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We shall not sleep, where poppies blow: Afghanistan's development into a narco-state, 1989-1996

Boogaard, Sam van den

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We shall not sleep, where poppies blow

Afghanistan's development into a narco-state, 1989-1996



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Sam van den Boogaard

Leiden University

Supervisor: Rizal Shidiq

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Introduction

'if the situation in Afghanistan is ugly today, it is not because the people of Afghanistan are ugly. Afghanistan is not only the mirror of the Afghans; it is the mirror of the world.'
(Rubin, 1995, p. 14)

Afghanistan has been of interest to empires over the last centuries. It has earned the moniker 'Graveyard of Empires' due to its ability to frustrate the greatest empires in the world, including the Macedonian Empire led by Alexander the Great, the Mongolian Empire led by Genghis Khan, the British Empire and the Soviet Union, although it implies that Afghanistan has been a state for thousands of years. (Fergusson & Hughes, 2019). The most recent empire that has retreated from Afghanistan is the USA, ending its engagement with Afghanistan in 2021. Since then, the Taliban have taken over control once again, after being in power briefly in the nineties.

During this short reign in the nineties, the Taliban accrued revenue from different streams, including foreign aid from Pakistan. A non-significant part of their revenue also came from the drug trade. Specifically, the cultivation of *papaver somniferum*, colloquially known as opium poppy, was profitable. (Peters, 2009) It forms the base for the drug heroin. (Booth, 2013). Even though the Taliban has recently cracked down on the drug trade, Afghanistan was previously a narco-state and the global centre of the heroin trade since the Soviet-Afghan War. (UNODC, 2024).

Several factors contributed to Afghanistan's development into a narco-state. First, a weak state, second, demands from armed groups, commanded by warlords, to cultivate cash crops and third, the suitability of Afghan soil for opium cultivation. Opium is resistant to drought, easily cultivated on Afghan soil and was sold at a price ten times higher than wheat. (McDonald, 2007). These biological characteristics made it a popular cash crop for warlords, who utilized the profits from this opium trade to pay for weapons and supplies, smuggling the drugs out of the country in trucks protected by the CIA. (Rubin, 1995). From the start of the Soviet-Afghan War in 1979 to the takeover of most of Afghanistan by the Taliban in 1996, a vast network of the drug trade was built. (McDonald, 2007).

A weak state led to Afghanistan's role as the premier producer of opium and is an obstacle to state-building. Afghanistan was already a complicated state due to its geography, politics, and differing traditions and religions. The Soviet-Afghan War, a conflict between two superpowers that spent billions of dollars on foreign aid, further complicated the political landscape. Afghanistan's current position in the drug trade is tied to the state's past failure to build, expand and modernise the state. Both Afghan and foreign actors instead directly contributed to the expansion of poppy cultivation and the heroin trade. (Rubin, 1995) The drug trade destabilised the region. Tonnes of drugs were smuggled to Europe and America, causing an epidemic that killed thousands. (Giummoni, 2024). The drug trade in Afghanistan has destabilised the country and the region.

This paper theorizes that the breakdown of the Afghan state and influx of foreign aid to non-state actors during and after the Soviet-Afghan War led to the development of a narco-state. These non-state actors, warlords, used foreign aid and opium to fund their operations. When foreign aid was cut in 1992, the production of opium increased. It hopes to answer the question of how the breakdown of the Afghan state led to the development of the narco-state between 1989-1996.

Hopefully, this paper can contribute to the academic and non-academic debate. The decision by the West to fund non-state actors to defeat a larger enemy was not unique to Afghanistan. The decision to use the profits from opium to do it was also not unique.

Rubin, Maley and Dorrosoro have written monographs that are specifically about the failure of the Afghan state as a result of the historical developments in the country. The narco-state is not centred in their approaches. Instead, they treat the breakdown of the Afghan state as something that also led to the development of a narco-state. They do not discuss the economic or practical reasons behind the cultivation of opium, or the reasons why a failed state can become a narco-state, as this paper will do. It discusses the political economy of opium. It will discuss who benefitted from it, how did warlords use it to supplant the state, and what role did state power and the absence of the state play in these developments. It hypothesizes that the increased drug production between 1989-1996 was due to the failure of the state. This failure of the state is measured by comparing it to the ideal state as defined by Weber. (Weber, 1946) It is important to realize, however, that Weber's model of the state is specifically designed for European states. Afghanistan does not fit this ideal. (Rubin, 1995). It is not specifically not being a Weberian state that caused Afghanistan's development into a narco-state. This thesis will argue it is the absence of the Afghan state in the lives of Afghans and the lack of state power that played a significant role. These indicators can be linked to the inability to produce good outcomes or have strong procedures, commonly associated with Weberian states.

