

GAMING THE SYSTEM: HOW AFGHAN OPIUM UNDERPINS LOCAL POWER

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Afghanistan's non-democratic local powers grow stronger while international efforts to ballast Kabul's government falter, so robust central governance continues to remain elusive to Afghanistan's leaders. Despite the influx of foreign aid, development agendas, democratic processes and urbanization at the center, localities at the state's periphery—predominantly in the south—are heavily reliant on self-administration and service provision. Entrenched local administrative procedures, based on authority from tribalism or local power brokers' influence, continue to be resilient, while faith in the state is decreasing. Central incompetence, reinforced by endemic corruption and entrenched tribal mores, have fomented a growing sense of confusion and impotence within the country's institutions. This deterioration represents a failure of governance for the Afghan state: the inability to deliver services to the populace. 70 percent of the Afghan population still resides outside of the centrally administered areas in historically fragmented communities, creating political bulwarks that the Afghan government must breach to attain domestic legitimacy and build strong national institutions. Yet some successes are rightly highlighted. In the wake of the 2001 Bonn Agreement, ripples of change advanced: the foundation of the bicameral legislature was poured, *de jure* human and equal rights were established and the ground for democratic growth was tilled. These successes, however, should be noted with caution for one needs only to look to the fraudulent elections of 2009 to see that these young democratic fields are salted with many of the despotic power structures that have characterized their landscape for centuries.

Some of the very global economic forces that should, theoretically, overthrow the local political status quo are actually playing an important role in sustaining it. Afghanistan's local power brokers are using new opportunities arising from global integration within existing traditional power structures to augment and entrench their power in ways previously unachievable. The term "traditional," however, has

two principal limitations. First, there is a question of how much today's tribal structures resemble those of the past; the structures are not static. Second, today's power brokers are revising and overturning "traditional" structure hierarchies, albeit governing in a similar fashion. As Barnett Rubin notes astutely, "Tribalism in the modern world is more often a strategy of state control or social resistance than the culture of an autarchic, kinship-based world that no longer exists, if it ever did."¹ Nonetheless, structures akin to those that have long prevailed still remain to the detriment of the state.

Among the most important forces that sustain these structures—and the focus of this essay—is economic integration. Specifically, it looks to the recent evolution of the Afghan opium trade as a case study. The opium trade includes all opiate-related activities bringing revenues to Afghanistan, from water rights and land tenure for poppies to heroin processing and trans-shipment.

Some observers paint a unidirectional relationship between the evolution of the opium trade and the Taliban insurgency, with the rise of a well-funded insurgency driving increases in cultivation in areas under their control. The impulse to view the opium trade as an indicator of instability is informed by at least two notions.² First, civil conflicts rage where they are financially viable—a function of natural resources ripe for exploitation—and eventually devolve into a conflict about the economics of war itself. This was convincingly articulated in Paul Collier's influential work on greed and grievance.³ Second, the American experience in Colombia can be projected onto Afghanistan. There is considerable pressure to see the Taliban as analogous to the FARC and the drug-terror nexus as symbiotic and linear. It is natural for policymakers to view similar problems as analogues of one another, though it can come at the sacrifice of lasting policy solutions. The view of the Taliban as being similar to FARC may largely be shaped by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's prominent role in both Colombia and Afghanistan.⁴ Regardless of the logic to which they subscribe, the account is reductionist; it misses the richness of understanding and implications for policy that comes from viewing the opiate economy as a function of local power dynamics rather than simply insurgency or criminality.

