

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan: A Global, Strategic Nemesis

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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ABSTRACT

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The United States has taken on the responsibility to stay the course on a long-term basis to assist the Afghan people to rebuild their country. Part of this responsibility will require the United States to provide leadership in the region and in neighboring regions on issue that may have strategic, global consequences. These issues include the proliferation of the illicit drug industry, drug addiction, the spread of HIV/AIDS, emergence of transnational organized crime and terrorist structures. All of these issues in the region have a common element with its genesis in Afghanistan. Afghanistan provides approximately 70-80 percent of the world's supply of opium. Now that the United States is the facilitator of Afghanistan's future, it will need to assist the Afghan government in establishing policies that will convince the Afghan people to move away from cultivating the poppy and aid the region in solving the problems that emanate from her poppy fields.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
POPPY CULTIVATION IN AFGHANISTAN: A GLOBAL, STRATEGIC NEMESIS.....	1
HOTBED OF GLOBAL TERRORISM AND THE OPIUM TRADE.....	1
GROWING AND HARVESTING THE POPPY.....	2
ORGANIZING THE OPIUM TRADE.....	3
CONNECTION BETWEEN ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM.....	4
DRUGS CAN DRIVE THE ECONOMY.....	5
GLOBAL ADDICTION.....	6
DRUGS AND DISEASE: SOCIETAL AND SECURITY IMPACTS.....	6
ERADICATION POLICY: WILL IT WORK?.....	8
PERSUADING A DRUG CULTURE.....	9
GLOBAL RECOGNITION OF THE IMPACT	10
THE UNITED STATES MUST LEAD.....	11
THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S COMMITMENT.....	12
THE CORRECT PATH	13
THE STAKES ARE HIGH, THE UNITED STATES MUST SUCCEED.....	13
ENDNOTES.....	15
BIBLIOGRAPHY	21

POPPY CULTIVATION IN AFGHANISTAN: A GLOBAL, STRATEGIC NEMESIS

HOTBED OF GLOBAL TERRORISM AND THE OPIUM TRADE

After September 11, 2001, the United States declared war on terrorism as its top national priority. The President stated the United States would fight terrorism on a global scale and attack it wherever it was found and those that aid and abet terrorists. From this national priority, the United States military found itself in Afghanistan fighting the Taliban and al-Qadea, and eventually defeating them to liberate the Afghan people from an oppressive regime. With the liberation of Afghanistan, the United States found itself as the guarantor of stability not just for Afghanistan but for the Central Asian region. Now the United States finds itself in a situation as the only global superpower capable of taking on the responsibility to stay the course for the long-term to assist Afghans in stabilizing and assisting them with the task of rebuilding their country. Part of this responsibility will require the United States to provide the leadership in Afghanistan and in the neighboring Central Asian region on issues that could have strategic and global consequences for the region's stability and economy. Some of these issues include the proliferation of drug trafficking and use, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the emergence of transnational organized crime and terrorist structures. All of these issues in the region have a core connective element, the Afghan poppy plant, which is found in abundance in differing regions of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the world's largest grower of poppy. From its harvest of poppy, it provides approximately 70-80 percent of the world's opium supply.

It is clear that every aspect of the illicit drug industry impacts on the social, financial, economic, health, and security of a nation. In the case of a poor, developing, or unstable nation, the drug industry's affects are all together more devastating. Such is the case in Afghanistan and in the Central Asian region. With the cessation of the Afghan War with the Soviet Union in 1989 and the later downfall of the Soviet regime, this region of the world found itself in an economic downslide along with the political fragmentation that favorably set the conditions for the illicit drug industry. As the demand for heroin (a refined derivative of opium) in Western Europe remained strong, Russia gave birth to a new generation of heroin addicts when her soldiers returned home from the Afghan war.¹ So where there is demand, supply will follow. While in the past, the opium trade from Afghanistan was primarily targeted toward Western Europe there is now a significant drug problem in the Central Asia states, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and China primarily because these countries are on the distribution routes for the European drug markets. This growing drug problem has placed a strain on the governments' ability to

solve the burdens on budgets, the increasing rates of crime, the cost of health care, the reduction in economic productivity, and the increasing spread of deadly infectious diseases.²

