

BACKGROUND REPORT

PRAGUE PRAŽSKÝ
STUDENT STUDENTSKÝ
SUMMIT



NATO

**Issue of drug trafficking and drug
cultivation in Afghanistan**





1. Characteristics of Afghanistan

Afghans are ethnically diverse nation as they belong to a complicated web of tribes in Central Asia. Traditional tribal rivalry is reflected in governmental seats and business relations; consequently, the formation of Afghanistan as we know it today was influenced by struggles for power between these tribes together with foreign interventions, ideologies and numerous revolutions. Wars have created powerful warlords who usually control smaller area; insurgency groups that play major role in regions or provinces and other groups with important word in politics and business. Today's complex situation can be partly understood from history.

1.1 History

Modern Afghanistan was formed in 1746 and later colonized by the British. Political system went through several transformations and revolutions, one of the most important in 1978 – Communist revolution, supported by Soviet invasion – took place in reaction to insurgencies against communist leaders. Soviet invasion was not a success and resulted in 10-year long war, destruction of arable land and civil casualties. Even after the soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, withdrew last troops in 1989 clashes continued between mujahedeen parties and quasi-government militias. Kabul's government was toppled by mujahedeens in 1992 and the Islamic state was declared, however, power conflicts were still going on. In this situation, a group of radical Sunni students in the south formed insurgency unit called **Taliban**, gradually gained power and started to actually rule Afghanistan since-after mid-'90s. Taliban had strong relations with Al-Qaeda, nevertheless, Northern Alliance constituted solid opposition and supported north of the country.¹

Breaking point is 2001 and terrorist attack against USA in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C.; George W. Bush launches **Operation Enduring Freedom** to fight terrorism, while UN Security Council agrees on a NATO-led **International Security Assistance Force** (ISAF) to stabilize and secure the country and help the interim leader Hamid Karzai. It was the first implementation of Article V. of North Atlantic Treaty ever.² A year later the Taliban regime is removed and some members of Al-Qaeda are captured. Official government is not very strong and power-wars between remaining Taliban members, warlords, tribes and Northern Alliance is dividing the territory.

¹ **Al-Qaeda** is a truly international terrorist organization that stood behind 9/11 attacks. **Northern Alliance** is an opposition group from northern part of Afghanistan, which cooperates with NATO. Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Studies and Threat Analysis Section (UNODC STAS). *Addiction, crime and insurgency: The transnational threat of Afghan opium* [report]. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009, p. 102. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf>.

² Article states: „An armed attack against one or more of [the signatories] in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all“. Source: The North Atlantic Treaty [Treaty]. Washington D.C.: 4 April 1949. Available online at: <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_17120.htm>.



1.2 Introduction to situation of drugs and security in Afghanistan

„It can now be said that all actors involved in destabilizing Afghanistan are directly or indirectly linked to the drug economy.“³

Insurgency groups, such as Taliban, have secured income from both opium trade and international aid aimed at eliminating opium trade.⁴ Warlords have access to arms and supporters and despite systematic war with organized crime led by NATO, the corruption and profit from black & white economy keep these groups powerful.

„A peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan will positively contribute to economic and social development in the wider region, and deliver progress in the fight against narcotics trafficking, illegal migration, terrorism and crime. In this context, regional cooperation and support for stability in Afghanistan is a key.“⁵

ISAF forces deployed in Afghanistan are gradually strengthening security and consequently they contribute to reducing opium trade, but by December 31st 2014, all ISAF troops will be withdrawn and situation in Afghanistan will be left upon local security forces and newly elected government. Seeing how deep the problem of Afghan opium and resulting security threats is, international community must provide Afghans with some form of support during the transition.

High priority questions are:

- 1) **How to eliminate or reduce drug trade** without increasing national or international organized crime (or terrorism)?
- 2) **How to ensure security and political stability in a country**, which has its economy linked to illicit drug trade (bearing in mind the withdrawal of NATO troops in 2 years)?