Observers of Afghanistan rightly argue that the drug economy is evolving; modes of opiate production are consolidating in the southern provinces as poppy cultivation declines in the northern provinces. Some argue that the opium economy is reflective of successful counternarcotics (CN) campaigns in the north and the insurgency-fomented instability in the south, and further, that the southern consolidation is illustrative of progress in the fight against the drug trade. Touting the northern poppy cultivation decline as a success, Antonio Maria Costa, director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), claimed in September

2009 that, “The bottom is starting to fall out of the Afghan opium market...the regional divide of opium cultivation between the south and rest of the country [mirrors] the security situation between the lawless south and relatively stable north of the country.”⁵

I argue that the opiate economy’s evolution is both a consequence of Afghanistan’s local power structures and a cause of their further entrenchment. Local actors have developed innovative ways to participate in the drug economy consistent with their power typologies. It is this dynamic—not simply counternarcotics and insurgency—that has shaped the opium economy. Furthermore, despite regionalization, the trade is more nationally integrated than at any previous time. Progress in the drug war or insurgency should therefore not be measured linearly, and attempts to categorize successes and failures as such miss important considerations. Viewed through the lens of local power, the opium trade’s southern consolidation is not a progression, as UNODC would claim, but rather a regression. It portends significant implications for the future of the democracy-building and development projects in Afghanistan.

In making my case, I will show that Afghanistan’s local power structures principally have two typologies: those powers formed by the Afghan state, and those powers formed by Afghan society. The terms “state” and “society” are problematic when applied to Afghanistan as they do not accurately reflect what they purport to describe. “State” is here meant to capture the various attempts by domestic and foreign powers to politically consolidate the territory of Afghanistan. “Society,” in contrast, describes the myriad societies and functions associated with tribal and traditional forms of governance. I use this paradigm to counter arguments about the causes and implications of change in the opiate economy. From a strategic perspective, my account aims to contribute to the larger discourse on local power in an era of globalization.

MAPPING LOCAL POWER IN AFGHANISTAN

In exploring the continued importance of Afghanistan’s local power structures, it is useful to map two local power typologies: those powers that form out of the state and those borne of society. The projection of this simple map is informed by two prevailing theories of the genesis of local power. The first argues that local despotic power structures are the form, function and manifestation of the state,

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even a democratic one. The second claims that the source of local power lies with society.⁶ Using both of these theoretical approaches, a simple geographic model can be generated: local power structures in the north of Afghanistan are generally more a product of the state, while those power structures in the south are more reflective of society. In very general terms, good proxies for evaluating the state and society model are ethnicity, which is distinctly geographical in Afghanistan, and proximity to the governmental center, Kabul, as will be explored below. Tajiks and Uzbeks largely control authority and local power in the north with their power stemming more from the state; in the south, local power is generally controlled by Pashtuns and the Baluch and is borne more of society. This paradigm is too simplistic to capture or account for the myriad exceptions to it, but it is useful in examining the evolution of the drug trade from the perspective of local power.

Many of the modern forms of local power in northern Afghanistan are products of militarism, an outcome of the country's long history of failed attempts at national consolidation, from Ahmad Shah Durrani to the current Karzai regime. Northern local power elites were generally created by the state as well as by world powers. Colonization strategy generated and exploited power asymmetries; the Soviets co-opted the ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks in the north rather than the southern Pashtuns, more due to geography than innate ethnic characteristics. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were Soviet republics and comprised of the very ethnic groups that make up northern Afghanistan. Further, much of the "economic and security infrastructure of the Afghan regime was located in [the north], which was increasingly integrated [...into] the Central Asian Republics."⁷

The new Afghan elites and rulers are a product of an education system created by foreign powers and designed to overthrow social mores of familial and tribal identity, creating a new intelligentsia.⁸ This education, coupled with billions of dollars in military aid to these elites, gave them the means and, once the aid dried up, the incentive to raise militias.⁹ Northern power broker and Junbish-e-Milli leader Abdul Rashid Dostum, for example, was a product of Soviet training, despite eventually turning on his patrons.¹⁰ Although leaders in the north, such as Dostum, do claim kinship identities, their form of power stems more from militarism. In contrast to the Pashtuns and Baluch of the south, tribal codes and institutions such as Pashtunwali do not characterize Tajik and Uzbek pedigrees.¹¹

