam Khan in Khost and Spin Boldak in Kandahar). The topography of the bordering areas includes numerous north-south mountain ranges, which create natural smuggling routes across the border.⁷ Besides this, there are a number of natural passes, mountain trails, and desert roads, most of which are unmanned and unsupervised.⁸ During 1990s, Khyber Pass emerged as a vital highway in international drugs trade due to its proximity to the poppy growing areas of Afghanistan's eastern provinces.⁹ Though, there are various routes for Afghan heroin to the world but many of the law enforcement officials are of the view that most of the heroin produced in Afghanistan is still trafficked through the traditional routes rather than north via the Central Asian Republics and Russia.¹⁰

A UNODC report, published in 2008, claimed that detailed and precise information on drug trafficking routes is largely unavailable; however, drug traffickers rely on three major routes through the region to Western Europe and other destinations-

- The western route via Iran.
- The southern route through Pakistan, and
- The northern route through Central Asian States.¹¹

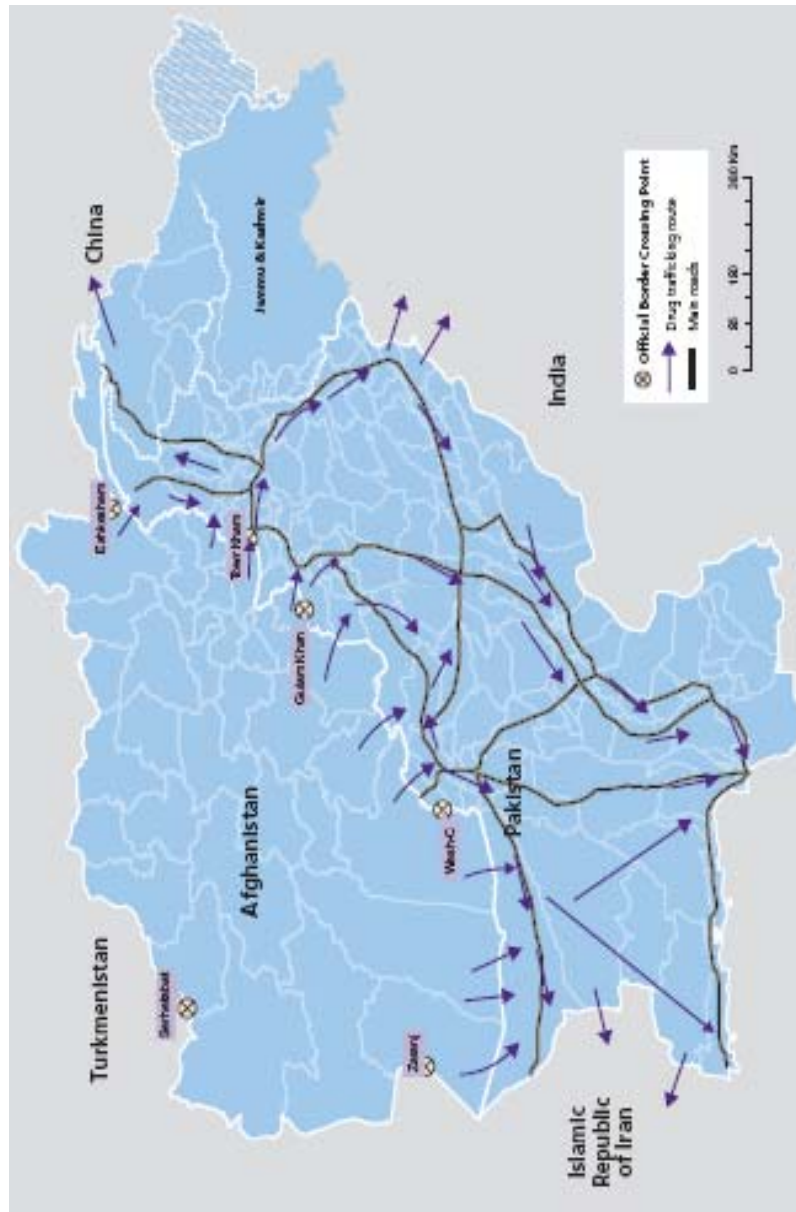
Recently released *World Drug Report-2010* has acknowledged the fact that Pakistan is geographically vulnerable to opiate trafficking and approximately 40 per cent of Afghanistan's heroin/morphine transits or is consumed in Pakistan.¹² The report also stated that it has become a daily affair where Afghanistan's finished heroin, unrefined heroin, and semi-refined morphine are smuggled into Pakistan using multiple methods of transportation, including the wide usages of camels and pack animals.¹³

