

Narcotic Dilemma and Political Upheaval in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

In Republic of Afghanistan international community is facing an unprecedented treat of Narcotic Production and Consumption. The Afghanistan is widely known as the largest producer of the world's supply of heroin. The threat has gone to the extent that in 2016, it was estimated that 80% of the world's Opium supply came from Afghanistan. Estimated production has risen by 43% in 2016 compared with 2015 levels, according to latest Afghan Opium Survey figures released by Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Opium is Afghanistan's largest cash crop. The Republic of Afghanistan is the country where the maximum production of Opium takes place. The problem is a serious concern in the future because it has a tendency to grow more and more as Afghanistan is about to complete the major project which will connect the South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East. This is of New Silk Route, one of the biggest reconstructions happening in Eurasian Continent after the disorganisation of Soviet Union. In this context the study would attempt to access the problems of illicit drugs and Narcotic Production in Afghanistan and in what way planners of the country will undertake steps to prevent the illegal trade of Narcotic Business.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Al-Quada, Narcotic Trade, Threat, Trade Route, Taliban, Struggling, United Nations

Significance

Narcotic Consumption causes many deaths every year in the entire world, because of Opium, maximum production of which takes place in Afghanistan. The major concerns are large production, manufacturing of illegal substances as marijuana along with the revival of poppy cultivation and then smuggled through Afghanistan to peripheral and cross-regional countries. It was estimated that about 120 tons of heroin of Afghan origin reaches Western Europe each year, accounting for three quarters of the heroin market there with a street of value of about \$30 billion. The Narcotic Production in Afghanistan has adverse consequences not only in Afghanistan but also in other regions of the world. The Problem of the Narcotic production in Afghanistan has an impact on all the countries of Central Asia. Its consequences are having devastating effects on the entire region. The trafficking of the produce in Afghanistan

destabilizes the other regional countries adjacent to Afghanistan by encouraging crime, violence, and corruption – especially if those states are already economically and politically unstable. The research paper accordingly in broader perspective signifies its role in maintaining a stable political scenario in case drug business process in being minimized.

Introduction

Looking at the map of Afghanistan, it is surrounded in north lay the Central Asian Republics, xingiang proviance¹ of china in the North-East touching the narrow strip of the Wakhan Corridor,² to the East, South, and Southwest lies Pakistan and the west is Iran. The second major observation is that it is central to the critical and unstable regions of west Asia and South Asia. It is land locked country and serves as a valued corridor for the rich gas and oil resources in the Central Asian Republics to the Arabian Sea. Conversely, it gives access to the

market in Central Asia and therefore a country of great interests for regional and world powers.³

Opium from Afghanistan is consumed in the Pakistan and CARs⁴. However, the primary destination of the supply is Europe and North America.⁵ The other destinations are America and the other parts of the world including Russia.⁶

The Narcotic production mainly produced is the Helmand and Nangrhar. The dried crops then are refined in small laboratories on and across the Pakistan border and are shipped out via Karachi and the Central Asian Republics.⁷

According to UN Regional Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, approximately 65% of the Narcotics from Afghanistan follow the route Afghanistan-Tajikistan-Kazakhstan-Russia-Europe.⁸

According to the UNODC, "The Balkan and northern routes are the main heroin trafficking corridors linking Afghanistan to the huge markets of the Russian Federation and Western Europe. The Balkan route traverses the Islamic Republic of Iran (often via Pakistan), Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria across South-East Europe to the Western European market, with an annual market value of some \$20 billion."⁹

The trade is very much in the hands of international crime syndicates, such as the Russia mafia, and also known that the Kurdistan workers Party in Turkey is heavily involved in the trade as a means of financing its terror campaign against Turkish state.¹⁰ Large quantities of chemicals particularly acetic and hydride reportedly enter from Central Asia, Europe and India.¹¹

In the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement,¹² the land locked country got an access to trade its goods imported to the outside world via Middle East and Pakistan. The trade was mostly in legal terms in the past, but after the onset of civil war reverse transmission took place, whereby the trade happen in illegal terms.¹³

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It was estimated that about 80% of World's Opium supply came from Republic of Afghanistan during 2016. Estimated production has risen by 43% in 2016 compared with 2015 levels, according to latest Afghan Opium Survey¹⁴ these were released by Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics and United

Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.¹⁵ The cultivation or the production of poppy in Afghanistan existed during the Taliban era¹⁶ and before.¹⁷ Afghanistan produces around 90% of the world's supply of illicit opium and nearly 85% of global supplies of heroin and morphine originate in the region. Opium is Afghanistan's largest cash crop.¹⁸