Southern Pashtuns are the focus of much discussion about traditional and tribal governance in Afghanistan. For them, the successful maintenance of local power is contingent first and foremost on tribal legitimization.¹² This may be, in part, reflective of the general political disenfranchisement many Pashtuns feel relative to Kabul, which begets further reliance on tribal structures. Pashtun tribal dynamics are not uniform. There have been cases where, like northerners,

Pashtun warlords have risen to prominence. The ebb and flow of tribal dynamics among Pashtuns, however, has meant that the political space at the local level for a modern conception of the state is fleeting, if it even exists at all. Insofar as state-legitimized power has existed among Pashtuns, tribal legitimization has also been necessary. Muhammad Nasim Akhundzada, for example, was legitimized as a powerful Helmandi warlord by both military prowess and his tribal lineage.¹³

THE OPIUM ECONOMY AND LOCAL POWER

The opiate trade plays a convoluted role within the larger political economy of governance and violence in Afghanistan. It would be reductionist to suggest that the drug trade foments instability or, further, that the drug economy *is* the war economy. Unfortunately, as others have noted, it is challenging to separate the role of resource exploitation in the origins of conflict from its influence on the conflict's longevity and form.¹⁴ Fundamentally, the Afghan opiate economy does play a part in sustaining the Taliban insurgency; it is a symptom of and fuel for the larger political economy of war.¹⁵ Were the drug trade removed from Afghanistan, however, the Taliban would still be a powerful insurgent force seeking to overthrow the Karzai regime. The Taliban-led insurgency is by no means the drug trade's *raison d'être*, nor does it follow that the insurgency is a product of the drug trade.¹⁶ Clearly there are overlaps between Taliban elements and opium—the two influence one another and are being driven closer together—but it remains the case that the two are discrete entities and will be treated as such for this analysis.

Far more important for the purposes of this essay is the opium trade's role in underpinning and perpetuating local power. Integral to the increasing strength of local power structures in southern Afghanistan has been the recent consolidation of the opiate economy, the evolution of which is a by-product of globalization. The trade is undergoing an evolution from a decentralized and diffuse economy to one governed by a pattern of geographic hierarchy. It is further characterized by vertical and national integration of the opiate business and prosperous local governance.¹⁷ Savvy tribal leaders and warlords in the south are slowly building a model of accumulating social and political capital via the provision of political protection from the north. Primitive accumulation from the evolving drug economy has been pivotal to the development of this model of governance, which is one that reaffirms

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local power structures in both the north and south.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE OPIATE ECONOMY AND LOCAL POWER IN THE NORTH

Poppy cultivation in eastern and northern provinces, particularly in major production hubs such as Badakhshan and Nangarhar, dropped precipitously in 2008 compared to years past.¹⁸ Northern power brokers are, however, no less complicit in the new opium economy. The UN is quick to cite the northern cultivation decline as a success, resultant from “the extensive eradication of opium poppy crops...conducted by Governors,” particularly in 2007.¹⁹ Low cultivation levels in the north have held for 2009 as well. This account sees declining cultivation as sufficient for success, whereas I do not. The drop in cultivation may in part be spurred by lower farm gate prices of opium, as some argue, but can alternatively be viewed as a product of the prevailing local power structures in the north. Much of the drug trade in the north and east of Afghanistan was once controlled by many of the warlords and power brokers who have since reached accommodation with the state.²⁰ This is reflective of the fact that many of the power structures in the north and east are endowed more with authority from the state than from traditional Afghan society. Those power brokers who were drug producers (many of whom serve as Kabul’s security officials) were subject to political pressure to stop illicit activities. Given that many local power brokers in the north garner legitimacy from the state, however, it is likely that they stand to profit whether or not poppy is planted in northern ground. This is the case for three reasons. First, they maintain their official positions and by extension their local power. Second, local power brokers stand to gain considerable rewards and political currency with good performance on poppy cultivation. Finally, local profits from the opiate economy do not end with poppy production. Local power brokers in the north stand to gain from eradication, the emerging “criminal protection industry,” and the processing and trans-shipment markets.²¹

