OPIUM IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY:
STATE FORMATION, DIPLOMACY, AND DRUG CONTROL IN AFGHANISTAN
DURING THE MUSAHIBAN DYNASTY, 1929-1978

A dissertation presented

by

James Tharin Bradford

to

The Department of History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the field of

History

Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
April, 2013
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role of opium in the political and economic development of Afghanistan from a world historical perspective. My research reveals that the Afghan government’s adoption of American anti-narcotics policy after World War II led it to enforce prohibitions and anti-smuggling laws that proved divisive among rural Afghans, who were both culturally ambivalent toward opium use and increasingly dependent on revenue from the opium trade. In particular, by the late 1960s and 1970s, when the global demand for narcotics exploded, Afghanistan emerged as an ideal source for illicit hash and opium. However, to maintain a steady flow of American money and aid, which it was increasingly dependent, the Afghan government had to enforce the culturally and economically divisive opium laws. More important, the crackdown on the opium trade coincided with broader political conflicts throughout the country. Thus, I recast the history of opium in Afghanistan to demonstrate that drug control, as a reflection of the ambitions, desires, and needs of the Mushiban state, were fundamental in shaping the conditions of statelessness and lawlessness that are commonly thought to characterize the Afghan opium industry today. The flourishing opium trade, then, is not simply the result of a fragmented state but rather a critical component of the historical process of state formation, social resistance, and fragmentation in the region.
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Introduction

There is a need to recognize that social and political stability, as well as wider economic growth, are essential preconditions for eliminating opium poppy cultivation on a sustainable basis in Afghanistan. Consequently, it is impossible to isolate illicit drugs from the wider issue of governance in Afghanistan; the two are intrinsically linked and, as such, will require a clear and coherent strategy to address them.¹

After three decades of war and internal political conflict, Afghanistan has become the single largest source of illicit opium in the world. The size and impact of the opium trade is staggering. In 1999, Afghanistan produced nearly 4,600 metric tons of opium, roughly 80 percent of the total illicit opium produced globally that year.² Despite the invasion of Afghanistan by American forces after the attacks of 9/11, as well as the establishment the new government under Hamid Karzai, opium production continued to grow. In 2007, Afghanistan produced an estimated 8,200 metric tons of opium, the largest single-year output ever.³ Opium has become so important to the Afghan economy that in 2011, the UN estimated the total value of Afghanistan’s illicit opium economy to be $1.4 billion, approximately 9 percent of the country’s GDP.⁴ As opium expert David MacDonald suggests in the quotation above, opium thrived in the environment of

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statelessness and lawlessness that has come to characterize Afghanistan in recent decades.

My research uses a longer historical analysis to explain how the relationship between the Musahiban government, its various state-building projects, and Afghan society were fundamental to the emergence of opium. The clear need to understand why and how opium endures despite the continued US presence is fundamental to assessing the larger aim of US policy in Afghanistan of building a functional and stable state. As a result, a massive body of work has emerged that explores the profound impact of illicit opium on the social, political, and economic dynamics of contemporary Afghanistan. The breadth and depth of the contemporary analysis is impressive. Anyone interested in drugs or Afghanistan can now easily dissect almost any aspect of the contemporary drug trade. One can examine the role of opium as a form of labor or credit, or analyze the root causes of opium’s persistence. The issue of opium has been elevated even further by the United States’ “War on Terror.”

International organizations, such as the United Nations

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5 The Musahiban dynasty was established by Mohammad Nadir Shah in 1929 and lasted until the death of Mohammad Daud Khan in 1978. Part of the Mohammadzai sect of the Barakzai Pashtuns, the Musahiban laid the foundation for the formation of the Afghan state and ushered in an era of relative stability throughout its 50 year reign.


7 For example, see: Mansfield, David. “The Role Of Opium As A Source Of Informal Credit In Rural Afghanistan.” World Bank, 2004, and Adam Pain’s “Opium Poppy and Informal Credit.” Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2008.


9 This is embodied by the growing number of UNODC reports that analyze the role of drugs with the threat of violence. For example, see UNODC’s, Afghanistan Opium
and NATO, produce yearly summaries of the Afghan opium trade.\textsuperscript{10} Reporters and scholars have produced valuable and insightful books that bring to life the deeper more personal dimensions of the contemporary drug trade.\textsuperscript{11} Yet, despite all of the valuable contributions to understanding the contemporary drug trade, there remains one significant flaw: the focus remains on the current situation and not the historical antecedents.

In sketching the historical roots of the contemporary opium trade scholars have presented opium’s emergence in Afghanistan as a consequence primarily of the Afghan Soviet War (1979-1989). This has created a mutual dependence between historical and contemporary sources about the narrative of the Afghan opium trade and its origins in the Afghan Soviet War. For these writers, the history of opium in Afghanistan begins with the war in Afghanistan and its emergence as a stateless and lawless place. While these explanations certainly contribute to the understanding of why opium expanded in Afghanistan, they do not explain how the contemporary opium industry began. The lack


\textsuperscript{10} The UNODC publishes yearly reports about the opium trade. They also sponsor reports by consultants that provide valuable glimpses into opium’s role as economic and political agent. Some of the best sources for in depth of analysis of the contemporary opium trade are Jonathon Goodhand, David MacDonald, David Mansfield, and Richard Scott.

of deeper historical analysis obfuscates how the contemporary Afghan opium industry is tied to longer historical narratives involving opium, the formation of the Musahiban state, and the conflicts of governance in Afghan society. Ultimately, this is critical for understanding how relations between the Afghan government and Afghan society were, and still are, essential to the existence and expansion of the opium trade.

I argue that examining the history of opium in Afghanistan during the Musahiban Dynasty (1929-1979), beginning with Nadir Shah’s (1929-1933) efforts to modernize Afghanistan to the end of Daud Khan’s rule in 1978, reveals that opium was an active component in the formation of the Afghan state. Although the Musahiban’s anti-opium policy was mainly launched as a reaction to the emergent drug trade, it was not a straightforward response to the growing drug industry. Instead, the Musahiban drug policy was also a stimulant for the Afghan drug trade. When viewed in the broader context of the political, social, and economic uncertainty that characterized the 1960s and 1970s in Afghanistan, the Musahiban reinforced the illegitimacy of its government by creating and actually enforcing controversial drug control laws. As a result, the flourishing opium trade that defines Afghanistan today is not simply the result of a fragmented state but rather a critical component of the historical process of state formation, social resistance, and fragmentation in the region.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^\text{12}\) I have opted to focus on state formation rather than state building. As Jonathan Goodhand explains, state building implies the “conscious, planned, and often externally driven attempt to establish an apparatus of control.” Focusing on state formation, on the other hand, reveals non-linear process occurring in “fits and starts”, not the gradual diffusion of power outwards. (Goodhand. *Bandits, Borderlands, and Opium Wars: Afghan State-building Viewed from the Margins.* Danish Institute for International Studies, 2009. (7)
Analyzing the history of opium in Afghanistan before the Afghan-Soviet War unearths a mutually constitutive relationship between state formation and the production and trade of opium, one that fundamentally alters the conventional historical narrative. On the one hand, opium policy was an important aspect of the state’s attempt to project its authority throughout the country. After abandoning efforts to become a licit producer of opium, the Afghan state embraced the prohibition of opium production and trade as a means of expanding state control. However, the attempts to use drug control as a conduit for the expansion of the state were ultimately inhibited by the goals of the government under Musahiban leadership. The Mushiban state was designed to limit interactions with rural Afghanistan, which in turn created a structural dependence on foreign aid to finance the state. As a result, in the late 1960s and 1970s, when the state needed to enforce drug control laws to maintain access to the foreign aid it was so dependent on, the state did not have the ability to impose effective drug control policy. Thus, analyzing Musahiban drug control policy reveals how the historical antecedents, particularly the growing social, political, and economic uncertainty of the late Musahiban dynasty, were fundamental to the emergence of the contemporary drug trade.

The roots of drug policy as a consequence of state design, i.e., the dependence on foreign money, led the Afghan state to establish and enforce laws that ultimately went against cultural and economic norms. As a result, drug policy had the effect of reinforcing the profound disconnect between the Musahiban government and much of Afghan society. In particular, the extent to which state policy was enforced or ignored, complied or resisted, largely revolved around tribal, ethnic, familial, and/or local needs,

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i.e. the qawm. In fact, qawm influenced every level of drug policy and the drug trade. Consequently, the Musahiban government’s continued and expanded pursuit of anti-narcotics policy contributed to the deepening fragmentation of Afghanistan as individuals opted to enforce or ignore laws based on the needs of the qawm. Inevitably, as drug policy proved increasingly invasive to conventional ways of life, it contributed to the greater illegitimacy of the state, all but reinforcing, if not stimulating, the expansion of narcotic production and trade in subsequent years.

As an analysis of the emergence of the illicit opium trade in Afghanistan, this study recognizes the limitations of the state as an analytical framework. By adopting analytic perspectives that highlight the participants in the international narcotics trade (farmers, traders, smugglers, and international crime organizations), we come to very different conclusions about the “causes, meanings, and processes” that shaped the contemporary opium situation. Fragmentation, in particular, is not just a consequence of Musahiban drug policy, but also a product of Afghan peoples’ response and reaction to state policy. The smuggling of drugs across borders, the manipulation of prohibitions, and the otherwise ambivalence toward drug control symbolize the ways individuals and groups respond to and influence the creation and implementation of government drug policy, ultimately contributing to this process of fragmentation.

14 Olivier Roy, in his book Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), defines a qawm as a “communal group, whose sociological basis may vary. It may be a clan (in tribal zones), a village, an ethnic group, an extended family, a professional group.” (242)
16 In Benjamin Hopkins and Magnus Marsden’s new book, Fragments of the Afghan Frontier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.), they note that the frontier has
convey is not only one of the state’s actions and impact, but also one in which people respond to and influence state actions.

Ultimately, this study examines how drug control policy and the resistance to it reflected deeper political, social, and cultural tensions between the Musahiban state and Afghan society. I attempt to recast the history of opium in Afghanistan to demonstrate that drug control, as a reflection of the ambitions, desires, and needs of the Mushiban state, were fundamental in shaping the conditions of statelessness and lawlessness that are commonly thought to characterize the Afghan opium industry today.

A survey of existing scholarship on Afghanistan and opium reveals a gap between the two fields. While Afghan history and the history of opium have established bodies of scholarly consideration, the history of opium as a component of nation building in Afghanistan before the events of the 1970s, although significant, has generated little scholarship. Louis Dupree, Vartan Gregorian, Maxwell Fry, Barnett Rubin, Leon and Leila Poullada, Larry Goodson, Richard Newell, Thomas Barfield, Olivier Roy, Ahmed Rashid, and Ashraf Ghani have all published extensively on various aspects of the history often been characterized as a series of fragments, preventing unification of a cohesive whole. However, they explain that this fragmentation is also an important component of the frontier’s heterogeneity, and serves to bind groups as well as pull them apart. The idea stems from Gyan Pandey’s work Routine Violence (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2006) where he calls for historians to recognize the state’s constructions of ‘minorities’ and how it is only a fragment of history. Presenting the state as one component of a much larger historical mosaic presents a more complete picture of the history of which they are both intertwined and equally influential (42). Hopkins and Marsden thus posit that these fragmented groups should be placed alongside states as part of the historical make-up. (219)
of Afghanistan in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{17} Their work has dealt extensively with the building of the Afghan state and the role of political culture in shaping the nation-building process. They emphasize how the political culture led to government policies constructed around the state’s conscious recognition of its limitations, weaknesses, and fear’s of tribal insurrections, ultimately manifested in the state’s increasing reliance on foreign patrons for state revenue. Yet, opium remains largely absent from these histories.

The connection between drugs and political culture has been a major focus in histories of other drug producing nations and regions. William McAllister, Francisco Thoumi, William Walker, and Alfred McCoy have all published books on the history of drugs in various countries around the world during the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{18} Their work has examined how the political and cultural history of those nations provided necessary conditions for narcotic economies to emerge and thrive. And yet, paralleling the dearth of literature on the history of Afghanistan and on the history of drugs in other nations, the history of opium in Afghanistan remains remarkably incomplete. McCoy, Emdad ul-Haq, David MacDonald, Pierre Arnaud-Chouvy, Nigel Allan, Amir Zada Asad, Catherine


Lamour, Gerald McLaughlin, Michael Lamberti, and Alan Labrousse have all written on the topic of opium in Afghanistan. Their focus centers primarily on the 1970s, particularly the prohibitions in Iran and Pakistan and the Afghan-Soviet War. Although their work is essential to understanding the contemporary opium trade in Afghanistan, earlier periods remain relatively unexplored.

Alfred McCoy’s *Politics of Heroin* is generally considered the main source for the history of opium during the Cold War. McCoy’s thesis centers on the role of US-funded covert wars using the illicit narcotics trade to fight communism. McCoy explains the dramatic rise of opium production in Afghanistan during the Afghan Soviet War as a result of Pakistan’s Inter-Service Intelligence logistical support, CIA covert protection, and the financial services of Pakistani banks. McCoy’s argument that opium was a consequence of the political chaos of the 1970s fails to consider how opium, particularly opium policies, contributed to the fragmentation and eventual downfall of the Afghan state in the first place. David MacDonald’s *Drugs in Afghanistan* deals primarily with contemporary issues of drug production, trade, and use in Afghanistan. However, in

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20 In 2011 Sean Duffy, defended his PhD dissertation at the University of Arizona, “Shell Game: The US-Afghan Opium Relationship.” Duffy’s dissertation was the first exploration of opium in Afghanistan before the 1970s. Although a valuable contribution, Duffy’s focus remained primarily on the impact of US foreign policy in Afghanistan.

historicizing the drug trade, MacDonald perpetuates the misconception that during the period from 1930 to 1970, aside from brief mentions of the prohibitions of opium in 1945 and 1956, opium was a dormant commodity, an isolated global issue, and a non-factor in shaping the growth of opium production during the early 1970s. He argues that the “catalyst for the expansion of opium cultivation and production in Afghanistan was the new bans and stricter drug control laws imposed in neighboring Iran, Pakistan, and India at the end of the 1970s.”

Emdad ul-Haq’s History of Drugs in South Asia is one of the few works to emphasize a broader historical lens to examine the history of drugs in South Asia. He argues that the opium industry in Pakistan and Afghanistan were products of the colonial heritage of opium production in South Asia. More specifically, Ul-Haq contends that Pakistan’s opium problem resulted from failed attempts by the state to create licit sources of opium for its own population. Unlike McCoy or MacDonald, ul-Haq presents the current opium problem in the region as a consequence of the failed political will of the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Amir Zada Asad’s Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border finds that the opium industry emerged along the border of Pakistan and Afghanistan in the wake of the Pakistan government’s Hudood Ordinance in 1979, a prohibition policy that ostensibly pushed the

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24 Emdad ul-Haq. (9)
25 Emdad ul-Haq. (163)
licit opium industry underground. Asad also argues that the 1979 prohibition of opium in Iran, which had a large indigenous opium industry, created the demand for Afghan opium. Likewise, Ikramul Haq emphasizes the importance of global factors in shaping the opium industry in Afghanistan. He adds that the prohibition of opium in Iran coincided with the prohibition of opium in Turkey, exposing the Afghan-Pakistan industry to markets outside of Central and Southwest Asia. Moreover, he argues that the influx of Western hippies into Afghanistan during the late 1960s exposed many Afghans to the potential of opium as a lucrative commercial product, a point reinforced by Nigel Allan.

The overarching narrative that emerges from the histories of Afghan opium focuses on global and regional factors, which are undoubtedly important. However, they inevitably produce a story in which Afghanistan emerges as a victim of these global and regional processes and events. In other words, the history of opium in Afghanistan is essentially marginalized within the country’s own history. Why has such an important factor in the history of opium in Afghanistan remained so understudied? Sources are partially to blame. Afghanistan has never been a place conducive to historical inquiry. The cultural indifference toward record-keeping, reinforced by the fact that Afghanistan

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27 Asad. (52)
29 Allan, Nigel. “Opium Production in Afghanistan and Pakistan” in Dangerous Harvest. Ed by Michael Steinberg. USA: Oxford Univ Press, 2004. (141) (for a memoir of Western hippies experiences in their travels in Afghanistan, look at Peter Levi’s the Light Garden of the Angel King.) Consequently, Allan notes, this was also the beginning of the ideological resistance to the West, as many Afghans were shocked by the behavior of Westerners, rejecting them and the West as sources of perversion and moral corruption.
was never formally colonized, has made Afghan records difficult to find. Moreover, the study of drugs is difficult in and of itself. Many of the more recent documents remained classified or are heavily redacted. By looking elsewhere for a history of opium and the Afghan state, I have discovered a large historical record of various US and UN memos, reports, as well as various Afghan newspapers, that shed light on the history of opium as a significant component of state-building in Afghanistan from 1929-1978.

The US has the most substantial historical record of narcotics matters primarily because of its role as the international crusader for anti-narcotic regulation. In other words, since it was an issue to the US, the issue generated an archive. The ambivalence much of the world has toward narcotics regulation is reflected in the limited archival material elsewhere. Thus, my approach is rooted in archival records collected at the Hoover Institution Library at Stanford University and the National Archives II in College Park, Maryland. Records from the UN archives in New York and Afghan newspapers from the Library of Congress also contribute to the narrative, particularly in highlighting the impacts of state opium policies on local populations. I collected oral histories as well, primarily for the last section of the dissertation. Much remains to be discovered, particularly further examination of Afghan voices, such as farmers, smugglers, and lower-level government officials. However, the records I found shed important light on the role opium played in the building of and the resistance to the Afghan state during the Musahiban dynasty.

Analyzing the history of drug control in Afghanistan provides a unique lens for refracting the design of the Musahiban state and the character of Afghan political culture. The Musahiban dynasty was constructed around the conscious recognition of its
limitation and weaknesses, which led to a policy of “gradual modernization.”\textsuperscript{30} The policy was a direct recognition of the threat tribal authorities posed to the state in rural Afghanistan. In particular, the state feared resistance from Pashtun tribes and consciously designed policies either to benefit Pashtuns or reduce the negative impact on them.\textsuperscript{31} Furthermore, to decrease potential confrontations with the rural population, the government relied increasingly on trade and investment with foreign powers for revenue to build the country, ultimately developing into a rentier state.\textsuperscript{32} The Afghan state’s dependence on foreign money meant that it never had to legitimize itself among the rural population.\textsuperscript{33} Opium contributed to this process. Before World War II, opium was an important export commodity for the government. It allowed the state to generate revenue through foreign trade rather than through domestic taxation. When the state launched prohibitions in 1945 and 1957, it was trying to appeal to foreign ambitions for narcotic control to gain access to more foreign aid and investment to strengthen the state. The Musahiban used those prohibitions as a means of securing financing to maintain the

\textsuperscript{30} Gregorian, Vartan. *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969. (343) Under Nadir Shah, the Mushiban ban recognized the downfall of their predecessors was largely a consequence of their attempts to modernize Afghanistan. As a result, the Mushiban leadership implemented a policy of ‘gradual modernization.’

\textsuperscript{31} Newell, Richard. “The Prospects of State-building in Afghanistan.” In *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.* Edited by Banuazzi, Ali and Myron Weiner. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986. (113) This was most evident in the declaration of Pashto as the national language despite the overwhelming use of Dari (Persian) as the lingua franca.


\textsuperscript{33} Barfield, Thomas. “Problems in Establishing Legitimacy in Afghanistan.” *Iranian Studies,* Vol. 37, Num. 2, June 2004. Both Barfield and Rubin note that the reliance on foreign aid allowed the state “to hover above society” rather than to be integrate into society.
status quo, not to fundamentally transform those regions affected by or dependent on the opium trade.

However, things changed in the 1960s and 1970s. As the global illicit drug trade expanded, concerns grew about the sources of supply. Mounting international pressure, spearheaded by the US, led the Afghan state to create and more importantly, enforce drug control laws. The creation of laws prohibiting opium production and smuggling, and the enforcement of such laws, were important aspects of the state becoming legible.\(^\text{34}\)

Moreover, the building of a drug control apparatus as a response to the growing global illicit drug trade, especially during the era of the US war on drugs, reinforced the state’s need to project its power into the lives of Afghan citizens.\(^\text{35}\)

However, the Musahiban state remained confined by its own political design. When the Afghan government did have to enforce prohibition and anti-smuggling laws to maintain access to American aid, the state’s lack of integration into Afghan society and the increasing resistance to centralized governance prevented any meaningful or effective form of drug control.

Examining the history of drug policy in Afghanistan also reveals how Afghan citizens reacted to and influenced the state and its drug policy. In particular, the interactions between the state and Afghan society reveal the impact of qawm in perpetuating the inherent conflict between state and local governance, thus dictating the

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\(^{34}\) Scott. *Seeing Like a State*. Where as the mapping of borders, boundaries, and cityscapes was an important aspect of a state becoming legible, so too was the need to control the movement of people across such spaces. The mapping of smuggling routes and illicit opium production were other ways in which the state became legible.

\(^{35}\) Tilly, Charles. *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AS 990-1990*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, Inc, 1990. Tilly notes that many of the states in Europe used war as a means of justifying state building and “reached directly into communities and households to seize the wherewithal of war.” (104) Afghanistan never went to war under Musahiban leadership. However, the war on drugs and the need to control illicit narcotics underscored the state attempts to build larger and more intrusive institutions of control.
extent to which drug policy was implemented, complied with, or resisted. The
government’s lack of integration into society inevitably elevated the importance of *qawm*
in determining outcomes. In fact, the aim of most who worked within the state was not to
overcome the *qawm* through the power of the state but rather to insert *qawm* into the
state. As Afghan historian Olivier Roy notes: “the state was no more than a stake in a
larger game and the strategy of a *qawm* consisted in establishing an advantageous
relationship with the institutions of the state.”

Thus, false compliance, smuggling, aversion, and corruption—forms of peasant resistance described by James Scott—should be viewed not only as forms of resistance but also as forms of support for local and individual interests. Ultimately, opium policy under the Musahiban dynasty was characterized by a sociopolitical culture that shaped how, why, and when the Afghan state decided to promote or prohibit opium and the extent to which individuals complied with, enforced, ignored, or resisted state control.

Moreover, analyzing the cultural dimensions of drug policy brings to light deeper forces and non-national histories that are integral to the entire story of opium but are often hidden in the histories of states. The focus on social factors such as *qawm* reinforces the need to differentiate between the nation and the state as a set of ruling institutions in explaining the origins of the opium trade. The focus on non-national histories also reveals how attempts by Musahiban leaders to stop smuggling along its borders were directly linked to broader ambitions to regulate the movement and mobility

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36 Roy. (24)
of people on Afghanistan’s periphery. Rural Afghans had been moving and trading across Afghanistan’s porous boundaries since the country’s inception, and opium, like other commodities, was considered a licit product. However, the establishment of an anti-narcotics policy allowed the Musahiban to portray Afghan traders as smugglers, posing a significant threat to Afghanistan and its neighbors and thus requiring an appropriate response from the state. In other words, “bandits helped make states and states made bandits.” The creation and implementation of drug control and anti-smuggling laws were vital components of the expansion of state power. Drug policy, in this vein, is not only about the drugs themselves, but more important, about the regulation of people whose lives transcended the borders and laws that states imposed upon them.

38 Hopkins and Marsden (in *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*) discuss in detail how mobility and state’s attempts to regulate and confine peoples movements have been fundamental to the history of peoples living in the frontier’s of Afghanistan. Not only has mobility been a key characteristic of survival and reactions to political pressures, but also important strategies for capitalizing on economic opportunities. Hopkins and Marsden note that this mobility, one often invisible in national histories, is fundamental to the identity of those living in frontier spaces. (for other examples, see Alessandro Monsutti, *War and Migration: Social Networks and Economic Strategies of the Hazaras in Afghanistan*. New York: Routledge, 2005. And Robert Nichols, *A History of Pashtun Migration*, 1775-2006. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.)

39 An important theme recurring throughout this project is the role of opium as a licit and illicit commodity. The defining of opium as illegal and the creation and perpetuation of stereotypical tropes of drug users, farmers, and traders as criminals (those that were historically constructed and then projected onto the rest of the world by the West, especially the US), are primary targets of this work. I adopt the perspectives proposed by Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (in *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things*) that identifying how opium the commodity became an illegal substance reveals the origins of and conflicts with regulatory authority. (16-17)


41 Berridge, Virginia. “Victorian Opium Eating: Responses to Opiate Use in Nineteenth Century England.” *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Summer 1978). (437-461) Berridge notes that drug laws in Victorian England were not about the drugs, but rather about class tensions, race, and the pressures on the medical profession. In this vein, drug control,
Furthermore, the national history of Afghanistan has come to represent that of the Pashtun majority. Yet many tribal and ethnic minorities have their own histories that have only been brought to light by anthropological research. Moreover, the emergence of these sub-national histories indicates the strength of these communities in the face of the state’s overt ethnic and tribal biases. Thus, Afghanistan represents the juridical state described by Myron Weiner: it is regarded as a national state in the international arena yet its legitimacy is contested within its own space. Ultimately, the many national, sub-national, and tribal/ethnic strands that make up Afghanistan’s history contextualize the political, social, and cultural underpinnings of the state building/drug trade dialectic.

The history of opium in Afghanistan during the Musahiban dynasty brings attention to broader issues of foreign influence in the development of the Afghan state, particularly the impact of the United States. The US played a significant role in building the Musahiban state and shaping its opium policy. Examining foreign influence on domestic policies illuminates political culture in Afghanistan as well as the conflicts

almost universally, is a form of population control, not benevolent goodwill on the part of governments. Thus, analyzing why governments implement drug control laws provide keen insight into deeper social, political, and cultural issues directly or indirectly linked to drug production, use, and trade.

42 Anthropologists dominate scholarly works about the history of Afghanistan. The incredible diversity of Central Asian tribes, clans, and ethnic groups, resulting from geographical isolation (among many other factors) and the limited state encroachment (as explained earlier) has made anthropology an important contribution to the historical fabric.


inherent within the US foreign policy. Although disputes between the state and rural Afghans existed well before the Musahiban dynasty, the Afghan state’s increasing reliance on foreign money exacerbated the pre-existing cultural disconnect between the state and people. Afghanistan’s attempts to adhere to international drug regulations required the implementation of a law that reflected American values more than Afghan ones. Opium thus emerges as a powerful symbol of the disconnect between state and society. For Afghan officials who believed American aid was the key to building a modern state, prohibition was synonymous with modernity. Yet for other Afghans, opium was a vital commodity that could help ordinary people thrive in the global market. Ironically, the state opted to prohibit the one commodity that had real potential to change the lives of thousands of Afghans.

Analyzing the impact of American-led drug prohibitions in Afghanistan reveals the extent to which the US lacked a comprehensive understanding of the global drug trade. In Afghanistan, as in much of the world, American ambitions to extend drug control through prohibition inevitably helped to globalize local and regional drug markets. In particular, US drug-policy makers failed to consider the deeper economic dynamics of the global drug trade. American supply side theory endeavored to use prohibitive and coercive methods, especially eradication, to curb drug markets in isolated

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45 Walker, William III. “Drug Control and the Issue of Culture in American Foreign Relations.” Diplomatic History, Vol 12. Fall 1988. (372) Walker notes that in the design of anti-opium policies in Asia the US was remarkably ignorant of the issue of culture. Later historians reinforced these notions by discussing too broadly the role of the state.

nations, assuming that the respective drug systems were inelastic markets. However, US anti-drug crusaders failed to consider that the variables of supply and demand were far more elastic than previously imagined, by no means isolated by national boundaries or political systems. In particular, the increases of opium smuggling into Pakistan and Iran during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s--despite prohibitions in both countries--indicates the limitations of American drug control policy. Not only did the regional prohibitions create new markets for Afghan opium to fill, but the dramatic increase in demand in the US and Europe helped to transform Afghan opium into a global commodity. As a result, the US ambition to control the supply of drugs worldwide by advocating or coercing nations to implement prohibitions proved to stimulate, not diminish, local, regional, and global drug economies. Thus, the Musahiban’s eventual cooptation of American drug policy proved fundamental to the emergence of the contemporary Afghan drug trade.

As Paul Gootenberg notes, the study of a transnational commodity that respects no boundaries is ideally suited for more integrated global history. The study of opium in Afghanistan during the Mushiban dynasty provides a unique lens through which to examine the various global forces at play in Afghanistan. During the Cold War, Afghanistan’s opium policy was affected as much by the broader geopolitical games being played by the US, Soviets, Iranians, and Pakistanis as it was with the transnational nature of its opium industry. Afghanistan launched various opium policies because it saw that not only were its neighbors doing the same, but also they were using opium policy as a conduit for greater American investment in the economy and military. Unlike Iran and

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Pakistan, who were allied with the US, Afghanistan was not an ideal site for American investment. Afghanistan was a neutral power with limited geo-strategic benefits. As a result, America was reluctant to provide Afghanistan with the same funding it gave to Iran and Pakistan. In short, examining the history of opium in Afghanistan during the Musahiban dynasty further integrates the history of Afghanistan into the history of the global opium trade, drug policy, and the Cold War.

This study provides a chronological historical narrative. It generally follows the dialogue between the Afghan state, the international community, and the Afghan people that led to key narcotic policies. It also examines how drug policies reinforced the political culture among the Afghan state, the Afghan people, and the international community.

I divide the manuscript into two periods: the first, from 1929-1958, follows the attempts of the Afghan state to trade licit opium on the global market. During this period the Afghan state was forced into the international opium regulatory system and attempted to implement and enforce drug laws differentiating and regulating licit and illicit opium. The second period, from 1958 to 1979, examines the failures of prohibition as well as other key state policies that helped opium become a global commodity in the illicit narcotics market.

Chapter 1, “From Free Trade to Prohibition,” takes up the early Musahiban dynasty. Established in 1929, it wanted to continue the process of modernization started by Amanullah (1919-1928), but without risking insurrection from the powerful tribal groups of rural Afghanistan. Hashim Khan introduced a policy of gradual modernization.
The objective was to reduce interaction with tribal forces by increasing exports and shaping policies to benefit or reduce threats from the contentious Pashtun tribes. Thus, the Musahiban leaders wanted to modernize without irritating the rural populations most representative of Afghanistan’s backwardness.

The Afghan state relied on the export of key commodities to provide revenue for modernization and expansion of the state. During this period, the export of raw opium emerged as a lucrative and growing sector of the Afghan economy. World War II disrupted the traditional networks of opium trade on the global market. This allowed Afghanistan to trade with nations that normally observed the 1912 Hague Opium Convention, to which Afghanistan was not party. The export trade opened new doors for the Afghan state that previously remained closed, especially the US. With a new approach to foreign policy, now increasingly dependent on new foreign trade partners, the Hashim Khan government attempted to improve the disastrous state of health care in Afghanistan by importing large quantities of Western pharmaceutical narcotics.49

As World War II came to a close, the US attempted to reestablish strong narcotic controls on traditional producers of opium such as Afghanistan. The US used the Afghans’ desire for pharmaceutical narcotics and US promises of a new and lucrative diplomatic relationship to pressure Afghanistan to launch a prohibition of opium. When it did so, the prohibition reflected the limitations and weakness of the state. By closing government-run opium monopolies, the prohibition affected only a small, well-connected group of individuals. Moreover, no institutional changes occurred. The state made no

49 For US narcotics regulators and American pharmaceutical companies, this was ideal. Afghanistan was selling cheap yet powerful raw opium to the US, where it was in turn manufactured into pharmaceutical narcotics and sold back to Afghanistan.
attempt to enforce the prohibition because it knew full well it did not have the means to do so.

Chapter 2’s, “The Prohibition of 1958,” addresses the launch of the prohibition of 1945, done with promises from the US for increased investment and aid to Afghanistan. For Afghanistan, the prohibition fit well into the broader government aim to improve diplomatic relations with the US. In addition, the opium prohibition was seen as a cultural bridge between Afghanistan and the west. Closing the cultural divide would prove useful for the Afghans in courting American investment and aid and would increase American attempts to implement policies abroad to aid its broader political, economic, and cultural agenda.

However, the 1945 prohibition was completely ineffective. By 1949, illicit production and trade were growing, and the state, losing its foreign exchange surplus, sought to reestablish the export of raw opium. In response, the US applied even greater pressure to get Afghanistan to prohibit opium. This led to the 1956 Opium Act and the 1958 prohibition of opium. Unlike in 1945, the Opium Act created legal frameworks for licit and illicit opium production, trade, and use. The prohibition targeted only one province, Badakhshan. The state targeted Badakhshan for two reasons. First, it was a northern province populated mostly by Tajiks and other national minorities. Launching a ban of opium there posed less risk to the Afghan state than had it opted for places inhabited by Pashtuns. Second, as the largest opium-growing province in Afghanistan, Badakhshan was well known to US and UN officials. Thus, the prohibition of opium carried significant symbolism and showed the lengths the Afghan government was
willing to go to appeal to American ambitions it hoped would lead to greater support of state development.

Although the prohibition was effective in eliminating opium in Badakhshan, it was a disaster politically. Opium was not just an illicit commodity; it was a fundamental part of life in the region. Viewed primarily as a source of narcotics by the Afghan and US governments, the poppy plant provided medicine, food, soap, and other essential products that alleviated the harsh living conditions for many in Badakhshan. Furthermore, the poppy harvest was a vital source of labor. Although a major humanitarian crisis was averted, the prohibition of opium signified deeper fissures between the state and the rural peoples of Afghanistan. The prohibition reinforced the popular notion that the Afghan state was culturally predisposed to support Pashtuns rather than all Afghan citizens. By 1959, poppy production resumed. More important, the prohibition reinforced the disconnect between state and rural society. This schism laid the foundation for continued production of opium and increased resentment toward the state in the next two decades.

Chapter 3, “Democracy, Smuggling, and Tourism: the Globalization of the Afghan Opium Trade in the 1960s,” focuses on the reactions to the changing political culture in Afghanistan and the impact it had on the growing illicit narcotics trade in the region. First, the chapter explores the increasing political tensions occurring throughout the country. Throughout the 1960s, and despite an attempt by Zahir Shah to open up democratic channels, the struggling economy and failing social and economic policies led to increased discontent with the state. Corruption, nepotism, and foreign influence became important charges used against the fledgling state. In cities, students were
increasingly open in their defiance of state policies. And in rural Afghanistan, various agro-industrial projects foundered because of problems with funding and implementation.

The chapter also focuses on the transnational networks forged by drug traffickers during this period. Emphasis is placed on Iran as the major site of this global convergence. The Shah’s prohibition of opium in 1955 ended all domestic production of opium in Iran. This created a massive gap in which Afghan and Turkish opium soon filled. During the 1960s, opium smuggling along the Afghan-Iranian border became one of the primary concerns of the Shah’s government. Yet, Afghan opium remained a relatively regional commodity. The US GENMISH program, a program in which the US military helped educate and train the Shah’s police, army, and gendarmerie, helped militarize Iranian drug interdiction efforts.

Western sojourners and criminal groups flocked to the region to purchase Afghan hashish to smuggle back to the west. During the 1960s, many travelers went to Afghanistan because opium and hash were so abundant and state laws were relatively lax. However, by the early 1970s, characteristics of westerners indicated a change in the global narcotics system. No longer were westerners coming to Kabul to buy drugs to get high but to buy drugs to send back to the west. By 1972 the narcotics trade in Afghanistan was increasingly dominated by young entrepreneurs rather than young thrill seekers.

Chapter 4, “Importing Nixon’s Drug War,” examines the impact of President Richard Nixon’s “War on Drugs” on the governments of major producer nations and the creation and transformation of institutions to eliminate the production and trade of drugs, particularly opium and heroin. First, it explores the impact of interdiction programs in
Turkey and France and how, despite a halt to the Turkey-France heroin supply route (colloquially known as the French Connection), production and trafficking expanded to other parts of the world, particularly Southeast Asia and Mexico. It then discusses how increased enforcement of America’s war on drugs in key production areas reverberated throughout the world, including Afghanistan. As a result, the elimination of traditional sources of supply did not deter traffickers and criminal groups; in fact triggered new sources of supply that were better suited for the ever-changing illicit global narcotics trade, particularly in Afghanistan.

Although Afghanistan was a relatively minor producer of opium when Nixon launched the drug war, the growing presence of Afghan opium in the illicit markets of Iran and Pakistan gave new life to international anti-drug policies in Afghanistan. The second part of the chapter explores anti-narcotics policy and infrastructure in Afghanistan and why, despite increased efforts from both foreign nations and the Afghan state, illicit narcotic production continued to thrive. In particular, it examines how American anti-narcotics officials in Afghanistan influenced the government’s implementation of new anti-smuggling laws and the creation of anti-smuggling units (ASUs) within the police and gendarmerie. Analyzing the anti-smuggling laws of 1969 and 1972 shows how US anti-narcotics officials attempted to coordinate with Afghans to try to fulfill Nixon’s vision of eliminating the production and trade of illicit narcotics in Afghanistan.

Nixon’s global anti-narcotics vision was contingent on the governments of producer states effectively transforming and implementing domestic narcotics policies and structural changes. In Afghanistan, the creation and enforcement of new legislation and anti-narcotics units indicated a renewed effort on the part of the state to use foreign
ambitions for narcotics control to expand the strength of the government through the police and gendarmerie. However, despite this renewed effort, the state still failed to stop the production and trade of illicit narcotics. Analyzing the failure of the anti-smuggling laws and the ASUs to stop the production and trade of narcotics reveals the tremendous difficulties facing the Afghan state and its ability to impose and enforce anti-narcotic laws, particularly in the periphery of the country. Specifically, such failure stemmed partly from the subjective enforcement of anti-narcotic laws by individual Afghan narcotics officials who often placed the needs of the qawm over state policy.

Chapter 5, “Developing Opium,” shows how the changes in the global market transformed the role of opium in Afghanistan, especially in the Helmand valley. During the 1960s, Afghanistan’s economy slowed to a virtual halt. Various development programs, many aided by the US, were doing little to help the country. By the early 1970s, political tensions were acute. The state was becoming increasing violent and corrupt, and the disparity between urban Kabul and rural Afghanistan was vast. 1973 proved to be the catalyst for Afghanistan’s opium industry. In 1972 the National Bank collapsed, drying up credit, and a devastating drought and famine crippled much of the country. The coup of 1973 further exacerbated political tensions. The Afghan state also created new anti-smuggling laws with US-trained police squads to stop the smuggling of opium. As a result, the social, economic, and political conditions in the country had a direct impact on the emergence of opium in the Helmand Valley.

This chapter focuses closely on the Helmand Valley, currently the largest opium-producing region on earth. The case of the Helmand provides insight into how domestic issues and global changes in the early 1970s slowly transformed the political economy.
By the mid-1970s, the introduction of cash crops helped farmers in the valley become more aware of the lucrative potential of opium on the global market. And as the political situation worsened, areas furthest from Kabul such as the Helmand saw increasing resistance to state policies. The chapter also examines the discovery of opium in the US-funded Helmand Valley development project and the impact of Daud’s prohibition of opium in 1974. Although the prohibition was seemingly effective in stopping the opium trade deeper inspection reveals that farmers and traders agreed to stop producing opium because it would enhance their future profits. Thus, local Afghans exhibited great knowledge of the global illicit narcotics market as well as cunning manipulation of Afghan government. As Afghanistan descended into political conflict in the late 1970s and the state lost control of rural areas, opium became firmly entrenched as a fundamental component of the new Afghan economy.

The common tropes used to characterize the Afghan opium industry today, such as statelessness, lawlessness, and war are rooted in misinterpretations of the history of opium in Afghanistan, if not the history of Afghanistan itself. Examining opium during the Musahiban dynasty reveals that opium played an important role in shaping the Musahiban state and its relations with Afghan society. More important, drug control, particularly the prohibition of opium, contributed to the gulf between state and society, which laid the foundation for Afghanistan to become the stateless, lawless, war-ravaged place where opium thrives to this day.
In June of 1929, Paris customs authorities delivered a rather strange package to the residence of the Afghan Minister to France, Ala Ghulam Nabi. French authorities had spent weeks trying to get Ghulam Nabi to file the necessary customs paperwork for the delivery of the package. However, he repeatedly circumvented official procedures. After three weeks, in a seemingly benign gesture of diplomatic goodwill, French customs officials decided to deliver the package anyway. However, during the delivery, a box was dropped, and several bags containing a white powder fell to the ground. Given Ghulam Nabi’s dubious behavior French customs officials decided to test the contents of the bags before delivering the packages. Tests later revealed that the bag contained heroin, refined somewhere east of France (likely in Germany) from opium of South Asian origin. Later, when authorities examined all of the contents of the boxes, they discovered the large cache of heroin (250 kg) and cocaine, believed to total an approximate street value of 1 million francs. As a result, Ghulam Nabi was arrested for smuggling 250 kilograms of heroin and a minor quantity of cocaine into Paris.  

After the incident, French and US officials struggled to identify the primary motivations for Ghulam Nabi to be smuggling such large a large quantity of heroin into the country. The most obvious concern was directed toward the fear that Afghanistan was now a major player in the illicit global narcotics trade. While somewhat true, this perspective disregarded the deeper connections to the political and social events in Afghanistan during 1929.

Ghulam Nabi’s arrest was significant because it revealed for the first time the growing role of opium as a catalyst for social change, political conflict, and economic development in Afghanistan during the 20th Century. In particular, from 1929 up to the Afghan prohibition of opium in 1945, both the export of raw opium and the import of Western manufactured narcotics, played important roles in the development of the Musahiban state. In this instance, both the export of raw opium to generate revenue for the state and the import of western pharmaceutical narcotics to support the development of a struggling healthcare system, greatly influenced domestic and foreign policies implemented by the newly established Musahiban government during the 1930s and early 1940s.

In this chapter I examine the role of opium as part of the formation of the Musahiban state. First, I analyze the attempts of the Afghan government to attain pharmaceutical opiates to build and expand its moribund healthcare system. Part of Nadir Shah’s vision for building a modern Afghanistan revolved around establishing an advanced healthcare system. This included building hospitals and clinics, and gaining access to modern pharmaceutical drugs. Access to pharmaceutical opiates, in particular, was important for Nadir Shah’s new state, as dysentery, malaria, and cholera remained
significant medical issues in Afghanistan. More important, the need for pharmaceutical drugs to modernize Afghanistan forced the Musahiban government to engage with the outside world in a way that no other Afghan government or leader had done before. This led to Afghanistan’s inclusion in the League of Nations and tacit participation in the early formulations of international drug control.

Meanwhile, as the second part of the chapter examines, the Musahiban government was also exporting Afghan opium to various countries around the world. Throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s, the export of opium emerged as a small but lucrative source of revenue for the Afghan government. More important, the onset of World War II and the disruption of the global narcotics market led to Afghanistan’s first formal engagement with the United States. Throughout the war, the US emerged as one of the major buyers of Afghan opium, helping nurture an otherwise nonexistent diplomatic relationship. Although the US had concerns about the Afghan government’s lack of control over the production and distribution of opium, the need for new sources of opium and the hope of creating a new ally in central Asia overrode any such fears.

However, as the war drew to a close, American ambitions for international drug control reemerged as part of the US foreign policy paradigm. In the final part of the chapter, I analyze how the nascent Afghan-American opium trade evolved in response to the post-war context. For Afghanistan the end of the once lucrative and dependable opium export trade with the US threatened to destabilize the struggling Afghan economy and the Musahiban’s tenuous control over the Afghan people. More important, the changing international dynamics, on which the Musahiban state had become increasingly dependent, forced prime minister Hashim Khan to reassess the government’s approach to
drug control, healthcare, and the building of the modern Afghan state. Was the export of opium so valuable it was worth risking alienating a new and lucrative relationship with the US? As I show, Musahiban leaders decided that maintaining access to modern pharmaceutical drugs and expanding its diplomatic relationship with the US were essential to the design and future expansion of the Afghan government, and as a result, implemented a ban on the cultivation and trade of opium in 1945.

This chapter concludes that this episode reveals two important factors about the mutually constitutive relationship between opium and state formation in Afghanistan during the early Musahiban dynasty. First, maintaining access to foreign money was an important aspect in the design of the Musahiban state. It allowed the Musahiban government to use foreign money to expand without relying entirely on domestic taxation. Thus, the government was more than willing to comply with American and international demands for drug control as long as it offered more lucrative opportunities elsewhere. Second, the Afghans exhibited incredible cunning in manipulating American ambitions for drug control. By appealing to American fears of an ever-expanding illicit drug industry, the Afghans touched a moral nerve they could exploit. Afghan manipulation of American fears as an important tool of foreign policy would become even more important as the US presence grew in Afghanistan in response to the Cold War. As a result, I argue that this period of dialogue over drug control contributed to defining the core characteristics of the Musahiban dynasty: that Musahiban leaders realized that acquiescing to international norms-- such as drug control and manipulating the manic fears of the US-- gave them access to money and resources that allowed them
to perpetuate and maintain their predominant position in the Afghan political hierarchy without risking insurrection against the state.