Another UNODC report has claimed that international airports were a significant conduit for narcotics smuggling as over 37 percent of Pakistan's total heroin seizures in 2006 took place at airports.¹⁴ Apart from concealing narcotics on their person or in their luggage, traffickers are also resorting to send drugs in letters and parcels to minimize the risks of getting captured, as the quantities involved tend to be much smaller. Inside Pakistan there are several routes that make traffickers work easy in transporting the drugs to various destinations throughout the world, in which some important ones need a brief discussion here.

Karachi and the surrounding coastal areas are the oldest routes that have been used most frequently by the traffickers for shipping narcotics. It is from this very point that the large consignment of narcotics is destined to African, American, and European markets. Usually, vessels carrying drugs leave the Karachi port for Yemen and southern Europe through Red Sea or sometimes they follow a different one, the African route which goes via Somalia and Ethiopia to Kenya and onwards.¹⁵ However, in recent years the Makran coast, due to its long and virtually unguarded coastline, has become popular where drug consignments are loaded on small launches and are carried from coastal areas to high seas to be transferred to ships.¹⁶

Balochistan's long and rugged routes are the most favourite routes for the traffickers because, drug convoys, due to its difficult terrain, travelling through this route carry low risk of being intercepted by the law enforcement agencies of Pakistan. Another major route is through

MAP : DRUG TRAFFICKING ROUTES IN PAKISTAN



Source: World Drug Report-2010

Quetta or Hyderabad to Lahore, from where it is smuggled directly to the West or sometimes indirectly through various Indian states such as Punjab, Rajasthan (especially Jaisalmer and Balmer districts), Delhi, Mumbai and Gujarat. It has also been noted that Samjhauta Express (the friendship express between India and Pakistan) carries the illicit drug.¹⁷

OPIATE SEIZURES IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan is an important destination and primary transit country for the opiates produced in Afghanistan and to some extent in Pakistan also. Trafficking of illicit drugs in the world involves a relatively small number of states and the only manifestation of which is the amount of illicit drugs seized in the country by the law enforcement and anti-narcotics agencies. However, it requires a careful interpretation because Seizure can be driven by production, local consumption, and transshipment; nations that experience large seizures but are neither producers nor major consumers are likely to be involved in trafficking to other countries.¹⁸ Pakistani case is different in this regard, as it is both a producer and consumer which in 2006 accounted for 72% of global morphine seizure.¹⁹

OPIUM PRODUCTION AND SEIZURE IN PAKISTAN

<i>Year</i>	<i>Opium Production (Mt)</i>	<i>Opium Seizure (Kg)</i>	<i>Morphine Seizure (Kg)</i>	<i>Heroin Seizure (Kg)</i>
1995	112.000	-----	-----	-----
1996	24.000	8080.000	-----	4050.000
1997	24.000	8502.000	-----	5076.000
1998	26.000	5021.000	-----	3363.000
1999	09.000	15469.000	-----	4672.000
2000	08.000	7840.000	-----	7410.000
2001	05.000	5140.000	1824.000	8755.000
2002	05.000	2686.000	6839.260	8818.000
2003	52.000	5786.000	27777.550	6364.000
2004	40.000	2495.000	21256.000	3488.000
2005	36.000	6437.000	22197.000	2144.000
2006	39.000	8997.000	32657.000	2819.000
2007	43.000	15362.000	10856.000	2880.000
2008	48.000	-----	-----	-----
2009	44.000	-----	-----	-----

Source: Compiled from UNODC, *World Drug Report 2010*, UNODC (Pakistan), *Illicit Drug Trends in Pakistan, 2008*, and UNODC, *World Drug Report 2006*.