For northern strongmen, by virtue of their intimate relationship with the state, control of their local bailiwicks is in part dependent on their continued legitimacy vis-à-vis the state. Thus, they cannot participate in the drug trade in a way that exposes them to anything beyond rumor of involvement. Some officials have been rotated out of official positions (to the detriment of their local power structures and influence) because of their direct involvement in the trade. In many cases, though, demotion was more likely a product of political targeting than effective counternarcotics. These cases of political rotation have nonetheless helped drive the northern evolution, a reduction in direct production involvement with the opium trade and a consolidation of ancillary functions associated with the opium economy. Northern power brokers help engender the political climate that allows

for tremendous cultivation in the south.

The cases of Mohammed Atta and Haji Zahir illustrate the new realities of how those local power brokers that are connected with the state participate in the drug trade.²² Haji Zahir, unlike many northern officials, is Pashtun, and provides an example of how proximity to the political center, Kabul, can be a proxy for the typology of local power. His case illustrates how, for northern powers, direct involvement in the drug trade comes at the detriment of their position with the state, and by extension, their local power. Zahir was a well-connected border commander in Nangarhar Province who, despite his pedigree, was not immune to the state's ability to disrupt local power structures.²³ Zahir was rotated out of his palatial Jalalabad home and sent to a new post far to the north in Takhar province, a major trans-shipment point for opium. His corruption, however, was viewed as egregious, and Zahir was stripped of his position.²⁴ Zahir's example demonstrated to other northern officials that there were limits to how one could participate in the drug economy, reinforcing a southern consolidation of the means of opiate production.

The Zahir case highlights that northern officials are vulnerable to scrutiny by the state. Practically, this means that northern power brokers cannot be as close to the drug trade as southern power brokers. This may be a product of the fact that Karzai does not rely on the northern power brokers for political support and power projection as he does the southern ones. It remains, however, that northern strongmen no longer have legitimacy by virtue of their military might alone; support from the state is necessary as is reflected in the evolution of the opium economy into a mostly southern phenomenon.

The case of Mohammad Atta shows how indirect involvement is more politically viable for a local power broker who fits the northern typology. Mohammad Atta, governor of one-time opiate hub Balkh province, and a former opium profiteer, successfully enforced a cultivation ban in 2006, "consolidat[ing] his power while also building his legitimacy and bargaining position vis-à-vis central government and international players."²⁵ Despite a lack of cultivation there, Mazar-e Sharif (Balkh's capital), is still a destination of a significant number of drug-related money transactions from southern cities.²⁶

Northern local strongmen like Atta stand to gain from counternarcotics campaigns. "Good performers" receive political currency and development aid for enforcing Kabul's counterdrug edicts. Further, other drug crops that garner less scrutiny, such as cannabis, are profitable, viable and are likely funding northern power. Many power brokers use drug proceeds to invest in and develop the local

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community as a mechanism for ensuring their longevity. It is likely arbitrary for a northern power broker if this development comes from aid or from drugs—now it comes from both. Local officials can then claim credit for helping to establish hubs of prosperity and maintaining an obliged populace of satisfied locals.

The Atta case shows that northern local power brokers stand to profit through both the corruption surrounding eradication and the state incentives to enforce alternative livelihoods. The bargaining around planting and eradication is subject to corrupt dealings and profits, particularly when pursued by local power brokers.²⁷ Further, those officials who have opium stockpiles benefit from the increase in opium prices caused by the decrease in northern production. Poppy eradication can raise profits for local power brokers, for it “raises the price of opium [and further . . . it] does not provide for a sustainable reduction in the drug economy, nor does sustainable reduction of the drug economy start with eradication.”²⁸