The past eighteen years have witnessed significant changes vis-à-vis people of Afghanistan as they have striven to establish an independent state with a market economy governed under pluralistic democracy. These changes, besides the contemporary terrorist movements in Afghanistan have brought sudden poverty, physical insecurity and bewildering social transformations that led to terrible sufferings of people. However, Afghanistan is trying its level best to forward towards peace and prosperity. The country has adopted several measures to ensure stability and economic prosperity to overcome the problems of people. Nevertheless, the region continues to a complexity of problems related to weak and corrupt Governments¹⁹, divided Societies,²⁰ Narcotic Trade and its corrosive effects on State and Non State Institutions, radicalized Groups and widespread poverty. All this has made the region suffer in many respects and adverse effects are visible on marginalized groups and weaker sections of the society including poor, children and women. All this has led to the growth of Transnational Organized Crime²¹ and its increasing relevance to the security of states and populations alike.

Many Academicians believe that Cold War²² helped the unlawful Narcotic Trade thrive in Central Asia. This trend of Opium Cultivation emerged first in Laos and in Burma, then in Afghanistan in what came to be known as the *Golden Crescent*.²³ The Golden Crescent is the name given to Asia's principal area of illegal opium production, located at the crossroads of Central, South, and Western Asia. The trade has gone to the extent that in 2016, it was estimated that 80% of the world's Opium supply came from Afghanistan. Estimated production has risen by 43% in 2016 compared with 2015 levels, according to latest Afghan Opium Survey figures released by Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Currently Afghanistan produces around 90% of the world's supply of illicit opium and nearly 85% of

global supplies of heroin and morphine originate in the region.²⁴ Afghanistan is now a major consumer of Afghan Heroin that has resulted in an HIV and other disease caused by injecting drugs.²⁵

The Afghan Economy and Opium

The 2004 United States Development Program ranked Afghanistan on 173 out of 177 countries, using Human Development Index (HDI), with Afghanistan near or at the bottom of virtually every development indicator including nutrition, infant mortality, life expectancy and literacy.²⁶ Several factors encourage opium production, the greatest being economic: the high rate of return on investment from opium poppy cultivation has driven an agricultural shift in Afghanistan from growing traditional crops to growing opium poppy.²⁷ Opium cultivation on this scale is not traditional and in the area controlled by the Helmand Valley Authority in the 1950s and during the crop was largely suppressed.

Despite the fact that only 12% of its land is arable, agriculture is a way of life for 70% of Afghans and is the country's primary source of income.²⁸ During good years, Afghanistan produced enough food to feed its people as well as supply for export. Its traditional agricultural products include wheat, corn, barley, rice, Cotton, fruit, nuts, and grapes. However, its agricultural economy has suffered considerably.²⁹

Poppy cultivation and the Opium Trade have been said to have had more significant impact on the cultivation in Afghanistan than the impact of wheat farming and livestock trading.³⁰ As farmers in Afghanistan were once heavily reliant on wheat farming to make sufficient income, the development of poppy cultivation has given many of these farmers a boost in capital, even though the Opium Trade may be a more dangerous product to distribute. In addition, as the demand for Opium has elevated, women have more opportunity to work in the same setting as their male counterpart.³¹

Afghanistan's rugged terrain encourages local autonomy, which in some cases, means local leadership committed to an opium economy. The terrain makes surveillance and enforcement difficult. Afghanistan's economy has thus evolved to the point where it is now highly dependent on opium.³² Although less than 4% of arable land in

Afghanistan was used for opium poppy cultivation in 2006, revenue from the harvest brought in over \$ 3 billion- more than 35% of the country's total gross national product (GNP). According to Antonio Costa, "Opium poppy cultivation, processing and transport have become Afghanistan's top employers, its main source of capital and the principal base of its economy."³³ Today, a record of 2.9 million Afghans from 28 of 34 provinces is involved in opium cultivation in some way, which represents nearly 10% of the population.³⁴ Although Afghanistan's overall economy is boosted by opium profits, less than 20% of the \$ 3 billion in opium profits actually goes to impoverished farmers, while more than 80% goes into the pockets of Afghan's opium traffickers and kingpins and their political connections. Even profits are generated outside of Afghanistan by international drug traffickers and dealers.³⁵

Historical Perspective

The history of Opium can be traced back to 3400 B.C. in the lower Mesopotamia. Opium has long been cultivated in the region, and records of Opium Poppy cultivation in Central Asia goes back to the 19th century. Opium Production began to be used for medicinal purposes during the colonial period.³⁶