1929 and the Fall of Amanullah: Setting the Stage for the Musahiban

Since the rule of Abdur Rahman Khan in the late 19th century, the central government of Afghanistan in Kabul has been embroiled in a bitter struggle for control against the traditional tribal and religious authorities of rural Afghanistan. Various leaders have tried, in some form or another, to reform a rural society that had for centuries resisted the control of centralized government. However, in a deeper vein, resistance to state control has not always been a product of innate rejections of institutionalized governance. On the contrary, the state itself was often limited by an acute lack of resources, accessibility, revenue, and manpower, if not a general disinterest toward engagement with rural Afghanistan. Yet, for some Afghan rulers, a modern Afghanistan was attainable; it only required a grand vision and an even grander ambition. In 1919, Amanullah Khan became the first Afghan ruler to make an earnest effort to transform and modernize the vast, desolate expanses of Afghanistan. With neighboring countries such as Turkey and Iran revolutionizing previously feudal kingdoms into modern republics, Amanullah hoped to make Afghanistan a beacon for modern Islamic nations in Central and South Asia. However, his ambitions were met with the stark reality that change in a place like Afghanistan would require great skill, resources, and time, none of which he possessed.

During the late months of 1928, Amanullah was losing his hard fought battle to transform Afghanistan. Throughout his ten-year reign he introduced a series of
controversial reforms that increased resistance against his attempts to modernize the country.\textsuperscript{51} This resistance stemmed from his reforms to education and health care sectors, which required heavy taxation of both rural and urban Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{52} He also introduced social reforms, such as giving rights to women and requiring Afghans to wear western dress. More important, to transform the socio-political foundation of Afghanistan, Amanullah needed to curtail the power of religious and tribal authorities, something he could not do because he needed their support to legitimize his rule in rural Afghanistan. His policies were ambitious and idealistic, but they also lacked the personnel, resources, and planning to implement change effectively.\textsuperscript{53} Ultimately, Amanullah’s attempt to transform Afghanistan into a modern, secular Islamic state in the matter of a decade, one to rival Turkey and Iran, created widespread animosity toward the Afghan government, leading it to crumble on its own very shaky foundation. Although in January 1929 Amanullah was forced into exile, he continued to fight for control of the country.\textsuperscript{54}

The Musahibans rose to power amid the chaos following the downfall of Amanullah. However, from mid-January to mid-October 1929, Habibullah Kalakani, otherwise known as Bacha-i-Saqao, or “the Bandit Amir,” ruled Afghanistan. A Tajik, he rose to power amid a flurry of anti-Amanullah sentiment among the rural and tribal elements of Afghan society, and promised to restore Afghanistan to its traditional foundations of tribal and Sharia law. While Bacha laid claim to Afghanistan, the nation

\textsuperscript{53} Gregorian. (269)
\textsuperscript{54} Dupree. (454)
itself eroded into political anarchy and economic ruin.\textsuperscript{55} Even though Bacha claimed rightful ownership of the Afghan throne, anarchy continued throughout the country, mostly because of the lack of consensus regarding his rule. This led many European powers to portend his demise. Though exiled, Amanullah remained an active player in trying to reestablish his rule. Many Durrani Pashtuns in Qandahar, who originally opposed him, began to change their tune, because Bacha’s chaotic rule and, probably more important, his Tajik heritage, proved difficult for most Pashtun tribes to stomach. Amanullah promised to revoke many of Bacha’s reforms and to work extensively with the tribal and religious authorities, attempting to regain favor from the tribes that opposed him only months earlier.\textsuperscript{56}

One of the major agents leading the fight for the rebirth of Amanullah’s rule was none other than Ala Ghulam Nabi. Having served extensively as the Afghan ambassador to Moscow (as well as France) Ghulam Nabi became a key player in gaining Soviet favor to help fight for the return of Amanullah. Throughout the struggles of 1929, Ghulam Nabi led a small army across the Afghan-Soviet border to muster support for Amanullah and to create a pro-Amanullah base of operations in the north.\textsuperscript{57} Although the arrest of Ala Ghulam Nabi in Paris was alarming because of the sheer size of seized heroin, its importance was not necessarily in the event itself, but rather in its connections to the political events occurring in Afghanistan. Norman Armour, the Charge d’Affairs ad interim for the State Department in Paris, was in some ways right about a connection to

\textsuperscript{55} Gregorian. (275) \\
\textsuperscript{57} Gregorian. (278)
Soviet Russia, but remarkably shortsighted in assessing the motivations of Ghulam Nabi. He stated in July 1929:

The MATIN\textsuperscript{58} sees in this incident evidence of a world-wide scheme by the Soviets to poison the public with drugs, from a ‘center of intoxication’ located in British India, and working through foreigners of position and influence such as Ghulam Nabi who, it is stated, is in the employ of Moscow, acting as a ‘blind’ for an organized band of drug vendors.\textsuperscript{59}

He did note that “the Afghan legation was admittedly hard pressed for funds after the fall of King Amanullah, the Minister was always in possession of large sums of money and is known to have spent 150,000 francs in one evening at Montmartre” but “this money comes from Moscow.”\textsuperscript{60} Armour concluded that Ghulam Nabi’s economic motivations were mainly a product of the limited funds brought on by the downfall of Amanullah’s regime.

After an extensive investigation by the United States Division of Foreign Control (part of the Treasury Department), it was revealed that Ghulam Nabi had worked with French national Joseph Raskine to obtain the heroin. Raskine was well known among French authorities for his long and lucrative engagement in illicit narcotics traffic. Raskine was known to travel extensively throughout areas of Asia that produced large quantities of outlawed narcotics, such as Turkey, China, and India. Raskine apparently received $10,000 from Ghulam Nabi, whereupon Raskine purchased the refined opium product from a manufacturer in Alsace. But in ascertaining the motivations of Ghulam Nabi

\textsuperscript{58} Le MATIN was a US-funded French language daily newspaper that covered domestic and global events and issues.

\textsuperscript{59} Department of State, Dispatch No. 9692. July 18, 1929. (3) Ibid.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid. (4)
Nabi’s motives, US and French officials were “convinced that the deal in question was financed with Soviet money through Ghulam Nabi, and the evidence goes to show that the drugs were to be sent to Bombay, where, the theory is, they were to form another insidious arm of the Soviet campaign to undermine British authority in India.”\(^{61}\)

The interpretation of Ghulam Nabi’s arrest as a part of larger global conspiracy derived from a consensus in both Russian and Western circles that the fall of Amanullah was largely a product of the ‘Great Game’ between the Soviet Union and Britain. Soviet officials, and portions of the French and German press, viewed Amanullah’s downfall as a product of British intervention. This was given greater salience when officials took into account the contentious history between the Afghan state and the British, as well as the close affinity of Amanullah toward Soviet Russia.\(^ {62}\) The various views put out by Western sources as to why Amanullah fell focused almost exclusively on the larger global powers. Most failed to credit political events in Afghanistan itself.

Ultimately, Ghulam Nabi tried to smuggle heroin into France not to help the Soviets poison the minds of the West but rather to help fund the resurgence of Amanullah. Although Ghulam Nabi failed to sell the heroin, or to help Amanullah reclaim the throne, his role was noteworthy. Although opium did not become a significant source of revenue, licit or illicit, for at least another decade, the episode of Ghulam Nabi in the broader struggle between Amanullah and the Musahiban for control of Afghanistan is indicative of the future role opium would play in shaping the political, social, and economic development of the Musahiban government and the country.

\(^{61}\) Memorandum for Division of Foreign Control. “Narcotics, Afghanistan Minister.” Paris, July 24, 1929. Ibid.
\(^{62}\) Gregorian. (267)
The Musahiban Dynasty: A new dynasty and the issue over medicinal opiates

In October 1929 the Musahibans took control of the Afghan throne. They were descended from the line of Muhammadzais, Peshawar sardars, and therefore not directly part of the dynastic line of Dost Muhammad that ruled Afghanistan for the better part of a century. Nadir Shah, the new Musahiban leader, established the dynasty fully cognizant of the need to differentiate himself from Amanullah. Amanullah and Nadir Shah had both appealed to modernizing factions of the Afghan urban elite, but Nadir Shah recognized that most of the rural tribal groups of Afghanistan were directly opposed to state-run modernization reforms. So rather than change Afghanistan overnight, as Amanullah had tried to do, Nadir launched a policy of gradual social change combined with economic development.

In the past most rebellions in rural Afghanistan were launched under the banner of Islam, usually in reaction to aggressive state policies. For the Musahiban’s to survive in Afghanistan stability was paramount. To ensure stability, the Musahiban government had to be delicate in dealing with the religious and tribal elements of Afghan society. One of Nadir’s first moves was to rescind the secular laws of Amanullah and to reinstitute Sharia law. His constitution, passed in 1931, was infused with Islamic sentiments. Although Nadir did manage to pass some moderate reforms, such as those for women and in education, the constitution made important compromises to the tribal and religious

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63 Barfield. (196)
64 Barfield. (198)
65 Gregorian. (295)
authorities. Loya jirgas,⁶⁶ were to be a regular exercise in the political mediation between the state and the tribes. This allowed tribal authorities to regulate the political and social policies of Nadir. The constitution also differentiated between civil and religious courts, giving the ulama broader powers over legal matters in the country. To appease both tribal and religious fears, the rights of foreigners were restricted and women’s quest to vote denied.⁶⁷

Another important facet of Nadir’s government was a focus on expanding access to public health. Afghanistan had one of the poorest health care systems in the world. To deal with the abundant health care concerns, the Public Health Department was upgraded to a ministry, and further attempts were made to reorganize the current health care system. For example, a Faculty of Medicine was established at Kabul University to expand health care education. And by 1938 the Bacteriological and Hygiene Institute was founded.⁶⁸ Although the health care system remained a work in progress for many decades thereafter, its development indicated the growing importance of health care as a fundamental aspect in the development of the Afghan state.

One of the major components of improving health care was gaining access to pharmaceutical opiates. Opiates, such as morphine and heroin (depending on the country manufacturing it), were revolutionizing modern medicine. In the United States and Europe opium was marketed as a panacea. Doctors, pharmacists, and even entrepreneurs

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⁶⁶ In Pashto, means “grand council” or “grand assembly”. It was essentially a larger jirga, a meeting of local village elders and representatives to discuss important social, political, and religious matters. Loya Jirga’s became essential political meetings between Afghan politicians and tribal and religious elders, often used by Afghan politicians to legitimize their rule among tribal authorities.
⁶⁷ Gregorian. (304-306)
⁶⁸ Ibid. (313)
prescribed opium and morphine for a variety of chronic illnesses, such as asthma, bronchitis, diarrhea, dysentery, malaria, and arthritis.\textsuperscript{69} Heroin transformed medicine by allowing doctors to experiment with longer and more intrusive operations. By the 20\textsuperscript{th} Century, opiates were the primary analgesic for modern medicinal practices. In Afghanistan, gaining access to modern pharmaceutical narcotics was essential to the modernization of its health care system. Whereas opium use within the medical field was seen as essential, its use as a recreational tool was seen as a scourge. Amanullah first targeted opium as a threat to Afghan society by increasing punitive measures for smokers of marijuana, hashish, and opium.\textsuperscript{70} Nadir renewed the effort against the trade and use of opium.

Nadir Shah was assassinated in 1933. It was believed that his killer, Abdul Khaliq, exacted \textit{badal} (a core tenet of Pashtunwali, meaning revenge) against the Shah in retribution for the execution of Ghulam Nabi in 1932. Unlike previous eras when sibling rivalry would have led to a war for the throne, the Musahiban family sought to preserve family stability. Mohammad Zahir Shah was proclaimed King, but being only eighteen, he acceded legitimate rule to his paternal uncles.\textsuperscript{71} Muhammad Hashim Khan assumed the role of prime minister and took complete control of domestic and foreign policies.

The relatively peaceful rise of Hashim Khan as Prime Minister led to a renewed wave of interest in Afghan nationalism and modernization. For many Afghans,

\textsuperscript{70} Article 91. Penal Code of 1924-25. It is not known to what extent the issue of opium addiction was in Afghanistan during Amanullah’s reign. Traditionally, Badakhshan was only province with a high number of opium addicts. Opium trading was relatively small. It is likely that Amanullah included this provision under the auspices of some Western nations or the League of Nations.
\textsuperscript{71} Dupree. (475-477)
modernism and Islam were compatible. Education, media, and industry emerged as significant forces during these years. The national bank, the Bank-i-Milli, reorganized and rebranded under Nadir, helped fund significant development projects throughout the country, particularly roads. Moreover, Hashim Khan desired to modernize the industrial and agricultural sectors of the economy to lessen dependence on foreign aid. The Bank-i-Milli used both state and private funds to invest in 50 trading and industrial holding companies to expand import-export trades.\(^2\)

Yet, despite the emphasis on imports and exports, much of the economy remained small. Hashim Khan was in a dangerous predicament. He wanted to increase the state by developing the moribund economy, but was reluctant to incite resistance to state expansion through taxation. Hashim Khan decided to reduce the dependency on taxation as a means of limiting opposition to state encroachment.\(^3\) As a result, foreign aid became a fundamental component to state expansion. But to get access to foreign aid and investment Hashim had to break down the barriers of isolation that had long characterized Afghanistan’s role in the international community. In 1934, Afghanistan joined the League of Nations.\(^4\) Joining the League of Nations proved fruitful for the Musahiban government: it facilitated greater trade with the Soviet Union and led to Afghanistan’s inclusion in the Saadabad Pact (1937), formalizing relations with neighboring Islamic nations to the west: Iran, Iraq, and Turkey.\(^5\)

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\(^2\) Gregorian. (362)
\(^3\) Barfield. (198)
\(^4\) Gregorian. (375) Gregorian notes that this was the same year as the Soviet Union. It was likely that Afghanistan joined because of the USSR’s new membership.
\(^5\) Ibid. (376)
Afghanistan’s inclusion in the international system ignited a wave of import and export trade. The export trade, in particular, was fundamental to the growth of the Afghan economy because it provided a market for the two largest agricultural products in the country: karakul and fruit. Karakul, in particular, was the primary export making up 40 to 50 per cent of all Afghan exports in the years from 1936-1946. In that decade, exports grew from 1.5 million skins to 3.3 million. Grains, cotton, wool and opium made up the rest of Afghanistan’s exports. As the table below shows both imports and exports increased between 1937 and 1944, indicative of the growing importance of imports and exports to the Afghan economy.

Afghan Trade, 1936-1944 (in millions of afghanis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Afghan Imports</th>
<th>Afghan Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1937-38</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938-39</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939-40</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941-42</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942-43</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943-44</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>734</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, exports were essential to the Afghan economy because they provided the only source for the accumulation of capital, thus allowing for the expansion of key industries. Trade increased so much that the Bank increased its capital a hundredfold.

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76 Skins from lamb that was a popular commodity for trade nomadic and sedentary Afghans.
77 Franck, Peter. “Problems of Economic Development in Afghanistan.” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (July 1949). (297) Franck notes that both karakul and fruit were chiefly export products. As a result, they were susceptible to fluctuations and irregularities on the global market.
78 Gregorian. (368-369)
79 Franck. (299)
between 1932-1938.\textsuperscript{80} Exports also served as the only form of foreign exchange.\textsuperscript{81} It was apparent throughout the 1930’s and leading up to World War II that the growth of the Afghan economy depended almost exclusively on foreign trade. This reliance on foreign trade meant that Hashim Khan had to maintain a foreign policy that recognized the importance of foreign investment in Afghanistan’s economic development.\textsuperscript{82} As a result of Afghanistan’s new role in the international community Hashim could forge new relationships for investment and aid that previously did not exist.

One of Hashim’s main goals was to improve relations with the United States The US was seen as potentially providing a major opportunity, because it could provide significant infusions of private American investment and technical expertise.\textsuperscript{83} Although both sides issued diplomatic pleasantries, including the recognition of Zahir Shah’s government and the appointment of a formal diplomatic mission, neither side was willing to acquiesce wholeheartedly to the other’s demands.\textsuperscript{84} The US was slow to approach Afghanistan partly because the US was not granted primary diplomatic treatment.\textsuperscript{85} Afghanistan, on the other hand, aimed to maintain its policy of neutrality, \textit{bi-tarafi}, on all foreign policy matters, although by the mid-1930s Germany had become the major source of aid. Nonetheless, throughout the 1930s Afghanistan had enough foreign support that giving the American’s primary diplomatic status was deemed unnecessary.

\textsuperscript{80} Gregorian. (366-67)
\textsuperscript{81} Franck. (298)
\textsuperscript{82} Gregorian. (370)
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid. (378)
\textsuperscript{84} Islah. January 12, 1935. It should be noted that the US did not establish a permanent mission in Afghanistan until 1943.
Much like Nadir Shah, Hashim hoped to expand foreign relations to transform the health care system. In the 1930s Afghanistan faced daunting health care issues. The demand for hospitals, doctors, and supplies greatly exceeded the supply. In 1935, the small number of hospitals in Kabul treated 93,168 patients, and 105,907 in the provinces. There was also a need for modern medicinal opiates. By the late 1930s the young and expanding health care system struggled to keep up with the growing list of epidemics ravaging the country. In 1938, a cholera epidemic devastated the tribal regions along the Pakistan border. The intensity of the cholera epidemic was due in large part to the insufficient supply of medicines, but also to the ignorance of the local populations and concerns about vaccinations. Afghan officials were particularly concerned about the possible impact on the population of Kabul, given the devastating effects of previous cholera epidemics.

It was clear by the late-1930s that to increase the wellbeing of the Afghan population through improved health care (and to bolster the legitimacy of the state), Afghanistan needed modern medicines. To gain access to them, Hashim Khan had to have Afghanistan participate in the international regulatory system of narcotics. The decision to obtain pharmaceutical drugs from abroad required the Musahiban government to implement policies that would conflict with the social, political, and economic norms of many of Afghanistan’s inhabitants. However, for Hashim Khan, the pros outweighed the cons. Becoming a member of the narcotic regulatory system meant that Afghanistan

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86 Gregorian. (373)
87 Although opium did not cure people of cholera and typhoid, it helped treat the symptoms often associated with such diseases.
shared similar social values as the West and was accorded legitimacy in the international regulatory regime. This would be convenient when courting western investment, which was fast becoming an important component in the design of the Musahiban state.

In previous years, the purchase of medicinal opiates went off without a hitch. But as the international regulatory system that emerged from The Hague Convention of 1912 took hold, Afghanistan’s ability to obtain opiates decreased. The basic issue was that, by the mid-1930s, Afghanistan had yet to recognize the core tenets of the convention, and as a result, all nations that were party to the convention (mainly Western nations) could not legally trade with a non-signatory nation. When Afghanistan joined the League of Nations, the hope was that trade restrictions would be lifted. Moreover, there was a general hope that Afghanistan would be free to purchase Western pharmaceutical opiates. However, because Afghanistan had yet to sign the official Protocol of Powers ratifying its acceptance of the 1912 Hague Convention, all attempts to gain licit sources of opium were put on hold while the Musahiban government tried to navigate the wonderfully inefficient bureaucracy of the League of Nations.

One such case in 1934 highlights the newfound difficulties facing the Hashim government. In November 1934, Afghan officials submitted a purchase order to the Martin H. Smith Pharmaceutical Company of New York City. The Bureau of Narcotics (then a function of the US Treasury Department) denied the Company’s request to export 10 16-ounce bottles of Glykeron (pharmaceutical heroin) to Afghanistan. In a letter to Harry Anslinger, commissioner of narcotics, Martin H. Smith’s manager, M. Reich, challenged the decision. Reich had received a letter from the Health Department of Afghanistan stating that Afghanistan had in fact signed the International Dangerous Drug
Act and was still in the process of familiarizing itself with the specific regulations and processes. The International Dangerous Drug Act mandated that a certificate system be put in place whereby no government could export dangerous drugs to an importing country without the necessary certificates to prove that such drugs were needed by the importing nation.

While the Afghan government may have signed the International Dangerous Drug Act in 1934 when it was admitted to the League of Nations, it had yet to ratify the 1912 Hague Conventions. Assistant Secretary L.W. Robert noted that Afghanistan needed to ratify the 1912 Hague Convention in order to be considered for certified trade in pharmaceutical narcotics. It was becoming clear that Afghanistan would need to adhere fully to the international system to gain full access to trade for pharmaceutical narcotics, leading Afghanistan to sign the 1931 Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs in March of 1937. The convention required that all signatory nations submit estimates regarding the amount of licit narcotics each nation intended to consume for that year and nations were to cease import and/or manufacture when they surpassed annual estimates. For the first time in its history

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89 The original Dangerous Drugs Act was passed by the original 12 signatories of the Hague Convention of 1912. By 1934, there were 56 member states. The US was instrumental in making its own Dangerous Drugs Act, otherwise known as the Volstead Act, a key component in the League of Nations.
90 Bureau of Narcotics, Treasury Dept. “Letter from M. Reich, Manager of Martin H Smith Company to Harry Anslinger.” December 27, 1934. RG 170, Ibid.
92 State Department. “Letter from LW Robert, Asst. Sec., to Stuart J Fuller, Division of Far Eastern Affairs.” 1934. RG 170, Ibid.
93 McAllister, William. Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century. New York: Routledge Press, 2000. (96) As McAllister explains, the Drug Supervisory Body (DSB) was responsible for administering the estimates. The DSB was also responsible for producing estimates for all nations, including those who did not ratify the treaty. The various
Afghanistan was a part of the international drug regulatory system and it submitted formal amendments to the League of Nations to alter the annual statement for the world requirements of dangerous drugs.\textsuperscript{94}

This was seemingly an important step for Afghanistan. By 1937, it appeared the Hashim’s government could trade for pharmaceutical opiates legally and give the state new access to medicines and sciences that could help in building a nonexistent health care system. However, Afghanistan never fulfilled the necessary requirements to be fully approved for licit trade in opiates despite signing the 1931 convention. It failed to submit statistics and estimations as required by the 1931 agreement, and it failed to work with the Preparatory Committee on new regulations. Much of the difficulty over Afghanistan’s adherence to statistics and estimates had little to do with its import of pharmaceutical narcotics, but rather, with its emerging role as a significant exporter of raw opium.

**Opium Exports, World War II, and the Beginning of a ‘Licit’ Opium Industry**

The lack of full or official participation in the 1912 Hague Opium Convention placed both signatory and non-signatory nations in odd situations, yet, it did not prevent states from trading opium. In Afghanistan, exports of opium began almost immediately after its official acceptance to the League of Nations. In an attempt to standardize and provisions gave the Body a fair amount of power in regulating the international trade for licit and illicit narcotics. The convention itself was largely a manifestation of US motivations to control the global drug trade. The various articles of the treaty contained subtle semantics reflecting the US’s desire to have the rest of the world adopt its administrative structure to suppress illicit traffic of narcotics. Article 15, in particular, gave Harry Anslinger and the BNDD immense power to regulate from which countries US pharmaceutical firms could purchase raw materials and to which nations they could export. (see pages 97-98)

regulate the process of production and trade, the government soon created the Government Opium Company, a monopoly controlled by the Bank-i-Millie. It first began exporting raw opium in 1935, sending 1,500 kilograms to Germany. To obtain raw opium, government agents (alaqadars), purchased crops from farmers who were registered and licensed by the government. Independent farmers who desired to plant poppies were required to submit applications through their local supervisor (alaqadar) to the National Department of Agriculture. The alaqadars were ultimately responsible for regulating who planted poppies for the sale of opium to the Government Opium Company. During the mid- to late-1930s, the Government Opium Company exported to Germany, Japan, and Russia to be used in the manufacturing of pharmaceutical narcotics.95

Other than the basic structure of the opium industry, little is known about the specifics of the process. Not until World War II, when the major players in the international opium trade, particularly the US, began to deal with Afghanistan, did more information emerge about the industry and its production, use, and regulation of the drug. Early statistics indicate that from 1937 on, opium was becoming a significant source of revenue for Afghanistan.96

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Afghan Opium Exports 1937-1941</th>
<th>Pounds Exported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 1937- February 1938</td>
<td>54,614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1938- February 1939</td>
<td>74,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1939- February 1940</td>
<td>53,438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1940- February 1941</td>
<td>50,246</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The USSR and Afghanistan agreed in June 1936 to a trade treaty covering the exchange of goods valued at $10.5 million over the course of three years. Part of the deal was that the USSR received 90 tons of opium from Afghanistan. It is not clear how the Afghan state differentiated between opium and pharmaceutical narcotics. Even though the medicinal qualities of raw opium were always known, a modern health care system required the standardization of medicine, so raw opium was of no use. Moreover, Afghanistan did not have the infrastructure or international approval to manufacture pharmaceutical opiates. As a result, Afghanistan was drawn into a strange predicament for a nation that produced opium: raw opium was exported to foreign nations, whereby it would be manufactured into modern pharmaceuticals, and then imported back into Afghanistan. This arrangement was attributable mostly to the US, because it had the largest stake in upholding strict international narcotic regulations. For example, the US began importing opium from Afghanistan with the understanding that Afghanistan would fully comply with League regulations. In 1938, US pharmaceutical companies imported some four tons of raw Afghan opium into the US. However, by 1939 Afghanistan’s full compliance with the 1931 convention was still very much in question.

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Other nations watched to see how the US would react given its avid stance against noncompliance. One foreign dignitary was curious about how the US could trade opium with Afghanistan given its noncompliance. Noting the fact that Afghanistan was supplying the raw opium that was eventually being re-imported to Afghanistan as pharmaceutical opiates, Clem Sharman of the Canadian government, envisaged “an even more intriguing situation wherein she would be the non-signatory country which will be supplying the non-signatory consumer.” This letter foreshadowed what became the major problem with Afghan opium. Pharmaceutical companies had first jumped at the opportunity to import Afghan opium the minute it ratified the 1931 convention. However, Afghanistan never fully complied with its provisions, and as a result, the formal inclusion of Afghanistan as party to the convention and legally allowed to trade opium, was still contingent on it’s fulfilling the obligations of party nations. Afghanistan would not attempt to fulfill such expectations until the latter stages of World War II.

Chief of the US Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, Harry Anslinger, in his response to Clem Sharman, was quick to point out the difficulty: “I learned of the importation of Afghan opium some time after the permit had been issued. At that time our permits did not specify the source, but they do now. I lowered the boom on the manufacturers and told them that there should be no further importations of this opium. They informed me that it is of high content and very cheap.” Anslinger’s reply highlights the major issue with Afghanistan and the trade of opium. It was clear that Afghanistan, despite its formal acceptance of the 1931 convention, was not party to it. US

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pharmaceutical companies were either unaware or willfully ignorant of this fact as they pursued the cheap opium. And even though the US Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs ultimately prevented the sale of pharmaceutical opiates to Afghanistan in 1939, the second world war changed the way the US and Afghanistan approached the global drug trade.

When World War II started, many of the established global systems of trade broke down. The economic and political development of nations such as Afghanistan, who were increasingly reliant on foreign aid, slowed to a halt. With Germany pre-occupied by war Afghanistan had little access to foreign aid. Understanding that the global order was shifting rapidly, Hashim reiterated the neutral stance of the state rather than reaffirming its support for Germany.\textsuperscript{100} Although neutrality had the potential to open new doors for engagement, Afghanistan’s economy suffered tremendously from the loss of its German donor. Most reform and development programs were interrupted or abandoned. Foreign trade, a major source of revenue for Afghanistan, was hardest hit. In particular, the karakul trade, one of the most important commodities for the Afghans, virtually disappeared. The growing economic hardship forced Hashim Khan to forge close relations with the other nations, especially the US.\textsuperscript{101}

Although most sectors of the Afghan economy struggled during the war, the export of raw opium did not. Afghanistan emerged as one of the more consistent sources of raw opium during the war. Because the war closed many customary sources of opium, competition for Afghan opium increased significantly. The Musahiban government was fully aware of the potential for opium as a major source of revenue. In \textit{Iqtisad}, it stated:

\textsuperscript{100} Dupree. (480)
\textsuperscript{101} Gregorian. (390)
“Opium is one of the important natural products of the country and as it is greatly in demand, more especially in wartime, in many countries steps have been taken to develop its production. It is hoped that, during the current year, good results shall be achieved.”

And the early 1940s were good for Afghan opium. In Badakhshan, opium purchased by the Opium Exporting Company increased from 7,772.6 kilograms in 1942 to 13,001.4 kilograms in 1943. Badakhshan opium was considered by the government to be the best opium because of its high morphine content. The opium was of such high quality that Thailand sent a commercial mission to Afghanistan in 1940-41 to inquire about significant purchases of Afghan opium. In 1943, Russia also purchased an unspecified quantity of opium from opium export companies in both Herat and Badakhshan.

Land devoted to opium production also indicated the importance of opium as a commodity. Although the government claimed to dedicate 20,000 acres to opium, it is unclear how much of the land the state actually utilized or how much of the opium was supplied by independent farmers. Nonetheless, the increasing use of land for crops demonstrates the point. In 1940-41, 3,650 acres were utilized. In 1941-42, only 1,500 acres were used, but in 1942-43, production increased dramatically on state-controlled opium farms, as 6,870 acres were used, producing 8,930 pounds. These numbers, however, provide only a limited scope of total opium production.

Exports, on the other hand, provide a better glimpse of the increases in opium production. The export of opium from the Government Opium Company rose sharply in 1942-1943 from two years earlier. In 1940-41 and 1941-42, Afghanistan exported 6,700

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103 Iqtesad Journal. (Dec 43-Jan 44).
104 Iqtesad Journal. (Jan-Feb 1944).
pounds and 3,300 pounds. Both years’ exports were sent to Thailand and Singapore. But in 1942-43, Afghanistan exported 19,740 kilograms, mostly to the United States. Unlike the 1930s, when the Bank-i-Milli exported government-licensed opium only, the demand for opium led non-licensed farmers to grow larger amounts of opium. As a result, much of the opium exported was grown independent of government regulation. The 19,740 kilograms exported to the US would translate to nearly 43,000 pounds of opium, 34,000 pounds more than the government estimated was produced on government run farms for that year. Clearly, the majority of opium produced in Afghanistan was outside the scope of the governmental control.

Numerous regionally based companies also emerged to capitalize on the trade. During the early 1940s, opium companies around the country were busy purchasing large quantities of opium for export. In an effort to open up business to private industry, the government allowed these businesses to compete with the Government Opium Company and each other. Two of the major companies, the Shirkat-e-Saderat-e-Teryaq (the Opium Exporting Company) of Herat and the Shirkat-e-Sahami-e-Teryaq (The Opium Joint-Stock Company), became major players in the opium trade. For example, in 1944, the Opium Exporting Company purchased 10 tons of opium during the first harvest and an additional 3,533 kilograms of Badakhshan opium at the end of the year.

The numbers should not be read as comprehensive evidence but rather as trend indicators of opium’s importance. Part of this stems from the changes in the opium trade. Whereas during the 1930s Bank Millie ran the Opium Company as a monopoly, private

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106 State Department, Confidential memo from Charles Thayer to Sec. of State. “Opium Traffic in Afghanistan”. No. 251. Aug 9, 1943. (1) RG 170, Ibid.
107 Iqtesad Journal. (Oct-Nov 1944)
companies now purchased opium from independent farmers. Why this shift occurred is unclear, but it is likely that the process was much more efficient, if less controversial when operated by non-government entities. Statistics, particularly acreage used, become far more suspect as a result.

The trade between the US and Afghanistan in raw opium began in earnest in 1941. In December, the Afghan American Trading Company responded to a request by the US government for Turkish opium. The national bank of Afghanistan, the Bank Millie, cabled the Afghan American Trading Company in New York claiming it could “deliver forty cases Badakhshan opium, each 140 lbs net, first of February. Ninety cases fifteenth April provided license obtainable granted. Sixteen percent morphine 2170 dollars per case for Karachi Payment India Rupees.” The Afghan government saw an opportunity to fill a void in the global market since production of opium in places such as Turkey and Iran was disrupted considerably by war. Moreover, Western nations needing raw opium to manufacture pharmaceutical narcotics were cut off from their usual sources, in some cases compelling those nations to produce their own opium.

Despite the political hold-ups via international regulations, it was clear that the US saw in Afghanistan’s opium a prime opportunity. Treasury Department officials were willing to agree to terms for price per pound depending on the percentage of morphine content. The first forty cases were of better quality, at 16 percent morphine. The second shipment of 90 cases was lower in morphine at 13.5 percent. The US would pay $15.50

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per pound for 16 percent morphine content or $13.10 per pound for 13.5 percent morphine content.\textsuperscript{110}

Harry Anslinger, head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, was at first a critic of American pharmaceutical companies for exporting pharmaceutical opiates to Afghanistan before it had fully ratified the 1912 convention. However, he apparently was less concerned with international regulations when Afghanistan was willing to supply the US with high quality opium. Rather than deny the entry of raw Afghan opium because Afghanistan was not party to international conventions, he instead immediately referred the matter to J.J. Kerrigan of Merck Pharmaceuticals.\textsuperscript{111} However, pharmaceutical companies apparently shied away from the opium because of what they saw as excessive high prices.

The US government, on the other hand, was willing to purchase the opium directly even if private pharmaceutical companies saw little potential for profit.\textsuperscript{112} The US government saw this as an opportunity to generate Allied support in Central Asia. The American commissioner in India, in a confidential telegram in 1942, noted that the US needed to consider the “possibility of supplying the United States with Afghan raw opium as the Far East markets for this product are now cut off.”\textsuperscript{113} The US stance was clearly changing as its role in the war changed. As a noncombatant, the US had little need

\textsuperscript{110} Note attached to letter from Afghan American trading Company, December 18, 1941. Author unknown. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{111} Harry Anslinger. Letter to Afghan American Trading Company. December 23, 1941. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} Harry Anslinger. Letter to Fred Stock, Special Advisor, Health Supplies Section, Division of Purchases, Office of Production Management. December 29, 1941. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Wilson, American Commissioner, Indian. Confidential telegram No. 4, January 8, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
for opium, but with the bombing of Pearl Harbor the US was now embroiled in conflict on both oceans. What was once a casual arrangement built on economic principles and loose political objectives was now, because of the war, one of dire need.

Within a few days of the telegram, the State Department issued a request for the commissioner to talk with the Afghan government about the availability of Afghan opium. He stated that “the Indian Government is reluctant to approach the Government of Afghanistan because this would tend to aggravate still further the price situation, which is already enormously inflated,” referring to the previous offer from the Afghan American Trading Company. The US hoped that the Indian government would have some leverage in possibly lowering the price, but the commissioner made it clear that the initiative might have the opposite outcome.

The price of opium was the major sticking point. US officials thought it could still obtain cheaper opium from other sources in the international market. If the US government were to buy Afghan opium, it would do so either out of charity for the Afghan state or its own self-interest. But this benevolence would have consequences elsewhere, as “it would become necessary to increase the price of morphine and codeine manufactured from this opium, and that the increase would have to be borne by the sick and injured.” It was also noted that the US had yet to increase the price of narcotics

114 Confidential telegram. Attention of Bureau of Narcotics from Wilson, American Commissioner in India. January 10, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
116 William McAllister notes (in Drug Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century, 148) that the US began purchasing opium from countries like Afghanistan as a way of generating sympathy for the Allied cause. In the case of Afghanistan, its previous relationship with Germany, the purchase of opium could shift the tide in a strategic region of Central Asia.
during the war and would not change this policy for Afghanistan. As a result of the high price the US did not agree to purchase the Afghan opium. It is unclear what happened to the opium in Afghanistan or whether it was exported elsewhere.

The seemingly high price of the Afghan opium suggests two things: on the one hand, it is possible that the Afghans were cognizant of the strain on the global market, and that the high price for opium was what they thought they could charge given the high demand and limited supply. On the other hand, the price of opium may have been dictated by more immediate needs. By 1942, the foreign investment that the state relied on, particularly from Germany, was quickly evaporating. It is possible that their motives were not mutually exclusive, but instead mutually reinforcing. Afghanistan was losing revenue every day the war dragged on, and it needed to find ways to generate revenue.

Interestingly, the purchase of Afghan raw opium for US production of pharmaceutical opiates did not generate the resistance that the Afghan attempt to purchase US pharmaceuticals for import did. The US consistently used its position as leader of international narcotic regulation as validation to impose its moral and ethical will on other nations. Why would Afghan need for pharmaceuticals be improper and illegal if it had yet to ratify the 1912 Hague convention, whereas US purchasing raw opium from that same nation would not? This dilemma was certainly contradictory, if not hypocritical. For any student of US drug policy in the twentieth century, this contradiction is not surprising; in many ways, it defines US policy.

Although attempts to sell raw opium failed earlier in 1942, the Afghan government continued to adjust its pricing to accommodate the market. In September 1942, Muhammad Omar, consul of Afghanistan in NY and president of the Afghan
American Trading Company, contacted Harry Anslinger about the sale of 30 tons of Afghan opium. Unlike the earlier attempt to sell opium, the Afghan government “would agree to sell it at a reasonable price, as the main idea is to establish friendly commercial relations with the United States.”\textsuperscript{118} Friendly commercial relations with the US were becoming increasingly important to Afghanistan since the loss of major assistance from states such as Germany.\textsuperscript{119} The lowering of the price and the overt political objectives of the Afghans made this a deal of great importance, with Anslinger giving it his personal approval.\textsuperscript{120}

Within three days the Defense Supplies Corporation made the move to purchase Afghan opium if private pharmaceutical companies did not purchase it. The DSC offered to pay the same amount for the Afghan opium as it did for Turkish opium, $18.70 per kilogram. The DSC was authorized by the board of Economic Warfare to purchase 400 tons of opium, 333 tons of which were already contracted out to manufacturers for production.\textsuperscript{121} The Afghan supply would not necessarily fulfill demand, being only 30 tons. However, it served to fulfill an immediate need and had potential for the future given the uncertainty of the global supply.

Both Anslinger and John Goodloe preferred that private corporations purchase the opium. However, both men seemed to be sending mixed signals to potential buyers.

\textsuperscript{118} Harry Anslinger. Letter from HA to Mr. John Goodloe, Executive VP, Defense Supplies Corporation. September 12, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Gregorian. (390-391) In 1941, the Afghan government had proposed signing a treaty with the US. Though both countries slowly grew closer over the course of the war, including the formal exchange of diplomatic missions in 1943, relations remained tepid at best until after the war.
\textsuperscript{120} Anslinger letter. (Sept. 12, 1942) RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Defense Supplies Corporation. Letter from John Goodloe to Mr. Morris Rosenthal, Asst. Director, Board of Economic Warfare. September 15, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
They did not want anyone to make a finalized purchase, only to inquire about the potential for purchase.\textsuperscript{122} The reason for this is not entirely clear. It is safe to assume, however, that the Bureau of Narcotics feared a free-for-all and wanted to keep the first official purchase of Afghan opium within the confines of their regulatory apparatus. The process of finding a suitor who would adhere to the demands of the Bureau of Narcotics took time. Muhammad Omar wrote a letter to Anslinger asking him why the deal was taking so long to happen.\textsuperscript{123} Anslinger was reluctant because private companies were overstocked with opium and were in fact losing money. To purchase more opium would simply overburden their already strained finances. As a result, Anslinger urged the DSC to purchase the opium.\textsuperscript{124}

The US purchased the opium on October 5, 1942. The DSC agreed to pay $18.75 per kilogram for 30 tons of 13.5 percent morphine content opium, to be picked up in Karachi. The DSC desired to contract the shipping process to Merck and Co., which had experience in dealing with this process in South Asia and Turkey.\textsuperscript{125} But as the Afghan American Trading Company sent the agreement to Kabul, the response from the Afghan Government marked a considerable change in the original agreement. On October 20, 1942, in a letter from Mohammad Omar to Harry Anslinger, the Bank Millie stated:

\begin{quote}
Can deliver within one a half months 8 tons of Badakhshan opium 16 percent morphine 3 tons Heart 10.5 percent. Can deliver another 11 tons
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{123} Royal Afghan Consulate. Letter from Muhammad Omar to Harry Anslinger. September 25, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Letter from Harry Anslinger to John Goodloe, Defense Supplies Corporation. September 26, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125} Defense Supplies Corporation. Letter from John Goodloe to Harry Anslinger. September 30, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
within 4 months same quality and proportion total 22 tons. Prices 20 dollars per kilo basis 13.5 morphine difference in morphine percentage will be counted for. You arrange Indian transit permit and shipping space.¹²⁶

The response from the Bank Millie contradicted much of what Mohammad Omar had told Anslinger. The opium was clearly not standardized, nor was it ready. In addition, Afghanistan wanted the US to pay for transport from Kabul to Karachi. Anslinger noted that paying for transportation costs would raise the price considerably and that this would most certainly be a deal breaker.¹²⁷ Rather quickly, Omar contacted Afghanistan and clarified the deal. The US would only be responsible for transportation from Karachi to the US, nothing else.¹²⁸

Although the transportation issue was resolved, the pricing was not. Apparently, the Afghan government was still going to charge $20 per kilogram, increasing the price from the $18.75 agreed upon initially.¹²⁹ Ultimately, despite the price increase, the US agreed to purchase the Afghan opium.¹³⁰ Although American pharmaceutical companies were enticed by the Afghan opium crop again in 1944, they remained dismayed by the

¹²⁶ Royal Afghan Consulate. Letter from Mohammad Omar to Harry Anslinger, Re: Afghan Opium, Ref. # 6440. October 20, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
¹²⁸ Royal Afghan Consulate. Letter from Mohammad Omar to Harry Anslinger, Bureau of Narcotics, Ref. # 6454. October 22, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
¹²⁹ Letter from Harry Anslinger to Mohammad Omar. October 24, 1942. RG 170, Ibid.
¹³⁰ Merck & Co. Inc. Receipt of Purchase for Mohammad Omar, Afghan American Trading Company. November 17, 1942. . The deal was finalized November 17, 1942. Through Merck & Co., the US purchased two separate shipments of eight tons of opium gum containing 16 percent morphine and three tons with 10.5 percent morphine, to be delivered in six weeks and four months respectively. The shipments were granted all necessary licenses for both US and India, and certified by officials in Karachi to verify the purchase before transport. RG 170, Ibid.
inefficiency and unprofessionalism of Afghan opium traders. State Department officials notified American pharmaceutical companies that nearly 25 tons of Afghan opium was harvested, of which 13 to 23 tons of opium were available for export to the US.\textsuperscript{131} In a 1943 report to the US government, JJ Kerrigan of Merch & Co., advised other pharmaceutical companies to be wary of the Afghans. When Merck representatives went to Karachi to inspect the product and approve of the delivery, “it was found that the weight of each case differed from the other. Moreover, the net weight of opium in each case exceeded 160 lbs.”\textsuperscript{132} Kerrigan, although reluctant to purchase more Afghan opium, was willing to notify Mallinckrodt Chemical Works and New York Quinine & Chemical Works of the available opium for purchase.\textsuperscript{133} Ultimately, the inconsistencies in both deliberations and delivery reinforced the notion that Afghanistan’s opium industry was inefficient, unprofessional, and maybe worst of all, unregulated.

For American pharmaceutical companies, strict regulations and highly organized procedures were the norm. But the problems with Afghanistan were not so much the lack of efficiency or standardization. Instead, the inconsistencies that plagued their multiple deals with US pharmaceutical companies foreshadowed potential issues in the entire Afghan opium export system. Was there an illicit trade and how big was it? And was the strain of the war leading the US into a relationship with a nation that was not, and likely could not, fulfill the expectations of a licit producer and exporter of opium?

\textsuperscript{131} State Department. Confidential telegram, No. 118. June 9, 1943. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{133} Merck & Co. Letter from J.J. Kerrigan to Harry Anslinger, Bureau of Narcotics. June 15, 1943. RG 170, Ibid.
Although American companies and government officials complained about the lack of standardization and professionalism, the United States recognized the devastating impact of the war on the Afghan economy. And given the Afghans’ previous affinity for the Germans and the present neutral stance in the war, the State Department saw the purchasing of Afghan opium as an effective way of encouraging sympathy for the Allied cause. By 1942-43, Americans were purchasing larger and larger quantities of Afghan opium. Even though American companies became a larger component of the Afghan opium trade, US State Department officials questioned how much of the industry the Afghans truly controlled. What concerned US officials was that the exports of opium in 1942-43 exceeded the production value that Afghanistan stated for acreage used. From the US point of view, independent farmers were too large a source of Afghan opium. For many of the US delegates in Kabul, the reality of the industry contradicted the majority of the claims made by the Musahiban government. To offset growing concerns about the Afghan government’s claims about its’ opium industry, State Department officials launched an investigation into the Afghan opium industry.

Investigations revealed that the strict regulation of production and trade claimed by the Afghan government was actually a farce. US officials believed that acreage and production control was far more lax than indicated and that most of the time alaqadars took small bribes. What concerned US officials more than government corruption was the opium that was being produced outside of government control. Often, the eventual acreage dedicated to opium production and export of raw opium often far exceeded

134 McAllister. (148)
135 State Department, Confidential memo from Charles Thayer to Sec. of State. “Opium Traffic in Afghanistan”. No. 251. Aug 9, 1943. (2) RG 170, Ibid.
government numbers, a clear indication that illicit production existed, and on a much larger scale than previously imagined. Additionally, the Afghan government repeatedly insisted that opium use and addiction was nonexistent in Afghanistan. Yet, one Badakhshan official believed that 1 in 5 people in Badakhshan were addicts, and that large black markets for raw opium existed in the larger towns and cities in the country. US officials also learned from talking to Afghan officials that the black market price for raw opium in Kabul was between $4.50 and $6.10 per pound, compared to the invoice price of licensed opium, which was around $3.00 per pound.  