Another feature of the evolution of the drug trade in the north is the possible trend toward regional specialization of the opium trade’s ancillary functions. As recourse for profiting while maintaining plausible deniability, northern officials have specialized in protection rackets, or what some call the “criminal protection industry.” An anonymous Afghan official said of criminal protection, “This is [not] illegal business in Afghanistan . . . this is business.”²⁹ And business is good. Thus, as in many other developing countries, clientelism abounds; the process of appointments generates big profits. Officials along smuggling routes in the north of Afghanistan, major trading arteries to consumer markets in Russia and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), are in the business of securing bribes for the appointment of sympathetic, corrupt or weak officials.³⁰ Once a corrupt official is in place, s/he becomes part of the reinforced web of protection and patronage.

Profits stem from more than protection rackets, appointment bribes and international aid packages to good performers. Despite a decrease in cultivation in the north, Afghan poppy crops still total well over 100,000 hectares—more than double the average cultivation between 1994-2001.³¹ Opiates still traverse the Afghan landscape prolifically, which means profits from smuggling. “One border police commander in eastern Afghanistan was estimated by counternarcotic officials to take home \$400,000 a month from heroin smuggling.”³² Though speculative, this commander is likely Haji Zahir who, during his time in Nangarhar Province, oversaw the important trade route through the Khyber Pass into Pakistan.

Northern local power brokers have monopolized the profits from the ancillary aspects and support activities of the opium economy—those sectors of the trade outside of traditional opiate operations. Thus, for northern power brokers who also serve as Kabul’s local administrators, the anti-poppy campaign has become

as much a function of their local power structure as the cultivation once was; the evolution of the drug trade is both a cause and consequence of their local power. The trend points to the evolution of the opium trade as a product of their power: the functionalism of corruption and the decline in cultivation are both shaping and sustaining the structure of local power.³³

THE EVOLUTION OF THE OPIATE ECONOMY AND LOCAL POWER IN THE SOUTH

The north's new supporting role has allowed the south to consolidate the sectors of production. Increased risks have led to rewards associated with the opium economy. Due to the pyramids of protection and patronage, now, "only larger traders can afford the increased bribes and protection from political authorities."³⁴

A consolidation of the means of opiate production in the south of Afghanistan is consistent with and reflective of the forms of local power there. In the north, the local power stems largely from militarism; the legitimacy associated with governance may prove elusive to these power brokers, which is why so many northern powers rely on state-endowed legitimacy. In contrast, in the southern Pashtun belt, charismatic leadership and authority within tribal structures are generally the primary sources of power. Southern power brokers, therefore, have to maintain an obliged populace that is integral to sustaining their position. Authority within the tribe is a project of constant maintenance; southern power brokers "must procure and redistribute resources from [without; . . . their] followers expect material or symbolic advantages from them."³⁵

Self-administration and local governance is key, as local *khans* amass political capital through the provision of political and economic goods in the absence of the state. Vertical integration on the part of southern power brokers has meant an increase in their share of the value chain of opium production. The technical capacity and expertise required for opium refinement formerly resided outside of Afghanistan in Turkish and Kurdish laboratories.³⁶ Refining opium into morphine base and refining morphine into heroin are arduous processes with both potential missteps and profits increasing dramatically along the value chain. Southern Afghanistan has increasingly developed the capacity to perform these refinements, thus capturing more of the added value. Some 90 percent of the opium is now processed in Afghanistan. With this vertical integration comes a windfall of profits: The potential value of the 2008 opium harvest for the Afghan economy was about US \$3.4 billion.³⁷

Competition within the trade has consolidated modes of production into the hands of a few. The barriers to entering the opiate trade have increased due to the requirements of technical savvy, international connections, manpower and wealth,

all of which are needed to run a more vertically integrated opium smuggling business. By some estimates, there are about twenty high-level traffickers, many of whom wield tribal authority and provide de facto governance structures.³⁸ As local power brokers in the south assert more control over the value chain, accumulation of capital occurs. Some of the accumulation is reinvested in the local tribe as smugglers make the import-export contacts to bring in cellular phones, vehicles and other goods in a local area. This use of opiate revenues to enrich not just the trafficking organization, but also an obliged populace of tribal followers is

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important in the south. Though the rules governing tribal hierarchies have been distorted in response to huge drug revenues, the forms of local power remain resilient.