2. Opium cultivation and trade, related security issues

Issues related to illicit drugs are not limited to the direct consequences for its users. In regions with high concentration of drug fields, the economy is affected by production of such plants instead of crops necessary for nutrition and in some provinces of Afghanistan the family income depends from as much as 40% on opium.⁶ Governments do not have official

³ Source: UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime...*, p. 101.

⁴ Taliban receives financial support for eradicating opium-poppy fields. Therefore, they profit from the land as well as from its eradication.

⁵ Source: *Chicago Summit Declaration on Afghanistan* [online]. 21 May 2012 [accessed 18 August 2012]. Available online at: <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-F8B64F90-EA102C93/natolive/official_texts_87595.htm>.

⁶ As an average figure. Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2011*. Vienna: UNODC, December 2011, p. 99. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2011_web.pdf>.

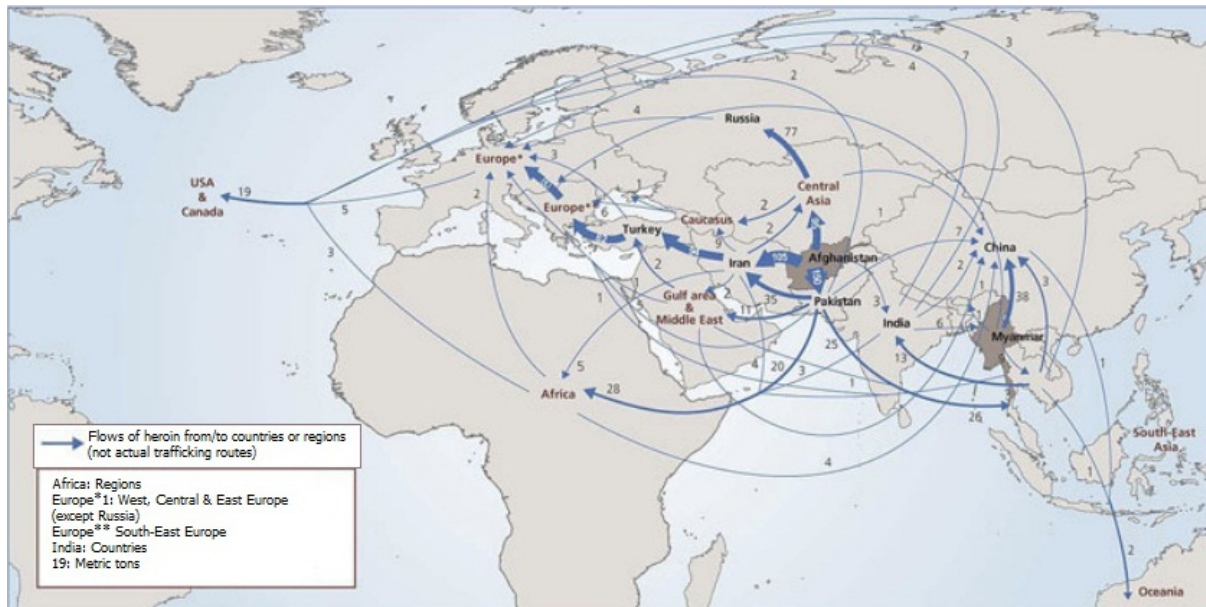


financial income from drug production and cannot invest or finance development of the country. The trafficking routes are surrounded by drug-related crimes, smuggling, violence, corruption, black market and even narco-terrorism. Drug consumption brings along health difficulties, misdemeanour and the demand of addicts is itself the driving factor of production.

2.1 Illicit drug trade⁷

Afghanistan is the world's top producer of opium and its derivatives which accounts for 82% of world production (that is 7 000 tons in 2011). Seizures of opium, morphine or heroin have been rising in recent years; the reason may be either bigger production or more effective seizure actions, or both. The most important trafficking routes run through Pakistan and over the sea, through Iran and Turkey to Europe and through Central Asia to Russia.⁸

Picture 1: Heroin trafficking flows



Source: UNODC Studies and Threat Analysis Section. *Addiction, crime and insurgency: The transnational threat of Afghan opium* [report]. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009, p. 60. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf>

Price of opium multiplies several times before it reaches the consumer. Farmers claim to receive around 300 USD/kg of opium which can be sold for up to 16 000 USD/kg to consumers in Europe, or even 10 times more if converted into heroin.⁹ It is clear that opium

⁷ Source: UNODC. *World Drug Report 2012*. Vienna: UNODC, 2012, p. 26-34. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR_2012_web_small.pdf>.