Now that the United States, along with the international community, is at the forefront in the effort to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan, it will need to take a leading role to guide the newly elected interim Afghan government to craft a poppy eradication policy. This policy needs to be effective and not fragment the establishment of the central government with the differing political/tribal groups particularly those led by the tribal warlords who in many respects control the rural areas of the country and the distribution of goods through their territories. International aid is vitally important to this effort if it is to work and to show the international community's commitment to the region. Poppy eradication must succeed for both the region, the United States, and the countries tragically affected by its curse. Otherwise it is quite possible the world community will perceive the United States as a moral failure because of its national/international policies on the war on drugs. More importantly, Afghanistan could digress into its former state of a fragmented failed state ran by non-state actors such as the tribal warlords or terrorist organizations. If this situation were to occur, there is not doubt the potential for reestablishing the illicit opium trade could quickly reignite and again underwrite transnational organized crime, terrorism, and the global spread of illicit drug addiction and HIV/AIDS.

GROWING AND HARVESTING THE POPPY

Since the early 1980s, when heroin was first introduced to the region, Afghanistan has been a major source of the drug smuggled through Central Asia and the Middle East for its destinations in Western Europe. Some of the heroin also reached North America.³ Estimates range from 70-80 percent of all opium production in the world come from the poppy fields of Afghanistan. After the end of the Afghan War with the Soviet Union and the beginning of Taliban rule, Afghanistan's poppy cultivation increased over time to a peak of 64,510 hectares (159,404 acres) of land under cultivation in (the year) 2000 that produced 3,656 metric tons (4,029 short tons) of opium.⁴ There were several reasons for this increase of production that happened over time. First, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that began in 1979. The military land mining of much of Afghanistan slowly reduced the area of farmlands from large tracts to smaller tracts. Farmers were unable to make profits from the traditional crops because the volume of harvest was severely impacted. Second, Afghanistan experienced a long period of drought that was unfavorable for growing food crops, such as wheat, largely the traditional crop cultivated in the farmable regions of the country. For example, a farmer farming 80 hectares of land in 2002 paid \$2,150 to plant wheat and sold his crop for a net loss of \$805. Contrast this

with the same farmer planting poppy at a cost of \$4,835 with a net profit of \$8,060.⁵ These two factors significantly contributed to the increase in the cultivation of poppy and at the same time financed the Mujahadeen's fight against the Soviets and later financed Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda.⁶

In contrast to the 2000 figures, in 2001, after the Taliban began destroying poppy fields because of worldwide pressures, the cultivation of poppy was reduced to 1,685 hectares (4,163 acres) of land that produced 74 metric tons (81.5 short tons) of opium.⁷ The eradication of much of the poppy farming pushed many farm families into poverty. As a result, it was difficult to meet the basic essentials of life such as feeding their children. Since the defeat of the Taliban by the United States and Northern Alliance forces, and the lack of a stable central government able to extend its control to the Afghan countryside, the farmers quickly began to sow poppy seeds for the growing season. It is estimated that the 2002 harvest could reach as much as 2,700 metric tons (2,975 short tons) of opium, equaling eighty-one percent of the 2000 production.⁸ It is estimated that unchecked poppy cultivation could result in opium production near 5,000 metric tons (5,510 short tons) of opium a year.⁹ Accordingly, the latest U.S. Justice Department report, which covers the previous cultivation and reaping seasons, describes opium products as the largest source of income in Afghanistan due to the decimation of the country's economic infrastructure and from years of warfare.¹⁰