136 Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the United States established itself as the strongest advocate for the regulation of narcotics. In respect to Afghanistan, the US feared the emerging illicit market for opium, but how to deal with it was another matter altogether. Direct intervention by US officials was not considered an option, given the still young diplomatic relationship between the two countries. But the US did believe that there was a genuine desire by the Afghan government to stop the illicit traffic in opium, indicated by the increased punitive measures for the illegal use and/or trade in opium. It is unclear whether the Afghan government wanted to control the illicit industry, so as to make it licit, or if it shared in American aspirations to eventually stomp out the illicit opium industry because of moral and ethical considerations. It is likely, given the general ambivalence toward opium production and use, that Afghanistan desired greater control for economic gain. However, the difficulty for the Afghan government was how would the government control a trade that existed generally in the places where the power

136 State Department, Confidential memo from Charles Thayer to Sec. of State. “Opium Traffic in Afghanistan”. No. 251. Aug 9, 1943. (2-3) As McAllister notes (Drug Diplomacy) when the price of illicit narcotics was greater than licit ones, it indicated the strength of the recreational narcotics market, most often illicit. (19) RG 170, Ibid.
of the state was often at its weakest, mostly the outlying provinces. Both US and Afghan
officials understood that trying to control opium production in the outermost provinces
would likely to lead to dissent and rebellion against the state. More important, it was
clear that the growth of opium as a global commodity could not be controlled by the
Afghan state. For US officials, it seemed that the best tactic was to bolster the strength of
the Afghan state so that it could either provide alternative employment or be strong
enough to control the industry.\textsuperscript{137} For that to happen a major change would have to occur.

\textbf{The Import of Pharmaceutical Narcotics during World War II}

The effects of World War II on the production and export of raw opium were
inevitably felt in the production and trade of pharmaceutical opiates worldwide. Before
the war, the supply of raw opium for America and Britain pharmaceutical opiates came
primarily from Germany. German manufacturers imported opium from Turkey, Iran, and
India. France imported nearly 60 tons annually from Iran and Turkey to French
Indochina. However, the war completely restructured the global trade in licit and illicit
opiates.\textsuperscript{138} Many nations had to adapt to the changing global supply. The United States in
particular adapted by manufacturing its own pharmaceutical opiates.\textsuperscript{139}

For non-industrialized nations with small health care systems getting access to
pharmaceutical narcotics during the war proved increasingly difficult, straining already
debilitated health care systems. In the 1930s Afghanistan struggled mightily to establish a
functioning health care system and this system was put under increasing pressure by the

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid. (2-3)
\textsuperscript{138} McCoy, Alfred. \textit{The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade.}
\textsuperscript{139} Courtwright, David. \textit{Forces of Habit.} (77)
The presence of diseases such as cholera, typhoid, and dysentery grew as decreasing supplies and increasing costs restricted access to vital medicines. In 1938, 400,000 people were inoculated against typhoid and an additional 164,000 against smallpox.\textsuperscript{140} The need increased for pharmaceutical narcotics to deal with the growing list of epidemics ravaging the country.

In 1941, feeling the pressures of the war, the Afghan government?Afghanistan approached the US to purchase large quantities of pharmaceutical narcotics. Although the US government recognized the dire situation in Afghanistan, it used Afghan desperation as an attempt to bolster their drug control measures in the region. Afghanistan needed to ratify the 1912 Hague Convention and become full party to the convention, otherwise they would refuse the deal.\textsuperscript{141} From the Afghan perspective, they had already begun taking the necessary steps. The Afghan ambassador to the US responded to the US decline for narcotics by reaffirming the Afghan ratification of the 1931 Narcotic Limitation Convention.\textsuperscript{142} This was not, however, primarily a crude display of American power and manipulation. Rather, the lack of diplomatic interaction and want of basic knowledge clouded the validity of the Afghan request. If Afghanistan needed American narcotics as they suggested, they would have to jump through the various bureaucratic and political hoops to do so.

By the next year, it seemed as though Afghan officials were taking the steps necessary to get access to American drugs. The Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Ministry of Public Health, sent a letter to State Department in Tehran

\begin{footnotes}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{140} Gregorian. (374)
\item \textsuperscript{141} Department of State. “Attention: Bureau of Narcotics (FE 511.4 A 6/1762)” October 20, 1941. (1-2) RG 170, Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid. (3) RG 170, Ibid.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotes}
requesting assistance in the urgent acquisition of American-made pharmaceutical narcotics. It stated:

The Ministry of Public Health has not been successful in obtaining narcotic drugs from the United States of America for three years as the Bureau of Narcotics of the United States does not permit the supplying of narcotic drugs to Afghanistan. It states that Afghanistan did not participate in the International Opium Conference held at the Hague in 1912, although the Afghan government has signed and ratified the International Convention for Limiting the Manufacture and Regulating the Distribution of Narcotic Drugs…which is supplementary to the Hague Convention of 1912. The Legation will note…that Afghanistan has legally adhered to the 1931 Convention and that our adherence has been accepted…

Since the signing and ratification of the 1931 convention by Afghanistan, the Ministry of Public Health has imported its requirements without difficulty from other countries such as England, Germany, and France. Now owning to the conditions prevailing in the world it cannot purchase from other sources. Therefore it desires to purchase its required drugs in America. Great efforts have in this respect been made by the Afghan Embassy in Tehran in collaboration with the American Legation. Mr. Mohammad Omar Khan, Afghan trade Representative at New York, has also done his best, but without results.

As the Ministry of Public Health is in great need of a certain quantity of narcotic drugs, and in view of the above statements, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would appreciate whatever cooperation the Legation of the United States of America can render to the Ministry of Public Health, and requests that a telegram be sent to its government asking that the
necessary facilities be given to the Afghan Trade Representative at New York to acquire and ship the above drugs.\textsuperscript{143}

Similar to the situation in the mid-1930s, Afghanistan sought American pharmaceuticals. However, in the 1930s the relative ease of obtaining narcotics from other nations, such as Germany rendered American drugs obsolete. Furthermore, political relations between the two states were far colder at the time. But by the 1940s, with the war closing supply channels, Afghanistan appeared more desperate than ever. This need for pharmaceuticals appeared genuine, particularly because of the overwhelmingly poor health care situation and the almost constant battle with disease. Yet, despite the desperate calls for assistance and growing empathy for the Afghan situation within the State Department, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics continued to drag its feet.

The State Department began applying pressure on the Bureau of Narcotics to answer the letter. The State Department sought a response from Anslinger either to approve or deny the Afghan request.\textsuperscript{144} Although the Bureau of Narcotics responded that it was willing to ratify a trade agreement, it was not going to do so without getting the Afghan to ratify the 1912 Hague Convention. Narcotics officials responded that:

the Treasury Department is fully prepared to issue export authorizations for the shipment of a limited quantity of narcotic drugs to Afghanistan, within the limits of its estimates to the Supervisory Body, with the

\textsuperscript{143} Department of State. “Translation of Letter from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Afghanistan to the Legation of the United States of America, Kabul.” December 19, 1942. (original letter dated Dec 2, 1942.) RG 170, Ibid.

understanding, however, that Afghanistan will ratify the Hague Opium Convention of 1912.\textsuperscript{145}

Urging Afghanistan to ratify the Hague Convention also reinforced American efforts to bolster international drug control regulations. As deliberations continued, the US used the opportunity to argue that the Afghan problem was not a bilateral issue but a multilateral one. For the US to approve of a sale of pharmaceutical narcotics to Afghanistan, Afghanistan would have to ratify the Hague Convention. But the US had no authority to approve such a request, rather, it was the Netherlands that had to approve of Afghan’s formal adherence to the 1912 Convention. Ultimately, it was “the opinion of the Department that any communication by the Afghan Government for that purpose should be addressed to the Netherlands Government.”\textsuperscript{146} Although this was a seemingly positive step for Afghanistan, the issue of Afghan legitimacy as a licit consumer of opium was now subject to the formal processes of the League of Nations and The Hague. Although time was clearly an issue, Afghanistan would simply have to wait.

As formal political dealings awaited Hague approval, the US Legation in Kabul began to arrange the more pertinent matters of actually obtaining the specific quantities of narcotics desired by the Afghan government. This was another seemingly positive step for the Afghan government, as specific quantities and required numbers would further satisfy Hague officials that Afghanistan was a responsible consumer of narcotics, and more important, that its needs were sincere. The Ministry of Health sent the list to the US

\textsuperscript{145} Department of Treasury. “Letter from Herbert Gaston, Asst. Sec. of the Treasury to George A Morlock, Division of Far Eastern Affairs, Department of State.” Jan 8, 1943. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Department of State. “Letter to American Legation, Kabul.” January 21, 1943. RG 170, Ibid.
Legation specifying the drugs and quantities desired.\(^{147}\) The State Department expedited arrangements for this purchase assuming that at some point in the near future Afghanistan would be granted permission to purchase narcotics and would receive the drugs it so desperately needed.\(^{148}\) The State Department was seemingly unaware of the politics surrounding such a request.

As the list of pharmaceutical requirements made its way to the Federal Bureau of Narcotics, questions arose over quantities of various medicines. The bureau believed that the amounts Afghanistan requested for codeine and ethylmorphine hydrochloride exceeded the estimates of the Narcotics Supervisory Body.\(^{149}\) Moreover, the Netherlands Government received no notification from the Afghan Government about whether it was willing to adhere to the 1912 Hague Convention.\(^{150}\)

Afghanistan was at a crossroads. The future of Afghan opium exports and the more desperate need to acquire American pharmaceuticals were becoming entrapped in a larger political discourse of international opium regulation. It was quite apparent that there were growing concerns about the exports of Afghan opium and the potential for growth in the illicit trade. Moreover, the overall situation in the country was

\(^{147}\) Department of State. American Legation, Kabul, to Sec of State. March 17, 1943. RG 170, Ibid. The list as follows:
- 20 kg Codeinum Purum
- 30 kg Codeinum Phosphoricum
- 15 kg Cocainum Hydrochloricum
- 15 kg Ethyl Morphin Hydrochlo (Dionin)
- 1 kg Stovainum
- 50 kg Pulvis Opium
- 250 kg Pulvis Epicacuanha Cum Opium
- 100 kg Tincture Opium C Amphoratum
- 50 kg tincture Opium Cum Crocus (Laudinum de Syndenham)
- 30 kg Pulvis Creta Aromatic Cum Opium
- 100x12 Amp. Pantopon 2 cc, 10x250 Amp. Eucodal, and 5 kg Extractus Cannabis Indica


\(^{149}\) Letter. Harry Anslinger to Muhammad Omar Khan. April 16, 1943. RG 170, Ibid.

deteriorating. Health care, in particular, was becoming a major issue. With US and League of Nations officials increasing the scrutiny of Afghanistan’s export of opium and imports of pharmaceuticals becoming more and more difficult to obtain, soon Musahiban leadership would have to decide between nurturing the export industry or securing the import of pharmaceutical narcotics. There were risks and rewards for either decision: first, would Afghanistan break from international regulations and continue to produce and export opium? In doing so, it could support the development its own production of manufactured pharmaceutical opiates. However, this would ultimately incur the condemnation of the international community and likely alienate a potentially massive source of aid and investment. Or would Afghanistan adhere to the desires of the international community for opium regulation? In doing so, it would eliminate the lucrative export of opium but gain access to pharmaceutical narcotics and likely the favor of the international community. This, of course, would be a major factor in obtaining foreign aid and investment. Underlying both options was the risk that the Musahiban could push the delicate balance between the people and state to the brink. A decision would be made with this in mind.

The Prohibition of 1945

By mid-1944, Afghanistan was becoming intertwined with the ambitions of the US and the League of Nations to establish greater anti-narcotics controls over global opium production and trade. As William McAllister notes (Drug Diplomacy in the 20th Century) the end of war was perceived by the most ardent anti-narcotics advocates (Anslinger, Sharman) as a prime opportunity to push the anti-narcotic agenda around the world. The plan was to

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151 As William McAllister notes (Drug Diplomacy in the 20th Century) the end of war was perceived by the most ardent anti-narcotics advocates (Anslinger, Sharman) as a prime opportunity to push the anti-narcotic agenda around the world. The plan was to
Afghanistan had benefited from the instability in the global market as a consequence of the war. However, as the war drew to a close it became apparent that the Afghan state could not meet the requirements of the Hague Convention because it could not regulate the production and trade of opium. And regulation was not just weak—it was practically non-existent. In fact, illicit production and trade was widespread. For the US to secure the peripheries of the global narcotics system from the potential inclusion into the illicit global narcotics economy, Afghanistan needed to suppress opium production and trade. The US, as the leader of the international anti-narcotics regulatory system, would have to provide the aid and motivation to push Afghanistan to prohibit opium.

Yet, Afghanistan’s decision to prohibit opium was not an act of diplomatic goodwill or mutual disdain for opium use. Rather, it was a calculated act of diplomacy, for the Afghans placed their new opium policy within the larger context of nurturing a new US-Afghan diplomatic relationship, one with potentially large economic rewards. The strategy employed by the Afghans centered on using American anti-narcotics ambitions to secure substantial aid and investment in the Afghan state and economy. The US, on the other hand, realized that to achieve its anti-narcotics agenda in Afghanistan, it would have to help in bolstering the Afghan state and economy.

In October of 1943, after various attempts to obtain American pharmaceuticals and consistent complaints about Afghanistan’s un-systematized export system, launch a multi-faceted campaign in countries ravaged by war to force compliance and limit excess production. However, as the Cold War developed, the various nations that had previously been united in their attempts to regulate narcotics fell into disunion amidst the chaotic political reshuffling of the Cold War. (156-157)
Afghanistan finally made the move to adhere to the 1912 Hague Convention.\textsuperscript{152} In a letter to the Hague the Afghan government wrote:

Whereas Afghanistan did not ratify the Hague Opium Convention of 1912 it is now desired that this convention should be ratified in order that certain essential drugs may be purchased from other countries subscribed to this convention and we, the undersigned, hereby signify our intention to adhere to all those terms of the convention which shall concern our country, which is confirmed by our signature herewith.\textsuperscript{153}

Adherence to the convention officially took effect on May 5, 1944.\textsuperscript{154} The adherence to the 1912 Hague Convention was a necessary start for Afghanistan. But in its acceptance to the Hague, the expectations for what the Afghan government was required to do to changed.

By becoming signatory to the 1912 Hague Convention governments were to enact laws against the illicit use and trade in opium while maintaining full and strict control over the licit industry. Afghanistan lacked any effective anti-opium laws and regulation, which ultimately meant that Afghanistan failed to meet any requirements of the 1912 Convention. Concerns over the Afghan opium industry were warranted. The State Department had called to question the claims to control by the Afghan government. They saw a limited and weak state unable to control much of the trade in opium, with the illicit trade and use of opium alive and well. In other words, Afghanistan needed to create legislative distinctions between the licit and illicit trade in opium, and more important,

\textsuperscript{152} “Official telegram to the Secretary of State.” October 10, 1943. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} Letter to League of Nations, from Legation Royale d’Afghanistan a Londres. 1943. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{154} State Department. “Notification of Afghanistan’s Adherence to the Hague Opium Convention of 1912 received by Netherlands Government (No. 140).” May 17, 1944. RG 170, Ibid.
begin earnest enforcement of anti-opium laws.

In a letter to Cornelius Van H. Engert, American Minister in Kabul, Sec. of State A.A. Berle laid out the tactics of the US delegation to try to convince Afghanistan that it needed to create laws regarding the cultivation and trade of opium. The letter from Berle was essentially a detailed list of orders for US delegates to push the American anti-opium agenda onto Afghanistan. First, it seemed vital to Berle that the US specify that the trade with Afghanistan for opium, which existed for the better part of two years, was a product of the war and American benevolence, not basic market dynamics.

You are requested, at an opportune time, in any manner you choose, to explain to the Afghan Foreign Office that the United States has found it expedient, owing to the exigencies of the war and in order to improve Afghanistan’s economic situation, temporarily suspend its practice of not purchasing opium from countries which have not enacted laws or regulations governing the control of trade in opium, including a system of import permits and export authorizations at least equivalent to that described in the Geneva Drug Convention of 1925, and that unless such a system is established and enforced in Afghanistan the United States authorities may be obliged, after the war, to refrain from approving applications for the importation into the United States of Afghan opium.

More importantly, Berle wanted Engert to set the foundation for the future regarding Afghan opium. The war made this trade possible, but to continue in the future, Afghanistan would have to make significant moves towards bolstering the regulation of the opium industry. Berle continued:

You are also requested to state that the Government believes that Afghanistan would be likely to avoid obstacles to post-war trade in narcotics with the United States and other countries if its Government
would take legislative and other measures, if it has not already done so, to fulfill the provisions of article 15 of the Narcotics Limitation Convention of 1931, to which Afghanistan is a party...You may wish to reiterate that the laws of the United States permit, among other requirements, the exportation of narcotic drugs only to a country which has ratified the International Opium Convention of 1912 and has instituted and maintains, in conformity with that convention, a system, which the Commissioner of Narcotics deems adequate, of permits or licenses for the control of imports of such narcotic drugs.

Playing the diplomatic game, Berle was also keen to reiterate a friendly stance.

The statements suggested above should be made in the most friendly spirit, giving assurances that the manufacturers of opium alkaloids in the United States are desirous of being able to continue making imports of Afghan opium, and in return, of selling morphine, codeine, and other narcotic drugs to Afghanistan.

Berle’s suggestions uncover the underlying motivations within US policy. Berle certainly desired adherence to international drug laws, but not for reasons concerned with illicit drug trade and use, per se. Rather, the Afghan trade in opium was valuable. It was more important for Afghanistan to adhere to the Hague conventions to continue the trade of opium with the US, than it was for the benevolence of controlling illicit opium trade and use.

After Berle outlined the issues with the present and future trade of opium with Afghanistan, he began to frame the important task of getting Afghanistan to launch a prohibition of opium.
You may draw the attention of the Afghan authorities particularly to the statement of the British Government that ‘the success of the enforcement of prohibition will depend on the steps taken to limit and control the production of opium in other countries.’ At the same time you are authorized to state that the United States Government is deeply interested in and is prepared to cooperate with all nations in efforts to solve the problem of the limitation and control of the cultivation of the opium poppy and to suppress the illicit traffic in opium.

As it now appears that there will be no legitimate market in the Far East for smoking opium after the war, those countries which have in the past produced and exported opium for use in the manufacture of smoking opium will be obliged to curtail production and to seek a share of the world market for opium for medical and scientific requirements. It is probable that the contemplated poppy limitation convention will limit to a minimum the number of countries which may produce and export opium and will regulate production and exports strictly. IN as much as Afghanistan produces opium of high morphine content, it would be unfortunate if Afghanistan could not qualify to become an exporter and to share in the world’s legitimate trade in opium. In order that Afghanistan may be on an equal footing with other opium producers, it is imperative that the Government of Afghanistan prepare without delay to establish control over the area to be devoted to poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and over the collection and distribution of all opium harvested.¹⁵⁵ (my emphasis)

Berle’s ‘suggestions’ for Engert were essentially a list of tools to either convince, or manipulate, the Afghans to finally adhere to the 1912 Hague Conventions. This would

¹⁵⁵ State Department. Letter from Sec. of State A.A. Berle Jr. to Cornelius Van H. Engert, American Minister, Kabul. (No. 80) January 29, 1944. RG 170, Ibid.
entail, for the first time in the history of Afghanistan, a concerted attempt by the state to control all facets of production, trade, and use. As a result, Afghanistan would have to come to terms with identifying what was licit and what was illicit, in a country where both production and use were regarded with general ambivalence. In other words, the state would have to control more people’s lives. As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, this was a political dilemma that the Hashim Khan government wished to avoid.

The cursory steps taken by the Afghans to adhere to the 1912 Hague Convention were seen as justifications to continue and expand both exports and imports of opium. The Afghan government pressed harder to get access to all of the medicines that requested from the US. Muhammad Omar, President of the Afghan American Trading Company, tried desperately to convince US officials that the quantities of narcotics desired by Afghanistan was unique, in that their annual requirements were “stretched over a period of years.”\(^{156}\) Anslinger’s response was typical in reiterating that Afghan estimates exceeded the Hague’s estimates for that country.\(^{157}\)

Afghanistan also tried to expand on the export trade with the US, which had been fruitful the previous year. Muhammad Omar contacted Harry Anslinger about the prospects of the US buying six tons of raw Afghan opium, for $30 per kilogram.\(^{158}\) The almost unanimous response from potential buyers was that the price was too high. Given the economic situation in Afghanistan in 1944, it was apparent that the Afghans were desperate to sell the opium. Unlike the exports to the US in 1942-43 of 19,740 kilograms,

the amount of opium exported to the US in 1943-44 dropped significantly to 871 kilograms, an astounding 4 percent of the previous year’s export. Afghan officials chalked the decrease in exports up to external factors associated with the war.\footnote{Iqtesad Journal. October-November 1944.} Regardless of the pricing issue, Afghanistan was desperate for money. This desperation reinforced Musahiban leaders’ desire to find new ways to generate revenue for the struggling state.

As exports decreased and access to imports slowed, the US increased pressure on the Afghans to write into law the boundaries of licit and illicit production and trade of opium. Part of the post-war anti-narcotic strategy spearheaded by the US was an attempt to secure the periphery of the global drug market, particularly the traditional suppliers of opium, coca, and marijuana.\footnote{McAllister. (165)} Places such as Afghanistan were targeted as areas of concern, and US officials were tasked with motivating various nations to establish basic controls over opium. The U.S. government was particularly motivated by the prospects of the global narcotics system after the war. The Narcotics Supervisory Board at the Hague estimated the required global opium usage for scientific and medical purposes after the war to be somewhere around 400,000 kilograms per year. However, real output would be closer to 2.4 million kilos/year. This meant, of course, that governments worldwide would have to prohibit illicit cultivation and trade in opium to prevent the 1.8 million kilos of surplus opium from hitting the illicit market.\footnote{State Department Dispatch No. 459, “Letter from Engert to Ali Mohammed Khan, Min. of Foreign Affairs.” September 25, 1944. RG 170, Ibid. Engert’s letter emphasized all of the major points suggested by Berle earlier in the year. The letter included 18 bulleted suggestions for the Afghan government to launch the prohibition.}

Given the foreign and domestic circumstances, Hashim Khan had to launch a prohibition of opium. First and foremost, Afghanistan was still in dire need of
pharmaceutical narcotics. Second, export of opium, though lucrative, had not been a major component of Afghan exports in the past. Third, the various dialogues between the US and Afghanistan was drawing the Americans closer to Afghanistan diplomatically. The more the US understood the issues concerning the political, social, and economic development in Afghanistan, aid and investment emerged as primary tactics to combat the growth of the illicit opium industry.

More important, Hashim Khan had larger concerns than the growth of illicit opium economy. The war had not only devastated the economy but had dramatically impaired state development. Afghanistan needed revenue to survive, let alone grow, and the US was willing to provide it. A prohibition of opium, though devastating to the relatively small export industry, could now serve as the nexus of the new US-Afghan relationship.

The Afghan Government sent a letter to the US delegation responding to its previous discussion about the need to uphold the 1912 Hague Convention by prohibiting opium:

Although opium is considered one of the export products which enjoy a ready and profitable market abroad at present, its cultivation in view of the non-existence of the necessary controlling organizations, has evil effects, both morally and materially, upon the public health. For this reason the Council of Ministers has passed a resolution that the cultivation of opium be prohibited as from the beginning of 1324 (March 21, 1945). The Ministry of National Economy should notify, by means of signed orders
of the Prime Minister and the publication of notices in the press, all provinces and districts of the prohibition of opium cultivation.\textsuperscript{162}

The semantics of the letter from the Council of Ministers reflected both the reservations and aspirations of the Afghans. The end of the export trade was clearly an inconvenience economically, made all the more inopportune given the struggling economy. However, with the lack of “controlling organizations” and, more importantly, the moral and material consequences of addiction, the government was willing to take the necessary steps to prohibit opium. This choice of words suggests two things that could be used in the Afghans’ favor in the future. First, the lack of controlling organizations could be remedied with necessary support, something the US stressed to the Afghans on numerous occasions. Second, the acknowledgement of the moral and material consequences of opium addiction served to bridge the cultural gap. This essentially notified the West that the Afghans shared similar cultural concerns in regards to opium. All of these points would make Afghan attempts to court American and Western aid that much easier.

American responses to the Afghan prohibition were overwhelmingly positive. Walter Judd, Rep. from Minnesota, remarked that:

The other day the Government of Afghanistan announced that after March 21, 1945, all cultivation of the opium poppy in Afghanistan is to be forbidden. This action is wholly to be commended, particularly since the loss of revenue resulting from the ban on opium-poppy cultivation will be felt by a nation whose resources of income are not very great. But the progressive leaders of the middle eastern kingdom acted as they did

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{162} State Department. Letter regarding statement from Council of Ministers, from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RGA to American Legation, Kabul (No. 549). November 12, 1944. RG 170, Ibid.
\end{footnote}
because they are fully aware that the only effective way of eliminating the opium evil is to strike at its root.\textsuperscript{163}

The government posted the formal declaration of the opium prohibition on November 6, 1944 in Islah. The government also ordered that all people possessing opium were to deliver it to government authorized dealers by September 23, 1945.\textsuperscript{164}

Afghan response was mixed. Most government officials knew that revenue from the opium industry would not surpass the potential gains from foreign investment in industry, transportation, healthcare, and education. Minister of Afghanistan, Abdul Hosayn Aziz, noted that Afghanistan was willing to prohibit all cultivation (versus limit, as proscribed by the 1931 Limitation Act) because opium was not a significant export commodity, and it seemed wiser to stop the trade altogether given the potential benefits of doing so. Aziz also noted that opium use was forbidden by Islamic law.\textsuperscript{165}

All in all, the prohibition of 1945 was initially seen as a positive and effective policy. The Government Opium Company and various subsidiaries all adapted to the prohibition and began to export other commodities.\textsuperscript{166} Yet, many of those same government opium companies were still active in purchasing opium up to March 20\textsuperscript{th}, 1945.\textsuperscript{167} In addition, various opium companies,--with the help of the Bank Milllie--still actively purchased opium that remained from previous stocks left over from independent farmers, to export to foreign nations. The Opium Company of Herat purchased 32,358

\textsuperscript{163} Hon. Walter Judd. Congressional Record- Appendix. House of Representatives, Tuesday, December 5, 1944. (A4993) RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{164} State Department. “Afghan Crude Opium Stocks (No. 790).” July 21, 1945. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} State Department. Interview of Abdul Hosayn Aziz by Helen Howell Moorhead. June 18, 1945. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Igtesad Journal. January-February 1945.
\textsuperscript{167} Igtesad Journal. Feb-March 1945.
kilograms, the Opium Company of Badakhshan purchased 8,773 kilograms, and the Amanat Company (Herat) purchased 10,700 kilograms. Since the opium was officially cultivated before the prohibition it was therefore legitimate and legal, and open for sale on the market. The US delegation in Kabul made a special point to ‘help’ the Afghans sell the remaining opium.

**Conclusion**

By April of 1945, the Afghan Government formally announced the prohibition of opium, and ceased all government sanctioned production and trade. For both the US and Afghanistan, the prohibition was an important step in the their future relations. For Musahiban leaders, the delineation of legal boundaries and the appearance of drug control gave Afghanistan a new foreign donor, the US, from which to get aid and build their nation. The US, on the other hand, saw Afghanistan’s apparent acquiescence to international drug control as an important step in their ambitious drive to create a strong international drug regulatory system.

From initial accounts, the Prohibition of 1945 eliminated all clandestine cultivation and trade of opium. However, things were not quite as they seemed. In 1947, the State Department in Washington inquired about the effectiveness of the prohibition. The US Legation in Kabul relayed that, according to reliable Afghan sources, the prohibition eliminated all clandestine opium cultivation. Yet, the United States Treasury Department reached a far different conclusion about the success of the prohibition. In late September 1945, the British Minister in Kabul notified Bureau of

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Narcotics officials in DC that Afghanistan did not enforce the prohibition of opium but rather continued to produce opium for export. Other sources claimed that Afghanistan’s continued export of opium stemmed in part from its large stores of surplus opium. Nonetheless, the total prohibition of opium, which was widely hailed in 1945, was appearing to be an aberration. Thus, the 1945 Prohibition marked the end of the government-run opium industry, but opium continued to be an economic force, with or without government sanction.

Throughout Afghanistan there was (and still is) a general ambivalence toward the production and trade of opium. This ambivalence has variety of dimensions, most of which are evident in the reach of the prohibition law. First, the prohibition was published only in Islah and failed to make it into legislation. Little attempt was made by the state to enact any legal measures. Second, the state was well aware of its own limitations. The formal declaration of a prohibition was more a political device to appease the US than a genuine attempt to stop opium production. And last, given the limitations of the Musahiban government at the time, it was virtually impossible to enforce the opium ban. Thus, at best the 1945 prohibition can be seen as an attempt to start restricting opium and at worst as a masquerade to get American money.

This episode unveils two important factors about the mutual constitutive relationship between opium and state building in Afghanistan during the early Musahiban dynasty, a relationship maintained by the function of opium as an economic and political tool. It functioned directly as an economic tool, as raw opium was exported to the US. But indirectly, opium emerged as an important political device, used to bring America

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and its vast money and resources, into the Afghan political sphere. By replacing Germany with the US the Musahiban opened a new avenue from which to extract resources from abroad. More important, it allowed the state to use this money to expand without relying entirely on domestic taxation. As a result, the prohibition of opium (or at least the formal appearance of a prohibition) proved essential to the Musahiban and their ambition to base the growth of their state on foreign revenue, not domestic.

Second, and more important, this episode highlights the limitations of American drug policy and the cunning of Afghan foreign policy that proved instrumental in the laying the foundation of Musahiban political culture. While American pressures certainly factored into the Afghan government’s eventual opium ban, this perspective obscures more important Afghan developments. The US managed to get Afghanistan involved in the international drug regulatory system but only because the Afghans saw benefits to such inclusion. Moreover, the US had limited access to Afghanistan, knew very little about Afghan history, society and culture, let alone the opium industry, and therefore was limited in its ability to understand and ultimately manipulate the Afghans. The State Department investigation is a case in point. It took nearly two years for Americans to realize that, although Afghans had signed the Hague Convention and appeared to regulate its drug industry, the Afghan government remained limited in its ability to regulate the trade. This fact alone reinforces the idea that it was the Afghans, not US, who exhibited tremendous cunning in manipulating changes in the global political environment to their advantage.

Ultimately, by opening up to the outside world and embracing international norms, such as drug control, as an important aspect of their state, Musahiban leadership
gained access to money and resources that allowed them to preserve and build their
government. However, the result of this political design ultimately negated any real or
meaningful political dialogue between the Musahiban government and the Afghan people
about drug control, which had profound effects on the future of the Afghan state, future
resistance from rural Afghan peoples, and the eventual expansion of the opium trade.
Chapter 2: The 1958 Prohibition of Opium and the Issue of Culture in Drug Control Policy

Although the 1945 prohibition failed to halt the production and trade of opium, the vestiges of its failure reignited the dialogue over drug control during the 1950s. As a result, the desires of US and UN anti-narcotic officials to curb the illicit production and trade of opium through the 1953 Opium Protocol, and Afghanistan’s pursuit to establish a legal opium export industry, had a profound impact on the implementation and enforcement of the opium prohibition in 1958. Unlike earlier efforts, this prohibition marked an entirely new direction for the Musahiban government: for the first time, Musahiban leaders were willing to use coercive force, a strategy advocated by the US, to stop the production and trade of opium. Given Musahiban fear of rural insurrection, why were they willing to use force? After World War II prohibiting opium became an integral component of the Afghan government’s strategy to get greater access to American aid and investment that was increasingly vital to the state. By targeting Badakhshan the opium ban allowed the state to use coercive force in a region populated largely by ethnic minorities, thus negating the risk of inciting rebellion from the contentious Pashtuns in

172 Although the prohibition was officially announced in November of 1957, I chose to reference the prohibition as being in 1958 since that is the year it went into effect.
the south. More important, despite the short-term success of the ban, the reemergence of opium production in 1959 reveals how deeper social, political, and cultural issues between the Musahiban government and the people of Badakhshan were fundamental to the effectiveness of drug control and the future opium trade in Badakhshan.

This chapter explores the process leading to the Afghan government’s decision to implement a prohibition and eradicate opium in the Badakhshan province, the impact that policy had on the people of Badakhshan, the future of opium production and trade, and the evolution of drug control in Afghanistan under the Musahiban dynasty. In the first part of the chapter I explain how the systemic failures of the 1945 prohibition, mainly the lack of a legal and structural framework, reflected the disinterest on the part of the Musahiban government effectively to stop the production and trade of opium. However, this inaction on the part of the government proved instrumental for the future of drug control. By the 1950s the Afghan government desired to restart the legal production of opium for international trade. However, for Afghanistan to gain international approval for the legal trade, especially under the 1953 Opium Protocol, it would have to not only implement legal measures, but also enforce them. By the time Mohammad Daud Khan took power in 1953, Musahiban leaders were finally preparing to do just this.

Although Afghan ambitions for a legal opium trade received tacit support from American officials, especially because they desired its potent raw opium, the increasing threat of illegal Afghan opium in neighboring Iran forced American and international officials to refocus attention on the extent of opium production, trade, and use in Afghanistan. In the second part of the chapter, I examine how the growing consumption of Afghan opium in Iran deterred Daud’s attempts to gain acceptance in the protocol.
Eventually, the fact that the illicit production and trade of opium was far more widespread than the Afghan government was willing to acknowledge, Daud was forced to launch new policy measures. By late 1957 Daud had one of two choices. He could either continue trading opium in the international market in contravention of international law, and thus further isolate the country. Or he could implement a new prohibition, effectively stop the opium trade, and use the new drug policy as a means of gaining access to US and UN funds for the development of his state.

In November 1957, Daud launched a nationwide prohibition of opium. Unlike previous bans, Daud actually enforced the opium ban, but only in Badakhshan. In the third part of the chapter I examine why Daud chose Badakhshan. Badakhshan, a province in the northeast, was historically the major source of opium in the country. By targeting Badakhshan Daud made a significant symbolic statement to the international community, since most countries recognized Badakhshan opium to be some of the best in the world and vital to the local economy. Although the symbolism of banning opium in Badakhshan was important, it was, more importantly, a calculated policy maneuver. The opium ban allowed Daud to garner international praise and financial support, while enforcing the eradication in an area inhabited by ethnic minorities, thus ensuring that the Musahiban would not generate resistance from rural Pashtun tribes historically opposed to these types of state interventions.

Although the opium ban was hailed in international circles as a shining example of global drug control, in 1959 opium production remerged in Badakhshan. The last part of this chapter explains why opium reemerged in Badakhshan and how deeper socio-political relations in the region were fundamental to the enduring production and trade of
opium. In particular, I argue that the eradication of opium in Badakhshan revealed a paradox between the governments’ justification for intervention and the underlying causes of opium’s enduring production and trade. On the one hand, by making opium illegal, the Musahiban government established legal as well as economic and cultural parameters about the improper uses of opium. The production and trade of opium defied the “norms and rules of formal political authority.” But whose norms, and whose authority? It was one thing for the Musahiban government to establish and enforce such norms in Kabul, but another altogether to do so in Badakhshan. Opium therefore played an important role. As a licit commodity in Badakshan, opium was a vital, if not normal, aspect of cultural, economic, and political life. Therefore, the eradication of opium was an intrusive and coercive cultural policy as much as it was an economic and political one. The opium ban exacerbated deeply rooted sentiments that government policy was overtly pro-Pashtun, reinforcing the growing cultural chasm between the Musahiban government and the people of Badakhshan, and ultimately fragmenting an already fractured state-society relationship.

Paradoxically, the prohibition reinforced the economic, as well cultural and political, role of opium. As long as Dauds’ government failed to build effective and responsive political and economic institutions and perpetuated the governments’ overt racial bias, opium would remain a vital part of the social, economic, and political fabric of Badakhshan. The more Daud and other Musahiban leaders pushed for drug control while neglecting other aspects of state-building that were indirectly tied to the drug trade,

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the more drug policy inflamed preexisting political tensions, fragmenting the country, and ironically creating a political and economic environment ideal for the expansion of the drug trade.

**Rethinking Drug Production in the Age of Daud**

Shah Mahmud, brother to Hashim Khan, replaced Hashim as prime minister in 1946. Much like his predecessor, Mahmud was encouraged by a growing educated elite to continue the push for social, political, and economic reforms. As a result, the years following the war and the 1945 prohibition saw substantial increases in foreign aid and investment. The United States, in particular, eventually became one of the major investors in the future of Afghanistan.\(^{174}\) Musahiban leaders understood that US financial aid and investment would provide more than economic benefits: it would also generate political confidence in the Afghan government. Initially, however, the US shied from forthright involvement in Afghan politics. Although aid and investment in Afghanistan was seen as an opportunity, resources from Afghanistan were not vital to American interests.\(^{175}\) Moreover, Afghan neutrality perpetuated American reluctance. With regimes in both Pakistan and Iran strongly supporting American foreign policies, and Afghanistan offering little economic or political return, Afghanistan was a secondary option.\(^{176}\)

However, the US still saw value in expanding the relationship with Afghanistan.

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\(^{174}\) Though not officially part of the Marshall Plan, Afghanistan received a large increase in US aid and investment following the end of WWII. In total, $5.9 billion dollars in aid was sent to Asia. (See U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1954* (1955) table 1075 pp 899-902).


\(^{176}\) Barfield. (209) This was evidenced by the fact the US refused to help in the building of the Afghan military following World War II.
Afghanistan was a buffer state to the Soviet Union and could be a key arena in a future conflict with the Soviet Union. In late 1945, the US agreed to help with developing rural Afghanistan launching the Helmand Valley Project. The project, contracted out to the Morrison-Knudsen Company, began with an estimated cost of $63.7 million. The Morrison-Knudsen Company was hired to build dams, roads, and canals in the Helmand Valley to improve agricultural output and connect the region—considered the breadbasket of Afghanistan—with the rest of country.\textsuperscript{177} The project was ambitious and beset with problems from the onset. After a few years, various inconsistencies and poor planning led to a major explosion in costs. For example, the Afghans had built a comfortable foreign exchange surplus after the war. However, the ever-increasing costs of the Helmand Valley Project pushed most of the surplus into the pockets of the Morrison-Knudsen Company, to the tune of $20 million in 1949.\textsuperscript{178} The loss of the foreign exchange surplus forced the state to cut costs where possible and to search for new sources of revenue. As a result, policies that restricted revenue growth such as prohibiting opium, were placed on the cutting block.

By 1950, rumors circulated that Musahiban leaders desired to reestablish the cultivation of opium for export. Abdul Wahab Haider, Afghanistan’s head of the Commercial Section of the Ministry of National Economy, believed that the 1945 prohibition of opium was a serious mistake given the potential for raw Afghan opium in the pharmaceutical market. The Afghan government believed that exporting opium was fast becoming a necessity, given the country’s greatly reduced foreign currency

\textsuperscript{177} Dupree. (483)
\textsuperscript{178} Dupree. (484)
Wahab’s explanation was likely related to general issues regarding the Helmand Valley Project but nonetheless proves an important point. Afghanistan needed more development. It needed major investments in the bureaucracy, the military, and economic infrastructure and could not enforce policies, such as the prohibition, without outside aid. Moreover, the enforcement of regulations was impossible since most opium was grown by individuals and smuggled along Afghanistan’s vast borders, which could not be effectively patrolled. Given the ability to play on American paranoia, the rumor could have been an attempt to stoke fear, but it is most likely that Wahab understood that American desires for a strong anti-opium regime in Afghanistan could be used to benefit the Afghan government.

Despite US narcotics officials’ concern about the threat of illicit opium cultivation and smuggling, the export of raw Afghan opium for manufacture in the US continued. Afghan opium was proving to be an ideal source for high-morphine content opium. In various discussions between Wahab and State Department officials, Wahab was keen to reinforce the fact that Afghan opium, especially from Badakhshan, was some of the best in the world. Opium could also provide a stable source of revenue for the growing state. Wahab estimated that if Afghanistan could again export opium, it would produce upwards of 100 tons of opium, adding $1.5 million to Afghanistan’s foreign exchange.


reserves.\textsuperscript{181} In repeated meetings with US officials, Wahab intelligently emphasized that the high-morphine opium from Badakhshan was valuable to American pharmaceutical companies.

Even though Afghanistan’s legal status remained in flux, American pharmaceutical companies continued to pursue the opportunity, albeit reluctantly. The variable for American companies was whether they carried licenses allowing them to import large quantities of Afghan opium.\textsuperscript{182} US anti-narcotics officials were disinclined to grant either American companies or the Afghans the right to openly commence trading. They feared that granting Afghans rights to trade opium again would undermine the most recent American effort to strengthen international regulation of opium supplies.

In 1953 the US and France had coordinated the Opium Protocol to reorganize and reestablish international efforts to control the production and trade of opium. The treaty aimed to get producer states to regulate production strictly through rigorous adherence to the monitoring of quantities of opium planted, harvested, consumed domestically, exported and stockpiled. It also gave the provisional body the power to make inquiries about discrepancies, conduct inspections, and impose trade embargoes. Only seven countries\textsuperscript{183} were granted rights to produce licitly under the protocol. In exchange for being signatories to these strict regulations nations were granted monopolies on all licit sales.\textsuperscript{184} In other words, if the United States were to trade with Afghanistan it would ultimately undermine the treaty the Americans worked so hard to create. By 1954, Harry Anslinger was urging the US Embassy in Kabul to discourage the Afghans vigorously

\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{182} Memorandum 0660. October 17, 1952. RG 170, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{183} Bulgaria, Greece, India, Iran, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and the USSR.
\textsuperscript{184} McAllister. (179-181)
from restarting export trade.\footnote{Memo No. A-31. October 5, 1954. RG 170, Ibid. The US committed to India, Iran, Turkey, and Yugoslavia as the four countries allowed to continue to produce opium illicitly under the 1953 Opium Protocol.}

Yet the conflict over Afghan export of opium was not limited to purely narcotic matters. Rather, the Cold War transformed the opium question from an ethical and moral crusade by the west into a political conflict between the US and the Soviet Union. During the Avuncular period (1933 to 1953)—the period in which both Hashim Khan and Shah Mahmud pushed for relatively liberal reforms in social and political institutions—Western nations provided most of the political and economic guidance. However, in 1953, public pressure mounted against the liberal parliament. Daud Khan launched a bloodless coup in September and announced himself prime minister. Daud promised to modernize the country but refused to continue the aggressive policies of the liberal parliament.

One of the principal aims of his rule was to reestablish Afghanistan’s neutrality.\footnote{Dupree. (499)} In an effort to rebalance Afghanistan’s foreign policy, Daoud forged closer ties with the Soviet Union. Part of his lean toward Moscow was the belief within Daud’s government that the US placed Afghanistan low on the geopolitical totem pole. In particular, Afghanistan was upset that the US denied requests for military aid, yet continued to arm Pakistan to protect South Asia from Russian expansion, even though Afghanistan bordered the Soviet Union.\footnote{Ibid. (510-511) The Daud government stated that the US denial was based on Afghanistan’s failure to join the Baghdad Pact or sign the Mutual Security Agreement, both of which the US used to bind various Asian nations in military and economic aid systems to counter Sino-Soviet expansion. Pakistan happened to be a part of both. US officials countered that Afghanistan demanded guarantees to defend from Russian
denied US aid under the Mutual Security Program, while Iran and Pakistan received increased funding. Conversely, US foreign policy under Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers viewed neutrality as an indication of leftist inclinations. With the US focusing on larger nations, the Soviets positioned themselves to take advantage of Afghanistan’s need for aid. By the mid-1950s, there were substantial increases in Soviet military sales to Afghanistan. They even managed to barter for substantial quantities of Afghan opium.

Afghanistan continued to push its case for inclusion in the 1953 Opium Protocol to the international community. In 1955, Afghanistan presented its case to the United Nations. A. Hamid Aziz, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN, argued that Afghanistan was not included in the 1953 Protocol because it was unable to attend the conference because of extenuating domestic circumstances. As a result, the Government of Afghanistan was taking the necessary steps to amend the 1953 protocol so as to include Afghanistan in the licit import and export of opium. By demanding the urgent amendment of the protocol Afghanistan was hoping to reflect the seriousness and urgency of the request, if not desperation. Aziz stated that “my Government considers it to be a matter of the most vital importance to her economy that the said protocol should

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188 Franck. (44)
189 Dupree. (522) In 1956, Afghanistan received $25 million in arms from the Soviet bloc. America refused to arm countries bent on aggression. Given the recent uproar over Pashtunistan, the US did not want to get involved.
191 Aziz was referring to the bloodless coup launched by Daud in 1953.
be amended with the least possible delay.” Egypt became the first significant Middle Eastern nation to support Afghanistan’s inclusion in the 1953 protocol, arguing that since Afghanistan was poor and remote, the export of opium could be a valuable crop to increase its desperate need for hard currency.