If we closely follow the available data, we'll find that Pakistan's heroin seizure decreased substantially between 1996 and 2006, but opium seizure almost doubled. Morphine is a short step before the making of heroin and requires acetic anhydride for final conversion into heroin. Pakistan is responsible for the bulk of morphine seizure of the world while Iran seizes the largest amount of the world. In Pakistan, vast majority of morphine continues to be seized in Balochistan province, specially its Chagai district, which is close to Helmand province of Afghanistan. It is important to note that trafficking of opiates into and through Pakistan increased dramatically during the period 2001-06 corresponding roughly to the increase in opium production in Afghanistan from 185 metric tons in 2001 to 6,100 metric tons in 2006. In 2005, Pakistan had seized around 2,144 kg of heroine but the amount substantially increased next year to 2,819 kgs.

MOTIVATING FACTORS

A UN study on narcotics claims that factors like falling commodity prices, debt problem and poverty contributed to the drug trafficking in Pakistan in 1980s. In support of the claim the report states that "the decline of prices for commodities like sugar (64%), coffee (30%), cotton (32%), and wheat (17%), between 1980 and 1988, motivated farmers to turn to cash crops like coca bush and opium poppy to avoid economic ruin." There is no doubt that the above conditions facilitated drug production and trafficking in Pakistan but there were also some other more influential factors such as political and regional instability, ineffective control, growing and sophisticated network of drug syndicates, and most importantly the covert state patronage and involvement.

Islamic Prohibition

Under his Islamisation programme, General Zia promulgated the Hudood Ordinance in February 1979 to satisfy long standing demand of conservative radical fundamentalist mullahs of Pakistani society. It was aimed to specify that drug laws in Pakistan had to conform to the prescriptions of acceptable Islamic moral behaviour.²⁰ It was thus widely propagated and presented as an Islamic provision which enforced a complete ban on opium production and abolished the centuries old vend system. However, some analysts later claimed that it was motivated less by Islam than the US pressure to put a stop on poppy cultivation inside

Pakistan. In this way Pakistan effectively ended the lawful and regulated production, sale, and consumption of not only the opium but alcohol and charas (hemp) also.²¹ Indeed, the law had not offered anything explicitly about poppy cultivation or trafficking but it was interpreted by the bureaucracy as doing so until, in 1995, a Presidential Ordinance clarified the situation.²²

The timing of the introduction of the ordinance was as such that it left the farmers with huge stockpile (estimated around 800 tons of opium poppy). Musa Khan suggests that it was intended for international market and was largely refined in Turkey, Sicily, and elsewhere for the US and European heroin markets.²³ It is said that at this crucial juncture, some western experts taught Pakistani farmers the technique of converting poppy into heroin,²⁴ which for the first time introduced heroin into Pakistan. Thus, the ordinance theoretically banned the poppy cultivation, possession, and trafficking. However, on the ground the situation became more complicated as this ban triggered the illegal drug business and industry in Pakistan.²⁵

Iranian Revolution

Under Reza Shah Pahlavi regime, Iran had been a producer of illicit opium both for domestic consumption and international medicinal market but following the 1979 revolution Ayatollah Khomeini adopted stern measures against drug traffickers and declared them a memorial of colonialism.²⁶ Death penalty was imposed on traffickers possessing more than 30 grams of heroin and five kg of opium which resulted in the relocation of heroin conversion facilities in the tribal areas of NWFP and Balochistan. Earlier the trackless deserts in Central Iran were used as corridor by the drug traffickers from Afghanistan and Pakistan to reach Turkey, and from Turkey to Italy and North America.²⁷ Khomeini after assuming office, blocked the very traditional Balkan route which also coincided with the bumper production of opium in Pakistani tribal areas, which in turn, facilitated the domestic consumption and international trafficking as well.