ORGANIZING THE OPIUM TRADE

The drug industry is synonymous with organized crime and corruption. With organized crime there comes a wide variety of other illegal activities to include corruption of government officials connected to the lucrative drug trade. The drug trade is unbelievably lucrative and places an enormous strain on governments to combat its affects. The 1999 data from the Russian Ministry of Interior indicated a kilogram of opium in Afghanistan sold for \$50, but the same kilogram of opium was sold for \$10,000 in Moscow.¹¹ Likewise, a kilogram of heroin in Moscow was worth \$150,000 and when it reached New York or London, the price increased to \$200,000.¹² At these prices, the 1999 opium crop from Afghanistan had a street value of \$100 billion.¹³ With the large sums of revenues generated from the illicit drug industry, organized crime can shape the political environment to their favor by bribing government officials particularly police and customs officials. This practice is common because of the economic situation in which most government officials find themselves. Salaries for police and customs officials in the Central Asian region range from \$20-\$30 dollars a month making them easy targets for bribery.¹⁴ Others are not exempt from this practice. In Tajikistan, allegations were

made against members of the Russian 201st Motorized Division who were alleged to have provided military aircraft and equipment to transport drugs to Russia.¹⁵ Bribery from drug money also impacts the economies of nations. It criminalizes the economy by allowing normal goods and services to move without government accountability.¹⁶ As an example, Kazakh authorities estimated that \$10 billion worth of illegal raw material (not drugs) exports occurred in 1999 through illegal joint ventures.¹⁷ These raw materials include commodities such as tobacco, alcohol, and gasoline transiting between borders undetected and untaxed by governments because of the corruption at all levels of government. All together, the illicit drug industry provides monetary incentives for officials at all levels to look the other way and allow illegal activities to take place with impunity.

CONNECTION BETWEEN ORGANIZED CRIME AND TERRORISM

One of the more serious problems connected to organized crime and the illicit drug industry is the sale of illegal weapons. The sale of illicit weapons has supplied differing clan factions within Afghanistan and the other Central Asian countries so they can pursue their own political agendas. Organized crime also provides a conduit for weapons sales to Islamic radicals, terrorists, and any other “oppressed” groups having little or no voice in the country’s political process. More directly is the case where it has been reported that Osama bin Laden financed his terrorist operations from his influential stake in the Afghan opium trade and his control of approximately 60 heroin processing laboratories.¹⁸ Just before 1996 when the Taliban took control in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden arrived in the country and for six years propped up the Taliban while netting as much as \$1 billion dollars a year from the drug trafficking in heroin. During that same time bin Laden used the profits to underwrite the expansion of his international terrorist network.¹⁹ This was further supported by the former bin Laden associate Ali Abul Nazzar who told the FBI in a statement, a few months before the September 11 attacks, “The money comes from heroin, not from (bin Laden’s father) personal holdings”.²⁰ In the case of bin Laden, his large sums of money and his standing as the leader of al-Qaeda enabled him to connect with organized crime to facilitate arming his soldiers of terror. A report by the newspaper Scotland on September 16, 2001 cited that:

“bin Laden built his fortune in part by working with Russian mafia operations in Qatar and Cyprus. Russian mobsters also reportedly bought weapons for bin Laden in Ukraine and shipped them secretly into the Persian Gulf and Horn of Africa, and laundered money for bin Laden through mafia banks in Central Asia and Eastern Europe.”²¹

Additionally, the Ottawa Citizen reported on Oct 4, 2001:

“Russian and Central Asian organized crime syndicates had close ties with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an extremist Muslim group that allegedly swaps heroin for weapons with the Russians. The IMU is tied to al-Qaeda.”²²

Then on October 16, 2001, the Czech News Agency reported:

“Arms control expert Friedrich Steinhausier saying in an ARD Television interview that al-Qaeda tried to obtain nuclear material with the help of Russian organized crime syndicates.”²³

The trade of illicit weapons for drugs originating in Afghanistan is not exclusive to Islamic regions of the world. For instance, in the Balkans police confiscate weapons destined for ethnic Albanian rebels in Macedonia all under the auspices of the Afghan opium trade.²⁴ One issue is very clear in the minds of many Americans, at least in the case of bin Laden’s al-Qaeda, is that bin Laden financed the international terrorism felt in the United States on September 11. And now that the Afghan farmers are replanting and harvesting their poppy, bin Laden’s al-Qaeda can potentially look forward to their number one funding source that was stunted for just one year under the Taliban regime. With this type of a relationship between organized crime and terrorist organizations, it is clear that the war on drugs, to include the syndicates, is an integral part of the war on terror.