Reluctantly, the US supported Afghanistan. Harry Anslinger noted that Afghanistan would have undoubtedly been included in the 1953 protocol had it been represented at the conference. Moreover, Afghanistan’s urgency was reinforced by the expectations of twenty tons of opium being produced in 1955. Anslinger thought “that they are entitled to this production…their opium is of the highest quality, and, as far as I know, has not been found in the illicit narcotics traffic.” Anslinger’s statement reveals the two primary concerns for US officials. First, the quality of Afghan opium was valuable to American pharmaceutical companies. Afghanistan’s inclusion in the protocol would be of great benefit to the US pharmaceutical industry. Second, Afghan opium had yet to become a significant component in the illicit narcotics trade. The US could not allow Afghanistan to resume licit production if illicit production and trade of opium was widespread. If the US wanted Afghanistan to control opium, decisions needed to be made, and soon.

Iran and the Regional Implications of Afghan Opium

Afghanistan’s push for a licit opium industry was not without its detractors. Iran,

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195 It is interesting that Anslinger made such remarks. He was involved in the 1945 dialogue over the prohibition of opium, and it was apparent then that Afghanistan had an illicit opium industry. Even Afghan officials admitted that smuggling of opium existed and that the state could do virtually nothing to stop it. (See Wahab)
Afghanistan’s neighbor to the west, struggled to deal with a very large and active opium consuming population.\textsuperscript{196} It was believed that in 1955 Iran had a staggering 2.8 million opium addicts. Opium use was so widespread that there were 1,200 opium dens in Tehran alone.\textsuperscript{197} The black market for opium was estimated to earn nearly $61 million dollars in 1955, three times the amount of revenue generated by the Iran’s licit industry.\textsuperscript{198} That year, the Shah and Parliament imposed a ban on poppy cultivation and outlawed the sale and possession of opium. Unlike previous measures to curb opium trade and use by the state, the Shah’s prohibition was unyielding in its implementation. All opium, including opium used for medicine and export, was banned.\textsuperscript{199}

The Shah’s ban on opium had profound implications for the region. Even though the prohibition was successful in eliminating opium production and closing down large

\textsuperscript{196} For the better part of two centuries, Iran had developed a thriving opium industry. As outlined by Rudi Matthee (\textit{The Pursuit of Pleasure}) opium played a vital role in both the public and private lives of Persians. The Safavids and Qajars derived a considerable portion of revenue from the domestic opium industry. By the end of the 19\textsuperscript{th} and beginning of the 20\textsuperscript{th} Centuries, opium became a lucrative export for the state. However, there were severe social consequences for the relative ambivalence toward opium use. By World War II, Iran had one of the largest populations of opium addicts in the world, if not the largest.

McLaughlin and Quinn’s fantastic analysis revealed the enduring nature of opium use, its importance in regard to state revenue, and the profound social consequences of widespread opium addiction. The state acknowledged that the domestic opium industry created $18 million in revenue. However, the state also argued that one-half million work hours were lost to addiction daily, 5,000 yearly suicides attributed to addiction, and 300,000 farmers were known to grow opium.

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid. (490)

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid. (491) Following the US-aided coup ousting Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, the Shah launched a series of measures to expand the power of the state to ensure that he would never lose absolute power. The opium prohibition could be taken into account as part of the Shah’s expansion of legislative and judicial reach to solidify his rule. On the other hand, the mounting public pressure against opium, and alleged issues within his own family, may have compelled him to launch the ban on opium as well.
numbers of opium dens in Iran, demand for opium remained high. Iranian officials feared that Afghan and Turkish opium would quickly meet the massive demand. Iranian fears had a considerable impact on Afghanistan’s push for legitimization of the opium trade. Had opium concerns been isolated to Afghanistan, considerations for inclusion in the protocol likely would have been different. But Afghanistan’s opium trade now threatened neighboring countries, especially those with deeply entrenched American interests. Iranian officials and State Department officials in Tehran believed granting Afghanistan rights to expand such an industry would only make matters worse in Iran. As a result, Iran was staunchly opposed to Afghanistan’s push for a legal opium industry given the potential for Afghan opium to fill the massive void in supply as a result of the Shah’s ban.

During the Eleventh Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council’s Commission on Narcotic Drugs in 1956, both Afghan and Iranian delegations were granted the opportunity to advocate their positions. Iran pressured the US to advocate on its behalf given the strength of the relationship between the two nations. The Iranian Mission to the UN regarded the Afghan request for inclusion in the protocol as a dangerous proposition, given the already substantial quantities of opium flooding the global market. The Iranian Mission stated:

Recalling the fact that at present those countries which produce opium…are producing more opium than the world requires for medical and scientific use, and noting that Iran, notwithstanding her loss of national income, has banned the cultivation of the opium poppy by law, and emphasizing the fact that the annual world production of opium by the

\[\text{Ibid. (495)}\]

five countries remaining as opium-producers is 500 tons - almost 50 tons more than is required by the world consumption of opium, the Government of Iran reaffirms that the recognition of another country as an opium-producer for export would not only add to the unnecessary production of opium, but it would also intensify illicit traffic in the world market, and in this special case, it would totally cripple effective enforcement of the law banning the cultivation of the opium poppy in Iran and make futile any efforts toward the treatment of opium addicts. 202

The State Department Legation in Tehran strongly supported many of the concerns of the Iranian government. The State Department feared that legalizing the export of opium from Afghanistan would undermine Iran’s attempts to curb production and use of opium. This was already underscored by the fact that Afghan opium smugglers were increasing along the borders. Given the large numbers of opium addicts in Iran, along with Iran’s geo-strategic significance, the State Department urged the UN to side with Iran. 203 While the commission recognized the dilemma facing Afghanistan, it opted to postpone any decision until its twelfth session, when they determined that Afghanistan could put the entire 1953 Opium Protocol in place as well as finally adhere to the 1925 Protocol. 204

The next session of the commission convened in July 1956. Various delegations discussed Afghanistan’s desire to be included in the 1953 Protocol. India, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey all displayed varying degrees of reluctance toward the Afghan request,

203 State Department, American Embassy, Tehran. “Request of Afghanistan to be an Authorized Opium Exporting State.” Dispatch No. 1096, August 3, 1956. (2) RG 170, Ibid.
mostly because they were either major producers, major consumers, or both. Some members of the Social Committee supported Afghanistan’s request because they believed that the regional prohibitions in Iran and Pakistan, regularly cited as the most obvious reasons why Afghanistan should not be allowed to export opium legally, gave Afghanistan an opportunity to fill voids in the licit market. Furthermore, one Afghan delegate cited the fact that Afghanistan prohibited opium eleven years before Iran and never had an addiction epidemic.205

However, UN and US officials began to question the sincerity of Afghan motivations. Not only was Afghanistan actively trying to restart the export of opium (preemptive to official inclusion in the 1953 Opium Protocol), but it was also raising alarms with its import requests as well. A major issue for the UN was the inordinately high quantities of pharmaceutical narcotics requested by the Afghan government. Dr. Abdul Zahir, Minister of Public Health, wrote the UN to explain Afghanistan’s large request for pharmaceutical narcotics.

The spread of modern medicine and its whole-hearted acceptance by the remote villagers throughout our country has been remarkably rapid during the past few years, due mostly to availability of more medical and paramedical personnel, increased national and governmental financial help and the technical assistance of the World Health Organization. Private and group medical practice, clinics, pharmacies have increased. The government budget for the Ministry of Health alone has grown in many fields during recent years. There was an increase of 17 percent in 1953 over the previous year and an increase of 100 percent in 1954 over the year 1953. Next year there will again be an increase of 75 percent increase

over last years budget. This increase in the government budget is a good index of the general trend of the growth of modern medicine in this country.

Dr. Zahir, although keen to emphasize the increasing role of modern medicine in Afghanistan, did not agree with the Afghan government’s request for pharmaceutical narcotics. He stated: “This increase in availability of medical facilities, although very appreciable, however, does not explain, in my opinion, the requests made during the past three or four years for a relatively large increase in the quota of the Narcotic Drugs for Afghanistan.” He explained that the government requested such high numbers “in anticipation of the expected future expanded medical programs.” However, making such a remark could be seen as proof of Afghanistan’s inability effectively and responsibly to control the import of pharmaceutical narcotics. However, Dr. Zahir intelligently cited the issue as the source of motivation for the government to act. As further proof of Zahir’s claims, the government created the Central Office for Narcotic Drugs within the Ministry of Public Health to regulate the import of pharmaceutical narcotics.²⁰⁶

The creation of the Central Office for Narcotic Drugs was initially considered a boon for Afghan import of narcotics. However, the Central Office had yet to prove that it controlled opium production and use. The first real step toward prohibition occurred with the launching of the Opium Act of 1956. Abdul Malik, the Finance Minister, sent a letter to the UN and made it quite clear that the law had a specific purpose: to justify the international court’s decision to grant Afghanistan the right to produce and trade opium illicitly. He stated:

²⁰⁶Letter from Dr. Abdul Zahir to Mr. L. Atzenwiler, United Nations. February 19, 1956. RG 170, Ibid. Dr. Zahir also made sure to decrease the amount of pharmaceuticals requested.
The Government of Afghanistan strictly controls the production and sale of opium in accordance with all International conventions and regulations already in existence. We hope, as the Economic and Social Council have expressed sympathy for the right to production and export of Afghanistan opium, the Narcotics Commission in its coming sessions will consider this in order to include the name of Afghanistan in the Single Convention and also among the exporters of countries mentioned in Article VI of 1953 Opium Protocol.  

The law was partially influenced by Iran’s prohibition of opium in 1955. Iran had secured substantial technical assistance and financial development aid from the US to implement the ban. Afghanistan hoped to do the same.

The Opium Act of 1956 was different from the 1945 ban in a variety of ways. First, it created a true legal framework for delineating the government’s control of opium. The 1945 Prohibition appeared as a government announcement in Islah but never actually became law. Second, the act marked a substantial change in the state’s role as arbitrator of economic development. In 1945, the state had been hampered by the war. The government not only was limited in its ability effectively to monopolize the opium industry, but also was strategically deployed by Hashim Khan to limit its interaction with the rural population so as to not incite rebellion. Third, the government was taking steps to institutionalize opium control. The arbitrary nature of the 1945 ban was reflected in the almost complete lack of institutional transformation. By 1956, as the law indicated, the state would now be in complete control of all aspects of the opium industry, and it would build the apparatus to do so.

More important, the 1956 Act marked a cultural shift in the government’s

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207 Abdul Malik letter to Central Opium Control Board. March 1956. RG 170, Ibid.
208 McAllister. (197)
approach to opium. Article 10 states: “The Ministry of Health, Royal Afghan
government, will launch a vigorous program against the eating, smoking, and the other
use of opium and bring to the notice of the public the evil effects on health and anti-social
repercussions of this drug.” Adopting Western puritanical notions of drugs as evil and
morally reprehensible, the opium act made quite clear that the state had taken sides in
approaching opium cultivation, trade and use as both a legal and moral dilemma.
However, this cultural shift carried both positive and negative connotations, either of
which could hamper or aid state development. In a positive sense (for the Musahiban), a
clear cultural shift would ideally lead to increased technical and financial assistance from
the US and UN, much like the 1945 prohibition. On the contrary, how could the state, one
so limited in its reach, possibly control a commodity so widespread as opium? Moreover,
how could the state control opium without inciting rebellion to its policies?

The US saw the Opium Act of 1956 as a positive step toward a licit opium
industry, but Afghanistan still needed to follow the American strategy and patiently wait
for the international system to ratify Afghan involvement (which the US admitted could
take some time) in the Opium Protocol. If it could maintain this course, Afghanistan
would eventually become the 8th licit producer of opium in the world.210

Afghanistan could not wait. In 1956, the New York Quinine & Chemical Works
Inc. received an unlawfully imported sample of Afghan opium from the Ministry of

Finance of the Royal Government of Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{211} This instance was not unique: in fact, foreign officials were notifying American authorities that Afghanistan was actively seeking buyers for their opium. French officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs reported to Harry Anslinger that the government of Afghanistan was regularly shopping its opium to prospective clients in France. The Chief of the Central Pharmacy Service in France noted that “it seems to me that the Afghan government is prejudging rather rapidly about the decisions that could be made concerning the eventual modifications of the opium protocol of 1953.”\textsuperscript{212}

The pushing of opium exports by Afghan officials indicated broader Afghan sentiment that there was little reason for reluctance on the part of the US and UN to approve domestic production. A licit opium industry could become a core export for a state in dire need of one, and through increased trade with the US, the state would become a powerful ally in a vital region of the world. Dr. Massouli, an economist and the Afghan delegate to the UN, exemplified the Afghan view that its request was reasonable given the potential economic and political benefits. Massouli believed the aim of the Afghan government was to export 75 tons a year. Such exports would greatly enhance Afghan’s foreign exchange and its internal economy. 75 tons a year would hypothetically add $1.5 million to Afghanistan’s foreign exchange reserves. Given the outflow in foreign exchange that started at the end of World War II, this was advantageous. The opium export would also provide a stable source of revenue for poor regions of Afghanistan, Badakhshan in particular. Dr. Massouli noted that if Afghanistan began to

\textsuperscript{211} Bureau of Narcotics Memo, February 9, 1956. RG 170, Ibid. The sample was sent in a cloth bag, with the words, “Sample Afghan Almond, hard shell No. 1”, printed on the side.

manufacture morphine, it would reinforce the desire to expand opium production.\footnote{GE Yates, Director, Division of Narcotic Drugs, European Office of the United Nations. “Afghanistan’s claim to be recognized as an opium producer.” December 21, 1956. RG 170, Ibid.}

Yet the unwillingness of the Afghans to follow US advice rubbed many US narcotics officials the wrong way. Harry Anslinger, who previously advocated on behalf of Afghanistan, tired of Afghanistan’s persistence. He empathized with its desire to begin licit production of opium but wanted to wait for the proper legislation. In a letter to colleague Gilbert E. Yates, he wrote:

I am reaching the point of exhaustion on the Afghanistan question. They are milling around New York trying to get Assembly action and we are sticking to the line that their request has been noted and will be considered by the Narcotic Commission.

I have talked with the State Department and they have no suggestion in relation to the proposal. I just read the PCOB report on Afghanistan’s statement. They expect to produce 100 tons. Also the idea of going into the manufacturing business is all wrong. Possibly at the next meeting we can drive them away from both production and manufacture by a little adroit public opinion with the Iranians leading off.\footnote{Federal Bureau of Narcotics. “Harry Anslinger to Gilbert E. Yates.” December 27, 1956. RG 170, Ibid.}

Anslinger’s changing tune reflected a broader change in most of the US government. It was becoming increasingly obvious that although Afghanistan could benefit from a licit opium export trade, it would simply be unable to do so under UN protocols. The issue lay not in the benefits of a government-run opium industry but in an opium industry the government could not control.
The official stance remained unchanged, as the US still declared its public support for Afghanistan, but behind the scenes the US was putting itself in a position either to get the Afghan government to act or to withdraw support based on the Afghans’ inability or unwillingness to meet the specific guidelines put forth by the protocol. The primary issue American officials raised with the Afghans was the existence of illicit smuggling into Iran and the total lack of enforcement by the Afghan government. If Afghanistan could not control the opium industry now, what would change in the future? Second, Afghan responses to UN requests for information regarding production, trade, and enforcement were remarkably deficient. As a result, both issues reinforced and exacerbated concerns the US, UN, and neighboring nations had about Afghanistan’s ability to control the opium trade.215

On the other hand, Afghans saw the decreasing support by the US as symbolic of Afghanistan’s minor role in American foreign relations. More specifically, Daud and Afghan officials interpreted the shift as an indication of America’s priorities to support regimes in Iran and Pakistan. The Afghan Mission to the UN stated:

In the last session of the Narcotics Commission, which, after long delay and much study showed great possibility of settling this question once and for all, the United States Mission, unlike its previous stand and support for the just claim of Afghanistan which was recognized by the majority of members of the United Nations, because of the opposition of one member, (Iran) took a stand which delayed the final settlement of the question for another year. The Mission of Afghanistan is surprised that the United States Mission has taken such a step, in a case which they themselves on

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principle and technical grounds have supported from the beginning.\textsuperscript{216}

The US Mission denied such accusations, sticking to the formal political stance. It responded:

The Permanent Mission of Afghanistan to the United Nations may be assured that the position of the United States with respect to the request of Afghanistan has not changed and will not change unless there is incontrovertible evidence which indicates that Afghanistan opium is entering illicit traffic or there is some other compelling reason for the United States to reconsider its position.\textsuperscript{217}

In many ways, the US was positioning itself for the inevitability that Afghan opium would emerge as a large component of the global illicit market. During the May meeting of the Economic and Social Council, the Narcotics Commission voted to defer, yet again, Afghanistan’s request.\textsuperscript{218} Then, in October 1957, the State Department sent out a memo that would be the death knell for Afghanistan’s hopes of becoming a licit opium producer. According to the memo embassy officials in Tehran met with the Swiss Minister to Afghanistan, Anton Roy Ganz, who reported that Iranians were traveling en mass to the bazaar in Herat and trading gold rials for opium to smuggle into Iran.

According to Ganz’s source, opium was traded openly. In fact, opium was so widespread that even Afghan government officials, including the vice-president of one of Afghanistan’s largest government-owned companies, owned extensive opium

\textsuperscript{216} The United States Mission to the United Nations. “Afghanistan’s request to be Recognized as a State Producing Opium for Export.” Dispatch No. 1100. June 24, 1957. RG 170, Ibid.
Daud’s bid for inclusion in the protocol hinged upon Afghan opium remaining out of the illicit market. However, when news hit, it was evident that the Afghan state could not enforce its own law. It was then apparent that Daud needed to launch and actually enforce a prohibition of opium. But to enforce a prohibition without threatening the delicate balance of the state was another matter altogether. Daud needed to find a place that, first, carried significant symbolism to garner attention from the Americans, and second, the government could enforce a ban without inciting widespread resistance to the state.

Targeting Badakhshan: The 1958 Opium Prohibition

As US and UN officials discussed the regional and global implications of ratifying Afghanistan’s membership in the 1953 Protocol, in November 1957 Daud surprisingly announced a ban on the cultivation and trade of opium. The prohibition was launched largely in response to growing skepticism regarding the government’s ability to control and regulate the production and trade of opium. But for the Musahiban the 1958 prohibition was a calculated policy risk. Enforcing an opium ban in conjunction with broader policy objectives allowed the government to exert greater control over tribal minorities. But Dauds’ government needed to prove to the anti-opium establishment that it had the power and will to uphold the requirements of the 1953 Protocol. In this way, the 1958 prohibition was far different from previous efforts. Unlike the 1945 prohibition,

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219 Bureau of Narcotics. “Opium Smuggling from Afghanistan into Iran.” Dispatch no. 312, October 5, 1957. RG 170, Ibid. Ganz also mentioned that in his conversation with the source, he was under the impression that most Afghan elites, including government officials, were participating in the illicit opium trade.
or even the 1956 Opium Act, the 1958 Prohibition was exacting and precise. Daud’s
government chose to target the one province where opium was historically cultivated and
traded extensively, Badakhshan. This ban was intended to send a loud message to the rest
of the world, particularly the US and Iran, that Afghanistan could in fact control, and
even suppress, its opium industry.

In choosing Badakhshan, the Afghan government targeted the one area where
opium played its most significant role. It was common knowledge at this point that opium
was a staple crop in Badakhshan. Previous decades of trade had raised awareness to the
superior quality of Badakhshan opium. Symbolism aside, this prohibition was a serious
challenge for the state, not only because of the limitations of state power, but particularly
because of the unique challenges the province provided.

Badakhshan is one of the most remote provinces in Afghanistan. High altitudes
and steep river gorges isolate it from the rest of the country. Communications with other
provinces were relatively undeveloped at this time, and only one road connected
Faizabad, the center of Badakhshan, with other provinces. Most of the population lived in
small, remote villages and imported and exported goods by pack animal. Historically, opium from Badakhshan was traded to areas in western China. But when the border
closed in 1949 traders shifted emphasis to the region, and began selling market goods to
local communities. This had a major impact on farmers. The increasing demand for
market goods led many farmers to devote more land to grow opium as a cash crop.

Most other provinces in Afghanistan had relatively diverse economies, but Badakhshan

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depended on thousands of small farms that cultivated and harvested opium. The opium harvest was especially important for the roughly 15,000 migrant workers who came down from the hills to harvest poppies in March and April each year. Unlike wheat and barley farms, the opium harvest required a great deal of labor. And for most migrant workers, the poppy harvest was the only way to earn cash, which was vital for the purchase of supplies to survive the long cold winters. Although the Afghan government knew that opium was an important crop in Badakhshan, it was intent on making a bold statement to the international community. Thus, it targeted the one province where the new ban would have its most significant and visible impact.

The opium ban went into effect on March 21, 1958, stopping all opium cultivation on the nearly 3,000 small opium farmers in the districts around Faizabad, Jurm, and Kishim. All farmers who were licensed by the state were forced to transition to wheat and barley, and unlicensed farmers were being forced to transition as well.²²² According to US and UN officials, the opium ban was relatively well received by local farmers and government officials. Two village conferences were held between Afghan government officials and local village and tribal leaders, and according to US representatives at the meeting, most farmers accepted the opium ban and agreed to work with Afghan officials to stop opium cultivation.²²³

The response from the international media was positive. The London Times summarized the plight of the people of Badakhshan but was quick to frame the importance of the anti-opium law, especially given the recent trend by Asian producer states to prohibit opium production. It stated: “The Afghan Government has boldly

²²² Ibid. (3-4)
decided to ban the cultivation and export of opium. It will not be an easy decision to implement in such a country, where it is not the population’s addiction to the drug that it is the problem so much as the livelihood of those who grow poppy in places where few other crops are possible. But the intention must be welcomed and aided.”

The eradication of opium was remarkably effective. The government eradicated opium throughout the province, ceasing production in all major opium growing regions of Badakhshan. According to US officials, farmers took the prohibition in stride as they shifted to new crops. However, reading between the lines, it is hard to believe that farmers were so easily convinced by the government to accommodate the eradication, especially given the fact that the government was more representative of distant Pashtun and Kabul interests. Rather, it is more likely that American and Afghan officials understood the delicacy of this action, and were less inclined to highlight the potential controversies of forcibly eradicating a crop so vital to the region. Furthermore, the effectiveness of the eradication had severe consequences for much of the region. The 15,000 migrant workers and their families who depended on the opium harvest, estimated between 75,000 and 100,000 people in all (10 percent of the total population in Badakhshan), suffered tremendously from the prohibition. The plight of the migrant worker typified the critical state of the Badakhshan economy. In a matter of a few months tens of thousands of people in Badakhshan were unemployed. To make matters worse, there was absolutely nothing to replace the employment offered by the opium harvest. During the warm summer months it was only a matter of work, but by fall, the lack of jobs was fast becoming a matter of life and death.

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Afghan and US officials recognized the urgency of the situation shortly after the implementation of the ban; tens of thousands of Afghans were without work and could no longer provide for themselves or their families, and faced the possibility of famine during the winter. The UN Technical Assistance Mission and various Afghan government departments contributed materials and advisers to boost agricultural output. The public works department of Afghanistan recommended improving the road into Badakhshan, completing the irrigation canal in Faizabad, and improving the airstrip. Yet the Afghan government had no funds to act on these recommendations. For both the Afghan government and the UN, the recommendations of each would take time and failed to deal with the immediate issues facing many in the province.225

In April Afghan officials approached the UN in hopes of getting aid for the farmers and workers in Badakhshan. While the UN agreed that aid was needed to help the people of Badakhshan, negotiating who would coordinate aid and how it would be dispersed took time. Dr. Abdul H. Tabibi, Afghan delegate to the UN, tried to appeal to Harry Anslinger to advocate for some expediency.226 Anslinger responded: “Will you kindly send me a proposal covering the assistance that you desire in the area. This should be very specific in relation to the amount needed for an agricultural or other project you have in view and should be in complete detail in relation to funds required for this purpose.”227 Anslinger was dragging his feet. Why is not entirely clear but it took three months for Anslinger to respond to Tabibi’s initial request. It is unlikely that Anslinger

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225 Ibid. (2)
wanted to make the thousands of inhabitants of Badakhshan suffer, but given his obvious vexation over the Afghans before the prohibition, willfully delaying action seemed highly predictable.

As various departments haggled over the details and official protocols, the issue of Badakhshan soon gained substantial international attention. The *New York Times* looked at the serious danger facing the thousands of farmers and migrant workers now without their primary source of income. In Badakhshan, “there 100,000 persons, prohibited by law from growing the opium that has sustained them and their ancestors for centuries, are threatened with destitution…unless the loss of revenue from the highly remunerative opium crop can be at least partially offset.”

Although not critical of US anti-narcotics policies, the article was quick to advocate assistance to Badakhshan. The potential for the Badakhshan prohibition becoming a humanitarian disaster was tangible. And for the US, blood would be on its hands.

It was not until October, a few weeks before the harsh Afghan winter began, that the State Department pushed for a more urgent response to potential and expected requests for Afghan aid. US officials knew that the political backlash from the opium prohibition leading to a famine was quickly becoming a reality. The US did not want the people of Badakhshan to starve for a policy that largely reflected American wishes. State Department officials suggested that Afghanistan file for a P.L. 480 designation, otherwise known as the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954. P.L. 480 would approve urgent US aid to Badakhshan. One of the major stipulations was that Afghanistan had to make a formal request, and for this to happen a prominent US official

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knowledgeable about the issues in Afghanistan would have to advocate on its behalf. The State Department immediately turned to Anslinger, feeling that he was “deeply interested in Afghanistan retaining the ban on opium production…you might be prepared to support the recommendation that Afghanistan be furnished appropriate assistance.”

Afghanistan had requested aid through the UN but did not specifically seek aid from the US. The State and Agriculture Departments were prepared to distribute aid to Afghanistan at a moment’s notice but awaited on official request from the Afghan government. On the contrary, US embassy officials in Kabul noted that the Afghan government was fully prepared to distribute its own aid regardless of the availability of US aid. But no one was sure what the Afghans were thinking. Between the various departments, urgency was palpable. However, to avoid a political disaster, someone needed to spearhead the cause, and in this case, most fingers pointed at Anslinger and the Bureau of Narcotics.

As a part of the Treasury Department, the Federal Bureau of Narcotics faced increasing scrutiny. Assistant Secretary of the Treasury A. Gilmore Flues figured prominently in the urgent push for Afghan aid. Flues sent letters to the heads of the Departments of State and Agriculture as well as the International Cooperation Administration (ICA) to garner support for Afghan aid. He wrote to the Department of Agriculture, which was responsible for P.L. 480:

This Government, it seems to me, has some moral obligation to help in the situation since over the past several years, through our Bureau of

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Narcotics and our representatives at the international conferences on illicit narcotics problems, we have urged Afghanistan to suppress the growth of the opium poppy and to prevent its opium production from falling into the hands of the traffickers of illicit narcotics. This is a case where the Afghan Government has succeeded just too well.\(^{231}\)

Flues noted that even if the Afghan government could provide aid on its own, it would still lose any surplus resources of grain, thus further straining its already depleted stocks. Flues undoubtedly felt responsible in some degree for the desperate state of Afghanistan. Not long after his letters Harry Anslinger followed suit, mostly reiterating the sentiments of Flues.\(^{232}\)

By mid-November all of the various departments were prepared to act on behalf of Afghanistan. But Afghanistan had yet to make a formal request to the US government for aid.\(^{233}\) The Afghan government’s mixed messages to the US, such as those from Tabibi, and its seeming lack of urgency toward the Badakhshan issue were largely a result from Afghan plans to depend on the P.L. 480. The Afghan government planned to use its existing wheat stocks to alleviate the most immediate issues, hoping that the P.L. 480 would be used to refill its depleted reserves.\(^{234}\) This was the plan all along, but the failure of US and Afghan officials to meet over the issue prevented a highly coordinated effort. The US, on the other hand, was more concerned with the global implications if it

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\(^{233}\) International Cooperation Administration. “Letter to Gilford Flues, from Deputy Director Fitzgerald.” November 12, 1958. RG 170, Ibid.

sent aid without a formal Afghan request. Most US officials feared that sending a large contingency of US officials to the province, which borders the Soviet Union, would raise big concerns for both Russians and Afghans. And if the US did not adequately respond to Afghan requests, it would push Afghanistan further into the Soviet sphere.

As 1958 came to an end and winter approached the US and Afghan governments seemed comforted in the steps taken to stop both opium production and avert an international relations tragedy. Food aid was provided to those in need, and opium was no longer the primary crop in Badakhshan. They also laid plans to provide a long-term solution to the Badakhshan problem. With the help of the UN, the Afghan government enacted a five-year plan to provide the population of Badakhshan with alternative livelihoods. The government would provide food, clothing, shelter, healthcare and residential facilities for inhabitants of former opium growing regions. The government also took on the task of enforcing the broader aims of stopping the traffic of opium. Immediate concern was placed on the cannabis trade, which most UN officials assumed would grow in size in the absence of opium.

But as the years followed and the development that had been promised to the region failed to come, opium cultivation reemerged throughout the region. British observers noted that opium was the only cash crop in the region, and that many of the small plots of cultivable land were devoted exclusively to opium. The reemergence of opium in Badakhshan forces use to ask why the prohibition failed, but why and how opium cultivation responded, if at all, to the impact of Musahiban policies in the region?

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Conclusion: Reading Between the Lines and the Meanings of the Opium Ban

This chapter explores how and why the Musahiban government launched a ban on the production and trade of opium in Badakhshan. I have shown that this opium ban was unlike any other social policy enacted by Musahiban leadership to date. The use of force to stop the production of a culturally accepted commodity with significant value to the local population was enacted not out of goodwill or a sense of benevolent humanitarianism, but rather because it allowed the state to project power in a way that would garner increased foreign assistance without instigating the vital Pashtun tribal base. Historically, drug laws have been about social and political problems concerning state’s desires to control certain groups of people, not the drugs themselves. However, analyzing the 1958 prohibition of opium in Badakhshan sheds light on how the production and trade of opium responded to the political and social interactions between the Musahiban government and the people of Badakhshan, and such interactions reinforce the mutual constitutive relationship between opium and state building.

Part of the reason opium production resumed after the ban in 1958 stems from how the Afghan government, as well as the US and UN, misunderstood the role of opium in Badakhshan. For people in Badakhshan, opium had a variety of uses. Opium was a vital source of nutrition, as many farmers used poppy seeds to make breads and oils. It

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237 Virginia Berridge notes that when the British government passed the 1868 Poisons and Pharmaceutical Act restricting certain uses of opium, fear of opium did not stem from the drug itself. In most cases, drug use was common, normal, if not entirely necessary to survive. Rather, the regulation of certain types of opium stemmed from middle class fears of the working class migrant labor groups, who commonly used opium because they did not have access to or could not afford more formalized medical care. (Berridge. “Victorian Opium Eaters.”)
was also used to make soap. More important, opium was an essential medicine. For a region so isolated from the rest of the country, health care was a serious problem. Opium provided people with a way to treat the symptoms of various diseases, as well as stave off persistent hunger. Therefore much of the understanding of why opium was so widespread in the region rested on culturally misinformed tropes regarding the use of opium.

Such misinterpretations as to why opium was widespread in Badakhshan reinforce how cultural misperceptions of opium use influenced American and eventually Afghan drug control policies. American perspectives have been shaped by a history of seeing opium as nothing more than a social vice. When American missionaries went to the Philippines in 1898 to assess the extent and impact of opium use, they failed to see that many Chinese and Filipinos were trying to use opium revenue to build schools, hospitals, and infrastructure that local and colonial governments failed to do. Rather, the Americans viewed opium only through a dialectical lens, a matter of good versus evil, and organized governments to introduce international legislation against opium, despite its seemingly benevolent uses for people in the Philippines.238

The UN and US could not see opium’s utility in anything other than as an addictive drug, concluding that the wide scale cultivation, trade, and use of opium in Badakhshan was due primarily to ‘social addiction.’239 They described social addiction as a “mass phenomena, where the taking of the drug is socially acceptable in the community, and is to a large extent due to stresses caused by factors such as exhaustion,

hunger, and poverty." But they failed to interpret opium use anything more than a social vice, justified by the deplorable social and economic conditions. Therefore, given the American one-dimensional view of opium, it is easy to see why the Americans conceived of the extensive production of opium as indicators of both widespread addiction, as well as a threat to neighboring regions.

Such cultural misinterpretations of opium use between western and Persian societies were not, however, unique to history. In Safavid Iran, the medicinal, spiritual, and recreational uses of opium were often indistinguishable, making it hard for European observers to determine the extent, let alone the existence, of addiction. Although many members of the Afghan government understood that opium was used for a variety of purposes beyond getting high, they certainly perpetuated, if not reinforced, American misperceptions of opium addiction to serve immediate political purposes. By elevating the fear of addiction in Badakhsan as well as its potential to spread throughout the region, Daud played to the emotional heart-strings of the Americans. This gave Daud the justification to exert pressure in a region that had a small Pashtun population, and therefore posed very little threat to Kabul.

The larger question is what impact this prohibition had on the future of the opium

240 United Nations. “Draft: 1958 UN Report: Afghanistan.” 1958. (12) RG 170, Ibid. The common solution for social addiction was to raise the standard of living, which the five-year plan would ideally address. The UN believed that the social addiction to opium was the biggest concern for the long-term opium suppression in Badakhshan, and it placed priority on social policies tied to the opium prohibition. In many ways, the UN was right to conclude that the success of the opium prohibition depended largely on the state’s ability to develop economic, social, and political infrastructures in Badakshan. But, this would require a much greater effort on the part of Musahiban government to develop an isolated and ethnically unimportant province.

trade and state-society relations in Badakhsan. I argue that as the Musahiban government implemented and enforced a drug policy that conflicted with local norms of opium production, use, and trade, the drug ban reinforced the profound disconnect between the people of Badakhshan and the Afghan government. By defining the opium trade as illegal, the Mushiban government was projecting its authority and further shaping the contours of what was legal or illegal, right or wrong. But as Itty Abraham and Willem van Schendel state, drug laws are “relational, culturally inflected, and act asymmetrically along the contours of power and social mores. Legal restrictions often come up against socially sanctioned practices, and while this may have the effect of driving these practices into the sphere of criminality, it does not eliminate them nor does it necessarily force them into hiding.”\(^{242}\) The imposition of halting a culturally accepted practice and trade, without enacting other social and economic policies that would have mitigated its loss, served to only elevate the role of opium in supplementing that which the government could not, it also exacerbated the preexisting cultural and political schisms. In other words, although the state defined opium as illegal, and stopped its production (temporarily), the opium trade would continue, in contravention to the distant and foreign government.

The broader cultural and political issues inherent in the Musahiban government’s relations with the people of Badakhshan also reinforced the cultural issues surrounding the opium trade. This stemmed from the structural and cultural contours of state relations in Badakhshan. Structurally, the government was not integrated into Badakhshan.

Thomas Barfield noted that in neighboring Qataghan locals had similar experiences in dealing with the Afghan government. Afghan “officials were part of the national system which was laid on top of the area it administered but which was not organically linked to it. Afghan officials looked upon residents as ruler to subject, not as public official to citizen.”

One British observer described the government in Badakhshan simply as an “instrument of oppression from which there is no redress.” Furthermore, the rampant corruption and oppression that often characterized the local government was mainly a product of the cultural gaps underscoring state relations. Tajiks, as well as Uzbeks and Kirghiz populated Badakhshan. Although Tajiks were a majority in the north, state officials were overwhelmingly Pashtun and often overt in their favoritism of policies that reinforced Pashtun hegemony. The role of tribal influence in the state was so profound that in northern Afghanistan the word *Afghan* was synonymous with *Pashtun*. Thus, for the Musahiban government it was much easier to justify a prohibition of opium in Badakhshan given the lack of ethnic concern.

The ban on opium in Badakhshan also reveals a paradox in the mutually constitutive relationship between opium and state building. Enforcing a ban in Badakhshan was an important, if not convenient move, on the part of Daud and the Afghan government. Its implementation was closely tied to the role of foreign aid in the design of the Musahiban state. But the use of coercive force (reinforcing the cultural and political disconnect of the state) to enforce state law and the lack of infrastructural

245 Barfield. (160)
development reinforced many of the reasons local residents of Badakhshan grew, traded, and used opium in the first place. The success of the opium prohibition and its enduring production and trade were also connected to how the Musahiban government was designed, where it got its money, and how it intended to wield its power and influence.

When Daud came to power in 1953 the state was increasingly financed by foreign revenue and developed into a rentier state. The problem with this was that development was contingent on the amount of aid received by a foreign donor. The ability to develop Afghanistan was only as good as the state’s ability to maintain support for its aid programs. The design of development programs was also greatly influenced by foreign powers. Many state planners, under the guidance of both Soviet and American officials, did not recognize the importance of agriculture as the foundation of the national economy, and instead put overwhelming emphasis on manufacturing and industry. Thus, rural Afghanistan was increasingly marginalized by the designs of its own state.

Although the Musahiban was increasingly reliant on foreign aid there remained a significant issue of retaining aid consistently. As Richard Newell states: “Donors are convinced that Afghanistan is important enough- largely because of its strategic location- to try to influence, but is not valuable enough to risk domination.” In other words, nations would donate money and resources to influence the country, to draw it into their sphere of influence, but were not willing to make Afghanistan an exclusive part of their

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247 Rubin. (69)
The opium ban was an important step in the American vision for global drug control. But its lasting success required substantial improvements to the country, and to Badakhshan more specifically. The Musahiban could not get access to the amounts of money they desired from the US to make develop Badakhshan. Daud’s reigniting of the Pashtunistan issue was leading to major diplomatic breakdowns with Pakistan and the US, and was reinforced by his growing relationship with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, even if Daud could get American money, it is likely it would have gone to the Helmand Valley, where the US had already begun a massive agro-industrial project in the Pashtun dominated area, and not to Badakhshan.

And herein lies the paradox. The more Daud implemented culturally misinformed and divisive policies, such as the opium ban in Badakhshan, the more local residents either became disaffected by or ignored state policy altogether. The only viable solution was to provide the economic and political infrastructural improvements to alleviate the needs of those who took part in the opium trade and to improve political relationships between the state and local inhabitants. This, of course, never happened. Thus, the more Daud pushed for drug prohibition, using force to eliminate a culturally accepted and economically vital commodity, while neglecting the broader economic and political improvements needed in Badakhshan, the more he de-legitimized the role of the state, ultimately creating the economic, political and cultural environment for the people of Badakhshan to continue to grow and trade opium in the future.

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250 Afghans also resisted such attempts to be exclusive to one foreign patron.
251 Badakhshan was structurally poor, and the possibility of a large agro-industrial project like that in Helmand was limited.
By the 1960s, people in Badakhshan, as well as in many other parts of rural Afghanistan, were increasingly prepared to defend their local communities in the face of a government whose rule proved increasingly contentious. Opium, on the other hand, continued to grow and expand. The question was whether or not the government could, or even desired, to stop it.
Chapter 3: Democracy, Smuggling, and Tourism: the Globalization of the Afghan Opium Trade in the 1960s

Following the 1958 Prohibition, both Afghanistan and the United States heralded the law as a successful example of US-Afghan cooperation in anti-narcotic matters. However, neither side seemed to recognize the fundamental flaws in endeavoring to eliminate opium in Badakhshan, or Afghanistan for that matter. The potential success of the prohibition was predicated on the state successfully transforming the social, economic, and political environment in the province, as well as the country. However, during the 1960s, the hopes of building a modern Islamic state were lost amidst the fray of an increasingly hostile political environment, both in Afghanistan and globally.

The political dynamics in Afghanistan during the 1960s reflected the growing dysfunction characterizing the Musahiban government and, more important, signaled the beginning of Afghan opium’s entry into the global illicit narcotics market. In this chapter, I examine the three major factors from the local, regional, and global levels, that transformed the economic and political role of opium in Afghanistan in the 1960s, initiating its emerging role in the global market for narcotics. First, the increasing political conflict in Afghanistan furthered the disconnect between Afghan citizens and the Musahiban government. Policies aimed at modernizing Afghanistan were becoming increasingly contentious, especially as the economy stagnated and the government became increasingly dysfunctional. In response to growing frustration (especially with
the policies of Daud, such as the Pashtunistan policy) Musahiban leadership democratized Afghan politics, launching the Decade of Democracy (1963-1973). The policy shift was intended to bridge the gap between the disillusioned populace and the state. However, the opening of political dialogue led to expressions of widespread discontent and anger. Various political factions emerged emboldened by the state’s continual mishandling of its domestic and foreign affairs. For many Afghans, the deepening political and economic crisis indirectly pushed them toward the opium trade.

In the second part of the chapter, I analyze how regional factors, especially the growing use of Afghan opium in Iran, had a profound impact on the growth of the Afghan drug trade. The attempts to curb illicit use and smuggling prompted the Shah’s government to reintroduce state regulated opium production and distribution in 1969 alongside draconian penalties against drug smugglers. Despite this policy change Afghan opium became the primary source for illicit opium use in Iran by the end of the 1960s. Although Afghans had a long history of smuggling contraband into Iran, something was different this time around: Iran was not only emerging as a major market for Afghan drugs, but was also becoming a significant transit point for drugs heading to emergent markets in Europe and America. I demonstrate that Iran became a key link in an otherwise burgeoning commodity chain that linked Afghanistan to new markets, transformed the regional trade, and ultimately led to the early globalization of the Afghan drug trade.252

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252 For insight into commodity chains and their relations to international crime and regulation, see Immanuel Wallerstein and Terrance Hopkins, “Commodity Chains: Construct and Research.” In Commodity Chains and Global Capitalism, edited by Gary Gereffi and M. Koreniewicz. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.)
Adding to Afghan opium’s transformation into a global commodity was the influence of Western European and American tourists traveling to Afghanistan. What began as drug tourists traveling to Southwest Asia to experiment with narcotics evolved into something entirely different: Afghanistan was increasingly inundated with entrepreneurial drug traffickers. These new traffickers established important physical links between opium (and hash) producers in southwest Asia and the ever-increasing consumer markets in the west. Although the quantities of narcotics shipped from the region to the west were nominal during the late-1960s compared with later years, I argue that these amateur traffickers, like the Afghan smugglers in Iran, established important links from Afghanistan to the west, setting the foundation for the expansion of the Afghan drug trade in the future.

In conclusion, analyzing Afghanistan in the 1960s forces us to ask how exactly global, regional, and even domestic forces impacted the transformation of opium as a global commodity. I argue that this period was instrumental to the future of the Afghan drug trade for two major reasons. First, drug tourists increased awareness about Afghanistan’s drug trade and in the process forged vital links between Afghan opium (and hash) producers and markets abroad. The early formulation of this commodity chain between Afghanistan and markets to the west (Iran and Europe/America) linked geographically segregated regions of supply and demand, transforming production, and consumption in the process. Second, this chain also carried social, political, and

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253 This chapter borrows heavily from the work of Paul Gootenberg (Andean Cocaine. Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008). Examining how hash and opium trades were impacted by local, regional, and global factors unveils the intricacies that are at the heart of understanding commodity chains.
cultural meanings. As the presence of western tourists increased, Afghans became increasingly aware of the lucrative potential of the drug trade. I argue that although opium and hash were illegal, they emerged during this period as viable commodities to be traded on the global market. The viability of these commodities only increased as the rest of the Afghan economy struggled and social and political conflict continued. Ultimately, the growing drug trade in Afghanistan and its increasing connections to markets abroad indicate how the opium trade both responded to and influenced the political and social environment, reinforcing the mutually constitutive relationship between state formation (characterized by the increasingly dysfunctional policies of the government) and opium.

**Democracy Now!**

Afghanistan’s attempt to modernize the country through democratizing the political process unleashed a wave of fervent and increasingly virulent political discussion during the 1960s. Often referred to as the Decade of Democracy (1963-1973) that followed the ouster of Daud in 1963, the ideal trajectory of Afghan development and modernization that had guided its leaders since the reign of Amanullah came under intense scrutiny from the increasingly popular and vocal left-leaning political parties, as well as from conservative tribal leaders. King Zahir Shah initiated democratization of Afghan politics in 1963 with the hope that opening democratic

254 Mintz, Sydney. *Sweetness and Power: the Place of Sugar in Modern History.* New York: Viking, 1985. Mintz demonstrates that the links forged between production and consumption carried remarkable social, political, and cultural weight. Particularly for the British, the increasing consumption of sugar was emblematic of the transformation of social life, the confirmation of the superiority of the British empire, and benefits of global capitalism.

channels, such as reforming the electoral process and promoting free speech, would unify the country and ultimately lead to modernity. Known as the Dimukrasi-yi Naw (Democracy Now) movement, it emboldened large numbers of students from the politics of the previous regime. Daud’s authoritarianism and his hard-line Pashtunistan policy had seemingly trumped the various successes he accumulated by modernizing the political and economic infrastructure of the country, and by 1963 many Afghans were united in their opposition to his rule. To change course King Zahir Shah forced Daud to resign and appointed Dr. Muhammad Yusuf as Prime Minister. Yusuf’s plan to change the country centered on constitutional reforms and a more representative government.