The simplistic view that drugs equal instability and insurgency does not capture this complexity: the drug trade can alternatively be viewed as a metric for local development. The trade resides in border communities, prompting exchanges in goods and the creation of infrastructure for service provision. This in turn leads to the establishment of legitimate businesses that fortify illegitimate ones—tea houses, fuel depots and schools, vehicle, cell phone and durable good imports—all of which give power

brokers stature and play a role in their opiate operations while providing political and economic goods for locals. The drug trade “also funds the real estate speculation behind the construction boom and rise of business,” many of which would not be built were it not for the drug trade.³⁹ Again, the assumption that the correlation between drugs and instability is linear does not hold. The stability and opportunities the trade provides, though strategically pernicious, are important to the local level and thus are important to understand.

Tribal largesse is part of the equation as well. Trafficking lieutenants with tribal authority use capital from drug revenues for the important performances associated with the maintenance of tribal power such as weddings, burials and pilgrimages.⁴⁰ Particularly in the wealthy areas, drugs provide locals with land, credit, water and employment.⁴¹ There is an impulse to reduce the role of these networks to simple criminality—to make them indivisible from the insurgency—but these power brokers play an important political and developmental role for their obliged populaces. Moreover, this dynamic is entirely consistent with traditional forms of southern power.

Take, for example, the case of Haji Juma Khan, a Baluch trafficker recently

extradited to the United States.⁴² Khan long ran a tribally based smuggling empire on the Afghanistan-Pakistan frontier, from Nimroz province to Quetta.⁴³ His nephews and his Mohammadhasni clan continue to operate a significant network.⁴⁴ Khan, despite having wielded tremendous tribal authority, is discussed more in terms of his relationship with the Taliban, having in the past provided drug revenues and safe haven for their attacks on coalition forces.⁴⁵ This association is what prompted the eventually successful, though decade-long, targeting by international law enforcement and intelligence.

If instead of simply viewing Khan as a drug trafficker, however, one examines him as a local power broker, his relationship with the Taliban appears more nuanced. As a powerful Baluch tribal leader, he was responsible for a significant number of people in a predominantly Pashtun region, where there is considerable tension between the two ethnicities. Khan more likely paid the Taliban (a Pashtun-dominated movement) out of political expediency to maintain stability in both his business and in his tribal populace than out of sympathy for the Taliban ideology. Further, Khan sought to ensure his power through the use of the criminal protection industry of the north; he pursued amnesty in return for investing his drug revenues into rebuilding the country.⁴⁶ Khan's strategy was to use his drug proceeds to develop, govern and provide security for his followers in the absence of the state.

More notable than the difficulty of targeting Khan, this case highlights the role of maintaining an environment conducive to opium production and local power. An environment suspended between strategic instability and tactical stability is ideal for the cultivation of poppies and the processing of opium. Thus, many of the overtures that local power brokers make to the Taliban are likely efforts to strike this balance between tactical stability and strategic instability, rather than out of ideological alignment. Khan, for example, likely paid the Taliban to ensure that his operations moved along unabated at a tactical level, while fomenting the instability and power vacuum through tacit support of the insurgency at a strategic level. This highlights the danger with policymakers' tendency to paint drug networks and the Taliban with the same broad brush: while defining and targeting them the same way drives them closer together, there exists a means to cleave the two apart.

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for poppy cultivation—crops are static, labor-intensive and require security—but also for maintaining allegiance from tribal followers. The opiate economy not only provides the economic opportunities at the local level, it also provides the incentives and revenues for stability. Local and tribal elites provide political goods to build their power, but by extension also build local stability, prosperity and its maintenance therein.