A species of Opium Known as *Papaver Somniferum*,³⁷ had been cultivated from centuries in Afghanistan. The cultivation of poppy as traditional crop dates back to medieval times.³⁸

Afghanistan's³⁹ Drug Trafficking through Central Asia has expanded dramatically over the past many decades. Central Asia⁴⁰ has recently emerged as a major International Drug Trafficking Centre.⁴¹

Afghanistan, along with Pakistan and Iran, form the Golden Crescent, an area known for opium and cannabis cultivation and trafficking from the time poppies were introduced from Europe by Arab traders along the⁴² Silk Road.⁴³

Being a part of the Golden Crescent Region have positioned themselves as the main source of opium since the early 1970s, as documented by Catherine Lamour and Michel Lamberti in their famous work "*Les grandes manoeuvres de l'opium*".⁴⁴ The country is involved in the Narcotic production from sixteenth century.⁴⁵ *The cultivation of Narcotic trade in the country did not reach to an unprecedented large scale until the Russian invasion in 1979.*⁴⁶

Thus the cold war helped the Narcotic trade thrive⁴⁷ in the country especially at the time of the Soviet-Afghan conflict of 1979.⁴⁸ The unexceptional growth was the direct result of the loss of government controls on production and indirect market demand created by decreased production due to political disruption in Vietnam and Laos, formerly the chief suppliers to Europe and North America. The Opium cultivation was further enhanced by the warlords who were in constant conflict with each other following the Russian retreat in 1989. Since, these warlords at that time required the financial support to weaken the United States funding to Najibullah's⁴⁹ government in 1991.⁵⁰

Thus, the Narcotic Trade was initially prompted by the US and Pakistani intelligence services for raising funds to purchase the Terrorist's⁵¹ war accessories.⁵² In the Post Soviet period the country was engaged in to a bloody Civil War⁵³, which completely destroyed central authority and reinforced the tribal leadership in various parts of the country, allowing various warlords and drug lords to prosper in a system of civil chaos and anarchy.⁵⁴

The expansion of opium production was largely ignored by the United States during the cold war. After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States began to pressure Pakistan to cut opium production. Meanwhile, the Taliban⁵⁵ encouraged opium production in Afghanistan to generate revenue⁵⁶. The Taliban ultimately tried to use their control over Afghanistan's opium production as a bargaining chip with the UN. In 2001, the Taliban's ban on opium production was largely successful.⁵⁷

The Taliban Regime⁵⁸ came with the policy of "*cleanse Afghanistan of the poisoned poppies*".⁵⁹ As a result of this during 2000, the Taliban, controlled the majority of Afghanistan, banned opium cultivation and enforced harsh punitive measures against drug use, which included maiming the hands of drug users. These steps, as well as severe drought in Afghanistan, were highly effective in reducing the amount of available opiates in the world market, resulting in drug shortages in Europe and a ten-fold increase in price. Some believe the move was economically motivated to increase price, but this will remain open to debate as the Taliban were deposed in 2001.⁶⁰

With the fall of the Taliban Regime⁶¹ the Opium Production recovered to near-record levels, with 3400 and 3600 metric tons produced in 2002 and 2003, respectively. In 2003, total income to opium farmers alone was equal to half of the legal gross domestic product and illustrated that, despite Hamid Karzai's⁶² declaration of a *jihad*⁶³ on opium; regional commanders continue to rely on opium production and trafficking to maintain their strongholds.⁶⁴

Now coming to the contemporary era the Opium has been of major significance in Afghanistan and all parties in the conflict have been involved in the trade, with Northern Alliance, particularly the Islamic Revolutionary Movement, regarded as corrupt and heavily involved in the Drug trade. During the Taliban regime, the Drug trade was a major source of revenue and helped to raise to prolong funds ongoing war against the Northern Alliance. The trade was originally ignored by the United States, as it was thought that UNOCAL⁶⁵, an American oil company, was involved in talks to build a pipeline from Turkmenistan to Pakistan.⁶⁶

Causes of Opium cultivation in Afghanistan

There are multiple causes for the production of illogical Narcotic trade in Afghanistan some are as follows.