⁸ Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *World Drug Report 2010*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2010, 37-53. Available online at: <http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/1.2_The_global_heroin_market.pdf>.

⁹ Reported farm-gate prices. Source: CORCORAN, Mark. Afghanistan - America's Blind Eye. *ABC Digital Radio* [Radio broadcast]. 10 April 2002. Transcript available online at: <<http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2005/s1379788.htm>>.



trade is extremely profitable part of economy and so areas of poppy production are linked with insecurity.¹⁰

„At varying levels, the key actors involved in the drug trade have an interest in maintaining an 'efficient' level of insecurity.“¹¹

People involved in organized crime are taking part in both licit and illicit economy and as a result the borders of black/white or grey economy are very wide. For instance, Afghans doing licit business usually have capital background in drug economy; even those businessmen that are not involved in illicit activities prefer to pay for security and keep good relationships with the ones in the black economy - some provinces and their transportation system of goods and supplies are largely controlled by the second group.¹²

International observers have noticed a strong **connection between opium trade and insurgencies** or anti-governmental movements; earnings from opium trade and trafficking are connected to organized crime, terrorism and cause corruption.¹³ Criminal groups are the core of drug trade, they secure transportation, reselling, processing and other related activities, moreover, these groups are involved in human trafficking and migrant smuggling. Most of them operate internationally and their activities spread over vast regions.

Existence of insurgency and anti-governmental groups decreases governmental influence in opium-producing areas. Warlords play major role in politics and actual power lies in hands of criminal or insurgency groups.¹⁴ Attempts to limit opium production have naturally lower impact in regions controlled by the insurgency groups, among which Taliban is the most influential one. There is no evidence that Taliban derives income from state and charities' funds but it does receive income from Al-Qaeda, sympathizers and from opium trade.¹⁵ Main sources of income for insurgents in general are:

- ◆ private foreign donations, including fraud by legitimate charities;
- ◆ corruption and opium taxes from local farmers – reported fees for poppy production is 10%;¹⁶

¹⁰ „Areas of opium poppy cultivation and insecurity correlate geographically.“ Source: UNODC Studies and Threat Analysis Section (UNODC STAS). *Addiction, crime and insurgency: The transnational threat of Afghan opium* [report]. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009, p. 106. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf>.

¹¹ Source: UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime ...*, p. 113.

¹² Source: UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime ...*, p. 104.

¹³ Source: UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime ...*, p. 101.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch estimated that 60% of the Members of Parliament had links to warlords in 2005. Source: UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime ...*, p. 106.