This thesis is divided into four sections. The first chapter discusses the background and research motivation, explaining the economic incentives behind cultivating opium. The second chapter addresses methodology, define the narco-state and propose theories for state failure that could lead to the development of the narco-state. It explains the concept of state formation and the (Western) ideal of a functional state, expanding on what constitutes a state and what it requires to function. This understanding could be useful to understand why the state of Afghanistan failed. Notably, Afghanistan had warlords who undermined the authority of the state. The third chapter analyses the mechanisms that caused the state to fail. A loss of state power and the absence of the state led to Afghanistan's development into a narco-state. This chapter elucidates on the function of both warlords, who are tied to the loss of state power, and foreign aid, tied to the absence of the state. it discusses their origin and effect on the trade and proliferation of opium. The decision to cultivate opium depends on various factors, such as pressure from warlords, foreign aid, infrastructure, and the decline of other countries producing opium.

Background and research motivation

Heroin is addictive. Made from opioid morphine, which can be found in the plant *papaver somniferum*, it is a drug that causes addiction within two to three uses. It was synthesised at the end of the nineteenth century. (Millella et al., 2023). Afghanistan is the leading producer of opium in the world. In 1999, before the Taliban banned opium, over 75% of the world's opium came from Afghanistan. In 2022, the year after the USA ended its twenty-year involvement in Afghanistan, the country was responsible for almost 80% of global opium production. (UNODC, 2024). Despite the United States' plan to end the cultivation of opium through bans, financial aid and substitute crops such as saffron, opium remained a widely cultivated crop during the American military operation in Afghanistan. (UNODC, 2024).

There were two major drug-producing areas in Asia. The Golden Crescent included Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The Golden Triangle included Myanmar (Burma), Thailand and Laos. (McCoy, 2003). The punishments for producing and transporting drugs were harsh, but the

chance of getting caught was minimal across borders. (McCoy, 2003). The economic motive was present everywhere. Cultivating opium was easy. Opium is considered a miracle crop. It matures quickly, can be planted twice in a single season and is easy to store, transport and sell. It is weather-resistant and requires about half the amount of water wheat does. It also allows for double cropping. (McDonald, 2007). It employs a significant amount of people, which was important in the aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan War, when employment opportunities in Afghanistan were scarce. (McDonald, 2007)

The production of drugs in Afghanistan increased drug after drug production in the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle decreased. This shift was the result of droughts, domestic anti-drugs policies and USA counter-narcotic operations. (McCoy, 2003). Demand for drugs also increased as Afghans and Pakistanis became addicted to the drug. (McCoy, 2003). These two trends are visible in table 1. Even as the drug production of countries such as Thailand, Iran, Laos and Burma decreased slightly or even increased, drug production in Afghanistan increased sharply. Afghani opium was sold to addicts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Europe and the United States of America. (McCoy, 2003)

Table 1

World opium production, 1990-1994

950 ASIAN SURVEY, VOL. XXXVI, NO. 10, OCTOBER 1996

Country	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Burma	2,250	2,350	2,250	2,370	2,580
Afghanistan	415	570	600	890	1,278
Laos	275	265	250	280	265
Iran	300	300	300	350	300
Pakistan	165	180	125	120	125
Mexico	62	41	55	45	40
Lebanon	13	17	10	12	12
Thailand	40	35	32	30	25
Guatemala	13	17	10	10	8

SOURCE: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report* (Washington, D.C.: March 1995).

Note: from “Pak-Afghan drug trade in historical perspective” by I. Haq, 1996, *Asian survey*, 36(10), p.950 (<https://doi.org/10.2307/2645627>). Copyright 1996 by Asian Survey.

Incentives to cultivate opium

Afghanistan has a comparative advantage in producing opium due to its natural conditions. (Byrd & Ward, 2004). Afghanistan’s valleys and mountains are well-suited for opium production. It is estimated around 40% of Afghani opium was cultivated in the Helmand River valley in 1994. (Haq, 1996). Technical knowledge of opium grew parallel to the increase in production, while technical knowledge of other crops faded as production shrunk. (UNODC, 2003).