Mujahideen's Holy War

Though, North West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan is known as smuggler's paradise, where poor peasants have grown poppy for centuries but they never converted it into heroin. Then occurred the Soviet invasion in neighbouring Afghanistan which pushed a large number of Afghan refugees in Pakistan's tribal areas and the fleeing Afghans came along

with their homemade laboratories to convert opium into heroin.²⁸ Apart from established factories, there exist a fair number of mobile factories, comprising two or three trucks, loaded with pans, port, and crude machinery.²⁹ Once the processing of opium into heroin is over, the new product smuggled inside Pakistan's coastal and border areas, from where it is destined further to the high priced markets of Europe and the US. Thus, drug trafficking gained momentum in Pakistan after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and within a very short span of time it gripped almost all sections of Pakistani society. Heroin became almost an 'ordinary-daily-use' commodity and was made available for sale openly and cheaply in markets like Jamrud, Bara, and Landi Kotal, with free samples distributed to potential users in and around Peshawar University.³⁰ In this way, Pakistan which was producing opium largely for domestic consumption in early stages changed its course drastically in late 1970s and emerged as a major factor in the international drug market. In this period, the farmers were covertly encouraged by the businessmen, smugglers and some of the political elements.³¹ One can assume the importance of Pakistan in drug market with the fact that in mid-1983, US narcotics officials reported that around 85 to 90 per cent of heroin was reaching the East Coast of the United States and the countries of Western Europe through Pakistan.

D. Suba Chandran has rightly claimed that Soviet invasion of Afghanistan altered the scenario at two levels; first, CIA and ISI both encouraged Mujahideen's extensive involvement in drug trade so that they could procure arms, required to fight the communist giant; second, Soviet presence in Afghanistan resulted in the closure of traditional routes to Europe and this subsequently resulted in the opening of various new routes in South Asia such as India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka.³²

Flawed State Policies

Policies adopted by the states and their implementation on the ground have played an important role in dealing with the complex problems like drug trafficking and production. In Pakistan, though, the politics of drug production and trafficking has been dominated by the external factors but internal factors also contributed substantially. The most important internal factor in the protraction of drug trafficking in Pakistan has been the ineffectiveness of federal government's writ over all the parts of the state. For example, in tribal areas, government control is almost negligible and in some of the areas its writ runs only 210 feet from the main road.

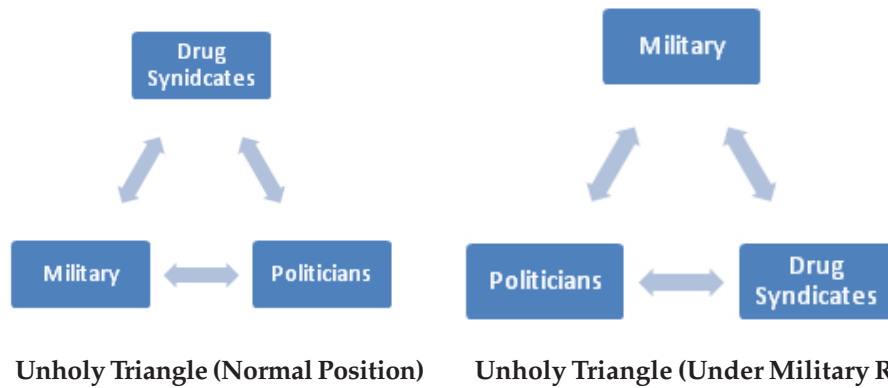
Due to its ability to provide safe havens to the terrorists and drug traffickers, North West Frontier Province (NWFP) has now emerged as the most dangerous spot on the map. Hassan Abbas comments that the crisis situation in the NWFP did not emerge overnight; the deterioration was a product of years of poor governance, regional tension, and economic distress.³³ There has been a fair amount of encouragement on the part of government establishment due to which this drug menace is continuing. In 1990, Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif himself conceded that Army Chief, General Aslam Beg and Central Intelligence Chief, General Durrani wanted a green signal in 1991 for using drug/heroin money to finance proxy terrorism in the region and both insisted that all this would be arranged in such a manner that no one could point finger towards Pakistan.