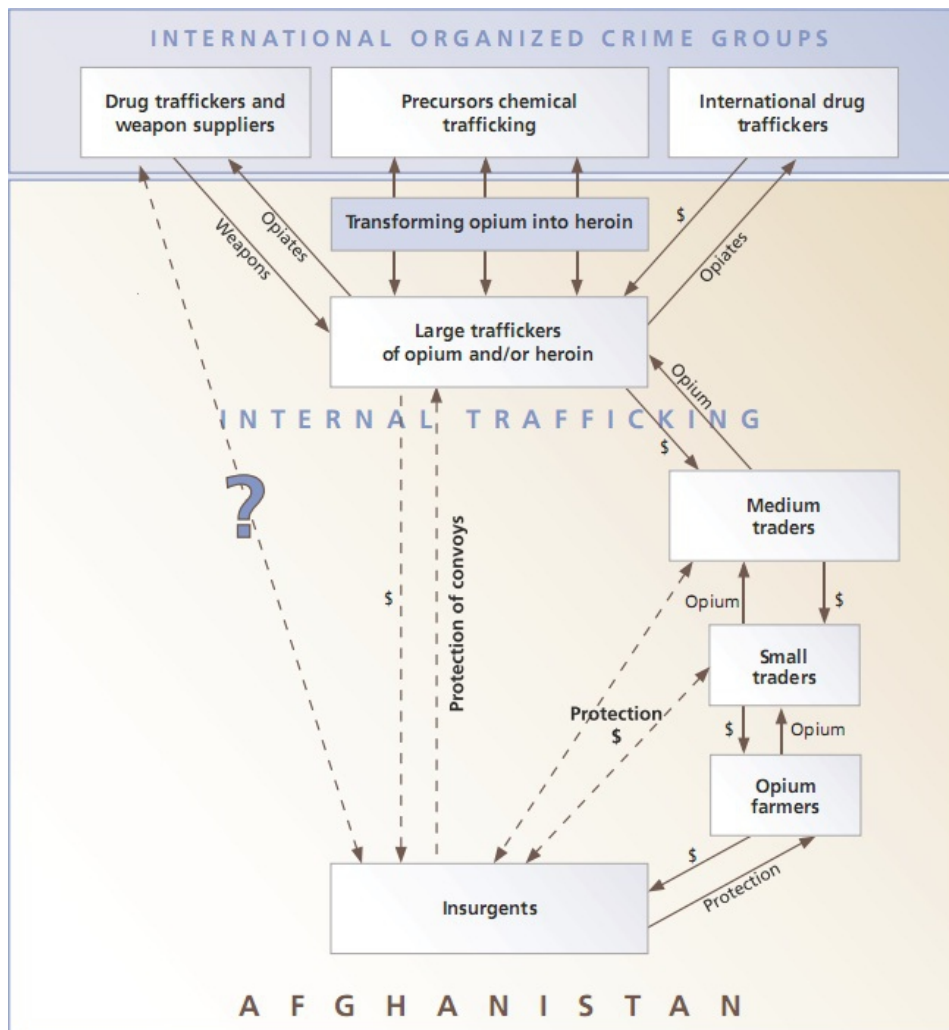
¹⁵ Al-Qaeda itself does not appear to have a direct role in the Afghan opiates trade, though. Source: UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime ...*, p. 102.

¹⁶ The tax is called *Ushr* and for illicit goods is usually paid not in cash, but as levy in kind. Afghan farmers paid an equivalent of US\$ 600 million to the Taliban, warlords, Mullahs or government officials as *Ushr* during 2002-2008. Source: UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime ...*, p. 99, 107.



- ♦ crime – that is extortion, drug, arms or human trafficking etc.

Picture 2: Network of organized crime groups



Source: UNODC Studies and Threat Analysis Section. *Addiction, crime and insurgency: The transnational threat of Afghan opium* [report]. Vienna: UNODC, 2009, p. 114. Available online at: www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf.

2.2 Security during transition

With the coming election in 2014, safety is vital: risk of pre-election violence, fraud and instable democracy after elections are all problems that occurred during 2009 elections and are expected to re-appear in 2014. ISAF troops were guarding the region and providing security, but they are to return home in order to let new government fully administrate Afghanistan from 2014 on. At this moment, ISAF forces are training and helping Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), so that ANSF can take over full security responsibility after elections. Summit in Chicago in May 2012 has largely debated the details of transition, especially the importance of transition to transparent democracy and sustainable stability.

After the withdrawal, NATO will contribute to transition financially and by mentoring ANSF. The need is to provide ground for stable and secure political system that would be



able to continue in opium trade elimination and rural development and this will become the task of ANSF.