The shining achievement of Yusuf’s reforms was the 1964 constitution. On October 1, 1964, after long and contentious deliberations, both the parliament and the Loya Jirgah accepted the new constitution, and Zahir Shah signed it into law. Soon after ratification its many flaws became evident. Some fundamental problems centered not on longstanding frictions between the state and tribal authorities but rather structural flaws, which created the potential for future political conflicts. Two articles in particular stood out. Article 15 both granted the king absolute authority and required him to abstain from politics. Article 24 prevented any member of the royal family, including Daud, from getting involved in politics. Both articles played a major role in alienating Daud from the king and royal family. As a result, Daud became an increasingly active figure in the

258 Babar. (112)
259 Da Afghanistan Kalinah/Salnanah (Yearbook), 1964. Ministry of Information and Culture, Kabul. (57) quoted in Babar, (135)
political conflicts in Kabul, culminating in the coup of 1973. More important, the new constitution also changed the structural components of the government. Former US diplomat and Afghan historian Leon Poullada points out that the new constitution isolated the legislative and executive branches, allowing the parliament to impede any executive action, essentially immobilizing the political process.

However, the increased political dialogue resulting from the Democracy Now movement generated very little attention outside Kabul. Most rural Afghans were illiterate and "knew little and cared even less about the new constitution and New Democracy." Most preferred to avoid government interaction at all costs. Some, however, were keen to use the democratization of politics to advocate limiting government intervention in rural areas, such as taxes. In the cities, on the other hand, the growing intelligentsia was enveloped by democratization. Most visible were leftist intellectuals, many of whom wanted greater participation in creating and implementing policy. Although political parties were outlawed by the constitution, it could not prevent their formation. Most of these parties used the new political system to put supporters into key positions of power and to further their particular agendas.

By 1965, the new democracy in Afghanistan exposed the hard realities facing the government: modernization was ill-conceived and ineffective; the economy was failing;

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260 Babar. (136)
262 Babar. (139) This is not surprising. Most rural Afghans thought the state to be just as foreign an entity as the American and Russian delegations that largely supported them.
263 Dupree. Afghanistan. (589) Many of them were socialists, Marxists, and communists, such as Babrak Karmal and Nur Ahmad Taraki, and played major roles in the coup of 1973, the Saur Revolution in 1978, and the eventual invasion by the Soviets in 1979.
264 Babar. (143) citing Mir Mohammad Siddiq Farhang. Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-i Akhir.
the state was corrupt; the gap between rural poor and the urban communities was increasing; and beneath the veneer of hope behind the democratization movement deep-rooted political tensions started to boil over. Leftist groups and leaders, especially Babrak Karmal, openly began to express not just frustration but also anger and rage toward the government. Social and political conditions around the country gave many critics of the government plenty of ammunition. As a result, various newspapers began decrying the government policies.

The newspaper *Afghan Millat* became a leading critic of the government. The newspaper was largely pro-Afghan, pro-Pashtunistan and often denounced the role of foreign powers, particularly the British, the US, and Iran, in Afghanistan. The newspaper especially emphasized corruption.265 In its March 28, 1967 it stated: “In present modern countries persons must acquire high ranking jobs on the basis of education and capability and not on the basis of family connections, riches, giving bribes and parties.”266 Various cartoons criticized the government for everything from corruption in the economy (Image 1) to increasing poverty among the rural and poor (image 2).

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Ibid. (12)
At one point, Millat even suggested, “a dictatorship with a stomach full of naan is better than a naanless and unfair democracy as this.” Millat, like many other periodicals of this period, became increasingly critical of the government and its policies. The young

269 State Dept. “Afghan Millat: Summary.” (6)
intellectuals who wrote for such periodicals found their influence was confined mostly to
the literate urban populations, not necessarily the country as a whole. Their views were
important nonetheless. These cartoons reflected the growing political and social unrest
that came to embody the era of democracy.

Criticism of the government was not confined to assaults from the press, but was
increasingly voiced by youth and student groups in Kabul. The various attempts by
Babrak Karmal and other leftist leaders to intrude on formal parliamentary processes
were becoming increasingly violent by the fall of 1965. The Siyyum-i Agrab (October 25)
tragedy became a galvanizing point for various political groups opposing the government.
On October 25 students marched on parliament, clashing with police along the way.
When students approached the house of Prime Minister Muhammad Yusuf, Afghan
troops fired on the crowd of nearly 2,000 students, killing three and wounding many
more.270 The tragedy led King Zahir Shah to force Yusuf to resign as prime minister.

For many, the Siyyum-I Agrab tragedy and Yusuf’s resignation marked the end of
an optimistic era. Although the new constitution and increasing freedom of expression
were welcome signs, the outpouring of grievances toward the government signified its
waning legitimacy. In rural Afghanistan, tribal authorities increasingly believed that the
government’s modernization program was no longer targeting rural Afghanistan, only the
cities. To the chieftains the balance of power was shifting heavily in favor of Kabul.271

270 Babar. (143) citing Mir Mohammad Siddiq Farhang. Afghanistan Dar Panj Qarn-i
Akhir. (747) According to Farhang the primary instigator of the incident was the Hizb-I
Demukratik-I Khalq-I Afghanistan (Peoples Party of Afghanistan). According to
Farhang, Karmal wanted to discredit democracy by initiating violence against the state.
271 Babar. (160) This certainly presents a strange paradox. Typically, tribal authorities
were suspicious and actively resisted the state’s attempt to modernize rural Afghanistan.
Yet by the 60s and with the brief glimmer of hope in the democracy movement, some
On the other hand, for many in urban Afghanistan, the reforms and policies of the government were simply too slow. With poverty, corruption, and violence increasing by the day, modernization, like democracy, had to happen now.\textsuperscript{272}

The successive governments of Mohammad Maiwandal (October 1963-November 1967), Nur Ahmad Itimadi (November 1967-July 1971) and Dr. Abdul Zahir (July 71-September 1972) each faced increasing waves of student unrest. Both Maiwandal and Itimadi tried hard to maintain stable political environments, but the violent interactions between state and people increased rapidly.\textsuperscript{273} A major cause of increasing tension between state and students was the increasingly socialist tendency of student groups. Although not pure communists who articulated higher notions of class struggle in an industrial society, students were responding to social and political inequities that they saw as consequences of religious fanaticism or Western economic exploitation.\textsuperscript{274}

Dr. Abdul Zahir, appointed prime minister in July 1971, faced a dire situation that further intensified criticism and anger toward the government. In 1971 a severe drought was followed by widespread flooding, culminating in a devastating famine. Rural areas were hardest hit. News reports cited examples of farmers selling their livestock, even their children, to survive.\textsuperscript{275} The slow response by the government in distributing aid and widespread corruption involving the selling of food aid created immense anger at

\textsuperscript{272} Ibid. (160)
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid. (221)
\textsuperscript{274} Dupree. \textit{Afghanistan.} (620)
\textsuperscript{275} \textit{Kabul Times.} August 4, 1971.
government officials.\textsuperscript{276} Most Afghans were becoming increasingly desperate. Student groups in Kabul openly attacked government authorities while in rural Afghanistan, thieves and bandits killed foreigners.\textsuperscript{277} By 1972, Afghanistan was ablaze in political, economic, and social strife. The democratization of Afghan politics had rendered the already weak Afghan government increasingly dysfunctional. The corruption and oppression that characterized the Musahiban state remained. But now Afghan citizens increasingly recognized the relationship between the government and their own marginalized political (and social and economic) positions. By the end of the Decade of Democracy a cohesive and unified Afghanistan was nothing more than a dream.

The political chaos of the 1960s in Afghanistan was important for the rise of opium in two ways. First, the widespread disdain for the government was a consequence of the increasingly dysfunctional policies of the state. The reactions of both urban and rural groups during the democracy movement reflected growing frustrations with the Musahiban government. Second, and conversely, the increasing chaos exacerbated pre-existing tensions between the Musahiban government and the Afghan people, leading to a cascade of social and political unrest. These factors contributed, albeit tacitly, to both the end of the royal dynasty and the spread of opium production. More important, opium’s ascendancy resulted from not just internal factors but also from the increasing impact of regional and global factors.

**Rekindling an Old Flame: Iran and the Afghan Opium Industry**

\textsuperscript{276} Babar. (237)
\textsuperscript{277} Musavat. November 16, 1971.
After the coup of 1953, the Shah of Iran sought to bolster the military, the gendarmerie, and the state bureaucracy as a means of consolidating state control.\textsuperscript{278} The Shah had long history of working with the US on various regional and global issues, and grew to depend on American aid and investment to expand state power.\textsuperscript{279} His willingness to cooperate on various issues such as narcotics control was natural. As discussed in the previous chapter, Iran had a long and complicated history of opium production and consumption. In 1955, the Iranian government estimated there were close to 2.8 million opium addicts in the country, consuming nearly 2 tons of opium a day.\textsuperscript{280} Even though opium was a fundamental component of life in Iran,\textsuperscript{281} the Shah imposed an absolute ban on production, consumption, and trade of opium in 1955.\textsuperscript{282}

His justification for launching the ban was likely more than a purely benevolent act to alleviate what was becoming a serious social dilemma; rather, it was a step to expand further his control over the population. Nonetheless certain aspects of the ban were sensitive to the plight of both farmers and users of opium. Addicts were granted six-months to overcome their addictions.\textsuperscript{283} Farmers were given long-term assistance for alternative crops.\textsuperscript{284} Although the law made all opium illegal, it was biased toward

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\textsuperscript{281} Matthee, Rudi. \textit{Pursuit of Pleasure}. Matthee notes that opium was used throughout Iran, rarely limited by class, gender, or ethnicity.
\textsuperscript{282} McLaughlin and Quinn. (491)
\textsuperscript{283} McLaughlin and Quinn. (492) From Law of October 7, 1955. UN Document E/NL.1956/1, 1956. (art. 2)
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid. (art 3)
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addicts who had been supplied with government opium. Dealing with illicit and unregulated opium was a different matter altogether.

In 1959 the government passed a second statute to increase punitive measures against the continued cultivation and use of opium. Specifically, the new law incorporated elements intended to deal exclusively with illicit drug smuggling. Article 8 of the law stated that if “the person in whose possession narcotics are detected is not the owner, but is merely a carrier for some other person, the former shall be regarded as the accessory and the latter as the principal.” Both the 1955 and 1959 laws were intended to reduce the supply and demand for opium. Whether they succeeded was another matter.

Cultivation and certain types of consumption decreased or were put under greater control by the government. Larger and larger swaths of opium producing land were eradicated each year, and most opium dens were abolished. However, as McLaughlin and Quinn stated, “If the government’s policies in banning opium cultivation and in closing opium dens can be characterized as successful, its policy-objective of containing smuggling ended in failure.” What the government accomplished was the suppression

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286 Ibid. (494)
287 Ibid. (494)
288 Ibid. (495)
289 Ibid. (495) McLaughlin and Quinn attribute this failure to the lack of border control by both the Turkish and Afghan governments. This is problematic in assuming that border control actually works, and that the governments in each case were capable of deterring smuggling. The Afghan government could hardly control its urban populations; how was it going to stop the rural traders? And given the long history of smuggling by Afghan tribes into Iran, their indifference to opium and authority, and the incredibly harsh and vast terrain of the Afghan borders, the Afghan state had very little chance.
of previously government-sanctioned production and traffic. What the ban had not done was decrease the demand of an estimated 2.5 million addicts. This created a prime opportunity for growers and traders. Not only was there massive demand for Afghan opium, but also its illegality made it far more lucrative than ever before.

As McLaughlin and Quinn note, the 1955 and 1959 laws had misidentified the nature of the opium industry in Iran. The government of Iran “had conceived of the opium problem as a self-contained medical-social problem. The opium consumed in Iran was mainly grown in Iran and distributed by Iranians,” and “the strategy might have worked had Iran been an island,” but “Iran did not exist in isolation, and programs directed at what superficially appeared to be a purely domestic concern carried international consequences.” By 1960, the obvious international dynamic of Iran’s drug problem prompted the Iranian government to approach the US for greater financial and technical support for its border patrols and gendarmerie, as well as diplomatic support to conjure greater regional cooperation from governments tied to Iran’s opium industry, mainly Turkey and Afghanistan.

US assistance to Iran for military and policing matters began as early as 1942 when the famed US General Norman Schwarzkopf was sent to Iran to help bolster the

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290 Ibid. (497)
291 Ibid. (496)
292 Ibid. (497)
294 Not to be confused with General Norman Schwarzkopf Jr, famous for the invasion of Iraq in the 1990s.
Imperial Iranian Gendarmerie (IIG). The program was called the GENMISH program. Through the 1940s and a large part of the 1950s, GENMISH worked on training and literacy. However, in 1959, after repeated failures by customs guards and Army patrols to impede smugglers, the IIG and GENMISH were sent to the borders to act as the primary anti-smuggling units. GENMISH incorporated various American anti-narcotics agents in its training of IIG personnel to increase the efficacy of anti-smuggling operations. Simultaneously, the US granted Iran significant increases in military aid, providing new planes, helicopters, and motorcycles to the IIG. The Shah was undoubtedly concerned with the increases in smuggling which by 1959, were readily apparent. However, the appearance of heroin on the streets of Tehran prompted renewed efforts by both the Shah and the US to stop all illicit traffic in opium as soon as possible. In major districts along the borders of Turkey, Pakistan, and Afghanistan IIG and GENMISH anti-smuggling squads were established, armed with Alsatian dogs from West Germany, to counteract the growing wave of opium into Iran.

The fears of Iranian and American anti-narcotics officials were warranted given the increased smuggling into Iran. For example, in 1961, two Germans were arrested in Karachi, Pakistan with two pounds of heroin. The details of the arrest corroborated concerns of US anti-narcotic officials that the connections between Afghanistan and Iran

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296 Ibid. (17)
297 Ibid. (18)
298 The IIG seized all sorts of illicit goods, everything from opium and hash to caviar and sturgeon. By 1960, IIG officials along the eastern border were increasingly aware of the growing presence of Afghan opium and Afghan smugglers.
were real and growing; the heroin was believed to be from Afghanistan, processed somewhere along the Afghan-Pakistan border, with the intent to smuggle and distribute in Iran.  By 1964 concerns that Afghan opium would fill the hole left by the Shah’s prohibition of opium was a reality. Nearly five tons of Afghan opium were seized per year.

Efforts to create greater collaboration between the countries tied to the opium trade seemed to be working, aside from Afghanistan. Both Turkey and Pakistan were willing to work with the IIG along their boundaries to fight smugglers, but “the Afghans ignore any overtures of mutual cooperation on anything including narcotic smuggling.” However, cooperation never materialized as narcotics officials envisioned. The relative indifference of the Afghan government suggests that either it simply did not care to stop smugglers (which is certainly plausible), did not have the capabilities to do so (more plausible), or, the most likely, that the Afghan government did not and could not enforce the boundaries because it had far greater priorities, such as surviving the political chaos of the 1960s. Patrolling the western border was a task the Afghan government was unprepared and unable to perform.

Moreover, the impetus to enforce narcotics laws in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey stemmed largely from American political and economic assistance. Afghanistan was an afterthought in the broader machinations of the Cold War. Both Pakistan and Iran, backed by the US, were motivated to stop narcotics because of US financial and political assistance.

301 Ibid. (1) RG 170, Ibid.
backing. However, Iran’s and Pakistan’s eagerness to enforce anti-smuggling laws on their mutual boundary had as much to do with efforts to exert greater control in areas dominated by ethnic minorities as it did with narcotics and Cold War politics.\footnote{By the late 60s and early 70s, the IIG wound up focusing not only on anti-smuggling efforts, but also on quelling rebellions and insurrections among tribal groups, particularly Baluchis. Calls for an independent Baluchistan by nationalists was a source of significant violence and government oppression in both Iran and Pakistan.}

\textit{Desperate Measures}

By 1969, the ban on opium was becoming increasingly difficult to enforce. In an effort to regain control of the industry in Iran, the Shah embarked on a multi-faceted approach to deal with the opium problem by regulating domestic opium production for a program for a small number of registered addicts; increasing rehabilitation; and instituting new, draconian measures for convicted smugglers.\footnote{McLaughlin, 1976. (498-500)} Both the GOI an the US deemed such steps necessary given the high demand for opium and the increasing role of illicit opium in meeting such demand.

In 1970, GENMISH, responding to a request from the French government, conducted a study of narcotics smuggling along the Afghan-Iranian border. The study, “Narcotics Traffic Originating in Afghanistan,” seemed to confirm anti-narcotics officials fears from the previous decade that Afghan opium was becoming a larger component of the illicit narcotics trade. More important, the report was fundamental in shedding new insight into the process, tactics and motivations behind Afghan smugglers’ increasing presence in Iran. Historically, the supply of illicit opium in Iran came from Turkey. However, following the new 1969 opium law, which made drug smuggling a capital
offense, Turkish smugglers were rapidly abandoning operations. BNDD officials in Meshed, in Khorassan Province bordering Afghanistan, noted that “prior to 1970, there were approximately equal amounts of raw opium illegally imported from Afghanistan and Turkey (45 percent each),” and “during 1970, the situation changed radically, 90% of seizures of smuggled raw opium were made on the Afghanistan border, 3% on the Turkish border, 4% on the Pak border, and 3% within Iran.” These numbers are of course estimates, but because both Turkey and Iran had stiff penalties against narcotic smugglers and both signed a border accord in 1970 to ensure better cooperation, these estimates were probably reliable. Turkish smugglers were noted as being the consummate “businessman whose prime interest was the making of the most amount of money with the least amount of risk.”

The changing dynamics of illicit drug smuggling presented new challenges to the IIG and GENMISH. Afghan smugglers, in contrast to Turks, came from a much different background. Most Afghan smugglers were from nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes of western Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most of the smugglers were illiterate, poor, heavily armed, and predisposed to violence. Yet, this only partially explains their increased involvement in smuggling. Although poverty might seem the most obvious justification

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305 “Traffic in Opium and Cannabis Originating from Afghanistan.” No. A-219, July 7, 1970. (2) Record Group 59: General Records of the Department of State, 1763 – 2002. Office of the Senior Adviser to the Secretary on Narcotics. Country Files, Box 3, “Afghanistan 1972.” The Turkish trade shifted almost exclusively to morphine base and heroin primarily because of its greater profit potential stemming from its higher potency and decreased size. Afghans had yet to transition to morphine and heroin, largely because Afghan opium being smuggled into Iran did not have high enough morphine content to make the switch.
for Afghan willingness to smuggle opium into Iran, many Afghans captured by the IIG offered a much different explanation. Many stated that members of their families were held hostage by the person that sent them into Iran, in the event that the smuggler did not return the money, failed to deliver the goods, or was caught.\footnote{Ibid. (2)}

The Afghan smugglers overcame daunting odds to bring opium into Iran. Individual smugglers were paid a flat fee of one thousand Iranian rials ($13) to carry a knapsack containing roughly 20-30 kilograms of raw opium across hundreds of miles of harsh and mountainous desert terrain. Because the threat of violence and capture increased with the 1969 anti-smuggling law, most Afghan smugglers traveled in larger and larger groups. If a smuggler’s family was held hostage, the smugglers would take every precaution to ensure that they would not be caught or surrender out of fear that their families would be sacrificed. This coercion led to the increasing militancy of these smuggler groups. Not all smugglers were coerced into the trade. Some were doing the bidding of their tribal chieftains, many of whom held key positions in the Afghan government.\footnote{Ibid. (3)} IIG officials complained that many Afghan smugglers were aided by Afghan border guards and were often paid by government or tribal officials to aid smugglers across the border.\footnote{Ibid. (4)}

The increased prices for both hash and opium indicated the growing importance of opium as a major commodity in both Iran and Afghanistan. The price increase in raw opium as it penetrated further into Iran provided the lure that enticed many Afghan

\footnote{Ibid. (2) The idea that kidnapping was a major tactic for higher level drug distributors is not necessarily an outlandish idea. For many Pashtuns, kidnapping and ransoms were a primary form of generating profit and a source of great esteem for the individual and tribe. (See Ahmed Akbar, \textit{Pukhtun Society and Economy and Resistance and Control.})\footnote{Ibid. (3)}\footnote{Ibid. (4)}}
smugglers to continue smuggling. In 1969, a kilogram of raw opium garnered $43.28 in Tabyat along the Afghan-Iranian border. That same kilo could fetch as much as $196.72 in Tehran.\textsuperscript{309} Areas along Iran’s eastern border were inundated with opium. In particular, the city of Meshad in Khorassan was emerging as a major transit zone for Afghan smugglers coming into Iran. Of the 13,447 kilos of opium seized in 1971, 9,116 kilos were seized in Khorassan, all of it believed to be of Afghan origin.\textsuperscript{310} And in March 1973 the IIG seized 12.7 tons of opium in Khorassan, the largest haul in Iran’s history and one of the largest in the world. The numbers of executions reflected the growing opium trade as well.\textsuperscript{311} By February 1972, 134 smugglers had been executed under the 1969 anti-smuggling law, the majority of them Afghans.\textsuperscript{312}

As a response to the escalating smuggling along the Afghan-Iranian border, the Shah increased funding, technology and training for the IIG. The IIG received upwards of 5,000 motorcycles to improve mobility, particularly along the Afghan border, as well as night-vision goggles, light aircraft, 8 Huey helicopters, and anti-narcotics and anti-smuggling training from both US and UN narcotics advisers.\textsuperscript{313} Yet despite the increase in funding and attention, smuggling continued at a rapid pace. The political, economic, and social climate in Afghanistan undoubtedly played a major factor in the increase in smuggling, but the IIG also faced a variety of hurdles impeding its border patrol and anti-narcotic capabilities. The 885-kilometer border with Afghanistan, made up of mostly

\textsuperscript{309} Ibid. (5) Heroin, although not incredibly lucrative at the time, saw a major price jump from 1969 to 1970. The price for a gram leaped from a low of $3.93 to nearly $15.74.  
\textsuperscript{310} “Supplementary Information on the Narcotics Situation in Iran (C-ER-2-56344).” Feb 29, 1972. (6) RG 59, Box 7, “Iran 1972.”  
\textsuperscript{311} McLaughlin and Quinn. (511)  
\textsuperscript{312} “Supplementary Information on the Narcotics Situation in Iran (C-ER-2-56344).” Feb 29, 1972. (6) RG 59, Box 7, “Iran 1972.”  
\textsuperscript{313} Ibid.
mountainous desert, was patrolled by IIG posts of 6 to 8 men, located anywhere from 8 to 40 kilometers apart. The increases in training and technology made little difference as the IIG faced large groups of well-armed and notoriously fierce Afghan smugglers. And as discussed earlier, most Afghan smugglers faced certain death if they failed to succeed, either in Iran or Afghanistan.  

Moreover, repeated complaints by GENMISH officers revealed deep fissures within the IIG apparatus that significantly inhibited the effectiveness of the IIG in curbing Afghan smuggling. In an exit interview one GENMISH officer noted that most gendarmes were totally unmotivated to act. Low morale pervaded most of the lower-level officers. One reason was that even though IIG officers got free education for their families, paid no income tax, and received two weeks’ paid vacation, many were remarkably underpaid. He noted that most civilians made 3 to 5 times as much as IIG personnel. Given the increasingly violent nature of anti-narcotic enforcement along the Afghan border, it is no surprise that many lower-level IIG officers were ill inclined to observe GENMISH standards.

A lack of coordination among relevant agencies also impeded efforts to stop the illicit trade from Afghanistan. In particular, the National Police and IIG rarely coordinated with each other, partly because of rampant corruption at all levels of the Pahlavi government. The Drug Enforcement Administration in 1975 complained to the IIG and National Police that only minor smugglers were incarcerated and not one major

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316 Department of State. (# 194581) Oct, 1972. RG 59, Box 7, “Iran 1972.”
trafficker was arrested because of corruption. Lack of coordination became a major thorn between US and IIG officials as well. One DEA officer spoke of a ‘one way street,’ where DEA intelligence was often taken by NP and IIG to stop internal trafficking, but nothing was given in return that would help stop international trafficking. Part of the reason may have been the growing anti-US sentiment among IIG personnel by the mid-1970s. To make matter worse, the rewards systems often created competition and discouraged cooperation among the various agencies. And individual rewards were often small. For poorly paid low-level IIG personnel corruption, proved far more lucrative than the government reward system.

The 1960s transformed the regional opium trade. By 1972 Afghanistan had replaced Turkey as the primary supplier of opium for the illicit market in Iran. American intelligence officials estimated that Afghanistan was supplying anywhere from 100 to 170 tons of opium to Iran a year. The political chaos and instability in Afghanistan, combined with the increasing demand in Iran, created a perfect opportunity for Afghan farmers and smugglers. Yet American officials, concerned that Afghan opium would start to make its way beyond Iran, focused not on Afghan smugglers, but on a new villain with the potential to make Afghan opium a problem of global proportions.

Bringing the West to Afghanistan and Bringing Afghanistan to the West

In 1961, the international community passed the 1961 Single Convention, the broadest and most progressive international narcotics regulation ever. It nullified the failings of previous treaties and placed all narcotics matters under one uniform

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international treaty.\textsuperscript{318} The convention put great responsibility on the governments of producer nations to increase reporting requirements for domestic needs and production.\textsuperscript{319} However, this new emphasis also granted producer nations greater power in mediating global narcotics disputes, much to the dismay of the Americans. Alternative approaches finally gained traction and producer states ended up retaining autonomy in dealing with supplies. Although considered a success by most in the international community, the convention placed its eggs in baskets that were soon crushed, for the 1961 Convention still focused on supply as the primary problem. However, by the end of the decade, political and social chaos created new social regimes that unleashed a misunderstood element of the global narcotics trade, demand.\textsuperscript{320} By the late 1960s, the global market for narcotics was emerging from adolescence to maturity.

All over the world, but especially in Western Europe and the United States, the demand for drugs reached unprecedented proportions. Heroin addiction increased in urban areas, American soldiers in Vietnam became regular users of marijuana and in some cases heroin, and white, middle class youths embraced the use of psychedelic and psychotropic substances.\textsuperscript{321} Individuals such as Timothy Leary, Ken Kesey, and Allen Ginsberg were seen by some as vanguards in a movement to challenge the social norms that regarded the recreational use of narcotics as both amoral and criminal.\textsuperscript{322} Although these figures saw themselves as leaders of a spiritual, cultural, and political movement,

\textsuperscript{318} McAllister. \textit{Drug Diplomacy}. (208)
\textsuperscript{319} Ibid. (209)
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid. (211)
\textsuperscript{321} McAllister. (218)
the basic reality was that by the late 1960s, drug use had carried itself into the mainstream. As a result, the increased demand for drugs was expanding the global narcotics trade, and opening up many parts of the world that had previously played only minor roles.

During the 1960s numerous educated, affluent youth left the confines of their homes to explore the world. Many of them traveled to Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan to smoke hash and opium, where it was readily available and cheap. Soon some of these travelers discovered that major profits could be made from shipping large quantities of opium or hash (mostly hash at first) back to the west. In particular, the lax customs and border controls in Afghanistan made smuggling easy. With the consumption of heroin and other narcotics in the US increasing in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the networks linking opium and hash in Afghanistan with the markets in the West helped to lay the foundation for the future expansion of Afghanistan’s opium industry.

Throughout the 1960s Kabul emerged as a major site for tourists seeking cheap drugs. Opium and hash were omnipresent in the bazaars of Kabul, and although sales remained illegal, most distributors acted with little fear of arrest. Opium and hash were

323 Some travelers to Afghanistan, as well as Iran, Turkey, Nepal, and India believed they were embarking on mystical journeys of the mind and body. The myths of eastern philosophies and the use of psychotropic substances to achieve higher states of spiritual being prompted a wave of young Western Europeans and Americans looking to achieve enlightenment by getting high. To smoke hash or opium in such ‘exotic and ‘mystical’ regions lent to the mythology of South and West Asia as havens for narcotic consumption. For others (most likely all of them to a degree), Asia was simply an ideal place to get high. Many of these travelers were completely ignorant of the political nuances of drug consumption and trafficking. Knowledge of local laws, customs, and public behaviors were subject to simplified notions of the Asian drug consumption. In many ways, the travelers’ naivete exemplified the orientalism inherent in western culture, evidenced by their perceived openness to Asian philosophies and culture. (see Said, Edward. Orientalism.)
cheap; opium could be purchased in Kabul for $45 per kilogram; high quality hash would go for nearly $20 per kilogram. In 1971 alone, 59,000 tourists flocked to Kabul, many to partake in its vibrant drug industry.\textsuperscript{324}

The presence of foreign tourists, many with the sole purpose of using drugs, was not without its detractors. The newspaper \textit{Afghan Millat}, which often criticized the government for its failed policies and inability to curb its dependence on foreign money, also criticized the presence of Western tourists and the many Afghans, including government officials, who catered to their needs. Many articles and cartoons, such as Image 3 below, criticized Afghans for apparent dependence on foreigners.

The *Afghan Millat* cartoon signifies a broader sentiment that modernity in Afghanistan was entirely dependent on foreigners, both governments and people. Other publications, such as *Karavan*, noted that throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s western drug tourists, often referred to as ‘hippies’, were a nuisance in certain areas of Kabul. Other

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publications mocked the public drug use of western tourists, and as the *Karavan* cartoon suggests, the expectations that it is was their right (*huquq*) to do so.

![Caption reads: Drawn out hashish protest: Give us our right.](image)

The drug seeking travelers of the 1960s were in many ways innocuous. Although they sought hash or opium for purchase to bring home, the quantities suggested that they did so mostly to cover their costs. Most incidents between hippies and Afghans were a nuisance, and sometimes comical, for American embassy officials. In 1971, US and Afghan officials met to discuss the issue of the hippie community in Kabul. US officials

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327 State Department. “Letter to Michael Hornblow.” July 26, 1968. RG 59, Department of State. Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Office of the Country Director for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. (1972 - ca. 1979) Records Relating to Afghanistan, 1970-1974. Box 2, “Narcotics 1971.” It was common for incidents to arise out of basic cultural differences. In one instance, four hippies were beat up by local police for washing clothes in Lake Karga, forbidden under local law. Afghan police were often noted for their brutality and western hippies for their complete lack of sensitivity to local customs.
seemed primarily concerned that tourists in Kabul were helping expand Afghanistan’s illicit narcotic industry and that the Afghan government was not enforcing its own laws. Given the dramatic rise of smuggling into Iran and the enduring strength of the Kabul narcotic industry, most American officials were justified in believing that something much bigger was happening.\textsuperscript{328}

Hashish was the first Afghan product to link Afghanistan with markets in the US.\textsuperscript{329} Although Afghan opium was in high demand in Iran, it did not make up a major percentage of opium used in the West. Most opium, and by extension heroin, was supplied by areas in Southeast Asia. This, of course, coincided with the Vietnam War, where American GI’s were a major factor in bringing Southeast Asian opium back to the States.\textsuperscript{330} However, hashish traffickers were laying the foundation for networks that could potentially traffic more lucrative and dangerous commodities. A DEA intelligence brief summed up this transformation:

> While of somewhat secondary significance relative to opium, hashish has been important in our enforcement efforts because of the smuggling systems has spawned. The drug seeking hippie who came to Afghanistan a few years ago and spent his last few travelers check to take

\textsuperscript{328} Department of State. “Narcotics and Hippies.” May 17, 1971. RG 59, Department of State, Box 2, Narcotics 1971.” One of the more intriguing elements of the discussions between Afghan and American officials was that Embassy officials were careful not to criticize Afghan desires to maintain their tradition of hospitality and openness.

\textsuperscript{329} This, in fact, was a major issue with Iranian and American anti-narcotics officials. Iranian efforts focused mostly on Afghan opium, whereas American efforts focused on the global hash trade. US narcotics agents tried to get Iranian officials to stop the hash trade, but since hash was not seen as a major Iranian issue, it was often not pursued with the same ferocity as opium.

home a kilo or so of Afghan hashish has been replaced by the well heeled young entrepreneur from the US.\textsuperscript{331}

By 1972, American anti-narcotics agents noticed that a new, professional type of smuggler was replacing the drug tourists who traveled to Kabul in late 1960s. Kabul was becoming a popular spot for known drug smugglers, many with extensive criminal records in the US. For Afghans, these entrepreneurs were a welcome respite from dealings with low-level hippies. More important, these well-financed individuals had a major role transforming Afghanistan’s place in the global narcotics market. Seizures included liquid hash, morphine, and heroin, and the sting operations discovered large hash distilleries and morphine conversion laboratories. What this signified was that Afghans and foreign traffickers were aware of the need to reduce the product to its most profitable and concealable form to “offset the increased detection efforts by international law enforcement elements.”\textsuperscript{332} Afghanistan was slowly emerging as a player in the global market for illicit narcotics. To defeat the growing professional drug trade both the US and Afghans would have to increase anti-smuggling efforts.

Nonetheless, the influence of drug tourists on the Afghan opium trade is ultimately quite nominal in the grander scheme of things. However, analyzing their role in the history of opium in Afghanistan provides key insights into the changes that confirmed Afghan opium’s ascendancy into the global market. Historically, the networks forged by pirates, bandits, and smugglers have played important roles in facilitating the

\textsuperscript{331} BNDD. “July 1972 Brief: Trafficking and Enforcement.” (1-2) files from former BNDD/DEA agent Terry Burke.

\textsuperscript{332} BNDD. “Enforcement Situation in Kabul as of February 1972.” File from Terry Burke.
spread of capitalism around the world. In Afghanistan, drug tourists forged vital global links to the markets in Europe and the US. Although they started out quite small in number, western travelers in Afghanistan increased awareness among Afghan producers and distributors of opium and hash that a larger market existed beyond Tehran. Conversely, travelers returning to the US and Europe brought with them the knowledge of an area of the world ideally suited for exploitation by the illicit market: a weak state, weak controls, abundant supply, and an increasingly eager population. Thus, the professionalization of the hash trade in 1972 signified the fundamental shift for Afghanistan’s future role in the global narcotics trade. Although hash, and to some extent opium, were small compared the profits generated by morphine and heroin, by the end of the 1960s, these factors were coalescing to create the perfect storm.

Conclusion: The Ascending Drug Economy

The growth in the Afghan drug trade coinciding with the increased resistance to and frustration with the Afghan government during the 1960s provides another lens from which to examine the mutually constitutive relationship between state formation and opium. The growth of the opium and hash trade in Afghanistan during the 1960s presents an ideal opportunity to analyze commodity chains, and their parochial and global impact.

I demonstrate that the opium industry grew because of the key links being forged at the regional and global levels. In Iran the prohibition of opium amidst increasing

333 In Thomas Gallant’s world historical examination of piracy and brigandage, he clearly demonstrates that these illegal groups and the networks they established were fundamental to the growth of global capitalism, as well as the growth of nation states. See Gallant, Thomas. “Brigandage, Piracy, Capitalism, and State Formation: Transnational Crime from a Historical World-Systems Perspective,” in J. Heyman and A. Smart (eds) States and Illegal Practices. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1999. (25-62)
demand opened new doors for Afghanistan opium to enter. Smugglers and traders took full advantage of this opportunity, as opium and hash smuggling increased rapidly during the 1960s. In Europe and the US, increasing consumption of opium and especially hash transformed the manners in which westerners used and eventually transported Afghan drugs. Initially, western tourists traveled to Afghanistan to consume opium and hash. However, entrepreneurial traffickers smuggling opium and hash back to the west soon replaced those tourists. In both instances, the proliferating drug trade led to interlocking networks of both production and consumption, which transcended national and regional boundaries. In this sense, the establishment of commodity chains to Iran and the west during 1960s represent the early globalization of the Afghan drug trade.

This examination also leads to important questions about the relationship between growth of the drug trade and the social and political ramifications of this development. On the one hand, how was opium production, use, and trade influenced by domestic (as well as regional and global) politics? On the other, how did the drug trade affect those political dynamics?

I argue that opium emerged during this period because the Afghan government was proving increasingly incapable of improving the economic situation in the country, especially its ability to alleviate growing unemployment or implement effective policy responses to the issues brought out by the Democracy Now movement. Opium, in this

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334 Steven Topik, Carlos Marichal, and Zephyr Frank (eds.) *From Silver to Cocaine: Latin American Commodity Chains and the Building of the World Economy, 1500-2000.* Durham: Duke University Press, 2006. (8) The authors focus on cocaine, sugar, and other colonial commodities helps to envision how these commodities became integral to the expansion of the capitalist system. The focus on the consumption and production of the product, not the national history, allowed for greater insight into the how cultures of consumption and production changed in response to shifting political frameworks.
sense, provided sources of economic revenue where the state was increasingly impotent. The cultural indifference regarding the trade of opium and hash only enhanced the economic needs. Furthermore, the importance of opium as a source of economic revenue was heightened by the growing regional and global consumption of Afghan opium and hash. For some Afghans, the growing number of tourists traveling to Afghanistan to either use or buy its drugs were clear indications of the potential for economic growth, regardless of whether the government said it was right or wrong.

The other important question guiding this chapter is how did the opium trade influence the politics of the era, if at all? I argue that opium did indeed impact the political conflict of the 1960s, however it is impossible to determine to what extent. As the cartoons from Afghan Millat and Karavan suggest, Afghans were increasingly aware of the presence and character of western tourists. But how does that indicate the impact on the social and political situation in Afghanistan during the 1960s? It is possible that the presence of tourists, most of whom were there to use drugs, represented the contradictions and dysfunctions increasing characteristic of the Musahiban dynasty. But to what extent did that influence or contribute to the increasing political conflict of the time? Part of the answer lies in the political and social meanings that accompanied the illicit drug trade. Historically, the illicit drug trade has provided marginalized groups the economic revenue needed to confront or rectify political and social disparities resulting from dysfunctional or racially biased state policies. Many of the nations that were major producers of illicit drugs suffered from similar social, political, and cultural cleavages.
that heightened the role of drugs as an economic agent of power. In Afghanistan, resistance to the government stemmed from divisive social policies and the controversial modernizing policies of the Musahiban state. In particular, the vision of creating a modern government, especially a drug-free one, depended increasingly on foreign aid from the United States. As a result, the Musahiban government adopted both political and cultural stances that contradicted popular norms of use and trade or effectively broke down socio-cultural systems that were vital to Afghan life (i.e. the 1958 Opium Prohibition). I argue that this reinforced political tensions stemming from the disconnect of the government (resulting from the tremendous influence of foreign governments and people) as a primary explanation for its dysfunction. Although the Afghan government had yet to make more concerted efforts to enforce drug control laws, the relatively lax enforcement of drug laws as they related to western drug users reinforced sentiments that the Musahiban were not only catering to foreign powers, but were largely drive by them (i.e. see Afghan Millat the cartoons criticizing the Afghan government). Thus, the growing trade did, in some way, influence the political conflict of the 1960s.

By the beginning of the 1970s, Afghan opium was ascending in importance in the world, not because Afghanistan lacked moral standards, or were flush with criminals: such views were imposed from outside. Rather, opium emerged because it was increasingly situated outside the legitimate channels of governance. For opium, the networks of the informal global narcotics economy were ideally suited for many

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335 For example, in Colombia, the production and trafficking of cocaine was closely tied to deeply entrenched socio-political problems stemming from the maintenance of colonial regimes of power. (See Francisco Thoumi, “Why the Illegal Psychoactive Drug Economy Grew in Colombia.” *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs, Vol. 34, No. 2, Autumn 1992.*)
Afghans’ political and social predicaments. However, by the early 1970s, the focus on stopping the illicit drug trade entered a new phase. Both the Afghan government and the international community would have to refocus their efforts if they hoped to stop the globalization of the Afghan drug trade.
Chapter 4: Importing Nixon’s Drug War to Afghanistan

America’s public enemy number one in the United States is drug abuse. In order to fight and defeat this enemy, it is necessary to wage a new, all out offensive. This will be a worldwide offensive dealing with the problems of sources of supply.\textsuperscript{336}

Heroin addiction is the most difficult to control and the most socially destructive form of addiction in America today. Heroin is a fact of life and a cause of death among an increasing number of citizens in America, and it is heroin addiction that must command priority in the struggle against drugs. To wage an effective war against heroin addiction, we must have international cooperation. In order to secure such cooperation, I am initiating a worldwide escalation in our existing programs for the control of narcotics traffic.\textsuperscript{337}

By the late 1960s drug use in the United States escalated to seemingly epic proportions. Use of marijuana, heroin, and other hallucinogenic drugs became a mainstay of a youth culture that rejected the social and political constructs of the previous generation. When President Richard Nixon signed the Controlled Substances Act in 1970 and formalized the War on Drugs, he struck at the heart of the “silent majority’s” fear that rampant and often romanticized drug use was a prime indicator of America’s rapid social and moral decline. Throughout the 1960s millions of baby boomers came of age in an era when youth culture romanticized drug use. For non-drug users, this romanticism


made them increasingly susceptible to the destructive use of heroin. Heroin addiction, in particular, became the primary gauge of social decay.\textsuperscript{338} Although heroin addiction was nothing new to America, the increased use among white suburbanites and soldiers in the Vietnam war transformed controlling heroin addiction into prime public policy.\textsuperscript{339} The issue of heroin had become such an issue that by 1971 Americans listed heroin addiction behind Vietnam and the economy as one of the nation’s most pressing problems.\textsuperscript{340}

Nixon cited drug policy as a fundamental barometer of the political, social, and cultural morass of the 1960s. As drug historian Daniel Weimer notes, “Nixon deliberately linked drugs with the challenges to the Cold War consensus, patriotism, patriarchy, and race relations. The anti-war movement, counterculture, feminism, Black Power, and the other ethnic and identity power/pride movements indicated that cultural modernity in the United States had become unstable and too permissive.”\textsuperscript{341} As a result, the once small group of zealous anti-drug crusaders had evolved into a primary player in American domestic and foreign policy, demanding the attention of all departments and branches of the US government.

Through the 1960s Afghanistan emerged as a haven for drug users, sojourners, and amateur drug traffickers. Despite its popularity as a paradise for unregulated drug use and trade, it still remained a relatively small part of the global market, still mostly fulfilling the demand in Iran and the rest of Southwest Asia. Nonetheless, the demand for


\textsuperscript{339} Ibid. (168)

\textsuperscript{340} Ibid. (170) This was certainly an issue of perception versus reality. Part of the impetus for Nixon to target heroin was the apparent association between street crime and heroin addicts in urban areas.

Afghan hash and raw opium was growing. Smuggling across the border with Iran increased yearly and more and more entrepreneurs traveled to Kabul to purchase large quantities of narcotics to ship back to Europe and the US. By the mid-1970s, Afghanistan was emerging as a significant source for the global drug trade. In response to both domestic and international pressures for increased drug control, the Afghan government escalated its enforcement of anti-smuggling measures and its 1958 prohibition of opium. Thus, we are left asking a fundamental question about the history of drugs in Afghanistan: why, despite efforts in Afghanistan and around the world to stop the production and trade of drugs, did Afghanistan’s presence in the global market for illicit drugs continue to rise?

Much of the explanation lies in the symbiotic relationship between global supply, distribution, and demand on the one hand, and Nixon’s War on Drugs on the other. Before Nixon’s war most of the European and American supply was met by Turkish opium shipped by Corsican and French trafficking cartels. Governments who took part in the American drug war gained access to new financial and technical resources to increase significantly the institutional capability to interdict and eradicate the production and trafficking of drugs. For nations with relatively strong state control, the enforcement of eradication and interdiction programs proved successful in the short term as many of the customary sources of supply and trafficking routes were temporarily extinguished. However, those successes often only extended to the national boundaries of the nations in which they were enforced. Many traffickers sought out new areas in the world where state control was not yet strong enough to enforce the American vision of global narcotics

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control. As a result, Nixon’s War on Drugs had a remarkable impact on transforming the global narcotics market by introducing new sources of supply that were otherwise isolated in parochial or regional markets.

In this chapter I examine the impact of Nixon’s “War on Drugs” on the governments of major producer nations and the creation and transformation of institutions to eliminate the production and trade of drugs, particularly opium and heroin. First, I explore the impact of interdiction programs in Turkey and France, and how, despite successfully stopping the Turkey-France heroin supply route (colloquially known as the French Connection), production and trafficking expanded to other parts of the world, particularly Southeast Asia and Mexico. Moreover, I examine how the consequences of increased enforcement of America’s war on drugs in key production areas reverberated throughout the world, including Afghanistan. As a result, the elimination of traditional sources of supply did not deter traffickers, but in fact started an evolution in the market from which new sources of supply emerged that were better suited for the ever-changing illicit global narcotics trade, particularly Afghanistan.

Although Afghanistan was a relatively minor producer of opium when Nixon launched the drug war, the growing presence of Afghan opium in the illicit markets of Iran and Pakistan gave new life to the coalescence of international anti-drug policy in Afghanistan. In the second part of the chapter, I explore anti-narcotics policy and infrastructure in Afghanistan and why, despite increased efforts from both foreign nations and the Afghan state, illicit narcotic production continued to thrive. In particular, I examine how American anti-narcotics officials in Afghanistan influenced the government’s implementation of new anti-smuggling laws and the creation of anti-
smuggling units (ASUs) within the police and gendarmerie. By analyzing the anti-smuggling laws of 1969 and 1972, we see how US anti-narcotics officials attempted to coordinate with Afghans to try to fulfill Nixon’s vision of eliminating the production and trade of illicit narcotics in Afghanistan.