Political Causes

Absence of government authority: The absence of government authority and the rule of law⁶⁷ provided an important incentive for farmers to grow opium.⁶⁸ The rule of law does not extend to large parts of the country, due to the dominance of anti-social activities in some provinces as southern province where the cultivation is maximum.⁶⁹

As for instance According to UNDOC 2007⁷⁰ report, Opium and Poppy Cultivation has increased in the province where there has been significant deterioration by Taliban activities. In fact Helmand⁷¹ has become the major producer of Opium, and Opium Cultivation has also increased in western provinces such as Farah,⁷² where the insurgents have enhanced their subversive activities.⁷³

Growth of Armed Movement: Growth of armed political movements has made the central Asian states increasingly vulnerable to the proliferation

of Narcotic trade and related crimes.⁷⁴ Drugs and terror enjoy a symbiotic relationship because they leverage similar networks, allow insurgents access to significant revenue to continue their resistance, and provide a way for non-state actors to emancipate themselves from state sponsors. They weaken state institutions and in this way, can be self-perpetuating.⁷⁵

Policy Formulation: The failure of Afghanistan state to curb the Narcotic trade and its production is also due to wrong policy formulation by administrators. A major anti drug policy was funded by Britain but it failed despite a budget of 100 pound. Due to its results there are now the serious apprehensions that US anti drug policy would also to be a failure.⁷⁶

Weak Central Government: The Afghan government is suffering from various serious problems. While analysing the condition in Afghanistan it has been observed that in the whole Southern Afghanistan, the institution of government are not available. Provincial governors themselves rely on the warlords and drug lords for their own protection, and in exchange they close their eyes on their illicit activities.⁷⁷

NATURAL CAUSES

Climatic Conditions

Climate change has severely damaged Afghanistan's agriculture production. According to the Latest study on climate change by Mercy Corps⁷⁸, Afghanistan is among the most vulnerable countries affected by climate change. From 1998-2007 mountain snow cover has been constantly below the long- term average throughout the year. Afghanistan has already seen its direct impact through consistent and continuous droughts.⁷⁹

Social Causes

Corruption: one of the main reasons for Poppy production in Afghanistan is corruption in the system. Several reports indicated the fact that the Drug traffickers bribed the Taliban and NATO⁸⁰ for the shipment of their trade. This is the reason that the Drug production represents the largest sector in the economy.⁸¹

Fragile Economy: In spite of other reasons for drug cultivation an important reason is also the fragile

economy. The fragile economy creates state failures which in turn flourish the illegal activities in the country.⁸²

Cheap Labour: Afghanistan poses the right environment for cultivation, not only in terms of yield, but other socio-economic reasons as cheap labour is available across the country.⁸³

CONCLUSION

Afghanistan's overall economy is boosted by opium profits, less than 20% of the \$ 3 billion in opium profits actually goes to insolvent farmers, while more than 80% goes into the pockets of Afghan's Opium Traffickers and kingpins and their political connections. State weakness in Afghanistan has enabled the gradual criminalization of state authority in the region. After a failed war on Drugs from decades of ineffective drug policies, something must be done to combat the growing drug economy. There should be a universal legislation that should provide a viable solution.

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 - 60 Catherine S Todd, Naqibullah Safi, and Steffanie A Strathdee, 2005. "Drug use and harm reduction in Afghanistan", *Harm Reduction Journal*, 2.
 - 61 The Taliban Regime had its birth in 1994. This was necessitated by the Pakistan's Afghanistan policy. The Taliban which had captured power in Afghanistan in 1996 were defeated in a spectacular way. They were defeated if not routed, within two months of launching of the Operation Enduring Freedom. The reason of failures may be multiple as The ideology of Islam practised by the Taliban came from the Sunni-Wahhabi dominated factions in Pakistan the other may be no proper leadership. Swamy Ram, pp. 113-116.
 - 62 The Karzai government was established with international support in 2001. It was first envisaged in 2001 of Boon Agreement and then codified in the 2004. This government was highly rigid and centralised and it virtually placed all the powers within the president. S.V. Salahuddin, *Militancy in Pakistan and Afghanistan A Brief History of Cause And Effect*, New Delhi, Pentagon Press, 2012, p. 166.
 - 63 Jihad in the Arabic means struggle. In the Islamic literature it means to be a better Muslim, to make a society clearly align with the teachings of Koran. Whereas some extremists elements among the Muslims have given the word another interpretation of the word which constitutes attack on the Infidals and Radical methods for morality and spiritually for self defence. John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, *The Globalisation of World Politics*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 568.
 - 64 Catherine S Todd, Naqibullah Safi, and Steffanie A Strathdee, 2005. "Drug use and harm reduction in Afghanistan", *Harm Reduction Journal*, 2.
 - 65 UNCOL is US based oil company. UNCOL was formed to exploit the resources in Central Asia and Caspian region. UNCOL with its Saudi partner Delta, they hired every Americans of those involved in Afghan Operations during Jihad. Sheel K. Asopa, *The Turmoil of Afghanistan: Role of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and US*, in *Afghanistan Dynamics of Survival*, ed. Jagmohan Mehar, New Delhi, Kalpaz Publication, 2008, p. 96.
 - 66 Frank A. Clements, *Roots of Modern Conflict in Afghanistan*, pp. 76-77.
 - 67 The Rule of law has been defined by various authors differently as Joseph Raz has the rule of law as a shorthand description of the positive aspects of any given political system. Also John Finnis has described the rule of law as "the name commonly given to the state of affairs in which legal system is legally in good shape". Lord Bingham, "The Rule of Law", *Cambridge Law Journal*, 66(1), 2007, p. 68.
 - 68 Mondira Dutta, *Emerging Afghanistan in the third Millenium*, pp. 220-224.
 - 69 "Office of the NATO Liaison Officer in Central Asia", NATO, 2014, accessed on 25-6-2017, available at, www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_107902
 - 70 UNDOC and Government of Afghanistan Ministry of Counternarcotics, *Opium Survey 2007 Afghanistan*, pp.iii
 - 71 The helmant proviance is the largest proviance in Afghanistan. The population of the proviance is largely based on the Pashtun, also some baluchs in the south of the proviance and Hazaras in the north. Its capital is