The case of Musa Qala in Helmand province during the 2006 cultivation season provides an instructive example. Helmand is the most prolific opium source in Afghanistan, and Musa Qala is one of the province's most prolific cultivation districts and fiercely contested by the Taliban.⁴⁷ Thus, for the local power structure invested in the opiate trade, stability comes at a high cost: negotiating a ceasefire with the Taliban. The *shura*, or tribal council, negotiated a settlement with the Taliban after the insurgent force overran the town center in October of 2006.⁴⁸ Notably, this ceasefire was negotiated in the weeks just prior to the closing of the poppy-planting window in the district, the month of November. Once the crop was in the ground, the incentives for the local Alizai tribe to ensure the stability to harvest would have been significant. The heavy fighting in the district center and fields might have meant farmers could not plant the crop without risk to their lives. If the fields were too insecure to harvest, my simple calculations indicate a potential profit loss of nearly US \$46 million to Musa Qala's populace.⁴⁹ This would be a huge loss for any developing local economy to sustain, let alone a small district in southern Afghanistan. A huge source of labor, tribal largesse and prosperity would have disappeared if the *shura* had not pursued ceasefires concurrent with the lead-up to poppy planting or the harvest.

In this case, the local power brokers, consistent with their power typology, that of society, sought to provide the stability needed to maintain their authority in their bailiwick, even though that meant dealing directly with the Taliban. The revenues from the drug trade provide not just the hard currency for prosperity in a local area, but also the political currency needed to hold authority over their people. In the absence of a strong state, local power brokers are able to use the exploding opium economy to entrench themselves within their community as *de facto* administrators, indispensable to both locals and the central administration of the government.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that a major linchpin for the trend toward further entrenchment of non-democratic governance structures has been the opiate economy, as both a cause and consequence of local power. This paper highlights that attempts to paint the evolution of the opiate economy as a sign of counternarcotics' success need to

be carefully considered. Success may actually be failure in this instance, as the powers that participate in the trade find innovative ways to entrench themselves, the trade and their ability to generate profits and to govern at the sacrifice of the state. Though self-administration by local power brokers with nominal allegiance to the state is strategically beneficial to Kabul in the short-term, this reliance on rural self-administration will inhibit the unification and democratization of the Afghan state in the long-term. Like the difficulty in addressing late development in the contemporary world, Afghan democratization within the context of globalization presents numerous obstacles that must first be acknowledged so that they might be overcome. 

NOTES

* Afghanistan was the author's professional focus for several years while he worked as a U.S. intelligence officer.

¹ Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 5.

² For many people examining the Taliban insurgency, "opium has become an index of insecurity," but this is too simplistic, as there "is no universal, one-directional relationship between drugs, corruption and conflict." Jonathan Goodhand, "Poppy, Politics and Statebuilding," in *Afghanistan: Transition Under Threat*, ed. Geoffrey Hayes and Mark Sedra (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press & CIGI, 2008), 51-89.

³ See Paul Collier, "Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy," in *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*, ed. Chester Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (Washington, D.C.: USIP Press Books, 2007), 197-218; Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," World Bank Policy Research Paper 2355 (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000).

⁴ See in particular the summary of remarks of U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) assistant administrator Michael Braun to the special policy forum at the Washington Institute in July 2008: "[t]he DEA [. . .] estimates that the Taliban is currently at the organizational level of operations at which the FARC operated ten years ago."; cf. Gretchen Peters, "Take the War to the Drug Lords" *New York Times*, 18 May 2009; idem, "Taliban Drug Trade: Echoes of Colombia" *Christian Science Monitor*, 21 November 2006; idem, *Seeds of Terror: How Heroin Is Bankrolling the Taliban and al Qaeda* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2009).

⁵ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2009, Summary Findings* (Vienna: UNODC, 2009).