DRUGS CAN DRIVE THE ECONOMY

The illicit drug industry can drive the macroeconomics of dysfunctional states and regions. A robust illicit drug industry unchecked by government authorities can lead to large influxes of dollars or other currencies into the nations’ banking systems. Money laundering in the Central Asian region is common due to the under developed banking systems that provides minimal oversight of large transactions.²⁵ This can affect trade and monetary cycles by destabilizing exchange rates and impact developing industries in the region.²⁶ On a long-term basis, this practice tends to stagnate and contract many industries in the economies of small, underdeveloped nations or those on the verge of collapse. When this characteristic occurs, the drug industry becomes the only viable industry within the economy, and it perpetuates a vicious cycle that creates an economic dependency on the illicit drug trade.²⁷ People then turn to the drug trade to make their living since all other forms of employment cannot come close to providing the same monetary incentives.

GLOBAL ADDICTION

Another aspect of the heroin trade borne from the fields of Afghanistan is the increasing number of those whom become addicted to the drug. The United Nations Drug Control Program stated in a report made public in March 2000, that Pakistan and Iran now have some of the world's highest rates of addiction to heroin.²⁸ Pakistan which has almost 3 million drug addicts, is a major market for Afghan heroin.²⁹ Iran reports 2 million addicts and now the number of addicts in Central Asia exceeds that of Western Europe and is still on the increase.³⁰ To the east, drug traffickers smuggle heroin through Russia to get to Europe and the United States. Heroin now is the drug of choice for more than 3 million estimated addicts in Russia nearly 2.1 percent of the population.³¹ China is also not exempt. Of the nearly 1 million registered addicts, seventy-five percent are heroin addicts.³² China has yet to define their addiction problem and no one has an accurate estimate. With the increased production that will surely lower prices, addiction will become easier for more people. Since the downfall of the Taliban and the subsequent increase in opium production, trafficking patterns will resume and also mutate from past practices to increase distribution routes. Since the European markets for heroin are supplied from Central Asia, that market is well establish and in some respects saturated. Organized syndicates will likely attempt to expand their share of the heroin in less exploited markets such as the United States.³³ The United States being the world's economic superpower is potentially the largest untapped, most lucrative market for Central Asian heroin. Organized crime realizes the United States is wealthy and there is a significant drug culture that can sustain the market. Currently, the available heroin in the United States comes from Mexico as a lower quality brown heroin.³⁴ The drug traffickers project that the significantly purer white Afghan heroin will take the place of the Mexican brown heroin and quickly proliferate throughout the United States drug culture.³⁵ The United States has never been immune to drug trafficking from transnational sources. It is only a matter of time before major shipments of Afghan heroin arrive in the United States and add to the complexity of eradicating the drug industry in Afghanistan and Central Asia. This makes it all the more imperative from the United States standpoint to eradicate the poppy fields in Afghanistan.

DRUGS AND DISEASE: SOCIETAL AND SECURITY IMPACTS

In 2002, HIV/AIDS was the fourth leading cause of death in the world.³⁶ HIV/AIDS in 2000 was on the rise in Russia and Eastern Europe where the number of reported infections were up to 700,000 from 420,000. The hardest hit was the Ukraine with a reported infection rate of one percent of the population. Russia, on the other hand, had more people infected that year than

all previous reported years, but was still at a relatively low infection rate of two tenths of one percent of the population. But by one estimate, Russia could face an infection rate of three percent in three to four years unless prevention is made a top priority.³⁷ And nine of ten HIV/AIDS infections in Russia and Eastern Europe are intravenous drug users who attract little sympathy from the rest of society.³⁸

A supposition can be made that suggests the rise in HIV/AIDS in this region and other regions that are on the heroin distribution routes from Afghanistan are caused by heroin addiction. That being the case, we can eventually see large numbers of HIV/AIDS infections in Pakistan, Iran, the Central Asian region, and potentially China. In June 2001, an estimate by the Chinese Health Minister put the number of HIV/AIDS cases at 600,000.³⁹ However, the United Nations AIDS program estimates more than a million Chinese are infected, and that if this situation is not addressed quickly, that by the year 2010, the HIV/AIDS population in China could reach 20 million.⁴⁰ Another recent report from China concerning HIV/AIDS came from the Public Security Minister who reported 28,000 new cases between January and October 2001 with two thirds of the infection occurring from intravenous drug use.⁴¹ Estimates indicate 80 percent of intravenous drug users in the cities of Yunnan province are infected with HIV/AIDS.⁴² Currently it appears those infected with HIV/AIDS are in rural villages among intravenous drug users and those who work in the sex industry. However, medical authorities are concerned that it will spread to China's general population that will make it virtually impossible to control its spread.⁴³ The HIV/AIDS dilemma is certainly a health crisis, and it can have major security consequences for nation states. Take for instance Africa:

"In Kenya, AIDS accounts for about three-quarters of the deaths among police. Defense ministers in some African countries report HIV prevalence averages of 20 to 40 percent in their militaries. In Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the rates are as high as 50 to 60 percent. So far in Africa, military forces suffer infection rates several times that of the general population."⁴⁴

If the African model is anywhere near reality then China, Russia, Iran, and the Central Asian states could find themselves in more than a health crisis, rather a security crisis, potentially impacting national interests. And adding to the death of the adults is the orphaning of children. In Africa there are 13 million orphans of HIV/AIDS and the number is expected to reach 42 million by 2010.⁴⁵

The population of a country is one of many basic resources a government must protect to create stability not only internal to the country, but to ensure its security from external entities. Drug addiction is the lesser cousin of HIV/AIDS and appears to initially fuel its spread. But in

time HIV/AIDS has its own pathology for spreading and eventually proceeds to the general population infecting millions of unsuspecting people. The affects are devastating to nations that do not acknowledge its danger and have little resources to combat it. If HIV/AIDS continues on its current path in countries such as China, India, and Russia, it will no doubt climb to a position higher than fourth as the leading cause of death in the world and creating new regions of instability.

ERADICATION POLICY: WILL IT WORK?

The current policy of the Karzi government in Afghanistan puts a ban on all poppy cultivation except for small-scale cultivation to allow small farmers to grow poppy legally.⁴⁶ The new law allows that “medicinal amounts” of opium may be freely sold in quantities under two pounds.⁴⁷ Initially this policy appears counter intuitive to get Afghanistan out of the drug trafficking business. There are several issues, from the Afghan perspective, that make the eradication of poppy a difficult problem to solve. One is that the country has been cultivating poppy for several decades and the farmers rely on the poppy to earn enough money to feed their families. As suggested earlier in this paper, farmers cannot make a living solely on farming food crops since the profitability is literally nonexistent. This is at the heart of the country’s dilemma as the world’s largest producer of opium along with the involvement of tribal warlords in the distribution of the drugs. The government cannot realistically expect its farmers to grow crops that will fail to feed their families. It is also a well known tradition for Afghans and others in the region to use opium for medicinal purposes to alleviate pains in joints, prolonged coughs, and for the loss of appetite.⁴⁸

Another obstacle is the central government has very little control over the rural areas of the country. Without the proper social, economic and legal institutions to assist the population and enforce this policy and others, the people will follow their old ways. Along with very little central government control, there is substantial control exerted by the tribal warlords in each of their provinces. In the past tribal warlords participated in the drug trade indirectly by taxing drug traders since they controlled access and movement through their areas.⁴⁹ To effectively begin the transition from a decentralized fragmented power structure to a central government that can effectively maintain firm control of the country, the Karzi government will need to somehow gain the support of the country’s tribal leadership. A newly elected central government, having representation from differing tribes, with very little resources must look to outside help to begin the process of stabilizing and rebuilding the country. The political environment is difficult between the international community favoring aid to Afghanistan and their desire to eradicate

poppy as part of the aid package. The Karzi government wanting the aid is attempting to rid the country of the poppy yet many in the country who were involved in the opium trade see no reason to stop because of its lucrative profits. This may explain the successful assassination of Vice President Haji Abdul Qadeer and the unsuccessful attempts on President Karzi in August 2002 and his Defense Minister Mohammed Fahim in April 2002 when he was launching a campaign to persuade farmers to give up farming the poppy.⁵⁰ Giving up poppy farming for the farmers will be difficult. Willing obedience to the policy will take skilled leadership and financial relief for the farmers and meaningful employment for urban dwellers otherwise the Karzi government will lose support from the majority of the country.