However, there was some decline in production and by 1995, the area of poppy cultivation in Pakistan was reduced to 5,215 hectares from 32,000 hectares in 1978. This resulted positively in the substantial decline in poppy production which reached to near zero level in 1999-2000. UNDCP in its annual report (2000-01) declared Pakistan a "poppy free" country. But Pakistan due to inherent contradictions and absence of a unified effort on the part of government could not maintain the poppy free status and cultivation again emerged in the areas along the Afghan border at about the relatively low level of about 2,000 hectares.³⁴

THE UNHOLY TRIANGLE

Pakistan processes much of the Afghan poppy into heroin, in the tribal areas of North West Frontier Province (NWFP), Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Balochistan. Though, there is no official figure about the amount of profit generated by drug trade in Pakistan, this huge sum of profit enabled the drug mafias to penetrate the Pakistani state and economy at all levels. It is widely recognised that Pakistani drug syndicates run a parallel economy in connivance with political and military establishment,³⁵ and drug traffickers in Pakistan have developed a very strong nexus and penetrated almost the entire establishment to the extent that even military, the self proclaimed guardian of Pakistani state, could not be given a clean chit. In fact drug syndicates, politicians, and the military are parts of an unholy triangle that has hijacked the Pakistani state and the resources. In this unholy triangle, drug syndicates have situated themselves on the top of the triangle and enjoy a certain level of protection throughout by both the military and the politicians. Situation

becomes more favourable to the military when it directly rules the state, as was the case with General Zia-ul-Haq who had covertly taken over the management of drug business during his tenure.



Under the military regime of General Zia, poppy cultivation was encouraged and his tacit support for narcotic drugs gave a new dimension to international drug trafficking and terrorism in India.³⁶ His involvement became public only after his death, when Mian Muzaffar Shah, Minister of State for Narcotics, revealed that Pakistani drug syndicates grew under General Zia's patronage.³⁷ His involvement in drug trafficking was also confirmed by Reza Qureshi, a Pakistani trafficker, who was arrested by the Norwegian police at Oslo's Fomebu Airport in 1984.³⁸ Norwegian police later disclosed the names of three Pakistani citizens-Tahir Butt, Munawar Hussain and Hamid Hussain patronised by the military dictator.³⁹ The most surprising revelation which left no doubt about Zia's direct drug connection was the case of one of his ADCs, who concealed a substantial amount of heroin in 100 precious lamps to be gifted by General Zia to the delegates at a special session of the UN General Assembly. At the last moment General Zia changed his programme to travel via Iran and Iraq and to his bad fortune, one of the lamps broke during the shifting of the baggage at New York Airport which stunned the world community. It has also been claimed by various reports that drug traffickers enjoy high level of support and during 1980s (Afghan *Jihad*) had smuggled contrabands even in vehicles of the National Logistic Cell (NLC), an army run trucking company which was assigned to deliver CIA weapons from Karachi port to Peshawar and Quetta. This entire system, controlled by elements of the Pakistani military, had employed thousands of military personnel including some retired officers, and emerged as a lucrative

business once the owners, drivers, and administrators became involved in the return shipment of narcotics from Peshawar to Karachi.⁴⁰ The above incidents provide conclusive evidence of army's involvement in the drug business.

Besides this, there are few other cases that certify the nexus of drug syndicates and military. In the early stage of Soviet-Afghan mujahideen war, General Akhtar Khan took the decision to remove the entire ISI staff in Quetta due to irrefutable proof of their direct involvement in profiting from drug trafficking and the siphoning of CIA supplied weapons.⁴¹ Tom Carew, a British SAS soldier has claimed that in 1980 he had seen more than 1,000 kg of opium being escorted by the Pakistani military to a special section of the mujahideen Camp.⁴² Moreover, in June 1986, Pakistani police arrested an army major with 220 kgs of heroin and in mere two months again arrested an air force lieutenant carrying an identical amount of illicit drugs.⁴³