A second advantage Afghan opium farmers had was the absence of state control in Afghanistan. Opium could easily be cultivated in the countryside. Officials from Kabul disliked being sent to the countryside, and the state was fundamentally weak. (Maley, 2018) Though infrastructure to transport other commodities deteriorated during the Soviet-Afghan War, all parties fighting had a vested interest in keeping the supply and trade routes open for the opium

trade. As a result, those involved in the cultivation of opium had more options to sell their goods than those involved in traditional agriculture. (Maley, 2018) Drug infrastructure and networks functioned throughout the Soviet-Afghan War and after as well. (UNODC, 2003). The men who fought against the Soviet invasion were called mujahideen. This word means ‘those who engage in jihad.’ (Lansford, 2017). The mujahideen encouraged the cultivation of opium after the start of the Soviet-Afghan War. (UNODC, 2003). Their influence grew after the start of the Soviet-Afghan War. (Rubin, 1995). As a result, the opium harvest nearly doubled between 1982 and 1983. (UNODC, 2003). Profits from the drug trade helped the mujahideen reach self-sufficiency. Income from the drug trade made them independent from the villages they came from. (Dorransoro, 2003) As a result, their dependence on foreign aid diminished, although it played a role in this shift from subsistence crops to cash crops. (Haq, 1996). The weapons supplied to them allowed them to control territory, which they could use to produce opium. (Rubin, 2000). (Coll, 2005) Over 75% of the opium in the world was produced in Afghanistan in 1999 (Rubin, 2000). There was virtually no state presence and no government control. (Rubin, 1995)

The economic incentives to cultivate opium

Opium has economic benefits. High prices, high demand and vast transportation networks have brought billions of dollars to the Afghan economy, of which several hundred million came into the hands of Afghan farmers. Cultivating opium allowed farmers to feed their families. (Byrd & Ward, 2004). These developments have been consistent with other countries that produced significant amounts of drugs, such as Vietnam and Laos (McCoy, 2003) . The short-term results are positive, although less positive than if this labour and money were invested in licit products. (INCB, 2002) In the past, the drug trade has also funded non-state actors, such as warlords, and terrorist organisations such as the Taliban. (Rubin, 1995).

There were several incentives to cultivate poppy. Afghan opium often found its way into other markets in Europe, Asia, Africa and South America. (Haq, 1996). In Europe, opium sold for a high price. This made the international opium trade profitable. The difference between wholesale price, the price opium farmers in Afghanistan get, and retail prices, the street value charged by dealers in Europe and North America, is significant. “One kilo of heroin purchased for £4,000 [US\$7,000] on the Pakistan/Afghan border may be sold as such in Britain for £20,000 [US\$35,000] to £25,000 [\$43,750]. If the kilo is sold in separate ounces, it can realize between £28,000 [US\$43,700] to £42,000 [\$73,500].” (Haq, 1996, p.952). This meant that farmers in Afghanistan were incentivized to cultivate poppy. It also meant the mujahideen were incentivized to force farmers to cultivate poppy.

Secondly, wages were an significant part of the economic motivation to cultivate poppy. While rural labour was usually priced at 1-2 USD a day, places where opium cultivation is concentrated sometimes paid as much as 12 USD a day for unskilled labour, due to a labour-intensive harvesting process (UNODC, 2003). It is estimated that half a million people earned wages related to opium in 2003 (Byrd & Ward, 2003). A farmer in 1999 had about 0,5 hectares to cultivate poppy on average. Based on UNDCP estimates, the average poppy farmer in 1999 earned about 1075 USD a year from cultivating poppy. (UNODC, 2003). The destruction of agricultural systems and infrastructure after the Soviet-Afghan War meant that in some districts, households were unable to feed their families for the entire year with the agricultural staples they cultivated themselves. (McCoy, 2003). Using opium as a source of income was a way to sustain these households. For farmers living on or below the poverty line, opium is a pathway to provide. (McCoy, 2003). The opium industry has worked as a way to alleviate poverty for the poor. (Byrd & Ward, 2003). Small farmers often do not earn much money, even when they are involved in the opium trade. The opium trade is often the only way they can get access to land. They are poor, and involving themselves in the cultivation of opium can trap them into vicious cycles of

debt (Byrd & Ward, 2003). Rich farmers, as well as smugglers, traders and those who process opium into heroin, earned much more from the opium trade. (Byrd & Ward, 2003). As a result, the adverse effects of the opium trade on the economy are felt most by the poor. Those who profit from the opium trade much more can afford to lose money, as their profits are higher. The poor do not have the capital to endure a period of hardship. (Byrds & Ward, 2003)