Nixon’s global anti-narcotics vision was contingent on the governments of producer states effectively transforming and implementing domestic narcotics policies and structural changes. In Afghanistan, the creation and enforcement of new legislation and anti-narcotics structures indicated a renewed effort on the part of the state to use foreign ambitions for narcotics control to expand and bolster the strength of the state through the police and gendarmerie. However, despite this renewed effort, the state continued to fail to stop the production and trade of illicit narcotics. Analyzing the failure of the anti-smuggling laws and the ASUs to stop the production and trade of narcotics reveals the tremendous difficulties facing the Afghan state in terms of its ability to impose and enforce anti-narcotic laws, particularly in the periphery of the country. Specifically, such failure stemmed partly from the subjective implementation and enforcement of anti-narcotic laws by individual Afghan narcotics officials who often placed local needs and relations over state policy. In other words, the success or failure of interdiction and eradication was ultimately a byproduct of the political culture in Afghanistan, whereby tribal, ethnic, familial, and/or local relations, the qawm, often dictated the extent to which state policy was enforced. Furthermore, the Musahiban government used the enforcement of anti-smuggling laws as a way of expanding power into the periphery of the country, attempting to regulate the movements of people whose lives often crossed the boundaries imposed on them. Consequently, by expanding drug
control to a national level, the Afghan government contributed to the deepening fragmentation of Afghanistan and increased de-legitimization of the state. In the end, these factors reinforced, and sometimes instigated, the expansion of narcotic production and trade in subsequent years.

**The Global Drug Trade circa 1972: Bringing Down the House**

When Nixon launched the drug war in 1971 heroin use had reached epidemic proportions in the US. A survey in 1974 estimated that nearly one million men between the ages of 20 and 30 had tried heroin at least once, and that nearly a third of those were regular users at some point in their life.\(^{343}\) Part of the explanation for the more aggressive political response was the changing dynamic of use and addiction of heroin in the US at the time. The emergence of white suburbanites and Vietnam soldiers as users put heroin addiction into the public sphere unlike ever before. Moreover, the relationship between heroin addiction and the increasingly unpopular war in Vietnam heightened public awareness of the increased use of heroin. By 1971, it was believed that over half of all enlisted men had tried heroin, with smaller numbers dependent on it. George McGovern, the 1972 Democratic Presidential nominee, charged that the CIA was addicting American soldiers in Vietnam and pushing heroin on the American civilian population as well.\(^{344}\) Although many politicians threw out numbers, many falsified, the stark reality was that heroin addiction was a significant problem in the US.

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\(^{344}\) Courtwright. *Dark Paradise*. (168-169)
Nixon spent much of his presidency building on previous federal legislation and infrastructural transformations to deal with the issue of drugs, including passing the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act in 1969. Although the scheduling of various substances and the public stigmas that surrounded their real impact on use and addiction were still clouded in highly subjective interpretations, the rapid growth in consumption seemed to justify an urgent, well-coordinated, and well-funded federal response. Nixon employed a drug strategy that was multi-faceted in approach, focusing on both consumption and production. He launched a series of treatment strategies, particularly methadone maintenance, to deal with alleviating addiction and curbing the demand for narcotics. Remarkably innovative at the time, Nixon’s emphasis on treatment altered the traditional anti-drug paradigm from its overwhelming focus on supply and production. For example, from 1971 to 1973 the federal budget for dealing with prevention and treatment increased from $59 million to $462 million.345

Yet, despite the increase attention to demand, Nixon’s new approach also reinforced and expanded efforts to curb production and supply. Nixon stated that:

America has the largest number of addicts of any nation in the world. And yet, America does not grow opium, nor does it manufacture heroin. This deadly poison in the American lifestream is, in other words, a foreign import. No serious attack on our national drug problem can ignore the international implications of such an effort, nor can the domestic effort succeed without attacking the problem on an international plane. I intend to do that.346

346 Nixon. *Public Papers of the Presidents, 1971.* (741)
The increased focus on the international sources of supply was in some ways a continuation of old fears, but the convergence of demand and supply as a single interconnected issue led to reformulation of methods and infrastructure to curb domestic consumption and foreign production. In particular, the evolution of the Bureau of Narcotics of Dangerous Drugs into the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 1973 created a new infrastructure to enhance enforcement programs (or bolster pre-existing ones) domestically and abroad, as well as increasing capabilities to exert greater diplomatic pressure in major producer countries.\(^{347}\) By making drugs an issue that required greater institutional support the US was now able to project its anti-narcotic ideology in a way that fundamentally transformed how the US and foreign governments dealt with the production, trade, and use of drugs. More important, by the early 1970s all of the major producers of narcotics--Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Mexico, and Southeast Asia--were soon tied to America’s new global anti-narcotics strategy.

Alongside the various domestic programs, such as increased police enforcement and the innovative methadone treatment programs, Nixon’s Drug War emphasized greater enforcement efforts abroad. However, the US had learned from its previous attempts to create a consensus on how to deal with the global drug trade that it could not fund anti-narcotic efforts unilaterally. Many states were reluctant to take American money directly either because of domestic pressures to resist the US or because of broader questions related to the Cold War.\(^{348}\) To circumvent possible problems arising from direct US relations, the Americans proposed forming an anti-drug abuse fund run by the United Nations. Financed by various government contributions and independent of

\(^{347}\) Courtwright. (171)
regular UN programs, the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) was formed in 1971.\footnote{McAllister. (237) Many states were skeptical of the fund given its independent status. Most feared that the US would use the fund as a means of dictating its increasingly controversial vision of global drug suppression.} However, as the primary source of revenue for the fund, the US quickly dominated defining the objectives of the fund. The fund was initially envisioned as an international resource for suppressing all facets of the global drug trade, meaning both supply and demand. But the US pressured the fund to emphasize enforcement and alternative crop programs, otherwise neglecting programs designed to reduce demand. As a result, despite the veil of international consensus and cooperation in the UN, the UNFDAC became a secondary conduit for the US to exert pressure in its quest to suppress the global drug trade.\footnote{McAllister. (238)} With the American public motivated to curb narcotics use and trade, and with new tools with which to implement its anti-narcotics vision, such as the UNFDAC, the US went about waging war against the global illicit narcotics market.

**Turkey and the French Connection**

The first target of Nixon’s new war was the infamous French Connection, a system of trade in which Turkey supplied the opium (and morphine base) for the heroin laboratories in Marseilles, France to be exported to the massive, and constantly growing, market in the US and Western Europe. Turkey had long been the primary source of opium and heroin coming into the US, and by the 1970s it was estimated to supply roughly 80 percent of the US market, making it the second largest producer of opium in
Asia.\textsuperscript{351} Despite Turkey’s long history as a producer of opium, as a focus of drug policy, it was historically smaller and less important to the conflict surrounding the global narcotics trade by larger exporters, such as India, Iran, and China. However, after World War II French and Corsican mafia monopolized the import of heroin into the US by buying large quantities of illicit opium from Turkey, refining it into high-grade heroin in laboratories in Marseilles, and ultimately transporting it to affiliated groups in the US for distribution. The monopoly transformed heroin into one of the primary illicit commodities sold in the US. As a result, the increased domestic pressure to curb drug addiction, crime, and other forms of vice inevitably led to the elevation of Turkey’s status as a focal point of US anti-drug policy. Thus, Turkey’s role in the French Connection led it to become the first target in a series of anti-drug campaigns inspired and funded by the US.

Corsican traffickers proved to be the vital link between the markets in the US and Europe and the sources of supply in Turkey. Corsicans worked with various criminal groups to ship Turkish opium to Lebanon, whereby it was refined into morphine and sent to Marseilles where it was manufactured into high-grade no. 4 heroin by Corsican chemists. Eventually, the high-grade heroin was shipped to the US where the American mafia cut and distributed the heroin throughout the US and Canada.\textsuperscript{352} Using loosely affiliated networks of individuals and groups, and using key local political and business contacts to traverse geographical and national boundaries, the French Connection thrived.

\textsuperscript{351} McCoy, Alfred. \textit{The Politics of Heroin}. (393)

\textsuperscript{352} McCoy. (63)
At its peak in 1965, Marseilles was producing nearly 4.8 tons of pure heroin for the US market.\textsuperscript{353}

However, by the 1970s, the French Connection faced increasing pressure from various circles. The Guerini family, who dominated the production of heroin in Marseilles and served as the virtual face of the French Connection for two decades, struggled to maintain their monopoly as competition increased from new criminal organizations. The rapid growth in heroin use in France transformed the issue of narcotics into a primary public agenda in the country, particularly because the Guerini family had insured its political protection in France by instituting a self-regulated embargo on heroin trafficking into France. However, as competing cartels expanded distribution into France, political scrutiny increased as well. Eventually the domestic and international pressures proved too much.\textsuperscript{354} By 1969, coinciding with the US war on drugs, French and US anti-narcotics operations worked to end the French connection, and by 1973, after numerous police operations, the Marseilles heroin industry was virtually annihilated.\textsuperscript{355}

Although the effort from French and US anti-narcotics officials proved effective in ending the role of Marseilles as the primary site of heroin production, there was also a concerted effort to cut off the major source of supply. While the US and French were launching raids in Marseilles, American diplomats exerted tremendous pressure on the Turkish government to eradicate opium. As early as 1969, American diplomats began to press Turkey regarding its role in the global opium trade. Americans advocated the total eradication of the opium crop, but Turkish officials objected, citing the economic and

\textsuperscript{353} US Drug Enforcement Administration. “The Heroin Labs of Marseille,” \textit{Drug Enforcement} (Fall 1973). (11-13) found in McCoy. (63)

\textsuperscript{354} McCoy. (65)

\textsuperscript{355} McCoy. (69)
political consequences of eliminating an important and widespread crop like opium. Eventually in 1971, after considerable US pressure (including promises of $35 million in aid), Prime Minister Nihat Erim announced a total ban in the cultivation of opium, including licit opium production, starting in 1972.

The details of American support for the ban were kept secret for the most part. $15 million was allocated to the Turkish government as compensation for the loss of its licit industry, and an additional $20 million for future development and alternative-crop programs. Although the $35 million promised to Turkey was seen as too low by most accounts, the future political implications of Turkey’s role in the global drug trade, specifically the French Connection, and the US role as one of the major sources of aid certainly compelled Turkey to act. This was even more paramount when Turkish Senator Kudret Bayhan was arrested in France for trying to smuggle 321 pounds of morphine base.

Turkey’s opium ban went into effect in 1972. Initially, US officials were pleased by the results of the ban. Laws were rigorously enforced; initially, farmers who were allowed to grow often opted for compensation instead, and cooperation between the DEA and Turkish police and Gendarmerie were at an all time high. Nonetheless, fissures emerged in the program, as many farmers complained about lack of compensation, and reporters feared the devastating economic losses from ending the illicit trade. By 1974, the opium ban became a major issue in the presidential elections. Bulent Ecevit, the

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357 McCoy. (72-73)
358 Spain. (299)
359 McCoy. (73)
360 Spain. (301)
young leader of the Republican Peoples Party who came to power that year, immediately
set about rescinding the opium ban. Ecevit consciously distanced himself from the
previous regime and its opium ban because “the ban had been the act of a non-
representative government; a freely chosen one had no choice but to follow the will of the
people.”361 By 1974, despite bitter condemnation from the US, Turkey reinstated the
legal production of opium in seven provinces.

As part of a broader coordinated effort to stop the entire French Connection, the
ban in Turkey, at least temporarily, was successful. In 1973, 100 tons of illicit Turkish
opium and nearly twelve tons of high-grade heroin from Marseilles vanished from the US
market. The doubling of street prices and the decline in purity indicated that the
disruption of the French Connection had led to significant shortages of heroin.362
However, with demand for heroin still high, and new markets continually emerging, the
global opium supply shifted east. As the French Connection was eviscerated, Southeast
Asia, known as “the Golden Triangle,” emerged as both a key source of supply for the
US market and the next target of Nixon’s drug war.

The Golden Triangle

Unlike other parts of Asia, opium’s fundamental role in the political economy of
Southeast Asia is a relatively recent phenomenon. Before the nineteenth century, most of
the Southeast Asian economy was subsistence based. However, as relations between the
Qing Dynasty and the Chinese people and colonial powers eroded, particularly in the
southern province of Yunnan, various groups in Southeast Asia began to cultivate and

361 Spain. (302)
trade opium in response to the chaotic political and economic climate. When the Qing Empire attempted to expand its dominion south into the long-standing autonomous ethnic regions of China in the late nineteenth century, many of the ethnic hill-tribes escaped persecution by fleeing to the mountains of Southeast Asia. Many displaced ethnic hill tribes and Muslim traders brought the knowledge of opium cultivation and trade with them. This displacement resulted in a new network of opium trade that linked Yunnan to the ports of Southeast Asia. For the better part of a century, up to the Second World War, opium was an important, albeit relatively small component of the Southeast Asian political economy.

However, after the war, Southeast Asia experienced a virtual opium boom. Unlike Iran, Turkey, and even Afghanistan, the nationalist fighting that unfolded after the Second World War had a profound impact on the production and trade of opium in Southeast Asia. After the war, the cessation of opium imports from major producers Iran, India, and China and the fear of communist uprisings led the Thai police, Nationalist Chinese Army, French military, and the American Central Intelligence Agency to adopt “polices that allowed Southeast Asia’s mass opium addiction to survive and even thrive.” As Alfred McCoy detailed in his seminal work, The Politics of Heroin, both the French and the CIA fought a covert war against communist insurgents throughout Southeast Asia. McCoy notes that unlike other covert operations around the world:

363 McCoy. (93)
364 McCoy. (94)
365 All of the major producers signed onto the 1953 Opium Protocol agreeing to forbid sale of opium on the global market for legal consumption. Afghanistan, which failed to attend the conference, was not signatory to the convention. However, it spent the following years trying to become the eighth licit producer of opium, to no avail (see Chapter 3).
366 McCoy. (128)
French and American operatives integrated their covert warfare with the Golden Triangle opium trade. An effective covert warrior had to find a strong local leader willing to merge his people’s resources with the agency’s operations. In a region of weak microstates and fragmented tribes, such strongmen usually combined traditional authority with control over the local economy. In the Golden Triangle, the only commodity was opium, and the most powerful local leaders were the opium warlords.\textsuperscript{367}

These warlords used CIA resources—arms, ammunitions, and transportation—to maintain and expand control over opium production. Moreover, “instead of opposing the expansion of their ally’s autonomous economic base, most CIA operatives embraced it, knowing it increased their client’s effectiveness and independence from Washington’s directives.”\textsuperscript{368} By either aiding the expansion of the opium industry or simply ignoring it, CIA officials could effectively arm and supply large groups of anti-Communist forces, while remaining outside of possible political ramifications back home in the US. Initially, the large addict population in Southeast Asia consumed almost all of the opium. This was of course important for political reasons, as American anti-drug officials would be less concerned with opium addiction in Southeast Asia as long as the threat to the US was minimized. By the late 1950s, the Golden Triangle was producing nearly 700 tons of opium, roughly half of the global illicit supply.\textsuperscript{369} As a result, opium had become a primary vehicle for the CIA’s covert war in Southeast Asia.

Although the CIA was complicit in aiding the expansion of the opium industry in Southeast Asia, it did not deter Richard Nixon from expanding his war on drugs to

\textsuperscript{367} McCoy. (129)
\textsuperscript{368} McCoy. (129-130)
\textsuperscript{369} McCoy. (128)
Southeast Asia. The disruption of the supply of heroin resulting from operations in France and Turkey had produced results in curbing supply in the US, but it failed to recognize the international and multi-dimensional aspect of the illicit trade. Part of this was because US authorities had misidentified Turkey and the French Connection as the overwhelming source of heroin in the US. What US authorities discovered in 1972 was that Southeast Asian opium was in fact a much larger piece of the global heroin market than previously perceived.  

In 1972, US authorities estimated the Golden Triangle produced between 750 and 1200 tons of opium a year. Much of the crop was consumed locally. However, US officials grew increasingly concerned with the changes in the local opium industry in response to the events in Turkey and France and the changing market in the US. It was generally believed that the Chiu Chau syndicate in Hong Kong monopolized the heroin trade. The Chiu Chau had key connections with the police and local politicians in Hong Kong, as well as a large network of affiliated groups throughout Southeast Asia. The opium industry had received a major boost in 1965 when American soldiers arrived en masse in Vietnam. Before their arrival, most of the local opium crop was refined into heroin no. 3, a brown crude heroin, smoked mostly by the local population. When American GI’s arrived, soldiers began to use various narcotics and stimulants to deal with the trauma of war, particularly heroin no. 4, a white and purer form of heroin. The overwhelming popularity of heroin no. 4 led the Chinese heroin manufacturers to increase the number of refineries capable of producing heroin no. 4 to feed the growing

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370 Lamour and Lamberti. (36)
371 Lamour and Lamberti. (37)
demand among US GI’s. Nonetheless, early in the war the opium industry still seemed confined to Southeast Asia, lacking the key networks and connections to push Southeast Asian opium into the global illicit market.

Hong Kong, much like Marseilles, was a key city in the globalization of the Southeast Asian opium industry. Hong Kong was literally built on the revenue of the opium trade in the nineteenth Century by the British and other opium traders. Little had changed by 1970. As a free port, a major international banking center, and a key transportation hub, Hong Kong was ideal for trafficking narcotics. Hong Kong provided both a staging ground and financial hub for the Chiu Chau to exploit the East Asian opium industry. But the Chiu Chau had yet to break into the US market. Not until 1969, with the US government facing increasing resistance to the war at home, did the US begin to decrease troop levels. The Chiu Chau syndicates were left with a large surplus of high grade heroin and no customers. However, the Chiu Chao used this opportunity to break into the US market. In essence, the Chiu Chau attempted to follow the GI’s home, using Chinese and American seaman to smuggle nearly a thousand pounds of heroin into New York City in 1971-1972. The shift of consumer markets from Southeast Asia to the US caused grave concerns among US officials. Not only was

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372 Lamour and Lamberti. (39-40)
373 Lamour and Lamberti. (43) Much like the French Connection, the Southeast Asian opium industry operated in a similar manner, whereby rural opium farmers were connected to the global market by large and ingeniously operated criminal organizations. In both Turkey and the Golden Triangle opium production was vital to rural farmers dependent on its revenue for survival. In both instances, the farmers were connected to global markets via international crime syndicates which used their incredible political and economic influence in their local cities (Marseilles and Hong Kong/ Bangkok) to ship refined heroin to major consumer countries around the world.
374 McCoy. (395) DEA officials theorized that the US GI epidemic may have served as a consumer test for the Chiu Chao in preparation for launching into the US market.
heroin use high in the US, but Southeast Asia was producing unprecedented quantities of heroin.

When knowledge of the GI heroin epidemic went public in 1971, US officials placed greater weight on stopping the flourishing trade in Southeast Asia. Concerned with preventing heroin from jumping across the Pacific to the US, the BNDD (later the DEA) placed increased emphasis on interdicting heroin flowing from major narcotics hubs, Bangkok and Hong Kong, to the US. The number of special agents grew from 2 in 1972 to 31 by 1974, and the budget increased to $12 million. When knowledge of the GI heroin epidemic went public in 1971, US officials placed greater weight on stopping the flourishing trade in Southeast Asia. Concerned with preventing heroin from jumping across the Pacific to the US, the BNDD (later the DEA) placed increased emphasis on interdicting heroin flowing from major narcotics hubs, Bangkok and Hong Kong, to the US. The number of special agents grew from 2 in 1972 to 31 by 1974, and the budget increased to $12 million. Almost immediately, the DEA succeeded in capturing shipments to the US. As a complement to the US interdiction program, the UNFDAC launched a series of crop-substitution programs encouraging farmers to grow fruit, coffee, and beans.

Although the Southeast Asian opium trade had all the makings of becoming the primary source of heroin for the US market, it never achieved such lofty expectations. In 1975, seizures of Southeast Asian heroin in the US dropped from 35 per cent to 9 per cent. Part of the explanation lies in the emergence of the Southeast Asia as a consumer market, and part in disruptions of distribution in the US. By the end of the war, heroin addiction was emerging as a major problem in Southeast Asia. The increasing demand for opium at home diverted much of the product that was potentially going to the US. Meanwhile, American street gangs linked to the mafia handled retail distribution of heroin. When Lamour and Lamberti analyzed the global illicit narcotics industry in 1974 Chinese and American syndicates had yet to bridge the gap and American distributors

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375 McCoy. (394)
376 McCoy. (395)
377 McCoy. (395)
378 Lamour and Lamberti. (46)
seemed to prefer their European counterparts. DEA officials concurred, noting that the Chinese preferred to deal with other Asians.

Nixon’s drug war, particularly the interdiction campaigns in Southeast Asia, also played an important role in curbing the Chiu Chau’s attempt to grab hold of the American market. The cost of purchasing raw opium, refining it into no. 4 heroin, and finding ways to navigate the increasingly difficult obstacles of US interdiction proved too much for the Chinese syndicates. Moreover, the communist victory in Vietnam led to eliminating key branches of the organization in Indochina, and increased pressure from police campaigns in Hong Kong and other key cities led the Chiu Chau to consolidate its organization in Bangkok. Although the Chiu Chau missed out on the American market, they opened new ones in Europe in Australia. Ultimately, by the mid-1970s, the Chiu Chau had adapted to and monopolized the entire heroin industry in Europe and Australia.

Much like the French Connection, increased American efforts to curb heroin trafficking into the US from Southeast Asia were seemingly effective. By 1973 and 1974, the two major areas of concern for the US, Turkey and Southeast Asia, had been dramatically reduced as sources of opium in the US market. However, US anti-drug officials were quickly learning that the global illicit narcotics trade was far more reactive and capable of swift adaptation than previously perceived. As soon as supply dwindled

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379 Lamour and Lamberti. (47)
380 McCoy. (396) Lamour and Lamberti also shed light on the intricacies of the Chinese narco-trafficking system. Rarely do they use cash of bank transfers, often paying months in advance or after the transaction, and sometimes in exchange for goods and services. Ultimately, “the result is an unofficial and highly complex financial network, based not only on mutual trust between members of the same community but also on the law of retaliation should that trust be betrayed.” (45)
381 McCoy. (396)
from one area, a new source emerged. By the mid-1970s a new source, Mexico emerged as the largest source of heroin for the US market.

Mexico

Much like the Golden Triangle and the French Connection, Mexico’s emergence as a major producer of narcotics stemmed from the events following the Second World War. During the 1920s Mexican immigrants were largely responsible for introducing marijuana to the US. During the war, fearing that the US would be cut off from the major sources of supply, the US turned to Mexico as a major source of opium. After the war, despite Mexico’s help in providing a key source of opium, the US returned to the more traditional sources for opium from Asia and the Middle East. In spite of the cessation of the licit trade with the US government, many Mexicans continued to produce opium and marijuana, feeding the growing demand in the US. It was during the 1950s and 1960s, when schisms appeared in the American social and political fabric, and recreational drug use became a more visible component of American life, that the Mexican drug industry blossomed.

When Nixon came to power, he repeatedly urged the Mexican government to eradicate opium and marijuana crops. In 1969, he launched Operation Intercept, which increased border patrols and customs searches in an effort stop the flow of Mexican

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383 Although Mexico had served as a vital source of opium during the war, it failed to produce high percentages of morphine that would have ensured it would remain a primary supplier of opium. The superior quality opium from Turkey, Iran, and China was more desirable for pharmaceutical companies because of the high morphine content.
brown heroin and marijuana from crossing America’s southern border. Mexico responded by launching an anti-drug campaign of its own, Operation Cooperation, whereby Mexican soldiers eradicated opium plants manually using machetes. Needless to say, the respective programs failed to curtail production in Mexico and trafficking into the US. By 1972 Mexican heroin supplied roughly 40 per cent of the US market, and by 1975, after the two campaigns in Southeast Asia and Turkey, it gained nearly 90 percent of the US market.

It was not until Operation Condor in 1975, a comprehensive interdiction program focusing on the highlands of Mexico where most of the narcotics were produced, that both governments were able significantly to cut back on supply. 25,000 Mexican troops uprooted poppy plants, and planes (supplied by the US) sprayed fields with herbicides. By the following year 22,887 poppy fields were destroyed, decreasing the flow of Mexican heroin from 6.5 tons to 3 tons and its share of the US market from 67 percent to 25. The apparent success of Nixon’s drug war in Mexico seemed to indicate that the aggressive militarization of anti-drug policy was an effective and sustainable solution to the drug problem.

Again, much like the previous experiences in Turkey and Southeast Asia, the success of Nixon’s drug war in Mexico produced changes in the US consumer market and shifts in production and trafficking, ultimately revealing the flaws in Nixon’s supply-side strategy. In the US, the decline in supply of heroin led to a transformation of

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384 Grayson. (28)
385 McCoy. (397) Taken from Irvin Swank, “North American Heroin,” Drug Enforcement (February 1977), (3-12).
consumption, as amphetamines and synthetic narcotics took the place of heroin. More important, production shifted again. Much of the narcotic production centered in the Americas shifted south, especially to Colombia. Meanwhile, production in Asia shifted toward Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. Nixon and US anti-drug officials discovered that the market was globalizing by constantly adapting to changes in the both consumption and production. Moreover, a supply-side strategy was proving successful in only limited situations within specific nations and areas. International drug trafficking organizations evolved by seeking supply from areas where state control was weak and/or contested, boundaries poorly monitored, and with agricultural areas capable of growing such highly lucrative crops. Unlike the previous three cases, Southwest Asia, especially Afghanistan, was ideally suited for the changing global illicit narcotics industry, fundamentally challenging the methods and strategies employed in Nixon’s war on Drugs.

**Afghanistan: Building the Mechanisms for Drug Control**

“Our is a poor country. Its impossible for us to control the crops with the few police we have at our disposal. Nor are we equipped to combat the traffic. We don’t have the money to pay informants. When we seize other kinds of contraband we sell it in the bazaar and pay fifteen percent of the receipts to the person who tipped us off. Obviously we can’t do that with opium and hashish. And so far as our frontier with Persia is concerned, all we have is a squad of ten unmounted gendarmes for every forty kilometers. They have neither jeeps, telephones nor radios.” Afghan Police Chief Col. Katawazi

As the US pushed its anti-drug agenda onto the rest of the world it focused on the areas of supply that were most closely connected to use in the United States. For countries like Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, their long traditions of opium production

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386 McCoy. (397-398)  
387 Lamour and Lamberti. (192)
were relegated to secondary status given their limited availability in the US market. However, this did not discourage the US from continuing to advocate greater drug control measures in those nations. And in Southwest Asia, as in other drug producing regions of the world, drug control continued to emphasize supply-side strategies. But, as Colonel Katawazi’s statement indicates, the attempts to build a strong military, police, and gendarmerie to suppress drug cultivation and trafficking took on new meaning in Afghanistan. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Afghan government, under tremendous pressure from the US and UN, expanded its anti-narcotics repertoire. With the introduction of new prohibition and anti-smuggling laws in 1969, as well as the expansion of the police and the gendarmerie tasked specifically with combating drug smuggling, the Afghan government implemented and expanded on the American militarized supply-side strategy.

Throughout the 1960s, drug cultivation and trafficking increased in Afghanistan. The influx of American and European sojourners, hippies, and young entrepreneurs contributed to the early globalization of Afghanistan’s opium industry. Moreover, the massive demand for opium and other narcotics in Iran and the rest of Asia was growing at an astronomical pace, overwhelming authorities’ ability effectively to manage addicts and smugglers. As a result, the attention given to Afghanistan as a part of Nixon’s drug war stemmed not from Afghanistan’s own domestic problems with addiction (which were limited, save for the drug tourists and Badakhshan), but from the threat of Afghan drugs reaching surrounding nations. For the US, Afghan compliance was increasingly important given Pakistan and Iran’s role as important allies in the Cold War in Asia. As a result, both Iran and Pakistan, opium producers in their own right, were in relatively fortuitous
positions on the American geo-strategic spectrum, granting them easier access to funds and technical assistance that were seen as fundamental to controlling drugs at the source. Afghanistan, on the other hand, as a neutral country, was not. However, as was historically the case, the drug issue became an important tool for Afghanistan to gain much-needed funds and technical assistance from the US and UN to expand its police and gendarmerie.

Pakistan became increasingly concerned with its role as a trafficking route for drug traffickers coming from Afghanistan. While laws regarding the illicit production, use, and trade of drugs remained stern for Pakistani citizens, many Westerners continued to cross the Khyber pass into Pakistan. Meanwhile, the government continued to pursue the licit production of opium in hopes of expanding its nascent pharmaceutical industry. Eventually, in 1973, after significant pressure from the US, Pakistan ended its licit production of opium and took a significant step into the realm of complete source control. However, despite the government’s formal prohibition of opium, opium continued to proliferate throughout the country. For many government officials, the money to be made from either trafficking or production was too much. Many officials abandoned their political posts, moved to the frontier provinces, and essentially formalized their role in the illicit narcotics trade. Others perpetuated the crisis of

388 State Department. “Illicit Drug Traffic in Pakistan.” American Consul Karachi. February 22, 1971. RG 59, Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Office of the Country Director for Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. (1972 - ca. 1979). Records Relating to Afghanistan, Box 2, “Afghanistan 1972.” Many of the young traffickers were given lenient sentences (if any at all) and were often quick to bribe local officials. As a result, many of the traffickers saw the southern route through Pakistan as preferable because of its weak judicial system.

corruption that permeated the Pakistani political system. Ultimately, US assistance for increased enforcement and crop substitution programs only affected Pakistan’s settled areas. The frontier, where the government had little control and where many of the Pashtun tribal groups freely traded all sorts of contraband, remained untouched by Pakistan and US efforts. As a result, despite the fact that the Pakistan government eventually conformed to American supply-side strategy, opium continued to proliferate. It was not until 1979, when the Zia ul-Haq launched the Hudood Ordinance, establishing shariah law in Pakistan, that the government enforced a nation-wide ban on opium.

Iran, like Pakistan, suffered tremendously from the expanding opium industry in Afghanistan as hundreds of thousands of addicts increasingly looked east for their opium fix. When the Shah announced the reestablishment of opium cultivation in 1969, he intended to bring rampant opium addiction under control by providing licit sources of opium in conjunction with increased measures to combat wide-spread smuggling. The US played an important role in helping try to stop rampant smuggling. It had established

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391 Lamour and Lamberti noted that at various border crossings, impromptu bazaars had been established whereby anyone could purchase drugs, as well as guns and other contraband. The presence of government officials generated little concern, as most were either indifferent or complicit in the trade. The laws of Pakistan did not extend into some areas, such as the Federally Affiliated Tribal Areas (FATA). (182-185)
392 Asad. (30-31) However, by then opium production and trade had moved almost completely into Afghanistan.
393 Pakistan has a large addict population as well, although until recently, it was often neglected as a significant social issue in the country. Part of the reason why Pakistan was slow to adopt American measures for strict control of use and trade of opium was that vestiges of the colonial system in the subcontinent were well entrenched in Pakistan. Drug policy in Pakistan after partition was mainly a continuation of the colonial policy stemming from Pakistan’s role as a major producer for British India. (See ul-Haq, Emdad. Drugs in South Asia.)
a significant advisory presence during the 1950s with the GENMISH program and merely
used Nixon’s policy as a means of enhancing the pre-existing system. In 1971, the US
agreed to expand financial and technical assistance to Iran, including a special police
training program that provided access to training in the US, as well as increasing the
capabilities of border patrols and customs through new equipment.\(^{395}\) Iran was a firm
member of the American anti-Soviet bloc, and the Shah’s policies in regards to narcotics
were ardently supported by the US. The increased enforcement had a major effect on the
border between Turkey and Iran, as both nations commitment to stopping the trade
virtually eliminated the illicit traffic of opium into Iran. As a result, the threat posed to
Iran from the Southwest Asian narcotics industry no longer came from Turkey, and a
new-found emphasis was placed on interdicting opium from Afghanistan.

\textit{Afghanistan: Smuggling during the time of King Zahir Shah}

Although opium cultivation remained an important part of the rural Afghan
economy the Afghan state, and even the international community, recognized its own
limitations in establishing effective and sustainable solutions. Both the 1944 and 1957
prohibitions stood as prime examples of how the Afghan government had attempted but
failed to stop the production of opium. However, in 1944 and 1957, Afghan opium
remained a domestic and regional concern, and its potential to surge into the global illicit
market remained relatively low. But, by the late 1960s, the ever-growing presence of
Afghan opium in Iran, and the increasing number of Western sojourners and drug-

Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Office of the Officer in Charge, Iranian
trafficking entrepreneurs in Afghanistan were transforming Afghanistan’s role in the
global drug market. Smuggling, not cultivation, became the new focus of drug-policy in
Afghanistan.

In 1969, under immense pressure from the US and its neighbors, Iran and
Pakistan, the Afghan government passed an anti-smuggling law to bring the proliferating
smuggling trade under control. After a meeting of the Supreme Judicial Court in Kabul,
the court concluded that:

the increase in cultivation of poppies and the increased production, sale,
purchase, import, transportation, export and stockpiling of narcotics in
recent years, and realizing the importance of Afghanistan’s membership in
the international community and her role in effectively participating in
world narcotics control, the Supreme Court, in pursuance of the above
mentioned points, and following the governments expressed wish…it shall
promulgate laws for the unification of the judicial process and court action
on narcotic crimes.

The court also established a special tribunal in the Kabul province for dealing with
special narcotics matters.396 The tribunal indicated that the government was taking steps
to centralize police and judicial structures in an effort better to combat the burgeoning
drug trade. The 1969 Anti-Smuggling Law defined smuggling as three types of criminal
acts: first, the import or export of goods without going through the proper customs
procedures or without paying necessary taxes; second, the production, import, export,
sale, purchase, and transport of prohibited goods or goods from government monopoly;
and third, altering the quality of goods to avoid paying higher duties or taxes, thus
decreasing revenue for the state. The state defined prohibited goods as “those whose

production, import, export, purchase, sale, storage, and transportation the Government has proclaimed to be prohibited.” The law also established the necessary procedures for departments, for policeman, reward systems, as well as broad punitive measures.397

While the law marked the most significant effort on the part of the government to establish legal boundaries for the illicit import and export of goods, it failed in two major respects. First, the law never outlined the specific goods prohibited by the government. As a result, for policemen arresting alleged smugglers or judges prosecuting suspected smugglers there was no specific guideline from which to define what was a prohibited good. Thus, policemen and the courts were tasked with stopping a growing smuggling trade without knowing what goods were illegal or how to allocate punishment. Needless to say, the arbitrary foundations of anti-smuggling laws in Afghanistan certainly did not help in stopping the burgeoning drug trade. Moreover, the law prohibiting the cultivation and sale of opium remained unchanged from its inception in 1957, despite the remarkable changes to the Afghan opium market. Second, and more important, the centralization of police and gendarmerie carried political and social implications that threatened the delicate balance between the state and the people. Would the authority of the state in Kabul have similar results in Badakhshan or Helmand? Although centralizing the narcotics system was deemed necessary, the success of such a restructured system would depend heavily on lower level police, gendarmerie, and courts in provinces far from Kabul acquiescing to the demands of the Kabul government. In other words, would lower level state officials abandon their qawm for the sake of the state? As we have seen, the state’s legitimacy was always in question, particularly the further one got from Kabul. As

a result, the centralization of Afghanistan’s narcotic war was ideal in theory but flawed in practice.

Although the passing of the law was an important step in the anti-narcotics campaign, the rather slow implementation and enforcement of the law prompted the US and Iran to press harder for a more concerted Afghan effort. In 1971, Prime Minister Dr. Abdul Zahir met with ministers of various related departments to create a separate narcotics commission tasked with expanding customs police and border patrols by improving funding and technical assistance while increasing the crack down on the production of opium and hash.\textsuperscript{398} It was becoming increasingly obvious that the size and depth of the narcotics industry in Afghanistan was so large and widespread that narcotics matters could not be handled under the traditional judicial constructs. By 1972 Zahir’s successor, Musa Shafiq, consolidated narcotics matters under two ministries: the Ministry of Interior to deal with smuggling and the Ministry of Agriculture to deal with production. Moreover, the Ministry of Interior created new anti-smuggling units within local police precincts tasked specifically with cracking down on illicit smuggling.\textsuperscript{399}

Although there was a genuine desire to stop the influx of narcotics from some within the Afghan government, the new anti-drug measures provided an opportunity for the Afghan government to continue its push for greater American financial aid. In meetings between Shafiq and the US Embassy, the Prime Minister repeated his intentions of increasing the crackdown on drugs but continually stressed the importance of


\textsuperscript{399} “Anti-Smuggling squads strengthened.” \textit{Kabul Times}. February 16, 1971. (3)
increased US aid to help provide for improved enforcement and, more important, increased funding for rural development.\textsuperscript{400} Not only did this conflict with the American overemphasis on enforcement, but also it countered the US investments of hundreds of millions of dollars in large-scale agricultural development programs. The result was that Shafiq was pushing for more money for programs the US had already contributed to (agro-industrial development) or had rejected in the past (police and military aid). As a result, despite the threat of Afghanistan as a significant source of illicit narcotics and drugs importance in American foreign policy, the US was unwilling to contribute the type of funds the Afghans desired and that both governments actually needed to stop the flow of drugs.

Regardless of the larger dialogue between the US and Afghan government, the increase in enforcement of smuggling laws by both Zahir and Shafiq led to a dramatic increase in arrests of smugglers. According to official Afghan statistics, the number of arrests of smugglers increased from 72 in 1971 (1350) to 221 in 1972 (1351), before skyrocketing to 584 in 1973 (1352).\textsuperscript{401} Although the statistics show a major increase in the number of arrests of smugglers, it is impossible to estimate the quantity of drugs being smuggled out of Afghanistan. Certainly, during this period there was a major increase in the smuggling of drugs and other products, but there is little statistical proof to show how much the industry was growing. If anything, these statistics demonstrate


explicitly that the state was in fact trying harder to crack down on smuggling, implying that smuggling was on the rise.

The states effort to combat smuggling was well publicized by government-run or pro-government publications, often extolling the virtues of the government’s courageous campaign. In August of 1971, Anis, the government-run newspaper, reported that Kabul police had successfully captured smugglers in Sarobi, just east of Kabul, trying to smuggle nearly 2,000 kilos of opium to either Pakistan or Iran. The seizure was massive for the time. The smuggler was said to believe that the shipment would have fetched nearly 8 million afghanis, or nearly $100,000 US.\textsuperscript{402}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{opium_smuggling.jpg}
\caption{Opium smuggling in Afghanistan.}
\end{figure}

(translation: the opium was carried in large plastic bags on the vehicle’s bed)

\textsuperscript{402} This is based of the exchange rate in 1350 (1971) of roughly 80 afghans to the dollar. (see Fry, Maxwell. \textit{The Afghan Economy}. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1974.)
Moreover, the article noted the police had adopted “the correct measures” by increasing the total area monitored, particularly two major roads leading into Kabul.

Interestingly, the seizure was indicative of the improvement in Kabul police tactics in fighting smuggling, a characteristic that the US and UN urgently prescribed as the solution to Afghanistan’s opium problem. The Anis article was followed by many others, including several in the Kabul Times, that emphasized, if not glorified, the state’s new ambitious plan for stopping smuggling.

However, despite this success and many others highlighted in various publications, American officials remained skeptical of the Afghan effort. Officials in the US Embassy questioned the purpose of the newspaper coverage. The Kabul Times, an English-language publication, was one of the most prominent of the Afghan newspapers to highlight the government efforts in cracking down on smuggling. Many American officials in Kabul questioned the sincerity of the Times given that it was generally aimed at the foreign community in Kabul. Furthermore, distrust was fueled by rumors circulating in Kabul that many within the government, including the king himself, were somehow complicit in the trade. Thus, many Americans in Kabul saw the crackdown not so much as a genuine effort but rather as publicity campaign.

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403 The author described the police measures as “polis tadawbir sahihi awthawz kardan” but placed the notion of correct, “sahih”, in bold, certainly implying that the police crackdown on opium smuggling was the right thing to do.  
Police, Drugs, and Qawm

Aside from the rumors of collusion at the upper levels of the Afghan government, all indications pointed to the continued expansion and growth of drug smuggling and cultivation in Afghanistan. Reports continued from US narcotics officials in Iran noting that Afghan opium was coming through the region in such quantities that it was not only spreading into Iran but also making its way by sea to Dubai.\(^{406}\) Furthermore, in 1972, the Iranian gendarmerie made the largest seizure in the history of drug interdiction, capturing 12.7 tons of opium from a truck en route to Iran from Afghanistan.\(^{407}\) All indications were pointing to Afghanistan’s emergence as a major player in the global illicit narcotics market. Nevertheless, explanations for why Afghan drugs continued to expand in the region remain relatively obscure. Globally, the market was changing, yet narcotics officials had little foresight into how the market was evolving. Locally, however, much of the explanation rested on the suspected collusion at the top levels of the Afghan government. Although this was undoubtedly true, this explanation obfuscated the deeper issues tied to the role of the state in Afghan society. As a result, the continued rise in opium smuggling was never truly impacted by Afghanistan’s narcotic policy because of the limited capabilities of the police and gendarmerie. Furthermore, political and cultural factors facing individual police and gendarmes tasked with enforcing anti-smuggling and anti-narcotic policies, particularly surrounding the issue of *qawm*, amplified this functional incapacity.


When Daud took power in 1953 he wanted to bolster the police and gendarmerie so as to better to protect state interests form the threat of local tribal authorities. In 1958, a small contingent of West German Police officers was sent to Afghanistan to train police in Kabul. Despite this training, the Afghan police seemed to be the weakest link in the enforcement chain. Much of this stemmed from the role of police in both the Afghan state and Afghan society. Unlike the military, the police were held in low regard in Afghanistan. The police were generally made up of the bottom 10 percent of Army conscripts. Most patrolmen received an average monthly salary of 80 cents a month. The low status and low pay of policemen often made even the most basic issues troublesome. For example, policemen were not given guns, badges, or ID cards because they often sold these on the black market to compensate for their meager pay. Illiteracy was endemic, virtually negating any record-keeping system or systematic application of narcotic laws. Moreover, officers who showed too much zeal in combating narcotics were often placed on leave as they threatened the status quo. In one case, a senior Afghan police official who cooperated with the BNND was eventually sent off to Europe to “study” because his superiors feared he was too close to foreign narcotics officials.408

Corruption remained the primary problem with police. Some of the German police advisers commented that the overall result of their effort in Afghanistan was “to create the most highly organized criminal element in Afghanistan.” Furthermore, any real and substantive progress was confined exclusively to Kabul. In the provinces “even the inept efforts practiced in Kabul are virtually nonexistent. Lack of authority, know-how, initiative and equipment reduces the police virtually to a token presence.” In 1972,

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BNDD agent Terry Burke was sent to Kabul to lead anti-narcotics initiatives in cooperation with the Afghan police. Burke and other US narcotics officials struggled to coordinate with Afghan police because many of the “educated officials are well aware of the short-comings of their police and are less than eager to place these shortcomings in full view by attempting to do that which the know they cannot.”409 Ultimately, the low regard for Afghan police in broader Afghan political and social spheres made it virtually impossible for American officials to co-opt them in effective narcotics controls.

Although the Afghan police clearly failed to match the American zeal for narcotic control, many of the problems were much deeper than mere “lack of initiative” or limited “know-how.” American desires to crack down on the highest-level drug producers and drug traffickers threatened the very foundations of Afghan political culture. As one BNDD official put it, the “BNDD won’t be satisfied with token arrests of a few hippies, but is going to be pushing to stop the major Afghan suppliers and traffickers. For family, tribal, and political reasons, this type of action will be avoided at all costs by the Afghan authorities.”410 In other words, Afghan police, from the bottom to the top of the political system, were more concerned about their qawm than they were about the desires of the state. American and European officials viewed this as nothing more than corruption. However, corruption implied that state rule superseded the power of local communities. In Afghanistan, particularly in rural communities far from Kabul, the state is not an entity that penetrates society but rather rests on top of society. Thus, corruption takes on a different meaning altogether. Rural peasants use the state to enhance or protect local interests while simultaneously preventing the state from integrating into local society. As

410 Ibid. (4)
Olivier Roy notes, corruption for peasants (including those in the police) “makes it possible to resist regimentation, and to avoid dealing with issues which he does not understand. Corruption makes the official powerless and ensures that bureaucratic machinery can only function in a vacuum.”

Thus, when the Afghan state’s narcotics policy threatened local political, social, and economic relations, policemen often ignored the state directive.

The gendarmerie, much like the police, was just as ineffective at stopping drugs. Although structured as a paramilitary force under the Ministry of Interior, the mission was to maintain internal security and to supplement regular police forces. Although a relatively large paramilitary force, most of the gendarmes were located in key provinces just outside of Kabul. There were only a few border posts on the Afghan-Pakistan and Afghan-Iranian borders. As a result, the gendarmerie suffered tremendously from a lack of mobility. Unlike the police, who were stationed throughout the country but lacked initiative the farther one got from Kabul, the gendarmerie had the potential to act as a significant anti-narcotics force but simply lacked the mobility to do so. This certainly explains why the majority of seizures from the police and gendarmerie were located in or near Kabul while drug smuggling continued unabated on Afghanistan’s southern and western borders.