The magnitude of the drug industry weighs heavily against Afghanistan and the governments of the Central Asian states because they are improperly resourced to fight the war against the drug industry. And most, if not all of the nation states that have governments, lack the will power because they are afraid to challenge a dangerous opponent that possesses large quantities of resources.⁵¹ Until the states gain or receive enough resources and aid to combat the drug industry, it is likely that the organized drug trade will become more powerful and the states will become increasingly weaker to address this condition. In turn, weaker states are unable to address the other ills created by the drug trade and the cycle continues on a downward spiral.

PERSUADING A DRUG CULTURE

Since the early 1980s, the Afghan economy was narcotized and provided employment for a significant number of the population. Only through the stabilization of Afghanistan and the Central Asian region can the governments of these countries begin to dismantle the illicit drug industry. The major step is to reduce the harvest of the poppy in Afghanistan. This can only be accomplished by providing relief to the farmers by way of agricultural incentives and the rest of the population through the creation of employment. The non-farming population cannot be forgotten in this effort. Those who are not farming the poppy are involved in the processing, manufacturing, and distribution of the drugs. Providing relief to the farming community alone will not end the illicit drug trade. The rest of the drug industry workers have to be drawn away from the trade to totally collapse it. The country must provide an agricultural incentive to move away from growing poppy and at the same time create an agricultural market, both imports and exports, for other products that can sustain a livelihood for the farmers and provide the ability to feed the Afghan people. There is a significant amount of infrastructure that is required in Afghanistan to rebuild the country and its economy. Infrastructure projects such as building of

schools, hospitals, government buildings, airports, roads and highways, water and sewage treatment facilities, mass transit, etc., can keep a large population gainfully employed for a significant amount of time. These infrastructure projects are key to employing the non-farming drug trade workers in providing a meaningful legal livelihood that will support the expansion of the country's economy. These farming and non-farming programs can only happen with the support of the international community and the financial aid they provide to the region.

GLOBAL RECOGNITION OF THE IMPACT

The countries that have experienced the onslaught of the negative impacts from the illicit drug trade are all in agreement that the disease needs to be exterminated. The Central Asian states see the advantage of a stable, thriving Afghanistan not just for security reasons but for economic as well. As an example, a stable Afghanistan would provide the opportunity to connect the land locked Central Asian states with the port of Karachi in Pakistan, thereby, increasing commerce and participation in the global markets.⁵² China perceives the drug trade from Afghanistan and what it creates in the realm of addiction and disease as a significant destabilizing factor tearing apart the fabric of their culture, threatening the cohesion and stability of the Communist Party and central government, weakening labor productivity and pursuit of their economic emergence. China is concerned that all this will feed competing centers of power like organized crime and terrorism that foreign interests can exploit in their favor.⁵³ Russia perceives it similarly and more as a security issue for the future because of the vast numbers of Russians that will be affected by addiction and HIV/AIDS causing a reduction in the younger population for their national labor pool and military service. It has also created an environment for the already virulent Russian organized crime syndicates that plagues and weakens Russian internal security, therefore making it susceptible to external security threats. Iran, in its attempt to stem the tide of drug trafficking into their country spent at least \$500 million and placed 30,000 men of its security force on their border with Afghanistan over the past two decades.⁵⁴ It has been a costly war for Iran, losing over 3,000 border guards over the two decades of fighting dangerous smugglers on a daily basis.⁵⁵ Now with the end of the Taliban, Iran hopes to realize a reduction of more than 2.5 million Afghan refugees that fled Afghanistan into Iran under the Taliban regime and a moderation of the past overt Sunni fundamentalism that almost brought them to war with Afghanistan in 1998.⁵⁶ The reduction or end of the illicit drug trade will bring welcome relief to these countries.