The security of Afghans and stability of government will be the criteria to measure stages of transition. It is very important to prevent following **undesired scenarios**:

- 1) Taliban has been slowly gaining power after 2001 and many Afghans fear its return after NATO troops leave.¹⁷ The following transition must be irreversible; a return to conditions of Taliban administration as it was at the turn of millennium would be a step back.
- 2) International community will have very limited influence in Afghan politics and their main mean of intervention will be financial support. Even though it should lead to investment, it might support corruption and turn against Afghan security.
- 3) Elections held in 2014 might be influenced by insurgents or criminal groups and NATO will not be able to maintain security in any part of Afghanistan. Extension of ISAF mandate would be costly financially and politically and would have negative impact on Afghan cooperation.

3. Reducing poppy cultivation - financial aid and eradication

According to surveys conducted by UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)¹⁸ among farmers, the main reasons for NOT cultivating poppy are: governmental or elders ban, lack of water or that it is against Islam. Afghan farmers are also often indebted to village traders and claim to need the money from poppy cultivation simply to survive. Once they decide to stop cultivating poppy, they do not count on receiving enough governmental support - partly because it only reaches one third of villages.¹⁹ Precisely for the lack of governmental aid a large number of farmers return to cultivation, which reveals major gaps in providing better systematic assistance to rural areas. There is a strong relation between farmers who start or keep on cultivating poppy and the lack of positive motivation from government.²⁰

International community is dealing with Afghan poppy, mostly by providing financial grants to the government and by developing specific programmes. At Tokyo Conference in

¹⁷ Q&A: *Foreign forces in Afghanistan*. BBC News [online]. 17 May 2012 [accessed 16 August 2012]. Available online at: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-11371138>>.

¹⁸ Ergo *United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime*, an office that conducts research on illicit activities, monitors trends and analyses related issues. Source of surveys: UNODC. ***Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2011***. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, December 2011. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2011_web.pdf>; and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. ***Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2012***. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, April 2012, p.10. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/ORAS_report_2012.pdf>

¹⁹ Reason for not receiving assistance may be because the awareness campaign has not reached the village, farmers did not fulfil the criteria or other. Source: UNODC. *Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2012*, p. 10.

²⁰ Source: UNODC. *Afghanistan: Opium Survey 2012*, p. 10.



July 2012, delegates of 55 nations and 25 international organizations made a commitment to give Afghanistan over \$16 billion by 2015.²¹ This grant is supposed to improve law and human rights enforcement; support government and help Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) maintain stability after ISAF withdrawal in 2014. Even though money is distributed among local governments or influential groups and invested into development projects, it does not always fulfil the goal. Corruption environment is deeply rooted in Afghanistan and some of the aid may, contrary to expectations, increase corruption and strengthen criminal groups or warlords.

3.1 Eradication

Problem of opium production is being tackled by reducing the cultivation of poppy (eradication). The most significant and effective reduction occurred in 2000, when Taliban leader, Mohammed Omar, declared the cultivation un-Islamic and the ban has wiped out most of world's production for that year. However, Taliban had no income from opium taxes, faced political instability and, even though Bush administration supported Afghan government's efforts to eradicate opium by an extra \$43 million grant²², money did not help impoverished farmers. The invasion of foreign troops slashed Taliban's influence and allowed farmers grow poppy again,²³ so the following year production reached previous levels. Similarly deep fall occurred in 2010, this time because of poppy disease. Result of both was large number of indebted farmers with little financial resources, increasing political instability and violence during the ban/poppy disease; afterwards, production returned to previous levels.

Apart from exceptional Taliban ban, the most commonly used methods of direct poppy eradication are tractors or manual destruction (using sticks, blades, etc.), some methods include burning down the plantations and spraying herbicides.²⁴ Production is decreasing, but at the same time these methods result in local violence and refusal to cooperate, despite the presence of security forces. Moreover, Taliban gained a lot of support from the poppy farmers who were outraged by the eradication policy - farmers cannot easily substitute poppy for other crops. Poppy is being sold directly at farm gate, so farmers have no troubles with transportation. However, everything else must be transported from the village to distant markets while the infrastructure is often in extremely poor condition. ISAF forces are directly involved in eradication since 2004. When troops were able to reduce the

²¹ Source: Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan* [online]. 8 July 2012 [accessed 16.8.2012]. Available online at: http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/afghanistan/tokyo_conference_2012/summary.html.