After Zia's death, in a mysterious plane crash, his close associate Gulam Ishaq Khan took over as the president of Pakistan. He and General Aslam Beg, the then Chief of Army Staff, worked together for the growth of the drug industry at the Pak-Afghan border. Over the time, both became very close and vigorously advocated the idea of Pakistan's decision to join nuclear race in the region. General Fazle Haq, former Chief Minister and Governor of NWFP, was another high profile member of the establishment who was popularly known as General Noriega of Pakistan due to his deep rooted involvement in drug business. General Haq was an important player in promoting the growth of drug industry in the Swat valley of NWFP and by using his business contacts he successfully organised transshipments of heroin from Pakistan to the international markets.⁴⁴

The drug story doesn't end here but some of the traffickers used their connections with the politicians and military to gain political hot seats in Pakistan. Two well known drug traffickers of Pakistan Haji Ayub Afridi and Dost Jan, tracked for years by US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), were elected to the Pakistani National Assembly in October 1990. These two well known heroin dealers were members of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Islamic Democratic Alliance.⁴⁵ Haji Ayub, who is called the founder of Afghan heroin trade in Pakistan, was wanted in the trafficking of 17 tons of hashish that was discovered in a Balochistan warehouse and was named as supplier by a drug courier in Belgium also. Dost Jan, another drug mafia, was the prime accused in the two-ton Balochistan heroin case.

ISI-TALIBAN NEXUS IN POST-SOVIET PERIOD

As it has already been mentioned that menace of drug trafficking in Pakistan is closely related with the production of illicit drugs in Afghanistan, which is solely responsible for over 90% of world opium supply. Drug production in Afghanistan directly affects trafficking in Pakistan due to the very geographical location of Pakistani state and the nexus between Pakistani intelligence agencies and fighting forces inside Afghanistan, specially the Taliban. During the Afghan jihad, drug money was introduced to fight the communists who had invaded the country, and three major mujahideen leaders, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, Pir Sayad Ahmed Gaylani, and Ismat Muslim, systematically exploited the drug cultivation for funding their operations. However, Hekmatyar proved to be more successful than others in this regard due to his close relations to the Pashtun refugee community in Pakistan and Pakistani ISI.⁴⁶ At that time the driving forces inside Afghanistan for poppy cultivation were the warlords, their commanders, and combatants who badly needed the profits to upkeep their armed struggle.⁴⁷

Withdrawal of Soviets from Afghanistan in 1989 resulted in the drying up of support from the CIA and other international donors which led to a civil crisis in the country where fighting mujahideen found themselves in a complex dilemma. On the one hand drug money had formed a substantial part of the Afghan economy and on the other hand opium cultivation and consumption was haram, prohibited in Koran, which meant that they could not endorse the drug economy without jeopardising the very Islamic credentials that legitimised their opposition to the communist regime of Najibullah.⁴⁸ Mujahideen like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar resolved the dilemma by tactfully acquiescing in the drug trade and used the profits to maintain the resistance organisations in the country.

ISI's success in Afghan *jihad* made this institution more independent in its actions regarding Pakistan's Afghan policy but by 1994 the strategy of promoting a Pashtun led government in Kabul failed. This provided Naseerullah Babar, the then Interior Minister in Benazir Bhutto government, an opportunity to step in the matter which he did successfully by fostering a new client, the Taliban, whom the ISI would come to embrace soon thereafter. ISI not only helped Taliban in recruitment, from Pakistan, but also provided the money, weapons, and military support. A Pakistani artillery barrage, early in the fall of 1994, helped the Taliban in capturing the vital border town of Spin Boldak and the arms depot at Pasha, a major

weapon cache that included rockets, artillery ammunition, tank ammunition and small arms.⁴⁹ This new connection was guided by the twin objectives of Pakistani state- gaining strategic depth against India, and opening up of trade routes to Central Asia. ISI very tactfully played an increasing role in supporting the Taliban, and by 1996 had become the Taliban's chief backer.⁵⁰