THE UNITED STATES MUST LEAD

The President of the United States has consented to rebuild the country understanding that it will take a long-term commitment and billions of dollars. The United States would like to do this in concert with other nations within the international community but if it must, will do it alone. The illicit drug trade and situation the United States finds itself in Afghanistan provides an unprecedented opportunity for the United States to partner with a number of countries to work together to resolve an environment which plagues all of them. By virtue of its actions in Afghanistan, the United States finds itself in a position as the lead responsible agent for the future of the country. The stabilization and rebuilding of Afghanistan will require leadership and constant monitoring by the United States. President Bush has set upon the right course by appointing several high level United States officials to keep the process moving toward the goal of rebuilding Afghanistan. Currently there are three officials. First, Richard Haass was appointed as the special coordinator for Afghanistan policy and the president's second appointment was James Dobbins as the special representative to the Afghan opposition, which is part of the interim Afghan government. President Bush also appointed the Afghan born Zalmay Khalilzad as the special envoy to Afghanistan to underscore his support for the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Kalilzad, the National Security Council specialist on Southwest Asia, the Near East, and North Africa has also served as an assistant undersecretary of defense for policy planning, and was a counselor to Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.⁵⁷

There are a number of potential issues the United States must consider and many will favor the United States as it takes the leadership role. First, the United States invaded Afghanistan to rid it of al-Qaeda and the Taliban. As the world's only superpower its prestige is on the line. If it leaves Afghanistan now, it will be looked upon by Islamic nations, as a conqueror and this will increase their hatred of the United States. If the United States is successful, the international community will praise the only superpower for doing its "duty". So now the United States finds itself trying to assist the newly elected interim government to stabilize a country that had no central government, a countryside controlled by tribal warlords, and the potential of it slipping back into a condition that allowed terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda to exist. To allow that to happen again would no doubt have the United States return to Afghanistan for the same reasons it invaded in the first place. So now that it is in Afghanistan, it must complete the task at hand.

Second, a stable Afghanistan could very well translate into a more stable and prosperous Central Asia. A stable Central Asia has many important consequences since it is an Islamic region more moderate than the rest of the Islamic world. With most of the rest of the Islamic

world having an unfavorable view of the United States, this is an opportunity for the United States to make positive inroads into the Islamic psyche to moderate their feelings toward them. It can potentially assist in moderating Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan. And if Pakistan moves toward a moderate government and moderate policies, then relations with India could possibly stabilize.

Third, on the economic front, it can lead to a more stable oil source in the Caspian Basin located east of the Central Asian states, around the Caspian Sea. This would minimize the influence of the Middle East oil cartel and decrease the United States' and other nations' reliance on Middle East oil and potentially stabilize or lower world oil prices.

If in the course of stabilizing and rebuilding the country, Afghanistan is able to significantly eradicate the poppy, major relief to other countries who are having problems with organized crime, drug addiction, and HIV/AIDS will be welcomed and they will have the opportunity to get ahead of their problems. Stability in this region will have major impacts on the world for decades to come.

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S COMMITMENT

International aid in terms of monetary resources, technical assistance, food and medical support, non-governmental and international organizations, etc., can assist in resolving the funding shortfall and technical problems in the region to indirectly combat the illicit drug trade. Unfortunately the aid that has been promised has not been forthcoming in amounts to generally support these types of programs on a massive scale to draw people away from the illicit drug industry. Of the nearly \$15 billion the United States government estimated that Afghanistan would need over a course of a decade, the United States has released less than 2 percent of that sum.⁵⁸ But there are small signs of progress such as the Kabul-Kandahar-Heart highway construction project. This is a partnership between the United States, Japanese, Saudi Arabian, and Afghan governments to build the main Afghan transportation artery and is an example of the long-term commitment on the part of the international community. The construction of the highway is funded at \$180 million.⁵⁹ There also have been talks between the Turkmenistan government and the United States for the possibility of a trans-Afghan pipeline to transport Turkmen natural gas to Pakistan potentially creating 12,000 jobs for Afghans.⁶⁰ The United States needs to show their leadership in this area in order to have themselves and other countries release financial aid to speed the rebuilding process.