By 1972, it seemed that Afghanistan was at a critical impasse. The steps the Afghan government had taken on its own were proving to be woefully inadequate. In a speech by Y. P. Maroofi to the UN General Assembly, Maroofi stressed that international

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411 Roy, Olivier. *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan.* (21)
desires for greater enforcement of drug controls would require greater investment in the country’s enforcement capabilities:

Traffickers are increasingly employing sophisticated methods of smuggling their contraband, both in and out of the country, sophisticated and advanced methods of detection were needed to effectively cope with the problem…However, in order to effectively screen traffickers we are trying to have more check points and border patrols on all areas of our borders and such a measure is costly and cannot be implemented with the limited resources at our disposal.413

As had been the case in the previous decades, narcotics control ultimately rested on the willingness of the international community to fund such programs. On the other hand, this required greater institutional transformations in Afghanistan to fulfill international expectations for drug control. The UN/FAO report, released in 1972, advocated a sweeping reform to Afghanistan’s anti-smuggling and anti-opium laws to allow the government to easily identify prohibited goods in conjunction with the 1961 Single Convention.414 The UN proposed a three-year program valued around $2.5 million,415 with an additional $2 million per year following the initial term. Most of the UNFDAC funds, $790,000, would be used for agricultural development, while $255,000 would be

415 $1.5 million would come from the UN, $500,000 from the Afghan government, and $450,000 from other sources. Of course, given the overwhelming influence of the US in the UNFDAC, the UN role as advisor to Afghan narcotics endeavors did little to mask the American influence. During the rules of Zahir Shah and Daud, public support from the US was still discouraged. As a result, using the UN allowed the US to exert influence on narcotics matters without creating political issues over the US role.
used for enforcement.\footnote{\textit{Narcotics – Assistance to Afghanistan: Memorandum to NEA Interagency Narcotics Committee.}} American officials created their own Narcotics Control Action Plan that placed an overwhelming emphasis on enforcement. The US recommended to the UN a program worth $9.5 million over three years, with the US paying for $3.5 million, and roughly $654,000 for enforcement every year. The US believed that the UN had undervalued the role of the gendarmerie and customs police in enforcing narcotics laws, and as a result, required far greater funding for enforcement.\footnote{Ibid.} Although there remained a significant question over how to implement successful drug control, both the US and UN realized that enforcement was fruitless without development of the country. Although steps would be taken to bolster enforcement, the changes to legislation and training of police and gendarmerie would take time. But, given their pre-existing presence in Helmand and other places throughout rural Afghanistan, development assistance could be implemented immediately.\footnote{State Department. \textit{“Narcotics Control Action Plan for Afghanistan – Analysis of the UN/FAO Report on Narcotics Control in Afghanistan.”} March, 1973. Digital Archive, nara.gov.} As a result, the US and the UN began to pump money into Afghanistan in an effort to stop the proliferation of drugs in the region.

However, when American and UN officials were beginning their anti-narcotics mission, the crisis of the Afghan state was deepening. In the summer of 1971 Afghanistan was hit by one of the worst droughts in its history. Although pleas were made to the government to provide much-needed food it did not respond until 1972. As a result, the drought and slow response from the state contributed to a famine that killed thousands
and pushed hundreds of thousands more to the brink. While the slow response was maddening enough, reports emerged that much of the food sent to the provinces was being hoarded by local officials and sold to desperate peasants. Other reports noted that most of the food went to the major urban areas, Kabul and Kandahar, and not the regions most affected by drought and famine. Furthermore, student uprisings continued. Much of the unrest centered on the increasing levels of unemployment and a frustration over the increasingly disconnected and ineffectual government. During the 1950s and 1960s, the government employed almost all college graduates, but, by the 1970s it could barely pay the workers it already hired. Moreover, the meager wages of government employees fed into the culture of corruption and bribery. Kabul University continued to be a source of intense and sometimes violent political action. On both sides of the political spectrum, radical leftists and extreme Islamists clashed over how to overthrow the political and social order. In the provinces, the drought and suspected corruption of government officials (often favoring one group over another) led to repeated violent clashes between tribal and ethnic groups as well as against the government. Things were so bad that Louis Dupree predicted that a coup would inevitably occur within five years of the events of 1971.

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420 Barfield. Afghanistan. (212)

421 Ibid. (213)


Drug Control Under Daud

Dupree proved prescient, albeit a little hopeful. In 1973, recognizing that the Afghan government was quickly losing its grasp, Mohammad Daud Khan launched a bloodless coup. Daud broke the traditional political paradigm that the Musahiban Dynasty had embraced for nearly 45 years by allying himself with urban leftists rather than the ulema and tribal authorities. Although Daud had placed himself on the left side of the spectrum with the coup, he initially faced little resistance from the tribal and religious authorities that historically played such an important role in shaping the political culture of the Afghan state. Many within Afghanistan viewed his coup as little more than a family dispute, and in some ways, the royal dynasty (despite its new socialist tint) as infallible.\footnote{Barfield. (214)}

Daud took power promising to rectify the many problems facing the state, particularly corruption. However, despite his new power base of young and zealous leftists, little seemed to change. In fact, the transfer of power and the surprising lack of resistance to it “demonstrated that Afghan national politics was still the domain of a small elite based in Kabul that had little connection with the rest of the country.”\footnote{Barfield. (215)} But beneath the veil of ineffectual and disconnected government Daud continued to pursue power for himself. He purged Islamists and Marxists from the government and military, established a one-party system, and bolstered the secret police and military by placing officials loyal to him in the key positions. Furthermore, he continued to pursue foreign development aid as a means of meeting the significant challenges facing the country. Daud bolstered

\footnote{Barfield. (214)  
Barfield. (215)  
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relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and even Pakistan and continued to play the Soviet Union and the US against each other to extract more foreign money.\textsuperscript{426}

Daud, ever the politician, embraced narcotics control as yet another way to bolster foreign aid for development and bolster the strength of police and paramilitary units. Initially, however, Daud was quite cold toward American anti-narcotic initiatives. US requests for increased enforcement prompted aggressive responses proposing the radical development of Afghanistan. Furthermore, Daud refused to allow the US or any other NATO country to take a significant role in designing and implementing any of the enforcement or development proposals, essentially confining narcotics control strictly to the UN. Other foreign embassies thought the US sensationalized the narcotics issue, while some US Embassy officials noted that there was a growing anti-American sentiment floating around Kabul.\textsuperscript{427} It is unclear whether Daud genuinely resisted the US, but, it seems likely that he was playing a delicate political game. Daud’s second turn in control of the government resulted from the support of the leftist contingent in Kabul. To acquiesce with the US would certainly create internal conflicts for Daud. Also, Daud had approached the US before for aid, particularly military aid, and after being refused, turned to the Soviets. As a result, his resistance to American overtures stemmed from the new political make-up of his power base (leftists) and largest donor and advocate (USSR), combined with lingering resentment against the US from his previous go around.

\textsuperscript{426} Barfield. (216) 
However, by the end of 1973 Daud realized that his ambitious plans for his country would not be possible without massive infusions of cash. As a result, his government warmed to the US and reasserted its commitment to improving drug controls. In October, Daud told the US Embassy that he ordered government officials to cooperate fully with US narcotics experts and that the matter of narcotics was “as much or more in Afghan interests than in that of the US.” As a result, Daud made significant moves to curb the production and smuggling of opium and hash. The head of the Ministry of Interior, Faiz Mohammad, was put in charge of a new anti-smuggling unit. Unlike previous such units, which were under the jurisdiction of local police, the new anti-smuggling units, or ASUs, were given national jurisdiction, charged exclusively with suppressing the drug trade. The ASU was made up of 12 ‘eager’ men, trained by UNFDAC and DEA experts to collect information and intelligence and launch covert sting operations against higher level traffickers. By all indications the new ASUs signified a new milestone in the US Afghan relationship. However, some US official remained skeptical of Daud’s intentions. Ambassador Theodore Eliot himself worried that Daud was using this as merely another avenue to increase funding for his large-scale development programs.428

Recognizing the limitations of Afghanistan’s legal structure, the DEA embarked on an effort to improve the operational capacity of the ASUs throughout the country. Apparently, the moral campaign against drugs did not seem to foment the same sense of urgency and zealotry among the ASUs as it did American narcotics officials. One proposal to improve initiative among Afghans was to use US money (through the UN) to

restructure incentives for informants and lower-level police officers to improve narcotic intelligence and prevent corruption. Both US and UN officials agreed that increasing monetary incentives would provide real motivation for raising the number of arrests.\footnote{In some cases, the monetary reward system was providing useful intelligence. However, the types of seizures were still minor in comparison to the overall quantity of narcotics smuggled out of Afghanistan every year.}

Although the Americans were essentially dangling money in the face of the Afghans, the Afghans continued to resist, particularly at the highest levels. It seemed to US officials that Afghans were increasingly wary of US approaches because they new it entailed greater US involvement in internal Afghan affairs. And although the Afghan government continued to pursue anti-narcotics controls it continued to resist committing fully to American guidance on the matter.\footnote{“DEA memo about US program for financial incentive program. Conf: Kabul 8749.” Dec 1973. Digital archive, nara.gov.}

By 1975, the joint venture between the DEA/UNFDAC and the Afghan ASU was seemingly producing results, indicated by several large sting operations, one leading to the seizure of one ton of opium.\footnote{“DEA memo: 4472.” July 1975. Digital Archive, nara.gov.} Moreover, the financial incentive program was helping contribute to the recent successes of the ASU, leading to improved morale and initiative.\footnote{“Special Afghan Enforcement Program. Conf: Kabul 4910.” DEA, July 1975. Digital archive, nara.gov.} Despite the success of the ASU, it was obvious that the enforcement campaign was merely nibbling at the edges of a much larger pie. The increasing prevalence of heroin in drug seizures was indicating that Afghanistan was in fact producing opiates that were moving beyond its regional market in Iran, as Iran was not a
major consumer of heroin. Furthermore, most of the enforcement successes occurred close to Kabul, where state control was strong. What worried both Afghan and US officials was not only that trafficking was spreading throughout the country, and virtually unabated in border regions, but also that cultivation of opium was spreading. In 1973, the Helmand Valley, the site of the largest agro-industrial project in the country (and funded by the US), was beginning to produce opium at alarming levels. As a result, by the mid-1970s, Afghanistan was emerging as one of the largest producers and transporters of opium in the world. To make matters worse, the political conditions in Afghanistan were reaching a critical mass. All hope of stopping narcotics in Afghanistan rested on a state that was quickly was losing control over its people.

CONCLUSION

When Nixon began the crackdown on the consumption and production of drugs, he had hoped to eliminate the role of drugs in fomenting and perpetuating the social and political decay of the United States. Initially, the increased enforcement against the production and trafficking of drugs seemed to be working. By the mid-1970s interdiction and eradication campaigns virtually eliminated the French Connection, reduced the role of Southeast Asian heroin in the US market, and decimated the Mexican heroin trade. All signs pointed toward a successful future for the war on drugs. However, underneath the veil of triumph loomed a stark reality that had yet to be understood. Implementing America’s new militarized supply-side strategy abroad led to a remarkable dispersal of production of drugs, ultimately diversifying the global market by introducing new actors.

that were better suited for the changing dynamic of the illicit drug trade. The resulting impact of Nixon’s war on drugs cannot be understated.

Analyzing the impact of Nixon’s drug war in Afghanistan reveals how American drug-control ambitions were subsumed within the deeper political and social struggles of Afghanistan. In a broad policy sense, acquiescence to the American drug war simply meant more money for the government to improve the strength and reach of the state. Under Zahir Shah the state attempted to stop drugs by initiating significant reforms and institutional changes to achieve such goals. The passing of the 1969 Anti-Smuggling Law, the creation of anti-smuggling units within the police, and the actual enforcement of the law indicated that the state was trying to enhance narcotics control. Daud took it even further, embracing Nixon’s emphasis on enforcement as a means of strengthening and consolidating his own power over the police and gendarmerie. The creation of the ASUs with national jurisdiction was a major step in transforming the role of the state in regulating its people. For what purpose did the Afghan state launch its own war on drugs? In this case, Afghanistan’s anti-narcotics policy was a continuation of the longstanding American – Afghan narcotics relationship whereby American ambitions for drug control were used by Afghans as a means of enhancing other more pressing social, economic, and political needs and/or desires.

The issues on the ground reinforced the broader political matters facing the Afghan state. The failure of drug control at the lowest level reveals the impact of the qawm in the state drug control apparatus. This was most obvious at the lowest levels of the Afghan drug control apparatus, particularly the police. The success and failure of drug control ultimately rested on an individual’s role within the state in relation to the
local community. Thus, the power of the *qawm* was easily apparent in the decisions of both lower and upper level police to pursue or ignore narcotics control initiatives. As Roy notes, for all Afghans working within the state “the aim is to insert the qawm into the state institutions at a level which befits their own importance. The operation is intended not only to produce material benefits, but especially to ensure that the local power game carries on as it has always done.”434 Thus, the majority of policemen, especially those that Americans labeled corrupt, were in fact playing the Afghan political game. Narcotics control was inevitably subject to the whims of a police officer, border patrolman, or gendarme who had to weigh the impact of decision on his personal standing within his family, tribe, or community versus the demands of the state. Given their low pay and low priority it is easy to see why most Afghan officials either turned a blind eye or lent a helping hand.

The enforcement of anti-smuggling laws also highlights deeper issues concerning people on the frontier and the attempts by the Afghan (and neighboring governments) to restrict mobility. Historically, regional nation-states and foreign powers interpreted the patterns of mobility as “dangerous source of instability.”435 However, many of the communities that traversed these borderlands were defined and shaped by this fluidity. In fact, the history of state encapsulation served as a significant source of identity for these peoples.436 Although the history of cross-border trading would suggest that little had changed over time aside from the regional and global context of what was being traded, the transformation of the trader into a smuggler was ideally suited for the expansion of

434 Roy. (24)
435 Hopkins and Marsden. *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier.* (175)
436 Ibid. (2)
state power in the periphery of the country. Thus, the drug smuggler became an important piece of the state’s narrative for the expansion of power into the periphery and the regulation of mobility.\(^{437}\)

Ultimately, the biggest impact of Nixon’s drug war on Afghanistan was in initiating a massive transformation of the global narcotics trade and Afghanistan’s role within it. Although Afghanistan was slowly emerging in the global market by the late 1960s, it could not compete within a market oversaturated with Turkish, Southeast Asian, and Mexican supply. Furthermore, the end of the second heroin epidemic in the early 1970s continued to restrict the consumer base.\(^{438}\) However, the crackdown on Turkey, Southeast Asia, and Mexico created a new market, which Afghanistan was ideally suited to fill.

The extent to which Nixon’s drug war influenced changes in the politics of Afghanistan is harder to discern. In Turkey the eradication of the opium crop became a major political issue and helped usher in a new political regime emphasizing the “rights of the people” to grow opium.\(^{439}\) However, narcotics issues were merely indications of much larger political and social dilemmas facing the Afghan state. Did the increased enforcement of narcotics control contribute to the growth of the drug trade in Afghanistan? Most certainly, but by elevating the risk of production and trading, thereby increasing the value of the illicit crop. But this is no different from anywhere else where drugs are illegal and enforced. The question is not so much about drugs as it is about politics. To what extent did increased narcotics control contribute to the declining

\(^{437}\) Gallant, Tony. “Brigandage, Piracy, etc.” (25)
\(^{438}\) Courtwright. (166)
\(^{439}\) Spain. (302)
legitimacy of the state? There is no concrete answer to this question. The implementation of narcotics policy was not sincere by any means, and the use of foreign money for development was not intended to build a cohesive national entity. On the contrary, the state’s ambitions to build up infrastructure seem to be self-serving. As Roy notes, “the state itself seems to have no other goal than that of perpetuating itself.”\(^{440}\) Thus, Afghan narcotics policy was not about protecting its citizens or building a prosperous nation, but rather using the global concern over narcotics control to enhance and secure the state’s purpose for the lives of a small, elite group of Afghans.

This state design, which had existed for the better part of five decades, was crumbling by the mid-1970s. State control was weakening, particularly in places well outside the state’s stronghold for power, Kabul. In places such as the Helmand Valley the state’s waning legitimacy was transforming people’s role in the global arena. In particular, changes to the global market for illicit drugs were leading many farmers, landowners, and traders to convert to opium production and transportation on a large scale. As a result, the increasing demand for Afghan opium on the global market and the declining strength of the state, particularly in relation to its ability to enforce smuggling laws or increase agro-industrial development, converged to transform the Helmand Valley. And unlike the rest of the country, the Helmand’s role as the breadbasket of Afghanistan, as well as the major site of American-led agro-industrial development, coalesced in the mid-1970s to lay the foundation for what would inevitably become the largest producer of opium in the world and a shining example of the failures of nation-building, narcotics control, and American politics in Afghanistan.

\(^{440}\) Roy. (24)
Chapter 5: Developing Opium: The Helmand Valley Project and the Globalization of Opium

If Hilmand were a country, it would once again be the world’s biggest producer of illicit drugs.\(^{441}\)

Following the attacks on the US on September 11, 2001 and America’s subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, opium has become synonymous with the conflict in Afghanistan. Helmand province, in particular, has come to symbolize the role of opium as both a cause and consequence of the failures of the Afghan state. Helmand province is by far the largest producer of opium in the world. In 2007, a year in which it was estimated that Afghanistan produced a record high of roughly 8,200 metric tons of opium,\(^{442}\) Helmand province itself produced an estimated 5,397 metric tons, nearly 66 per cent of the total national crop, making it the largest source of opium in the world.\(^{443}\) Underlying the contemporary situation in Helmand, however, is that from 1946 to the Soviet invasion in 1979, the Helmand Valley development project was a cornerstone of US-Afghan efforts to build a large-scale agro-industrial economy in Afghanistan.

\(^{443}\) Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008. (37)
Building dams and irrigation canals to improve agricultural output and establish a market-based agricultural economy was a key component of the US vision of modernity in rural Afghanistan.

However, why the Helmand Valley became the largest source of illicit opium in the world remains unexplored. This stems partially from the broader historiographical issues that motivate this study: mainly that the Helmand Valley, like the rest of the country, emerged as the major producer of narcotics primarily because of the Afghan-Soviet War of 1979-1989. Although the war was an important catalyst in expanding the opium trade, it only explains why it expanded, not why opium began in the Helmand Valley. There are many unanswered questions. Why, despite the hundreds of millions of dollars spent in the region, did farmers and traders turn to opium? Was it purely economic necessity? Or did social, cultural, and political factors influence the changing dynamic of the region?

I argue that the emergence of opium was tied closely to the US-Afghan development project following World War II. Analyzing the transformation of the Helmand Valley from state development project to burgeoning producer of opium reveals how development and drug control were vital components of the state’s attempt to become legible in the rural Afghan landscape. As a development project driven by

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McCoy, Chouvy, and Mansfield all emphasize war as the fundamental component shaping the contemporary Afghan opium industry. Although Chovuy does state that “opium production predated the Afghan conflict.” (Chouvy, Pierre. *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010. see page 100).

Scott, James. *Seeing Like a State.* (78) Afghanistan embodied the illegible state Scott describes.
America and modernization theory, building roads, dams, irrigation, and canals was an integral element of the government’s visibility in the Helmand Valley. Drug policy, particularly prohibitions on cultivating and trading opium, reflected the state’s attempt to penetrate and regulate the lives of rural Afghans. Although by the 1970s the Helmand development project had actually improved the lives of rural Afghan farmers via increased revenues and farming beyond sustenance, the state was unable to bolster its own legitimacy in the region. Furthermore, the webs of the global narcotics economy had finally reached Afghanistan. Opium emerged in the Helmand Valley at a time when the Afghan government was increasingly unable to legitimize its rule in rural Afghanistan. In this way, the emergence of opium in the Helmand Valley is a microcosm of the broader political, social, and economic developments that plagued the Afghan government and reinforced the expanding opium trade during this period.

This chapter examines the factors that influenced how and why the Helmand Valley turned into the epicenter of the Afghan opium industry. First I examine the history of the Helmand Valley development project to reveal the fundamental political, social, and economic issues that underscored why many rural farmers turned to the opium economy. Despite Afghanistan’s neutrality during the Cold War, the Helmand valley project was distinctive in that it was branded with an American vision of modernity. From building dams and canals to the forced settlement of itinerant traders, the Helmand Valley project was a radical, if severely misguided, attempt to transform the region into Afghanistan’s main contribution to the global agricultural commodity market. By

examining the various problems that plagued the project throughout its history, I reveal that the tensions surrounding the project were not isolated by any means, but rather played an integral role in reinforcing many Afghans concerns about the impact of corruption, foreign influence, and overt racial biases in the Afghan government and its policies.

In the second part of the chapter, I explore how in the early 1970s, despite widespread political discontent, the introduction of high-yield wheat and cash crops resulted in a burgeoning market-based agricultural economy. The relative success of the Helmand agricultural economy did not, however, result in a boost for the government’s claim to legitimacy. Although many farmers finally began to reap the rewards of the development program, the decades of corruption, inefficiency, and the racial/ethnic discrimination began to take its toll on the government’s legitimacy in the region. Furthermore, the development of cash crops also profoundly impacted the growth of the opium trade in the valley. Afghan farmers became increasingly cognizant of the global market and started to grow opium as a cash crop in response to the significant increase in global demand.

The third part of the chapter explores how the discovery of opium in the Helmand Valley affected US-Afghan relations and the eventual implementation of a prohibition in 1974. For the Afghan government, the presence of opium in the Helmand Valley had the potential to undermine its relationship with the US. The success of the Helmand Valley project, which was viewed by Afghan officials as an “unfinished symphony,” entirely depended on the US continuing to finance the project. As a result, Prime Minster Daud

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launched an eradication and prohibition campaign to stop the opium trade and maintain a steady flow of US aid. The prohibition was seemingly successful, as most farmers stopped producing opium. The US, content with Daud’s persistent anti-opium policy, decided to continue to finance the project. However, opium production resumed in 1975. And by the end of the decade, the Helmand Valley had become one of the largest producers of opium in the country. What impact did prohibition have on the opium trade in Helmand? The temporary success of prohibition stemmed primarily from farmers’ understanding of global markets, as well as, reinforcing the political, economic, and social disconnect between Afghan state and rural society. As a result, opium’s emergence in the valley stems not only from global market forces, but also from the growing friction between the Afghan government and the increasingly disaffected population.

So why, despite the millions in investment and US and Afghan efforts to inscribe state power onto the Afghan countryside, did Helmand emerge as a major producer of opium? I conclude that opium emerged in the valley because the global opium market reached the Helmand precisely at a time when the region was finally, after decades of setbacks and conflicts, successfully modernizing its agricultural infrastructure and seeing real tangible results in its agricultural output. By the mid-1970s opium was proving increasingly lucrative, and attempts to stop opium were increasingly difficult for the Afghan government. For many farmers, the decision to continue to cultivate and trade opium contrary to state policy not only reinforced the power of the qawm and the priorities of local communities, tribes, and groups; but was reinforced by an increasingly disconnected state that had historically (after decades of corruption, discrimination, and mismanagement) and contemporaneously (after the new leftist government was
established in a coup by Daud in 1973) proven its illegitimacy. Thus, the emergence of opium in the Helmand Valley should be perceived not only as a failure of Musahiban development and prohibition policies but also as an indicator of the emerging role of opium in preserving the strength of the *qawm* as the primary social and political unit in rural Afghanistan.

Ultimately, there is great irony in the story of the Helmand Valley. At one moment in time, it represented the hopes of two nations. But in the end, it served only to symbolize the failure of the Musahiban state and the power of the global market.

**History of the Helmand Valley**

When the noted Afghan-American author Tamim Ansary was a young boy he and his family moved from Kabul to Lashkar Gah in Helmand province. Lashkar Gah was unlike any other town or village in the country. Although hundreds of miles from urban Kabul and thousands of miles from the United States, it was a veritable oasis of modernity in an area otherwise seemingly untouched by the hands of change. Established by the Helmand Valley Authority (HVA), Lashkar Gah housed the American workers and their families dispatched to Helmand to build dams, canals, and schools. But as Ansary puts it, “the HVA’s mission was not just to build dams but to impose Western progress on the Afghan people.” As one might guess, building modernity in the Helmand Valley was not without problems. More important, the myriad of problems that plagued the Helmand Valley development project began to reflect broader concerns about the modernizing policies of the Musahiban government.

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Helmand province is the largest in Afghanistan, making up roughly 10 percent of its territory. Mostly uninhabited desert, it contains rocky foothills in the north and gradually descends into clay and sand desert in the south. The capital, Lashkar Gah, and Girishk are the two largest cities/towns, although most of the estimated 400,000 inhabitants of the province live in rural areas. Not far from the modern tenements of Lashkar Gah lies the ancient fortress of Qala Bist, where the Helmand and Arghandab rivers meet. The Helmand river is the largest in Afghanistan and the most important geographic feature in the valley. It flows roughly 600 miles from its source in the Hindu Kush, near Kabul, southwest into the Sistan Basin near the border with Iran. For centuries, inhabitants of southwest Afghanistan and southeastern Iran built canals, villages, and towns in an effort to harness the power of the river to make the desert bloom. In more recent times, the Afghan government, with foreign assistance, tried to exploit the power of the Helmand. In 1910 Habibullah built the first functional canal, and before World War II both the Germans and the Japanese lent technical assistance. Not until after the Second World War, when the United States emerged as a key player in the development of Afghanistan, did the Helmand Valley begin the transformation to its more recognizable form.

The role of the United States in developing the Afghan state was fundamental to the design of the Musahiban dynasty. When Nadir Shah established the dynasty in 1929, he created a system in which state revenue was increasingly supplied by indirect taxation

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450 Dupree. *Afghanistan*. (482)
of foreign trade and customs. The aim of the government was to decrease its dependence on land taxes from the rural population, allowing it to continue its policy of gradual modernization while minimizing the risk of rural revolt. As a result, foreign trade became fundamental to state expansion. Although the United States had diplomatic relations with Afghanistan before World War II, particularly involving the trade of opium, significant and formal engagement did not begin until the conclusion of the war. The war had eliminated the significant donors—Britain, Germany, and Japan—from Afghanistan, crippling the economy, and forcing Prime Ministers Hashim Khan and Shah Mahmud to reassess Afghanistan’s engagement with the world. As a result, the United States emerged as the clear choice to fill the financial void. In 1945, the Afghan government began negotiations with the Morrison-Knudsen Company, based in San Francisco and famous for building the Boulder (later Hoover) dam and the Golden Gate Bridge. Unlike other projects throughout the country, the Afghans intended to use American technology and knowledge to construct an important symbol of Afghanistan’s future: a dam.

Throughout the modern world, dams in the mid-twentieth century were imposing symbols of progress and power. In the US, the Hoover dam was a daunting representation of federal power carved into the American landscape. In India, Jawarhul Nehru

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451 Gregorian, Vartan. The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan. (317)
envisioned dams as the temples of modern India. More important, dams were symbols of the power and reach of the modern state. As historian Nick Cullather states, “a dam project allows, even requires, a state to appropriate and redistribute land, plan factories and economies, tell people what to make and what to grow.” For Afghanistan reconstructing the Helmand Valley by building dams projected its emerging power in the post-war context.

Although building a dam in the Helmand Valley symbolized the state’s power, it also manifested the political culture of the Musahiban state. Since its inception, the Musahiban dynasty designed and implemented policies recognizing that most rural tribal groups in Afghanistan, particularly the large Pashtun tribal majority, were directly opposed to economic and social modernization. As a result, a cultural policy was established to ensure Pashtun support of the new government. The Afghan government’s social and economic policies combined gradual modernization with overt favoritism toward Pashtuns. The idea was simple: by assuring the allegiance of the largest and most important tribal group, the state would have unrivalled control of the country. This cultural policy inevitably reinforced economic policy. Although the Helmand Valley project was an enormous undertaking, certain to transform the region radically, the

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455 Ibid. (521)
456 Ibid. (522)
457 Newell, Richard. “The Prospects of State-building in Afghanistan.” In *The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics: Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan*. Edited by Banuazzi, Ali and Myron Weiner. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1986. (113) This was most evident in the declaration of Pashto as the national language despite the overwhelming use of Dari (Persian) as the lingua franca.
458 Barfield. (198)
southern Pashtuns in the government wanted investment in the area.\textsuperscript{459} Thus, justification for choosing the Helmand Valley stemmed from the government’s hope that successfully modernizing Helmand would result in stronger state control in the region, and greater access to and control of the country’s most important, albeit most threatening, demographic.\textsuperscript{460}

For the United States, building dams was an important part of foreign policy during the Cold War. In an attempt to reshape America’s role in the post colonial world, it sought to ground itself in a new dialectic of developed/under developed, rather than perpetuating the historically loaded colonizer/colonized. In particular, western technological advancements became the focal point of the new development paradigm, and as a result, America began its new engagement with the world by building roads, dams, schools, airports, etc. American scholars and policymakers believed that technology would lead not only to the establishment of capitalist markets abroad, but also to changes in behavior and thought, inevitably westernizing foreign cultures.\textsuperscript{461} This cultural transformation would not only strengthen America’s position abroad, but would also help counteract Soviet expansion. Advocates of modernization theory perceived

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\textsuperscript{459} Fry, Maxwell.  \textit{The Afghan Economy}. (89)

\textsuperscript{460} As Timothy Mitchell notes in \textit{Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002) the story of development was not only about building state control in these far away regions, but was constructed locally, and therefore required the state to navigate local realities with its own ambitions. (169) The history of the Helmand project is as much about the ambitions of the state as it is about the way in which local communities influenced the state project.

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American modernity to be the only tool for confronting Soviet influence abroad.\textsuperscript{462} Thus, building modern capitalist economies was both financially and politically important. In Afghanistan, this took on an entirely new meaning as the US and the USSR competed for influence.

Although modernization began to take root throughout the world at the onset of the Cold War, it often failed to generate the political impact Americans had hoped. Many world leaders of recently decolonized nations viewed modernization and economic development as the primary means of alleviating the significant inequities remaining from the colonial era. However, they did not see using American money and resources as a sign of political acquiescence in the Cold War. For instance, in India Nehru was keen to use American money to finance the country’s rapid industrialization, even while he steadfastly maintained his neutrality in the Cold War.\textsuperscript{463} Afghanistan followed a similar path. Despite Musahiban leaders willingness to use American money to transform Helmand, they never relinquished their neutrality.

The Afghan government first approached Morrison-Knudsen in 1945, and after a series of preliminary surveys, Morrison-Knudsen Afghanistan Inc (MKA) began building two dams and an extensive canal system the following year, costing a total of $63.7 million.\textsuperscript{464} The project was beset with problems from the beginning. For example, building a small dam at the mouth of the Boghra canal raised water levels too high.


\textsuperscript{463} Ibid. (200)

\textsuperscript{464} Dupree. \textit{Afghanistan}. (483)
inevitably producing increased salt levels in the reservoir. More important, the problems arising from the Boghra dam highlighted the severe disconnect between the Afghan government and the MKA. The Afghans, in order to save foreign exchange, took over some of the more critical aspects of the project (e.g. constructing feeders and ditches to drain canals) and convinced MKA not to conduct vital surveys of soil and groundwater in the area. Both later proved to be critical errors.

By 1949 costs skyrocketed. For MKA, the price of shipping to a land-locked country halfway around the world, through hostile Pakistan, proved costly. Afghanistan, on the other hand, saw its foreign exchange surplus dwindle because of the project. In 1949, after asking for a $55 million loan, Afghanistan received a $21 million loan from the Export-Import Bank. Despite the increase in funding, both MKA and the Afghans were forced to cut various minor projects to complete the more significant features of the project. Eventually, construction delays and rising costs led the Afghan government to hand over its own engineering projects to MKA. More important, the need for unification resulted in the creation of the Helmand Valley Authority (HVA), now responsible for implementing the entire project.

Reorganizing the project under HAVA led to completing the 200 foot high Arghandab and the 320 foot high Kajakai dams. Although the completion of these large

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465 Cullather. (523)
466 Dupree. *Afghanistan*. (483) Dupree also notes that human and bureaucratic errors permeated the project. Many of the Afghan engineers were put in administrative positions, preventing them from fulfilling their engineering duties. And many of the Americans failed to understand Afghan cultural practices.
467 It was later renamed the Helmand Arghandab Valley Authority (HAVA). To be consistent, I will refer to it as the HAVA henceforth.
468 Dupree. (484) The importance of the HAVA to the Afghan government was significant: all governors of the Helmand province were named as president of the HAVA, and were also granted cabinet status in Kabul.
dams signified progress, much remained to be done. An extensive system of drains and canals had to be created, and maintenance had to be performed. Furthermore, acquiring land and the subsequent displacement of people failed to result in more land being farmed. Squabbles over land ownership were never resolved, and most of the land remained in the hands of farmers already affiliated with HAVA, not new ones as the project hoped.\textsuperscript{469}

By 1953, HAVA had morphed into a project of unprecedented proportions. It was responsible not only for development, but also for building schools, housing, hospitals, and infrastructure. The seemingly endless array of problems created numerous critics. Both the UN and the Afghan Minister of National Economy, Abdul Majod Zabuli, criticized the project for not being economically viable, focusing too much on large scale investments with slow returns, and lacking culturally nuanced ancillary development.\textsuperscript{470} Either to save face or to take greater control of implementing the project, in 1953 the Technical Cooperation Administration (TCA) of the US government took responsibility for the completing the project. As a result, the failure or success of the Helmand Valley project rested “fairly or unfairly” on the joint venture of the Afghan and American governments.\textsuperscript{471}

When Mohammad Daud Khan took power in 1953 he wanted to accelerate the development of Afghanistan. Facing a reluctant US, Daud turned to the Soviets as the primary source of aid. Daud claimed that the turn to the Soviets was an effort to restore Afghan neutrality, or bi-tarafi. However he was certainly influenced by the conflict

\textsuperscript{469} Cullather. (525)  
\textsuperscript{470} Fry. (200)  
\textsuperscript{471} Dupree. Afghanistan. (485)
surrounding the Helmand project and broader disdain for US support of Pakistan.\textsuperscript{472} Daud’s frustration over the Helmand project was warranted. Rumors persisted of corruption and mismanagement within HAVA and bribes to MKA officials as well.\textsuperscript{473} Nonetheless, Daud continued with the project, not just to maintain a balance of Cold War powers but also to reinforce Pashtun hegemony.\textsuperscript{474}

Although the HAVA had an indirect impact on the politics in Afghanistan, more important was that it directly affected the lives of Afghans in the region. The reclamation and redistribution of land fundamentally altered the tribal and ethnic divisions that had defined much of the country. Daud resettled small groups of ethnic minorities in the valley, especially in Shamalan, so that the towns of Nad-i-Ali and Marja were essentially made up of the resettled nomadic Ghilzai Pashtuns. The impact of land reform was widespread. Between 1953 and 1973, nearly 5,000 families immigrated to the province.\textsuperscript{475} But land reform also cut across ethnic and tribal lines. As Louis Dupree put it, “old villagers,” farmers who had lived for centuries along the river, now had to contend with “new villagers,” resettled nomads.\textsuperscript{476} Anyone who wanted to farm the land had to apply to the HAVA (including those that had lived there for generations), and after

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[472] Ibid. (510-511)
\item[473] Ibid. (499)
\item[474] Cullather. (528) By the late 1950s Daud made the “Pashtunistan” issue his primary policy. The schism between Pakistan and Afghanistan ultimately drew lines in the Cold War, as the US remained steadfast in its support of Pakistan.
\item[476] Dupree. Afghanistan. (501)
\end{itemize}
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security screenings, they were housed in constructed communities, given a pair of oxen, two thousand Afghans, and a year’s supply of seed.\textsuperscript{477}

For the Ghilzai, who for centuries had migrated between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Helmand project resettlement program was particularly infuriating. The Ghilzai were not only wealthier and freer than the farmers, but they were now being forced to co-habitat with minorities, most of whom they viewed with particular scorn.\textsuperscript{478} However, for the state the risk was worth the reward. Resettlement allowed the state to bring nomads under some semblance of control. This was important politically, because nomads, especially Ghilzai, were prone to resisting state programs. Moreover, gaining favor among the Pashtuns allowed the state to “crush the uprisings of the non-Pashtun people” and further its underlying aim of perpetuating Pashtun hegemony.\textsuperscript{479}

Nonetheless, for all Afghans displaced by the project, the experience of resettlement was disturbing at best. By the 1960s, many of the original participants had either moved outside the project area or to other parts of the country altogether.\textsuperscript{480}

The project also proved to be a considerable source of conflict between the Afghan and American governments. In 1959, the Afghan government terminated its contract with MKA. Throughout the early 1960s the Helmand Valley continued to fail to meet expectations, particularly because of problems with water logging and

\textsuperscript{477} Cullather. (529) The resettlement program also had a subversive effect. Many of the Americans and upper-level Afghan government officials viewed nomads with disdain, particularly the tribal leaders, \textit{maliks}. The resettlement program offered families the opportunity to choose new village leaders, \textit{wakils}, with the hope of undermining the authority of the \textit{maliks}.
\textsuperscript{478} Ibid. (529)
\textsuperscript{480} Dupree. \textit{Afghanistan}. (504)
salinization. With American credibility at stake, both the Kennedy and Johnson administrations renewed their commitments to the project, increasing the annual pledge from $16 million to $40 million. Through increased money and reorganization under the US Agency for International Development (USAID), along with new techniques accompanying the “green revolution,” HAVA seemed to stabilize.

Although funding continued, many USAID officials remained skeptical of the program’s future. Water runoff and drainage remained a constant problem within the project area. More important, embassy officials worried that the scope of the project was simply too large. Finishing the project too quickly would certainly lead to the failure of the program in the long term and could ultimately damage US-Afghan relations. On the other hand, the Afghan government faced increasing internal pressure to finish development programs as soon as possible. Taking the time to ensure that the various development programs would be sustainable in the long term was not politically expedient for the Afghan government, particularly in the mid-1960s, when frustration with the government’s ineffective development programs became a growing source of conflict. In short, some US officials believed the project itself was doomed to fail.

In 1965 both the US and the Afghans perceived the project to be at a critical juncture. In a meeting with Prime Minister Yusuf, Ambassador John Steeves set forth a

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481 Cullather. (532)
482 Cullather. (533) Resettlement subsidies were paid off and most of the land was settled by small private landholders, and it seemed that farmers had begun to reshape the landscape for farming.
new project proposal. Yusuf was disappointed and frustrated by the proposal, remarking that the scheme was “more of the same thing.” He emphasized that his government was fully prepared to “pour in all the men and monies necessary to accomplish the job.”

Feeling pressure from the Afghans to make the project fully operational in the quickest time possible while also ensuring that the project would be effective in the long run, USAID concluded that the best course of action was to remove the farmers, level the land, and redistribute land in larger plots. However, when HVA tried to implement the new policy USAID tractors were confronted by farmers with rifles. Throughout the last half of the 1960s USAID officials spent most of their time navigating the increasing resistance to HAVA from the farmers. By the end of the 1960s the Helmand Valley project had yet to meet its lofty expectations. Moreover, resistance to HAVA projects was suggestive of the broader political conflict over the role of the state in the development of Afghanistan.

By the early 1970s the democracy movement continued to generate protests against the corruption, mismanagement, and overt chauvinism within the government. These problems were amplified by the drought in 1971 and 1972 and the famine that followed. The Helmand Valley project struggled as the drought destroyed most crops because the Helmand river and Arghandab reservoir virtually evaporated. Meanwhile, détente led both the US and the Soviets to decrease aid to Afghanistan in 1970. When

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486 Cullather. (534) This was also connected to the broader issues facing the state. As discussed in chapter 4, the late 1960s and early 1970s were a period of tremendous political activity.
487 Cullather. (535)
Daud launched his coup in 1973, the future of the Helmand Valley project and of Afghanistan remained very much in doubt.


Part of the impetus for Daud to launch a coup in July 1973 (beyond a pure power grab) was his desire to accelerate the modernization of Afghanistan. In 1959, when Daud was prime minister, he remarked that “Afghanistan is a backward country” and that he would do everything in his power to modernize the country. But by 1973, much had changed. Resistance to the government was growing because of the rampant corruption and mismanagement within the state bureaucracy. To achieve his goal of modernizing Afghanistan Daud had to break from the established foundations of Musahiban power. Rather than seek the customary support of the ulama and rural tribes, Daud allied himself with the urban leftists who had played such an important role in vocalizing popular discontent against the corruption and incompetence of the government. More important, Daud identified corruption as a major impediment to modernization. In his first address to the nation, he stated that the government and “system became so corrupt that no hope for its reform existed. Consequently all patriots decided to put an end to this rotten system.”

However, as much as Daud portrayed himself as different from the monarchy and King Zahir Shah, many of the core characteristics of the Mushiban state remained the same. In particular, the government continued to rely on foreign aid as a foundation of

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489 Barfield. *Afghanistan*. (214)
490 Daud, Mohammad. “Address to the Nation.” *Kabul Times*. August 26, 1973. (1)
state revenue. The oil boom in 1973 increased Daud’s access to foreign money, evidenced by the new relationship with the Shah of Iran that in principle would have provided Afghanistan with $2 billion for development. 491 On the outside, Afghanistan’s economic situation under Daud seemed to improve dramatically. 492 However, the reliance on foreign aid and grants to grow the Afghan economy and strengthen the state negated any motivation Daud’s government had to be responsive and accountable to the Afghan people. 493 As a result, Daud’s state grew, but his ties to the people did not. More important, the combination of economic growth and sociopolitical fragmentation led to a vivid transformation in the Helmand Valley.

The Helmand valley project remained an important component of Daud’s engagement with the US. For many Afghans Helmand was an “unfinished symphony.” 494 However, initial discussions between the US and Afghanistan centered on dealing with the rampant corruption and mismanagement that had come to characterize the project. The US, fearing the project was lost and concerned with Daud’s new alliance with leftists, contemplated ending its involvement altogether. During Ambassador Theodore Eliot’s meeting with the new Helmand governor and president of the HAVA, Fazil Rabi Pazhwak, both sides seemed to see Daud’s coup as an opportunity to rectify the failures

491 Rubin, Barnett. The Fragmentation of Afghanistan. (74) Most of the money was to be spent on a railroad linking Afghanistan with the border port of Bandar Abbas. Iran was not the only oil rich country to interact with Afghanistan, as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq all increased aid to Afghanistan. The oil boom also provided unprecedented amounts of remittances that became an important part of the economy.

492 A good indication of the broader scope of economic aggrandizement in Afghanistan was the increase in surplus balance of payments, from $2.2 million in 1972-73 to $65 million in 1976-77.

493 Rubin. (75)

of the project under the monarchy. However, underlying the diplomatic platitudes was a seething frustration over the handling of the project. Governor Pazhwak believed that the US had been complicit in contributing to corruption and mismanagement of the project. In particular, Pazhwak noted that there was a discernable difference between the development of Lashkar Gah and the surrounding villages, something that local residents were keenly aware of as well. Pazhwak’s concern was well founded. Lashkar Gah stood as a shining example of the impact of the state development program in rural Afghanistan. For the Americans and Afghans who worked as engineers and administrators, life was similar to that of suburban America, with wide streets and modern housing. As historian Arnold Toynbee wrote, the Helmand Valley “ceased to be a part of traditional Afghanistan. It has become a piece of America inserted into the Afghan landscape.”

For the farmers and villagers outside of the project area, Lashkar Gah was not a beacon of modernity but rather a somber token of the disconnect between state and people and of the corruption that underlay it. US officials noted that the general sentiment among farmers regarding the project was “depressing,” despite the relatively good agricultural output. Much of this frustration stemmed from the obvious corruption. For political and practical reasons, both the US and Afghans endeavored to fix the

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problem. Daud removed scores of HAVA administrators and engineers, including the heads of six departments. Furthermore, rumors circulated that many of the department heads would be put on trial for criminal prosecution. Although removing these administrators slowed the progress of the project, the changes were needed. By 1974, the US, despite opposition from USAID, agreed to continue funding the project.