Lashkargal. The economy of the province is based on the agriculture. Frank A. Clements, *Roots of Modern Conflict in Afghanistan*, p. 107.

- 72 Farah is the second large province in Afghanistan. It is located in the western part of Afghanistan. The Capital is also Farah. The province is traversed by the Farah, the kash, the hert river. The economy of this province is also base on the agriculture. Frank A. Clements, *Roots of Modern Conflict in Afghanistan*, p. 85.
- 73 Mondira Dutta, *Emerging Afghanistan in the third Millenium*, pp. 220-224.
- 74 Sreemati Ganguli, Afghanistan: A security Challenges for Eurasia, in *Reconstructing Afghanistan, Prospects and Limitations*, ed. Arpita Basu Roy, Binoda Kumar Mishra, Mulana Abdul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, Kolkata, Shipra Publications, 2001, New Delhi, pp. 188-190.
- 75 Katharine Petrich, "Freedomwritersca: The Drug Trade in Afghanistan and Pakistan", Mosecon, 2013, accessed on 23,5,2017, Available at: <https://www.mosecon.com/freedomwritersca-guest-blog-the-drug-trade-in-afghanistan>,
- 76 Mondira Dutta, *Emerging Afghanistan in the Third Millinium*, p. 216.
- 77 *Ibid.*, p. 236.
- 78 Mercy Corps is working in Afghanistan from 1986. It help the Afghan people to raise their standard of life by helping them build sustainable, legitimate livelihoods. As the ongoing conflict have major impact on the people in Afghanistan. The consequence of the conflict is that it has left Afghanistan as one of the most poorest and unstable regions in the world. Eighty-five percent of the population relies on agriculture and natural resource-based livelihoods, leaving them vulnerable in a precarious economy. Over, 70% of the population is under the age of 30, and 400,000 young people reach working age yearly — there are not enough jobs available to meet their employment needs."Afghanistan Mercy Corps, accessed on 3-6-2017 available at <https://www.mercycorps.org/countries/afghanistand>
- 79 *Ibid.*, pp. 220-224.
- 80 The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was established in 1949 with the aim of to make a to make political and military between the United States and a group of historically fractious European nations in order to deter and, if necessary, defeat a conventional attack by a single threat – the Soviet Union and, later, the Warsaw Pact. Colonel Patrick T. Warren, *Alliance History and the Future NATO: What the Last 500 years of Alliance Behaviour Tells us About NATO's Path Forward*, Foreign Policy at Brookings, 2010, p.7
- 81 A Wordsworth Compilation, *Afghanistan Things Fall Apart*, p. 218.
- 82 Amalendu Mishra, *Hot Sports in Global Politics*, p. 56.
- 83 Ed. Adam Pain and Jacky Sutton, *Reconstructing Agriculture in Afghanistan*, David Mansfield, 'Economical with the truth': The Limits of Price and Profitability in both explaining Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan and in Designing Effective Responses, Food and Agricultural Organisation UN and Intermediate Technology Limited, UK, 2007, p. 215.