Expressed as a percentage of average yearly income in Afghanistan in USD, the economic motive for smuggling poppy across the border becomes evident. An income of 1-2 USD per day amounts to a yearly income of \$365-730. “Even if one takes the higher end of this range, available data suggest that smuggling one kg of opium to Tehran was equivalent to 2 years of income in Afghanistan, while smuggling one kg of heroin was equivalent to 4 years of income.” (UNODC,2003, p.141)

As visible in the table below,, Afghan opium smugglers can make ten times the profit opium traders who only sell in-country are making. While drug-related income in Afghanistan in 2004 stood at 2,800,000,000 USD, about a third of Afghanistan’s GDP, the value of the drugs smuggled across the border is almost ten times that. (Byrd & Ward, 2004).

Table 2

Average profitability of the opium trade in southern Afghanistan (based on farmgate price)

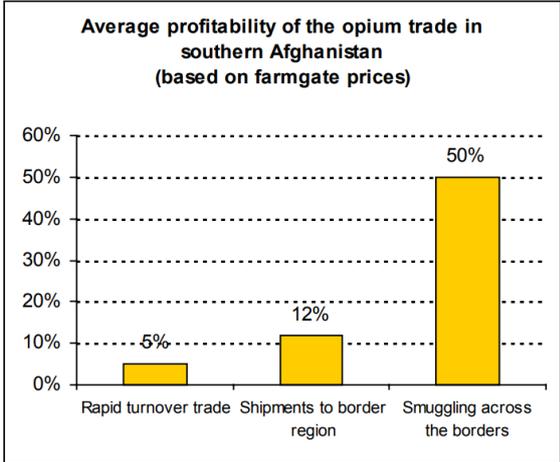


Figure 2
Source: UNDCP, Afghanistan, Strategic Study #2, The Dynamics of the Farmgate Opium Trade and the Coping Strategies of Opium Traders, October 1998.

Note: from “The opium economy in Afghanistan” by the UNODC, 2003, p.130 (https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/afg_opium_economy_2003.pdf) Copyright 1998 by UNODC.

In a state with few functioning institutions, opium can also function as a commodity to be exchanged. It is a survival tool for the poorest. (UNODC, 2003) Moreover, opium represents wealth and status and is often used by the more affluent members of society to gain status symbols such as cars, agricultural machines like tractors, and houses. The journey to Mecca, which every Muslim has to make, can also be a reason for cultivating opium. (UNODC, 2003)

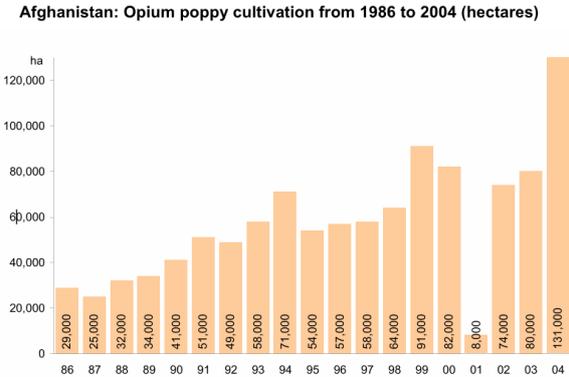
Despite all these benefits, the practice of cultivating opium was still not widely spread in Afghanistan. In 2004, less than 7% of the land was used to cultivate poppies. Even so, it involves over 2,200,000 people, which is over 10% of the population. (Byrd & Ward, 2004). In line with the increasing production of opium, the total land on which poppy was cultivated nearly doubled from 1986 to 1996. As a percentage of total available arable land in Afghanistan opium was

cultivated on a small percentage of arable land (World Bank, 2025). As a result, using the term narco-state to denote that the average farmer was cultivating poppy is wrong, The term narco-state as used to describe Afghanistan in this thesis denotes the involvement of the mujahideen warlords with opium trade. They encouraged and forced farmers to do it and used the profits to build their own capacities. (Rubin, 1997) Most farmers were not involved.