**Building a Market-Based Economy in the Helmand Valley**

Although the political aspects of HAVA clearly proved divisive among local Afghans, by the early 1970s the project was finally producing agricultural dividends. This success stemmed primarily from the introduction of high-yield varieties of wheat and cash crops. In the past, farmers in Helmand grew corn, wheat, and various fruits, mainly at the subsistence level. However, the introduction of varieties of high-yield wheat and cotton provided them with incentives to utilize American technology and resources to grow crops beyond the subsistence level, creating a market-based agricultural economy. From 1970 to 1975, land devoted to growing high-yield wheat increased from 6 percent of total cropland to nearly 44 percent. The increased planting of high-yield wheat, which required chemical fertilizer and irrigation (ideal for farmers in or near the project),

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498 “Memo of Conversation: Governor Fazil Rabi Pazhwak and staff.” March 28, 1974. RG 84, Records Relating to Afghanistan, Ibid. (3)  
decreased the total area farmers needed to devote to wheat to meet subsistence levels, allowing farmers to grow cash crops to increase personal income.\textsuperscript{501}

Cotton emerged as one of the major cash crops.\textsuperscript{502} First introduced by the British in the mid-1960s, cotton was initially an unpopular crop because cotton prices remained low and the government took a substantial share of the profits. But in the early 1970s, USAID worked with various Afghan tractor owners to “ridge and row-plant cotton and increase production.”\textsuperscript{503} After the coup in 1973, the government began to pay more for cotton and also offered a credit system for fertilizer.\textsuperscript{504} Moreover, the global demand for cotton prompted the government to offer greater incentives for farmers who sold the cotton to government-run processing plants.\textsuperscript{505} By 1975, nearly 29 percent of total cropland was devoted to cotton (up from 5 percent in 1970), much of it devoted to double cropping of cotton.\textsuperscript{506}

When farmers expanded output of wheat and cash crops, substantial problems arose. Growing high-yield wheat and cotton created depleted soil fertility. The solution was to use more chemical fertilizer, which in turn increased farmer’s costs.\textsuperscript{507} Increased

\textsuperscript{501} Area of cropland devoted to double cropping increased from 9 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 1975.
\textsuperscript{503} Scott. “Opium Poppy Cultivation.” (5)
\textsuperscript{504} Ibid. (6) Farmers repaid the loan at harvest time. They also received some of the byproducts from the cotton gin in Girishk, such as cottonseed, cooking oil, and soap.
\textsuperscript{505} Scott. \textit{1975 Farm Economic Survey}. (39) The government, along with the cotton gin in Girishk (built by the British), built a cotton processing plant in Lashkar Gah to take advantage of the abundance of supply.
\textsuperscript{506} Ibid. (46)
\textsuperscript{507} Clapp-Wincek. (13)
labor costs drove farmers to expand the cultivation of cash crops. \footnote{508}{Rann, Jerry. “Helmand Valley Crop and Insect Survey, July 1973.” USAID Kabul. RG 84, Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, 1788 - ca. 1991, Department of State. U.S. Embassy, Afghanistan. Afghanistan Box, Helmand File. NND 52378. (7-8) Labor costs were noted in years 1971 to 1973.} Although during the early 1970s incomes increased significantly throughout the project area, the increased costs of operating these farms often offset their greater revenues.

Aside from the economic problems, there were significant social and political ramifications from the project as well. New farmers overwhelmingly experienced the problems with soil quality, especially increased salinity, sodicity, and drainage problems. \footnote{509}{Ibid. (15)} Moreover, the government program of settling heterogeneous groups led to social and political disputes over the allocation of land and resources. In particular, the disparity between new and old farmers often fell along tribal and familial lines, as most of the new farmers were not Pashtuns. Moreover, most new farmers had smaller plots of land and less access to loans and government resources. As a result, new farmers were not only economically marginalized by the environmental impact of new forms of agriculture but also politically marginalized by the overwhelming prominence of Pashtuns within HAVA and the project itself. \footnote{510}{Ibid. (13)}

The overarching effect of introducing varieties of high-yield wheat and the expansion of cash cropping was a profound shift in the agricultural practices of the valley. However this shift was not just rooted in technological improvements or changes in cultivation methods. Rather, farmers became remarkably astute at understanding the
global market and adapting their land to grow crops to maximize their profits. A USAID survey conducted in 1973 asked farmers, “How do you think you as a farmer can do better and make more money from your farm?” Farmers answered that they could get a tractor and/or increase fertilizer. This, of course, implied that they needed some connection to the government-run project. But more important, farmers also answered that they could “watch the market and plant the most profit making combination of crops.” USAID officials noted that farmers were adept at understanding how various combinations of crops could result in increased profits. The increase in double cropping during the early 1970s, from 9 percent in 1970 to 23 percent in 1975, substantiates the incredible impact of the market-based agricultural economy on the farmers of the Helmand valley. This was important for Afghanistan as well, as Helmand made up nearly 20 percent of the total agricultural land in the country.

The farmers’ answers led to an important point about the future of opium in Helmand. For farmers to have access to tractors and fertilizer, they had to participate in HAVA, which many did not. However, the knowledge of the global market was not confined to the project area. As a result, the dissemination of knowledge by farmers regarding the global market, particularly the profit maximization of cash crops, had an unforeseen consequence. As the market for cotton and wheat grew so too did the global demand for illicit opium. Therefore, the knowledge gained by farmers and traders to double-crop wheat and cotton proved instrumental in the growth of the opium trade in the Helmand Valley.

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511 Rann. (8-9)
512 Scott. 1975 Helmand Farm Survey. (114)
A Helmand farmer scratching the heads of poppies during harvest.\textsuperscript{513}

\textsuperscript{513} Owens, G.P and James Clifton. \textit{Poppies in Afghanistan}. USAID, Kabul, Afghanistan. 1972. RG 84. Ibid. (Image 14)
**Opium Blossoms**

Before the 1970s, the majority of Afghan farmers grew opium for individual needs or as a minor source of income, but was not a significant cash crop. However, by the early 1970s, opium was transformed into an important cash crop for farmers and traders in Helmand as well as other parts of the country. Opium markets emerged in Herat and Kandahar in 1970, although they remained small compared with the markets at the end of the decade.

For farmers involved in the Helmand project or those who were close in proximity, planting poppies fit well into the double-cropping schemes that had become a foundation of the Helmand project. Farmers would plant poppy seeds in the fall and harvest in the spring, and then plant cotton or vegetables and harvest them in the fall. Wheat, which was the most prevalent crop, was planted in the fall and harvested in the summer. As a result, poppies were often grown with corn and not wheat because wheat and poppies competed for seasons and water.514

Nonetheless, initially the prices remained low, ranging anywhere from 1,400 to 3,600 Afghanis per kilogram depending on the quality. Part of the explanation for the low prices was that Helmand opium was still relatively low in demand. The primary market for Afghan opium was Iran. But in the early 1970s, Helmand opium faced stiff competition in a limited market. The Shah of Iran restarted domestic opium production in 1969, Turkey produced significant amounts until 1972, Pakistan was also a major producer, and other areas of the country, particularly Badakhshan, continued to produce large quantities of opium. Furthermore, many poppy farmers sold their opium short,

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514 Ibid. (6) Poppies were often harvested a few weeks before wheat.
meaning they agreed to accept payments before harvest, selling for a much lower price.\textsuperscript{515} Revenues for farmers were also hampered by the high costs of labor and bribes. In fact, bribes often constituted the largest cost for poppy farmers and seemed to be the main impediment to devoting more land to the poppy.\textsuperscript{516} As a result, up to 1972 the cost of growing poppies seemed too high to be a profitable business.

However, in 1973 something changed. Opium production in the Helmand valley went from being a limited crop with high costs and relatively low returns to one of such financial importance that it threatened to undermine the Helmand Valley project itself. In May, Bernard Weinraub of the \textit{New York Times} reported, “Afghan farmers are harvesting a bumper crop of opium poppies on newly irrigated land that has been developed with foreign aid. American officials are furious and embarrassed because the land was developed by the aid mission here to spur food production. Instead, farmers have grown opium because of the fast and easy profits.”\textsuperscript{517} Weinraub’s article sent shock waves through the American political establishment. DEA, State Department, and USAID officials all feared that Weinraub had uncovered a political catastrophe; Americans becoming addicted to opium grown on fields that had been leveled, irrigated, and perfected using American technology, know-how, and money.

In July, the State Department cable entitled “Poppies in Helmand Valley” confirmed fears that poppy cultivation had indeed emerged in the Helmand valley.\textsuperscript{518} The cable was an urgent and desperate response to Weinraub’s article. Interestingly, the cable,

\textsuperscript{515} Ibid. (9) \\
\textsuperscript{516} Ibid. (10-11) \\
\textsuperscript{518} “Poppies in Helmand Valley.” July 6, 1973. RG 84, Records Relating to Afghanistan, Ibid. (1)
as a half policy, half intelligence brief, aimed to refute his claims by revealing the extent of poppy cultivation in Helmand while simultaneously establishing the official US posture on the issue. US officials quickly contextualized the opium problem in Helmand as a nation wide issue and not “a Helmand problem,” and more important, did not want to policymakers to see it as “a problem to be approached with a panic mentality.” State Department officials remarked, “the observation of extensive cultivation of illicit opium on project lands in the Helmand Valley is erroneous.” They noted that when the Weinraub went to the Helmand to research his article, “opium poppies were in full bloom in one, repeat one, field” and that he photographed that one field. More important, the farmer had been working with the USAID and Peace Corps and was likely to lose US financial assistance.

Although the revelation that opium was being produced had major policy ramifications, within USAID conflicts arose over why and how the problem emerged. Some AID officials only understood the opium problem as a problem of poverty and basic economics. They believed that poor farmers were enticed by the lucrative crop and that the improvements in the project area would allow farmers to “resist the extraordinary economic incentives” to grow opium. However, others understood the cultural and political nuances that underscored opium production. They countered that the very notion of resistance was tied to American perceptions of opium as an evil, whereas one official noted, “farmers don’t think like that, they don’t ‘resist’ poppy growing because we think

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519 Ibid. (1)
520 Ibid. (3)
Moreover, the affect of USAID assistance went far beyond the project area. It was impossible for the “US to completely close off supply of new technology to offending farmers since they can learn from their neighbors.”

Efforts to withhold technology or information would be counter-intuitive, panicky even. Instead, USAID needed to influence Afghan policy makers and administrators to make decisions that would curtail poppy production. In essence, US officials hoped that the Afghan government could exert greater political influence in the area. This was easier said than done.

Was Weinraub right? Or was he merely being sensationalist? The truth was that opium did exist in the Helmand project area, yet it remained a small percentage of the total area devoted to opium in the region. Officials noted that “its obvious manifestations” were outside the project area supported by USAID, around 10-15 percent of total cultivation area, and that only 1-2 percent of land within the project area was devoted to growing poppies. Poppy cultivation was most prevalent in the northern parts of the valley, from Girishk to the areas around the Kajakai dam. Although not part of the US project, farmers undoubtedly benefited from being in close proximity to the project area. If anything, Weinraub proved prophetic, as opium was not grown in substantial amounts in the project area in 1973. Yet, his article pointed to an important

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521 Ibid. (2) What is interesting about these comments is that someone had indeed read the cable, and offered critiques in the margins. These “offhand” critiques point to deeper concerns, and even fissures, within the US foreign policy establishment over its operations.
522 Ibid. (11)
523 Ibid. (10)
524 Ibid. (2)
525 Ibid. (4)
process occurring in the Helmand region: the growing prevalence of opium as a lucrative cash crop.

For both the Helmand region and Afghanistan as a whole, 1973 was a benchmark year. In 1972, farmers in the Helmand valley were planning on decreasing their poppy harvest because prices remained low. However, in 1973 something triggered a substantial increase in poppy cultivation. Officials estimated that cultivation had increased seven-fold. In May, US and Afghan officials conducted a fly-over of the Helmand-Arghandab area and noticed that poppy cultivation was so extensive and widespread that it was easily visible from an altitude of 800 feet.\textsuperscript{526} So what exactly triggered this increase?

Although local factors, such as improvements in agriculture, certainly led to the increase in poppy cultivation, there were also significant changes regionally and globally that contributed to the expansion of poppy cultivation. One of the most significant developments was building of a ring road, which for the first time in the nation’s history connected previously isolated regions and transformed rural life by shrinking travel time and transport costs.\textsuperscript{527} The road also had a significant influence on social and economic systems. Throughout the country, the proliferation of goods and services led formerly self-sufficient regions to grow gradually dependent on economic exchanges lying beyond their domain,\textsuperscript{528} with impacts as well on the growth of a cash economy and on migrant labor.\textsuperscript{529}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{526} Ibid. (10)
\item \textsuperscript{527} Barfield. \textit{Afghanistan}. (219)
\item \textsuperscript{528} Shahrani. \textit{The Kirghiz}. (79)
\item \textsuperscript{529} Rubin. \textit{Fragmentation}. (79) Rubin also notes that the demand for products such as opium reinforced the demand for cash.
\end{itemize}
Globally, the demand for new sources of opium was never higher. The dramatic shortage of opium on the global illicit market following eradication in Turkey and interdiction programs in Mexico and Southeast Asia forced opium traffickers to adapt to new global realities. The effects were unexpected for US anti-drug policymakers. US officials expected to reduce demand by cutting supply via coercive measures in isolated national forums, which they did, temporarily. Instead, the market proved remarkably resilient, and drug traffickers, not confined by national boundaries or laws, sought new sources. Furthermore, the temporary restriction of supply in the US and Western Europe created the paradoxical effect of increasing demand, driving up prices. As a result, by cutting supply in specific source countries and inevitably increasing demand and prices, US supply-side policy actually stimulated the global illicit narcotics economy. In this way global factors are important in explaining the emergence of opium in the Helmand valley.

The supply shortage was affected by environmental elements as well. The interdiction campaigns in Southeast Asia were compounded by the drought there. Internally, the drought and famine in Afghanistan in 1971-72 produced considerable economic strain on the entire rural population of Afghanistan. These exogenous (and endogenous) forces all played a part in the emergence of opium in the valley in 1973.

Although Weinraub’s article pointed to an ominous future for HAVA, the extent of opium production within the project area clearly remained limited in 1973. However,

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530 For further explanation of how US drug policymakers misperceived the economic principles of the global drug market, particularly that it was an inelastic commodity capable of being suppressed, see Alfred McCoy’s “From Free Trade to Prohibition: A Critical History of the Modern Asian Opium Trade.” *Fordham Urban Law Journal, Vol. 28, Issue 1, Article 4*, 2000.
both US and Afghan officials believed that the potential to stop opium from taking over the Helmand valley rested in the ability of the state and HAVA to transcend the economic, social, and political problems that plagued the project and the surrounding area. In other words, to stop opium from taking over, the US and Afghanistan would have to succeed in developing the Helmand valley. But by the mid-1970s, the political and social fabric that (loosely) tied the nation together began to unravel. More important, so too did farmer’s and villager’s faith in HAVA. As a result, opium production increased, not just because of economic necessity but more important because of the social and political conflicts that increasingly characterized relations between the Afghan government and rural Afghan society.

Prohibiting Opium in the Helmand Valley

The political impact of Weinraub’s article was far-reaching. Shortly after the publication of the article, the American Congress investigated the extent of poppy cultivation in the USAID areas of the Helmand valley. In September 1973 Daud announced a nation wide prohibition on opium. The prohibition was enacted to increase enforcement of bans on the cultivation, use, and trade of opium. However, on closer inspection, Daud’s prohibition reflected the deeper political problems plaguing the new republic. Daud, in line with his efforts to increase military and police power, established

531 “Poppies in the Helmand Valley.” (5) It is unclear whether this cable had a direct impact on American official’s decision to renew development agreements in the Helmand valley in 1974, but given the importance of combating illicit opium in US foreign policy, it is likely that it did.
new enforcement apparatuses, especially the ASUs with federal authority. The ASUs, financed by the UN and DEA, were far more aggressive than the previous regime in cracking down on smuggling networks. But Daud’s augmented enforcement and eradication programs did not hide the fact that he desired massive increases in US funding. The US, on the other hand, remained wary of Daud’s true intentions, steadfastly maintaining that increases in development aid had to be matched by increases in enforcement programs. The unwillingness of the US to pour more money into the Helmand project forced Daud to ease up on enforcing bans on opium cultivation and production compared with his zealous implementation of anti-smuggling laws, and it signified the Afghan government’s tenuous control in Helmand.

The September prohibition was part of a larger dialogue about the future of the US-Afghan relations. US officials hoped that Daud would recognize the delicate political situation the Americans were in. If US policy-makers had proof that American money was being used to grow “bigger, better, and more opium poppies,” this would threaten not only the future of US support for the Helmand project but of other proposed joint US-Afghan development projects in Nangarhar and Badakhshan. However, Daud and the Afghan government were still in no position to flex their muscles in rural Afghanistan. Fresh off of the coup in July, Daud was still consolidating power. Exerting power in

532 ASU were the anti-smuggling units tasked with cracking down on the growing narcotics trade. See Chapter 5.
Kabul was one thing, but in Helmand, the government, regardless of who was in power, remained a contested political entity.

Ismail Osman, a UN official and also nephew of Daud, met with Afghan government officials to gauge their willingness to enforce prohibition measures in the Helmand region. Osman found that Daud was reluctant to prohibit opium production, fearing that it would be unpopular. Daud planned to prohibit opium cultivation only in the small project area. Outside the project area, rather than targeting opium farmers, Daud planned to concentrate on “big traffickers who gain most of profits and who are currently target of new regimes anti-corruption campaign.” Daud wanted to “avoid full scale anti-opium production ban in Helmand area until regime has had time to consolidate its power in the area” and instead would focus on trafficking because that was “all the Government of Afghanistan could realistically do for the moment.”

As a result, the prohibition of opium as well as America’s hope to stop Helmand from becoming a major source of the drug depended on the future of Daud’s government. But US and Afghan aspirations for drug control were ultimately dependent on the willingness of local government officials and community leaders to comply with national drug control policy. For local government officials enforcing a national ban on opium could hurt farmers economically, inevitably straining the already tenuous relations between the government and local peoples. In February 1974, Peter Constable and Charles James of the State Department met with Governor Pazhwak to stress the grave concern of the US over the discovery of opium in the Helmand Valley. However, despite pressure from the US to enforce the prohibition, Pazhwak could not simply eradicate the

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opium crop. Pazhwak brilliantly responded that the opium problem was a simple issue of the “poor little farmer” and that the solution would be to find suitable alternatives and rectify the income gaps among farmers.\footnote{Helseth, William. “Poppies in the Helmand Valley.” February 11, 1974. RG 84, Records Relating to Afghanistan, Ibid. (1)} In other words, more US money and resources and the problem would eventually go away.

Pazhwak’s reluctance to prohibit opium spotlighted the fragile role of Daud’s government in the Helmand valley in 1974. Pazhwak had been an ardent critic of the project as a whole but remained steadfast in his efforts to increase US aid. His various meetings with US officials regarding opium suggested that he was rather indifferent to opium cultivation and trade, believing the opium trade “was a fact of life in the area.”\footnote{Brown, Vincent, Director USAID Afghanistan. “Memorandum on Narcotics in the Helmand Valley.” USAID. March 9, 1974. RG 84, Records Relating to Afghanistan, Ibid. (2)} No matter how much US officials pressured Pazhwak his concern rested in maintaining good relations with the people of the region rather than appeasing the US. On a deeper level, Pazhwak’s constant concern about his political standing reflected the simmering conflict between national directives and parochial realities. Prohibiting opium made little political sense for Pazhwak as a provincial governor when tensions between the people and the state were already high. Moreover, farmers were finally benefiting from the project, either directly or indirectly. Thus his general cultural and economic indifference toward the opium trade, combined with political pragmatism, certainly reinforced the notion that Pazhwak, was less than enthusiastic about enforcing national anti-opium laws in the Helmand Valley.
Nonetheless, by early 1974 rumors circulated throughout Helmand that Daud would finally crack down on poppy farmers and enforce the ban on opium. In February, to gauge the extent of the narcotics trade and the impact of narcotics policy in the valley, Richard Scott and Frank Denton of USAID met with three wholesalers and middlemen operating in the raw hash and opium trade in Lashkar Gah. Scott and Denton’s survey revealed that hash and opium prices had made substantial gains from the previous year, confirming fears that the global market was making in-roads in Afghanistan. Between 1973 and 1974 profits from the sale of a seer of hash increased 59 percent. For opium, profits increased 68 percent (both percentages based on the lowest sale price).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hash and Opium Prices (Afghanis per seer)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hash</strong></td>
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<td>Buy</td>
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<td>1972-73</td>
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<td>1973-74</td>
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(*hash prices were based on first quality)

(**all prices varied within ranges listed)

Although prices fluctuated depending on the market, the increasing demand for opium was undoubtedly escalating prices, partly because the market for Afghan opium was no

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538 A seer is a unit of measurement common in Afghanistan, usually with a weight of a few ounces.
539 Ibid. (1)
longer exclusive to Iran. Some traders noted that foreigners had entered the markets in Herat and were sometimes offering double the market price.\(^{540}\)

In early 1974, fearing the cessation of US funding if opium production continued unabated, HAVA declared a prohibition in the project area and promised to turn any farmer growing poppies over to the police. USAID officials seemed comforted by the notion that opium would be eradicated from the project area. However, State Department and DEA officials remained more concerned about opium outside of the project area. The project area was only a small fraction of the total farmland in the valley, and more important, the opium trade was growing throughout the valley and country. Ultimately, to stop farmers outside the project area from growing opium, Governor Pazhwak would need to enforce anti-opium laws, something HAVA, provincial, and national officials were clearly reluctant to do.\(^{541}\)

Still, the Afghan government imposed a prohibition outside the project area shortly after HAVA’s ban. Unlike earlier prohibitions, particularly the 1958 ban in Badakhshan, the prohibition in Helmand received little fanfare. It was never physically enforced by the police or gendarmerie but rather self-imposed by farmers, local khans, and landlords. In June US officials reported that, “poppies are not being grown on a commercial basis anywhere.” According to the US, subtle and informal pressures from Afghan authorities led farmers to stop growing. In any event, the apparent success of the

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\(^{540}\) Ibid. (1) One trader noted that French and Italians came to Herat to buy small quantities of hash and were in the process of consolidating the buys.

\(^{541}\) Ibid. (2)
prohibition was a clear political victory for the US. Embassy officials cabled Washington to notify Congress about this important development.\footnote{\textit{Narcotics: No Poppies in Helmand Valley.} State Department, Kabul 3363. June 3, 1974. RG 84, Records Relating to Afghanistan, Ibid.}

Although the US perceived a significant victory in the war on drugs, the prohibition was a calculated move on the part of opium farmers and traders to manipulate the market to their advantage. When Scott and Denton conducted their survey in February 1974, the three narcotics traders noted that the shortages in supply caused by the prohibition would potentially increase prices nearly 200-300 Afghanis per seer. Most farmers seemed aware of the impact of the prohibition on their profit margins. As a result, despite increases in customers buying opium many farmers held onto the year’s crop because they expected an even higher price in the future.\footnote{Brown, Vincent, Director USAID Afghanistan. \textit{“Memorandum on Narcotics in the Helmand Valley.”} USAID. March 9, 1974. RG 84, Records Relating to Afghanistan, Ibid.. (2). This escalating police crackdown was a product of US and UN funding of ASUs and informant rewards system.}

Farmers exhibited tremendous agency in manipulating international and national drug control programs. However, fear of coercive action from Daud’s government influenced farmers and traders to self-impose the opium ban. Government pressures under Daud, especially the introduction of ASUs, began to change the way the opium trade operated. The men interviewed noted that things had become more secretive but also more accurate. The threat of coercive action by the government raised the stakes for traders, and as a result, required them to be more precise in their business. Farmers were also holding onto their crop because if they did not have regular buyers they feared that the government’s use of local contacts and informants would eventually lead to their
arrests. More important, traders indicated that growing scrutiny from the central government was pressuring the local structure of production and trade. Conventionally, farmers who grew hash or opium sold it to a local khan or large landowner who, in turn, sold it to traffickers. These networks mostly followed ethnic and tribal lines. However, the government’s strength, particularly in rural Helmand, depended on coopting local khans and large landowners in supporting government projects and policies. Thus, farmers had to be careful in dealing with wealthy landowners who might be acting on behalf of the state. Daud’s government, on the other hand, was also walking a thin line. If the prohibition was not enacted properly and without due consideration of these powerful characters, the state risked further alienating the local population.

Was the prohibition a matter of effective state enforcement or market manipulation? The answer lies somewhere in between. The growth of double cropping certainly gave farmers a way to maximize their individual profits, given global market conditions. The increasing demand for opium, evidenced by foreigners showing up in Herat and Kandahar, strengthened awareness among local Afghan farmers and traders of the lucrative potential of the global narcotics market. They understood that demand showed no signs of subsiding. As a result, withholding supply rather than complying with the prohibition (despite the massive demand for their product) would improve future profits.

Meanwhile, since opium was often double-cropped, farmers could survive the

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544 Ibid. (2) Scott and Denton also discussed the growing demand for hash and opium inside of Afghanistan. According to Baluchi traders who passed through the southwest, opium smoking was on the rise in Farah and Nimroz provinces.
545 Ibid. (3)
546 In more recent times, this same phenomenon occurred. In 2000, under pressure from the US, the Taliban enforced a nationwide ban on opium, virtually eliminating production. Initially hailed as an important step in legitimizing Taliban rule, the
year by growing wheat and cotton. Complying with state policy allowed farmers, khans, and large landowners to avoid Daud’s crackdown on corruption and crime while simultaneously improving their future prospects. The Afghan government had a history of being indifferent when it came to enforcement, and undoubtedly used informal pressures to maintain political support from local khans and landowners while satiating the feverish demands of the Americans. In effect, the prohibition was essential to the future growth of the opium trade in the Helmand valley.

Amid US elation over the apparent success of the prohibition, it seems odd that the Americans never questioned the role of corruption. Corruption plagued HAVA and local provincial authorities throughout the history of the Mushiban state, and State Department and DEA officials were convinced to some extent that Afghan authorities remained involved in the drug trade. Indeed, this casts a shadow of skepticism over the whole prohibition. Is it likely that local officials withheld product, enforcing the prohibition, to protect themselves from potential prosecution while profiting in the future? The answer is yes. The potential impact of prohibition on future prices further reinforced local officials’ willingness to acquiesce in state directives. As an informal prohibition of sorts, whereby subtle pressures were applied, this scheme protected larger traffickers and khans (who played important and profitable roles in moving product) from prosecution by allowing them temporarily to halt the trade while projecting an image of compliance with the government. As a result, the prohibition succeeded not as a result of prohibition turned out to be a farce. Afghan opium had saturated the market and prices had fallen dramatically. As a result, the Taliban ordered the prohibition to cut supply and allow time for the prices to increase.
moral compliance or of effective state policy but rather because of the political and economic opportunity the prohibition presented.

Despite the cessation of opium production in 1974, by 1975 and 1976 opium cultivation had once again sprouted up in the Helmand valley. UN narcotics advisers noted that roughly 106 fields were identified near Lashkar Gah and surrounding areas, although not in the project area. US officials scrambled to offset the political damage, fearing that opium’s reemergence in the valley and, worse yet, the project area would lead to the end of US presence altogether.\(^{547}\) Daud issued stringent orders to his ministers and provincial governors to eradicate all opium. The US even helped fund a propaganda campaign to try to convince farmers not to grow opium. However, despite US pressure, Daud seemed politically impotent. Again, the effectiveness of Daud’s orders depended on cooperation from the heads of ministries and provincial leaders.\(^{548}\) Yet by 1976 many within the government were more concerned about their own survival than with implementing drug policy. Unemployment skyrocketed and peasants continued to be exploited by landowners. Furthermore, the country’s trade deficit continued to rise.\(^{549}\) Local khans and landowners, who had proved so instrumental in the prohibition in 1974, were no longer willing to acquiesce to government demands. By 1975, Daud’s republic faced increasing resistance in the countryside from Islamic radicals, who was in turn met by even greater repression from Daud. In sum, by the mid-1970s, Daud’s government


\(^{549}\) Emadi. \textit{Superpowers in Afghanistan.} (78)
did “not have the capacity to implement policies that challenged entrenched local interests.”

Needless to say, by 1976 opium production proceeded uninhibited. In 1977, the CIA estimated that the Helmand valley produced nearly 51 tons of opium, a significant portion of the estimated total 200-250 tons produced throughout Afghanistan. It was quite apparent that by the Sawr Revolution in 1978 opium had become an integral part of the Helmand valley.

The Helmand Valley During and After the War

When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, opium was fast becoming the primary source of revenue for farmers, khans, and resistance leaders. In 1978, the CIA estimated that Afghanistan and Pakistan together produced roughly 1,000 tons of opium, double the 500 tons UN officials had predicted. In the early stages of the Afghan-Soviet war Pakistan experienced a boom in the production of opium, particularly in the frontier provinces. However, as the mujahidin took control of rural areas in Afghanistan, opium production shifted primarily to Afghanistan. The results were astounding. In 1983, it was estimated that Afghanistan produced nearly 600 tons of raw opium. By the mid-1980s, most mujahidin commanders operated within a system in which opium was

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550 Barfield. (224)
552 Ibid. (5)
553 The US also exerted tremendous pressure on the Pakistan government to curb opium production in that country.
grown in Afghanistan, refined into heroin in Pakistan, and then sold domestically or
shipped to neighboring markets or the west. Some leaders even managed to establish
heroin laboratories in Afghanistan. Gilbudin Hekmatyar, leader of the Hizb-i Islami and
one of the major figures of the mujahidin, established six heroin refineries in the
Helmand during the early stages of the war.

Part of the reason why opium production increased so dramatically in Helmand
and the rest of the country during the 1980s was that heroin consumption increased
significantly around the world. The re-emergence of heroin consumption in the US in the
late 1970s and early 1980s solidified Afghanistan’s role as the major supplier for the US
market. In particular, in the northeast United States heroin addiction and overdose were
on the rise. American officials estimated that 54 percent of the US heroin supply came
from Afghanistan in 1981. Regionally, both Pakistan and Iran emerged as major
consumers of heroin in the early 1980s.

By the end of the war, as the mujahidin broke into rival ethnic and tribal wars, the
fight for control over opium took form. Warlord Mullah Mullah Akhunzada took control
of the Helmand valley and used the opium profits to continue his fight versus his rival
Hekmatyar and also to build schools and roads amid the political vacuum nationwide.
The role of opium warlord and local leader was reminiscent of Republican era China,

555 “US Task Force Focuses on Narcotics in Southwest Asia.” United States Information
(nsarchive.chadwyck.com)
557 “The Supply of Drugs to the US Illicit Market from Foreign and Domestic Sources in
National Security Archive. (nsarchive.chadwyck.com)
558 Ibid. (24)
559 McCoy. (484)
when local warlords encouraged opium production so as to tax it and use its revenue to build local states. Control of Helmand valley was extremely profitable for Akhunzada, as it was producing nearly 250 tons a year, earning him the nickname “King of Heroin.” Following the end of the war, Akhunzada was so powerful that the US offered him $2 million to stop cultivating opium. Although the sum was to be paid in the form of UN development aid, Akhunzada agreed and reduced Helmand production considerably in 1990. Although Akhunzada managed to stop growing poppies in 1990, Helmand remained an important region for opium producers and traders. It remains even more so today.

Ultimately, there is a sad irony to the story of the Helmand Valley. In 2002, the Helmand Valley produced nearly 56 percent of the country’s opium. Nad-i-Ali, once an important settlement in the Helmand Valley development project, itself produced nearly 8 percent of the country’s output in 2003. Although thirty years of war and political instability led to the expansion of the opium industry in the Helmand, its origins remain closely intertwined with the building of the Helmand Valley, the Afghan state, and globalization of Afghan opium.

Conclusion

The combination of bureaucratic uncertainties, too many bureaucracies and agencies involved in decision making, rushed and short-term personnel assignments,  

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561 Rubin. (213, 263)
562 Rubin. (263) Akhunzada’s reduction in opium production was eventually offset by his assassination and subsequent takeover of the valley by Hekmatyar.
contracting procedures, poorly conceived projects, not giving adequate consideration to farmer priorities and local staff input, and a breakdown of security in the region have all contributed to the inconsistent and ineffective reconstruction and poppy eradication program.

In the meantime, the farmers have lost confidence and respect for the government and the donor community. They understand that the inconsistencies in word and action reflect uncertainty, indifference and disorganization. The opium buyers continue to offer credit and a good market. Violence increases and the farmers continue to cultivate ever increasing crops of opium poppy.564

As Richard Scott indicates above, many of the problems that plagued the Helmand valley development project during the Musahiban era continue to this day. Many of the projects launched by the Afghan and donor governments are poorly managed and conceived, and there remains a vast gap between local concerns and input versus those of national and international governments. More important, farmers continue to grow opium as the Afghan government, and its various international supporters, remain disconnected from local realities that buttress the opium trade. For historians, as well as social scientists, there are important lessons to be learned from this episode in history.

The examination of the history of opium production in the Helmand valley sheds light on the important factors shaping why opium production began in the region. Economically, the introduction of cash crops created an awareness among local farmers and traders of how to maximize profits in the global market. This proved to be a vital component in the transformation of Helmand as the global narcotics market adapted to

the restrictions in supply stemming from the US led war on drugs. The prohibition on poppy growing in 1974 was also important to stimulating the local opium economy, as the decrease in supply amid growing regional and global demand helped increase prices for locally produced opium. Politically, the republic established under Daud proved an important factor in the deteriorating relations between the Daud government and local Helmand officials. Daud broke from the conventional Musahiban political model using leftists as his primary support base. The prohibition emerges in a different light as a result. Local officials did not acquiesce per se but rather co-opted the prohibition to eliminate potentially violent interactions with the Daud government while improving future economic prospects. As a result, the emergence of opium in the Helmand valley was not a product of the Afghan-Soviet war but rather a byproduct of the political, social, and economic engagements, between local Afghans, the Afghan government, and changes to the global narcotics economy.

Except for the ring road, the Helmand valley development project was unprecedented in size, scope, and impact. Not only did the Morrison-Knudsen Company build dams, canals, and roads, but it also settled nomads, built schools, and housing. It constructed a new way of life in Afghanistan. This transformation was branded indelibly with American identity and visions of modernity. However, on a deeper level, the Helmand development project was about the expansion of state power into rural Afghanistan.565 In this way, development took on a new “meaning.” Thus, resistance to

565 In James Ferguson’s book The Anti-Politics Machine: Development, Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990) he describes a similar process in Lesotho where the “meaning” of development was always about political control, not the ideas of alleviating poverty and inequality that were supposedly at the heart of modernization theory.
development was really about resistance to the political attachments that came along with development. The prohibition took this even further. The threat of coercive force by Daud, seen by Americans as an important step for the aspiring modern nation, was a symbol of the increasingly invasive character of the Afghan government. Thus, in a country where the economic disparity and cultural differences between urban and rural societies was stark, the transposition of American modernity into rural Afghanistan, in the form of both development and prohibition, was even more radical. The impact was profound.

The social and cultural issues revolving around the planting of American modernity in the Helmand valley were reinforced by structural deficiencies within the Musahiban state, especially the pervasive strength of the qawm. The Musahiban dynasty never established a consensus or uniformity around an imagined national identity, i.e. Afghan. Rather state officials “inserted the qawm into the state institutions.” The net effect of course, was that Afghans rarely developed a fealty toward the state. As Afghan historian Olivier Roy states: “the state was no more than a stake in a larger game and the strategy of a qawm consisted in establishing an advantageous relationship with the institutions of the state.” Specifically, the development of the Helmand valley was not an effort to unify and strengthen the national allegiances but rather to aid and perpetuate Pashtun hegemony.

What impact did this have on opium in the Helmand Valley? In the early 1970s, when farmers’ incomes had grown beyond subsistence levels, the state was not credited

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567 Roy. *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*. (24)
568 Emadi. *Superpowers*. (90)
with the success of improved agricultural systems. This was mainly because the state was rarely integrated into rural society; rather, it merely encapsulated “local political structures in order to prevent them from causing trouble.” Furthermore, relations between the state and people were weakest at the provincial and sub-provincial levels. As a result, when opium burst onto the scene in 1973 the state was incapable of introducing the types of measures that would effectively stop opium production.

In many ways, the emergence of opium highlights the problems surrounding the qawm and state governance. In particular, the state’s attempt to prohibit opium happened at a time when the local farmers and traders were benefiting from the global opium trade. And even when the state managed to enforce a prohibition in 1974, the ban succeeded only because it served local interests to do so. Thus the false compliance by farmers and traders in the Helmand represented a form of peasant resistance to the state. More important, opium emerged because it benefited the qawm, which ultimately had the irreducible effect of de-legitimizing the state in the region as it tried to uphold coercive prohibition policies. Furthermore, the hopes of developing legal crops as an alternative carried the historical weight of nearly twenty-five years of government corruption, mismanagement, and misguidance in HAVA. Thus, it is not surprising that given the history of the project and the potential of the opium trade, local farmers and traders continued to produce opium and ignore or manipulate the directives of the increasingly disconnected Afghan government.

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569 Barfield. Afghanistan. (220)
570 Scott, James. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance. (29) Scott defines the ordinary forms of peasant resistance as foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, etc.
The linkages between the Helmand valley development project and its subsequent role as epicenter of the global narcotics trade also lead to questions about America’s legacy in the Helmand valley. The legacy of America’s role in the Helmand valley is one in which it succeeded in teaching farmers to grow crops for the global market. However, it happened at a time when local political and social schisms were increasing, the state was weakening, and the tentacles of the global illicit narcotics trade finally reached into the fields of Afghanistan. Consequently, Afghan farmers learned to master a system that happened to be in direct opposition to the ideologies of the American donors who helped them learn and achieve such mastery. More important, America was exporting competing visions of its own modernity: one rooted in building a free market, the other in prohibiting opium.571 As a result, by co-opting the Afghan state in its own inconclusive and misguided ideology of building a drug-free market based agro-industrial economy, the Americans contributed to the cultural and political malaise brewing in Afghanistan. In other words, by failing to achieve either of their objectives, the United States contributed to the failure of both. Now, the opium poppies that riddle the Helmand countryside serve as reminders of a vision of modernity gone awry.

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Conclusion

Analyzing the historical antecedents of the Afghan opium industry broadens and enriches our understanding of the contemporary drug trade in Afghanistan. In particular, analyzing this period reveals the mutual constitutive relationship between state formation in Afghanistan and the growth of the Afghan opium industry. Musahiban drug control was both a response to the drug trade, and a stimulant of it. The increasingly coercive nature of drug control, often contradicting social, cultural, and economic norms regarding opium production, use, and trade, reinforced the growing illegitimacy of the Musahiban government. As a result, drug control contributed to the political, social, and cultural problems that increasingly characterized the relationship between the Afghan government and its citizens. The globalization of Afghanistan’s opium industry was not a byproduct of war and statelessness but rather a consequence of the deeper political problems stemming from the formation of the Musahiban state, in which drug control played an increasingly important role.

The growth of the drug control apparatus was an important aspect in the design of the Musahiban state. Increasing efforts to stop the illicit drug trade allowed the Musahiban to gain access to foreign money that was vital to the structure and function of the government. This was important in as much as since its inception Musahiban leaders
consciously adopted policies that allowed the state to grow while limiting interactions with contentious and rebellious rural groups. Over time, its dependence on foreign aid and trade allowed the state to function almost exclusively on revenue from abroad. This political structure in turn shaped many of the policies enacted by the Musahiban.

Drug control, in particular, increasingly took on the shape and character of America’s militarized war on drugs. Americans were eager to expand drug control globally to thwart the growing threat of the illicit trade, and were willing to give money, aid, and training to achieve their goals. However, implementing American-style drug control did not go smoothly in Afghanistan. Turning opium into an illegal commodity transformed the meanings surrounding opium production, trade, and use. Farmers became drug suppliers and traders became drug traffickers. In other words, as the Musahiban government introduced the threat of drug traffickers and the illegal drug trade, the more it created the necessity to do something about it. As Tony Gallant states, “bandits helped make states and states made bandits.” Drug control was an important way the state justified its expansion of power and greater control over the lives of Afghan citizens.

This transformation also reflects how drug control law “is relational, culturally inflected, and acts asymmetrically along the contours of power and social mores.” It reveals how deep social dynamics were fundamental in shaping drug control policy, and why and how people responded to them. The creation and implementation of drug control had significant consequences for the people of Afghanistan, and that the impact of this policy inevitably transformed opium’s role as a commodity. Before the Musahiban, the

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572 Gregorian. The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan. (343)
573 Rubin. Fragmentation.
574 Gallant. “Brigandage.” (25)
575 Abraham and van Schendel. Illicit Flows and Criminal Things. (19)
opium trade was relatively small, and opium was used mainly as a medicine traded in limited quantities. However, as the Musahiban embraced western conceptions of drug control, the implementation and enforcement of drug control laws proved increasingly controversial. The attempts to stop the production and distribution of opium went against the cultural norms and economic needs undergirding the opium trade. For example, in Badakhshan the government (and more important, the western powers who motivated its implementation) defined opium as a matter of addiction and poverty. Although poverty was present, opium was not a source of it. Rather, opium was a multi-faceted agricultural product that was not only a major cash crop but also a vital source of medicine, food, and hygiene. In this sense, opium was an economic and culturally important product for the people of Badakhshan. Why then did the Musahiban eradicate opium there? The government launched a prohibition in Badakhshan not only as a visible international policy ploy but, more important, because Badakhshan was inhabited mainly by ethnic minorities. These minorities did not threaten the state, and it was much easier to justify a coercive policy in this region than elsewhere given the Musahiban’s racial bias toward Pashtuns in the south and west.

Analyzing the relationship between state formation and opium explains why the 1958 prohibition, and drug control in general, failed. One of the most important consequences of Musahiban drug control was that it reinforced the role of *qawm* in Afghanistan. *Qawm* influenced every level of drug control. Whether it was the decision of the Musahiban to enforce the prohibition in minority-inhabited Badakhshan, or a gendarme’s decision to ignore drug smugglers who shared some tribal or ethnic relation, *qawm*’s impact was felt. As a result, the decision of where and when to enforce drug laws
and the extent to which drug laws were enforced at the local level revolved around *qawm*. The consequence was that the Musahiban were enforcing subjective laws based on deeper social and political constructs. Enforcing drug control exacerbated these deeper undercurrents, further fragmenting the nation and actually aiding the continued expansion of the opium industry.

Drug control and its impact on people’s mobility added to the political tensions between the Musahiban government and Afghan people. In particular, the anti-smuggling campaign launched under Daud was as much an effort to control people’s movement as it was to stop drugs. The continued subversion of smuggling laws, however, reveals how those on the boundaries of the state perceived these subjective laws. Historically, the movement of people and commodities across borders, including opium, was a normal, licit activity. However, the state defined these activities as illegal in order to justify the expansion of state authority in the periphery of the country. Daud created anti-smuggling units (ASU’s) with national jurisdiction and authority to stop the smuggling of narcotics across its borders. But despite the creation of these units, trading of drugs continued. Thus, the “illegality” of their actions reveals a great deal about the state’s projection of authority, and the continued smuggling of drugs exposes the tensions surrounding center-periphery interactions.

Although this study focuses mainly on the creation and implementation of Musahiban drug policy, it also unveils the impact of global forces. The US figures prominently in this instance. Musahiban drug policy was shaped entirely by the US. Thus, to examine Afghan drug policy is also to examine the impact of American drug

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576 Abraham and van Schendel. *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things*. (4)
policy in Asia. American ambitions to suppress the production of illicit opium in Asia were completely devoid of cultural and political nuance.\textsuperscript{577} In Badakhshan, the Americans perceived opium use to be a social addiction, but, opium was much more than that. Americans failed to understand the long-term impact of their drug policy because they simply could not understand the cultural, social, and political nuances at play in Badakhshan. American drug policy was defined by cases such as these.

There is still a great deal to learn about drug history and especially the history of drug control in Asia. Historians have reinforced these gaps by focusing too much on the state.\textsuperscript{578} The need to paint a more comprehensive picture remains central to this study. I demonstrate throughout this work that the state influenced and was influenced by the Afghan population. For instance, in the Helmand valley, the development project had an incredible impact in transforming the lives of its rural inhabitants. Conventional social and political systems were completely revamped as a result. While this is a good example of how the state impacted its people, there were reciprocated effects. By the early 1970s farmers were growing opium as a cash crop at increasing rates, some even on the development project area itself. This of course led the Daud government to increase its enforcement of anti-opium and anti-smuggling laws. Thus, the Musahiban government and the Afghan people both play important roles in this history.

In the last three decades Afghanistan has become synonymous with the illicit opium trade. In 2011, it was estimated that Afghanistan produced nearly 82 percent of

\textsuperscript{577} Walker, William. “Drug Control and the Issue of Culture.” (372)
global opium output. Revenue from farm gate opium generated an estimated $1.4 billion, roughly 9 percent of Afghanistan’s GDP. Revenue from trafficking and smuggling was believed to have pushed the percentage of GDP to 15 percent. More troubling for scholars and policy makers was that 95 percent of the opium being harvested came from the nine most insecure provinces in the country. As a result, scholars and policy makers have concluded that the pervasiveness of the opium trade results from the inability of the state to exert effective control throughout the country and from the ongoing conflict stemming from America’s occupation of the country. Improving security and quality of life are seen as vital to ending Afghanistan’s dependence on opium.

Although contemporary and historical analyses are important, they fail to present the history of opium in Afghanistan in toto. In determining the roots of the opium trade, most scholars have focused on the opium trade since the Afghan-Soviet war. By focusing on the period in which Afghanistan became a stateless, lawless place, histories of the opium trade easily conform to the contemporary narrative. However, underlying these conceptions is a lack of historical understanding about the inter relationship between opium and state formation that has shaped the poor security and quality of life that now characterize the opium trade in Afghanistan. Opium emerged not as a byproduct of statelessness and lawlessness but rather as a consequence of state formation during the Musahiban dynasty. As a result, it forces us to look at how the formation of the state was,

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580 Ibid. (6)
and still is, vital to the opium trade. As David Mansfield suggests, “it is impossible to isolate illicit drugs from the wider issue of governance in Afghanistan; the two are intrinsically linked.”582 And to do that, we must better understand the history that has so fundamentally shaped, and continues to shape, the present.

This study has contemporary as well as historical significance. As the United States continues to pursue a war on drugs, understandings of the impact of that policy remain shrouded in an ahistorical state. It is important for policy makers, not just scholars, to step beyond the narrow drug lens and recognize that drug economies and cultures are intrinsically linked to the political, social, and cultural interactions of individuals, groups, and states. And to do that, we must better understand the history that has so fundamentally shaped, and continues to shape, the present.

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