²² Source: CROSSETTE, Barbara. *Taliban's Ban On Poppy A Success, U.S. Aides Say*. The New York Times [online]. 20 May 2001 [accessed 19 August 2012]. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/05/20/world/taliban-s-ban-on-poppy-a-success-us-aides-say.html?src=pm> >.

²³ Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Afghanistan Opium Poppy 2002*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2002, p. 3. Available online at: http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/afg_opium_survey_2002.pdf.

²⁴ Source and more detailed information: UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime ...*, p. 34-51.



influence of Al-Qaeda, their role moved from direct combat to reconstruction and development. Firstly, the troops were distributed to regions other than Kabul and have begun either eradicating, or intercepting opium or guarding governmental eradication groups. Secondly, ISAF is helping the recovery of economy from drugs by reducing Taliban influence and supporting legitimate government in general. While eradication has disputable results, stabilization and security saves more energy to spend on infrastructure, development and growing economy.

3.2 Summary of pros & cons²⁵

After several years of experience, it is clear that poppy eradication and international financial aid in Afghanistan has **several drawbacks**:

- ◆ Opium-poppy cultivation is the main source of income for almost 2 million Afghan farmers.²⁶ Eradication and NATO interdiction can put farmers in financial difficulties, especially those from distant villages that do not have any relevant alternative;
- ◆ 'Opium taxes' represent a substantial source of income for criminal and insurgency groups and at the same time, insurgents profit from financial grants aimed at eradication;
- ◆ Government programs for non-growing farmers are ineffective and corrupt. Moreover, corruption is strongly associated with eradication and financial aid;
- ◆ Aid received for eradication is invested in short-term solutions rather than long-term development;
- ◆ Taliban drew a lot of support from the poppy farmers who were outraged by the poppy eradication policy;
- ◆ Burning down the crop also destroys the land which has to recover before being used to cultivate poppy or wheat (or other basic foodstuff).

International financial aid together with eradication brings **positive results** and potential as well:

- ◆ proven decrease in poppy cultivation;
- ◆ potential better infrastructure that would allow farmers to transport their crop and substitute opium;
- ◆ agricultural support, in form of seeds and machines or recovery of soil, might encourage to switch to vegetables or wheat;

²⁵ Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Studies and Threat Analysis Section (UNODC STAS). *Addiction, crime and insurgency: The transnational threat of Afghan opium* [report]. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009, p. 113. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf>

²⁶ UNODC STAS. *Addiction, crime ...*, p. 94.



- ◆ stabilization of political situation.

4. Open issues and conclusion

Coming back to the two key introductory questions, it is necessary to resolve the key question **How to reduce opium cultivation and maintain security during and after ISAF withdrawal by 2014?**

- ◆ Support eradication and reduce the production of opium poppy while decreasing negative impact on farmers and the risk of insecurity and violence?
- ◆ Pour investments to improve infrastructure and development while preventing insurgent groups to benefit from this funding?
- ◆ Give money to farmers to enable their development, bearing in mind more corruption and uncertain results?

Afghanistan is an insecure country in turbulent region and its complex issues pose a threat to peace and development of the entire world. Perils, such as organized crime, insurgencies and conflicts, are all closely related to illicit drug production and trade. Afghan farmers have even more reasons to cultivate poppy – dry land, dysfunctional infrastructure and high income from poppies. Attempts to lower the opium production come from Afghan government, international efforts and NATO forces as well. So far, most successful slash of production (increasing poverty, however) has been the Taliban ban on opium production a decade ago. Eradication can also take form of burning the land or manual destruction, leaving farmers with scarce alternatives, or financial aid and investment, being a burden to international organizations.

After NATO withdraws troops from Afghanistan, there is severe risk of deterioration of insurgencies and poverty. Both are partly results of opium trade, therefore, NATO needs to take sufficient measures to prevent the trade from intensifying.

5. Timeline

Overview of important dates; events *in italics* are described in the report in more detail.

1978 ***Communist-led coup***

1979 ***Soviet invasion*** after opposition protests.