⁶ See Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988); Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Michael E. Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: the Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

⁷ Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 144.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹ "From 1955 to 1978 the Soviet Union provided Afghanistan with \$1.72 billion in economic aid and roughly \$1.25 billion in military aid, while the United States furnished \$533 million in economic aid." (*Ibid.*)

¹⁰ Jane's Information Group, "Political Leadership: Afghanistan," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment*, online edition, www.janes.com (accessed August 2008); "Profile: General Abdul Rashid Dostum," *BBC News*, 21 September 2001.

- 11 Rubin, *Fragmentation*, 30.
- 12 Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, “‘Tribes’ and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005,” Working Paper No. 7, Crisis States Development Research Centre (London: London School of Economics, 2006).
- 13 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 14 Chris Cramer, “Homo Economicus Goes to War: Methodological Individualism, Rational Choice and the Political Economy of War,” *World Development* 30, 1849.
- 15 Goodhand, “Poppy, Politics.”
- 16 See, for example, General McChrystal’s recent remarks on Taliban funding, “[e]liminating insurgent access to narco-profits . . . would not destroy [Taliban] ability to operate,” Eric Schmitt, “Many Sources Feed Taliban’s War Chest,” *New York Times*, 18 October 2009.
- 17 See, for example, UNODC, *Opium Survey 2009*; and Doris Buddenberg and William A. Byrd, eds., *Afghanistan’s Drug Industry: Structure, Functioning, Dynamics, and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*, (Kabul: UNODC & World Bank, 2006).
- 18 UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey* (Vienna: UNODC, January 2009), 42.
- 19 UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey* (Vienna: UNODC, February 2008), 2.
- 20 Goodhand, “Poppy, Politics,” 59.
- 21 Buddenberg and Byrd, eds., *Afghanistan’s Drug Industry*, 195.
- 22 Mohammed Atta is also known as Ustad Atta Mohammed Noor.
- 23 See Farah Stockman, “Karzai’s pardons nullify drug court gains,” *Boston Globe*, 3 July 2009; and Jason Burke, “A Year of Living on the Edge,” *Guardian*, 6 October 2002.
- 24 See Stockman, “Karzai’s pardons.”
- 25 Goodhand, “Poppy, Politics,” 68.
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- ³⁹ Barnett Rubin, *Road to Ruin: Afghanistan's Booming Opium Industry* (New York: CIC NYU, 2004), 6-7.
- ⁴⁰ UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007* (Vienna: UNODC, 2007), v.
- ⁴¹ Rubin and Sherman, "Counter-Narcotics," 17.
- ⁴² Peters, "Take the War to the Drug Lords."
- ⁴³ See Walsh, "Flower Power;" Peters, "Take the War to the Drug Lords;" *idem.*, *Seeds of Terror*.
- ⁴⁴ Peters, *Seeds of Terror*, 158.
- ⁴⁵ See, for example, Peters, "Take the War to the Drug Lords;" *idem.*, *Seeds of Terror*; Greg Zoroya Donna Leinwand, "Rise of drug trade threat to Afghanistan's security," *USA Today*, 26 October 2005; Tim Mcgirk, "Terrorism's Harvest," *Time*, 2 August 2004.
- ⁴⁶ Walsh, "Flower Power."
- ⁴⁷ UNODC, *Opium Survey, 2007*; *idem.*, *Opium Survey, 2008*; Jane's Information Group, "The Battle for Musa Qala," *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 4 April 2008.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ The average farm gate price of dry opium, P, in 2007 was US \$122/kg. The average opium yield per hectare, Y_h, for 2007 was 42.5 kg. The area under cultivation in Musa Qala, A, for 2007 was 8,852 ha. Based on averages, the farm gate price potential of Musa Qala district, X, in 2007 is $X = [P * Y] * A = [122 * 42.5] * 8,852 = \text{US } \$45,897,620$. This is significantly higher than any alternative development aid that might have reached the district.