But there are other countries that are also assisting. Russia's President Putin stated "Russia has no other goals in Afghanistan except one, to see an independent, prosperous, neutral, and friendly Afghanistan."⁶¹ President Putin offered to rebuild the Afghan Army and to

help restore nearly 140 factories built by the Soviet Union prior to the invasion in 1979 and to clear the Salang Tunnel a major transportation route from the city of Kabul to the northern tier of Afghanistan.⁶² A Chinese delegation has also offered access to \$150 million in financial aid.⁶³

THE CORRECT PATH

In general, the United States and the international community need to assist the Afghan government to put programs into place that will facilitate their transition to a nation state. By conducting elections and forming an interim government and the appointment of key departmental ministers, the Afghans have taken the first step toward a nation state. They will need a professional military that can secure their borders and national interests. The United States and France have already begun this process and have already created several battalions for a fledgling Afghan Army. They need to create a secular judiciary and law enforcement (along with correctional institutions) agencies to enforce the laws of the land, and must be perceived by the population as fair and just, and not corrupt. The Germans have volunteered to train the Afghan police forces.⁶⁴ Health and education departments will quickly need to come into being to heal the diseased and injured and to teach secular not Islamic fundamentalism to their children. Education will be a major effort due to the pervasive illiteracy rate among the Afghans. Although literacy data is difficult to confirm, pre-war data as of 1997 indicated the national literacy rate was 11.4 percent.⁶⁵ Public information infrastructures are needed to disseminate information from both the private and public sectors. This will be instrumental in informing Afghans of the dangers of drugs, HIV/AIDS, and how other public policy, financial aid, and employment issues will affect them. There is a lot of work ahead of the United States, international communities, private companies, and the Afghan government. The world cannot afford for this project to fail. There are too many complex global issues at stake for it not to succeed.

THE STAKES ARE HIGH, THE UNITED STATES MUST SUCCEED

Eradicating poppy from Afghanistan will take significant political capital on the part of the Afghan government and aid of many sorts from the international community to rebuild the country. The enormous amounts of money that flow from the illicit drug trade remains influential on the country from the poor farmers, to the tribal warlords, the organized crime syndicates, and the terrorist organizations. Over the course of decades, the drug trade has become a part of the fabric of Afghanistan. It is one of the major fulcrums on which the future political and economic balance of Afghanistan will be determined. It is foreseeable that it will take a long period of time to reach the goal of eradicating the majority of the poppy. It will not happen overnight. The

United States has no choice but to stay the course (neither does the rest of the international community), otherwise, Afghanistan will surely fall back to its old practices and again become a failed state ran by rogue terrorists and organized criminals generating an instability that will threaten the security of the region and potentially on a global scale. This will be a difficult task for the United States to stay the course and keep other countries' interested in this effort. What the United States experienced in World War II, under the Marshall Plan, is significantly less than what it faces today in Afghanistan. In Europe, the United States rebuilt what was destroyed of an industrialized western nation with all the trimmings of a modern society. In Afghanistan, the United States will experience the creation of institutions, political entities, and the rule of law, a task much more difficult than the reconstruction of Germany.⁶⁶ As Mr. Dov Zakheim, Comptroller for the Department of Defense stated:

“Unless we can rebuild Afghanistan, we really will not be able to get out of there. We have to leave Afghanistan a place that is secure and terrorist-free. And not only terrorist-free but that it is totally an antibody to terrorists – that means they cannot thrive there anymore. Without reconstruction that will be very hard to do.”⁶⁷

The production of opium from the poppy fields of Afghanistan has three specific impacts on the world. First, the massive amounts of money made from the illicit drug industry finance organized crime syndicates and terrorist organizations throughout the world. Second, drug addiction to opiate derivatives is on the rise in many countries mainly along the distribution routes and in countries experiencing social and economic hardships. Finally, intravenous drug use is fueling the HIV/AIDS epidemic in those countries where opium addiction is increasing. The task upon the shoulders of the Afghan people is enormous but they will have help from those who desire a stable region. From outside its borders, the international effort and aid to rebuild Afghanistan will be a small investment compared to the destructive affects of a region ran by rogue characters engaged in the illicit drug industry that grows from her poppy fields. As the world's only superpower, the United States has taken on the leadership role as only it can to bring Afghanistan and the Central Asian region to a stability where nation states can begin to transform their national institutions.

WORD COUNT = 6423

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