The Taliban facilitated the opium cultivation in a larger acreage fields than ever. Poppy growing farmers found a golden opportunity to earn a hectic sum of money with their fields and thanked Taliban for their encouragement and facilitation. Wali Jan, an elderly toothless farmer, said that he could not be more grateful to the Taliban who brought security to, farmers like him, to grow the poppies in peace.⁵¹ The Taliban, as suggested by Ahmed Rashid, had done more than expanding the areas of opium production that includes significant expansion of trade and transport routes. They sought to expand and regulate the narco-economy by providing official government license, setting up model farms, training the farmers in efficient poppy growing techniques, and distributing fertilizers to the farmers.⁵² To facilitate trafficking, they significantly lowered many transaction costs for the traffickers also. By sponsoring poppy cultivation and trafficking Taliban systematically exploited the illicit narcotics economy and derived large political benefits as well.⁵³ Their active participation in the illicit business has aided and abetted opium cultivation on a scale unmatched to anything Afghanistan has produced in the past.⁵⁴

Ahmed Rashid states that due to the very nexus of drug syndicates and Taliban, heavily armed convoys started moving, several times in a month, towards south across the deserts of Balochistan to make drug deliveries to Pakistan's Makran coast.⁵⁵ In 2003-04, US spy satellites tracked cargo ships, laden with Afghan heroin, leaving Pakistani shores and returning with weapons and ammunition for the insurgency.⁵⁶ To raise their revenue substantially the Taliban started collecting Zakat from all dealers engaged in the business of illicit drugs. The trend continued till 2000 when, surprisingly, Taliban regime introduced an effective ban on opium poppy cultivation and almost eliminated its cultivation in Afghanistan. However, the ban did not cover the trade of illicit drugs and no actions were taken at the time against opium inventories or their holders.⁵⁷ Hopes were high for a change in drug production and trafficking scenario when US started a crackdown on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan following the 9/11 event but contrary to the expectation, between 2001 to 2006, trafficking of opiates into and through Pakistan

increased dramatically corresponding roughly to the increase in opium production in Afghanistan from 185 metric tons in 2001 to 6,100 metric tons in 2006.⁵⁸

EFFORTS TO CONTROL THE MENACE

If one goes through the official documents and reports that have been published by the government of Pakistan, one would find that government attaches a high priority to control and eliminate the narcotic menace, especially processing and trafficking, from the country. One would also find that the government of Pakistan has taken a number of effective measures to combat all aspects of this multi-faceted drug problem which has been internationally acknowledged. However, the government is well aware of the importance of narcotic dynamics in the country, specially its bad affects on the society, and its major role in military build up and budgetary process.

Given the complexity and fragile character of Pakistan, Government controls do not allow a uniform approach to deal with the menace of narcotics. In 1948, Pakistan ratified the UN Protocol of 1946 and promised the eradication of drug addiction under international conventions and agreements of 1912, 1925 and 1931.⁵⁹ Until 1979, it relied on centuries old laws to control the opium production in the country. Pakistan in 1979, introduced the Hudood Ordinance which penalised almost everything from production, possession, transportation to conversion, but planting of opium poppies did not fall under it.⁶⁰ In order to satisfy the anti-drug campaigners, General Zia-ul-Haq in late 1983 amended the Hudood Ordinance and declared life imprisonment for drug trafficking,⁶¹ but it did not produce the desired result. The remaining lacuna was removed much later by a presidential ordinance in 1995 which brought poppy cultivation under state law.

There have been some important international efforts also to reduce poppy cultivation and trafficking in Pakistan, and international agencies like the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) and the US government both have been generously funding an alternative development programme in tribal areas that includes crop substitution, road construction, electrification, and water schemes. But these efforts have been seriously undermined by the corrupt practices, and the local people remain sceptical of the outcome. "I don't know where this development has taken place; it must be in the files alone," comments

Shah Jahan, a villager of Kohistan, sarcastically pointing towards the surrounding villages, where people still ride for miles on mules' backs to get the drinking water.⁶²

Anti Narcotics Force (ANF), established in July 1994,⁶³ is the principal agency for combating the drugs which enter Pakistan mainly through the long and porous border with Afghanistan⁶⁴ and has a vast area of responsibility with it. But its existing resources, specially staff and funds are fairly inadequate to trace and interdict the movement of illicit drugs in a wide spread area of Pakistan. It maintains round the clock presence at all the international airports and seaports; however, the dry ports and border exit points are checked by the ANF at random and on the basis of intelligence received.⁶⁵ Other law enforcement agencies sharing ANF's border control responsibility include Frontier Corps (Balochistan & NWFP), Punjab and Sindh Rangers, Pakistan Customs and Pakistan Coast Guard.