1988 As it seems increasingly complicated to maintain control in Afghanistan, Mikhail Gorbachev announces **withdrawal of troops** and he hands communist Afghanistan to president Najibullah. The change, however, brings also chaos that turns into conflicts and rise of warlords.

1992 Opponents of communist regime take over and declare an **Islamic state** (by the Peshawar Accords). The fights continue during this administration as well.



- 1994 **Taliban** is created as a religious guerrilla group of opposition Sunni students led by Mullah Omar. After gaining more people and power, Taliban declares *sharia* and takes other measures to turn Afghanistan into fundamentally Islamic state.
- 2000 Taliban **bans opium** cultivation as *un-Islamic*. Opium trade, however, is not included in the ban.
- 2001 George W. Bush responds to terrorist attacks by **Operation Enduring Freedom**, and UN Security Council agrees on a NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (**ISAF**).
- 2002 International intervention succeeds in reducing the influence of Taliban and Al-Qaeda.
- 2004 **Hamid Karzai** becomes the first democratically elected president.
- 2005 First time in more than thirty years elections are held and parliament is assembled.
- 2006 NATO resumes responsibility for security of all Afghanistan.
- 2007 Opium production reaches record high, according to UN report²⁷
- 2010 The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan signed a **Declaration on an Enduring Partnership** at the NATO Summit in Lisbon.
- 2011 *Spread of poppy disease greatly decreases production of opium for the season.*
- 2011 Osama bin Laden is killed in Pakistan.
- 2011 Biggest seizure of opium so far occurred in Iran, the load weights 8,685 kilograms and is worth approximately \$12.3 million.²⁸ Iran sits on a key trafficking route from Afghanistan and yearly seizures remain the highest²⁹ in the world.
- 2014 *Inteqal – the Dari and Pashtu word for transition – is the process by which security responsibility for Afghanistan is gradually transitioned from the NATO/ISAF to Afghan leadership*

²⁷ Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Studies and Threat Analysis Section (UNODC STAS). *Addiction, crime and insurgency: The transnational threat of Afghan opium* [report]. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009, p. 113. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Afghanistan/Afghan_Opium_Trade_2009_web.pdf>.

²⁸ Source: *Iran makes its biggest ever seizure of opium*. Mehr News [online]. 8 August 2011 [accessed 19 August 2012]. Available online at: <<http://www.mehrnews.com/en/newsdetail.aspx?NewsID=1377962>>

²⁹ Source: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *World Drug Report 2012*. Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012, p. 29. Available online at: <www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/WDR2012/WDR_2012_web_small.pdf>.



6. More sources to study

- ◆ Situation of drugs and criminality on global level, statistics and maps
[World drug report 2012](#), UNODC
- ◆ Extensive report on Afghan opium and related insecurity
[Addiction, crime and insurgency](#), UNODC 2009
- ◆ Detailed statistical data and trends, by provinces
Afghanistan opium survey [2011](#), [2012](#), UNODC
- ◆ Evaluating results of reduction of opium-poppy cultivation
[Where have all the flowers gone?](#), Afghanistan research and evaluation unit
- ◆ NATO in Afghanistan
<http://www.isaf.nato.int/>
- ◆ Micro-loans, providers and impact
[Basic information](#)
[KIVA](#) – internet organization providing loans

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Imprimatur: Šimon Presser, Zuzana Netolická

Language correction: Šimon Presser, Veronika Smělá

Graphics: Zuzana Netolická, Thu Thuy Truong

Consultancy: AMO Research center

Released by Association for International Affairs for the XVIII. year of Prague Student Summit

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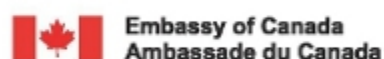
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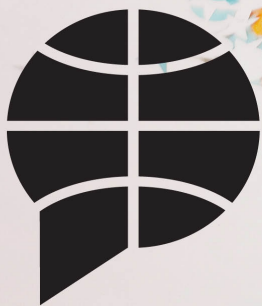


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