Pakistani Coast Guard which enjoys the jurisdiction extending for 12 nautical miles to sea and for 50 miles inland, has been assigned to patrol the Makran Coast and the port of Karachi.⁶⁶ Pakistani Custom agents bear the responsibility of all the airports, order points, and the Karachi port. However, Frontier Corps and Frontier Constabulary primarily serve as the law enforcement agencies for tribal areas of NWFP, FATA, and Balochistan.

Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) in June 1996, seized around two tons of heroin in Balochistan province, the biggest seizure in the history of the country at that time, and invited foreign diplomats to see the destruction.⁶⁷ It is worth mentioning here that in Pakistan, the largest seizures usually take place not because the anti-drug agencies are working effectively and efficiently but by chance or through tips from disgruntled insiders or member's network. Sometimes drug mafias themselves leak the information of a small amount of drug travelling on specific route so that a larger amount of it could be smoothly destined through other available routes.

Control of Narcotics Substance Act (1997), passed by National Assembly, encompasses all the pervious laws, envisages establishment of special courts with sole jurisdiction to try narcotic offences, and also includes several new provisions like death penalty for trafficking and financing of narcotic drugs, confiscation of drug generated assets etc. Following this, in 2000-01, Special Narcotics Courts were established in Peshawar, Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, and Quetta to speed up drug prosecutions in the country.⁶⁸ Pakistan also extended the application of

the Control of Narcotic Substances Act (CNSA) and Anti-Narcotics Force Act (ANFA) to the tribal areas which proved to be a major breakthrough in law enforcement efforts and for the first time, federal anti-drug laws covered the tribal areas.

With the ratification of various conventions on narcotic issues, Pakistan committed itself for complete eradication of poppy cultivation by the end of 2000⁶⁹ and did a great job to meet its commitment despite the fact that historically Pakistan's efforts to contain narcotic problems have been constrained by a severe economic crisis which restricted its ability to finance anti-drug operations. Currently, Pakistan's efforts to control the trafficking of Afghan opiates and the cultivation of opium poppy inside the country are adequately constrained by the ongoing US led "War on Terror," major cross-border insurgency and threat of violent extremism. Pakistan's decision to throw its lot in favour of US in the war on terror has shifted the attention of law enforcement agencies from the narcotic menace. The result is being felt in the tribal areas which were opium poppy free for several years, having again resorted to poppy cultivation in 2004.⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

Drug trafficking is a non-traditional security threat which when combined with terrorism has the potential to transform itself into a more deadly composition. It poses a significant threat to the world community at two levels; first, by targeting the human resource of a country (especially youth), it paralyses the state and prevents it from realising its actual potential; second, by financing the acts of terrorism with the same money earned indirectly from the targeted state. Pakistan's geographic location in the region has made it vulnerable to drug trafficking and a substantial amount of drug is still trafficked to the regional and international markets by using various routes inside the country that include the sea, air and the land. The trafficking phenomenon in Pakistan largely gained momentum due to two external developments- the Iranian revolution and mujahideen's holy war against Soviets in Afghanistan. However, it was the emergence of Unholy Triangle inside Pakistan and ISI-Taliban nexus across the border that subsequently hijacked the Pakistani state and made the situation from bad to worse giving a new dimension to the growing international drug trade and terrorism. Various international attempts to deal with the menace, like crop substitution, road construction, electrification, and

improvement of water system failed to achieve the desired result and were ultimately consumed by the Unholy Triangle and ISI-Taliban nexus. Besides this, the ongoing "War on Terror" has also severely undermined anti-drug projects and shifted the attention from anti-drug to anti-terrorism. Heroin explosion emanating from Afghanistan and existing trafficking network in Pakistan is now affecting the socio-economic and political circumstances in the region and has put the entire region including Indian security at risk. The money generated by illicit trade and trafficking is now being used to finance the terror activities in the region.

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