This is evidenced by the fact opium production steadily rose during the Soviet-Afghanistan War. It decreased temporarily after 1994, then rose again. When the Taliban banned opium in 2001, production fell significantly. After the USA invaded Afghanistan as part of Operation Freedom, the opium production rose again. (UNODC, 2003). It can also be seen in the table below.

Table 3

Afghanistan: opium poppy cultivation from 1986 to 2004 (hectares)



Note: “Afghanistan: opium survey” by the UNODC, 2004, p.4 (https://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afghanistan_opium_survey_2004.pdf). Copyright 2004 by UNODC

Negative economic effects of cultivating opium

First, the development of drug production prevents long-term economic growth. In all countries that have massive drug industries, a rise in drug production is coupled with a drop in GDP. (INCB, 2002). The profitability of drugs will hamper the development of more licit forms of agriculture that are not as profitable. (Byrd & Ward, 2004). As opium becomes more entrenched in the economy as a form of payment and rent, it becomes harder to root out, strengthening the negative effect. (Bryd & Ward, 2004)

Second, the opium trade is seasonal and volatile. Weather plays a role, as it does in all agricultural economies. Demand and supply volatility could send shockwaves through the economy, especially coupled with the threat of eradication. Water availability fluctuates as well (Byrd & Ward, 2004).

Third, the growth of the drug industry can lead to inflation through exchange rate corrections. This makes the rest of the economy less competitive and could further influence those not involved with drug trade to become involved in the drug trade. (Byrd & Ward, 2004)

Methodology

Analytical framework

Several theories could be used to explain the increase in drug production in Afghanistan between 1980 and 1996. Failed state theory, characterized by a loss of state power, rise of non-state actors and influx of foreign aid, offers the best explanation for the increase of drug production in Afghanistan between 1989-1996. A failed state should have low tax revenue, no monopoly on violence by the state, low turnout for elections and non-state actors assuming government responsibilities. All of these factors were present in Afghanistan between 1989-1996. (Dorronsoro, 2003). Unique to the case of Afghanistan is the influx of foreign aid to warlords during the Soviet-Afghan War, which strengthened their position and further deteriorated the government's position. It also allowed them to expand their production of drugs, which made Afghanistan the premier source of opium (UNODC, 2003). Other failed state were not rentier states dependent on foreign aid before they failed, as Afghanistan was (Maley, 2018). Afghanistan is unique because the narco-state did not develop despite the foreign aid given to the country. The donors were aware the aid was used to cultivate and trade opium, and allowed it. (McCoy, 2003).

To develop this theory, this chapter will first discuss the definition of a narco-state. After, it will present the numerous theories that could explain Afghanistan's development into a narco-state. To conclude, it will detail the mechanisms through which a failed state could develop into a narco-state. These two mechanisms are the lack of state power and the absence of the state. This paper will not deal with the ethnic and religious factors that contributed to the failed state and thus to the rise of the narco-state, although it acknowledges that these are factors and will discuss them in passing. Discussing them falls outside the scope of this paper. Moreover, these factors have been extensively covered by accomplished scholars such as Rubin, Maley and Dorronsoro. It is the link to the narco-state that makes this research unique.

Defining the narco-state

Authors do not agree on a single definition of the narco-state. There is discussion about the number of institutions that have to be penetrated by drug-producing elements. There is also discussion about whether this definition should be binary or gradual. (Chouvy, 2017). A state that has drug trade due to involvement with this drug trade at every level differs significantly from a state that actively participates in the distribution of drugs. The absence or presence of policies aimed at producing drugs mark different gradations of narco-states. Moreover, defining a narco-state as all institutions being affected, or some, renders the definition vague.

Chouvy defines the narco-state as a "country in which the resort to illegal drug production and/or trafficking is part of the official state policy with the government organizing drug production and/or trafficking through the involvement of state and/or non-state actors. ... for a narco-state to exist illegal drug production and/or trafficking must be sponsored and planned by the state, whether the state's most important resources are devoted to drug production and/or trafficking, or not." (Chouvy, 2017, p.30). In this definition, the state intentionally produces drugs as part of the official government policy. These states do not exist because no country has an official policy of producing drugs.

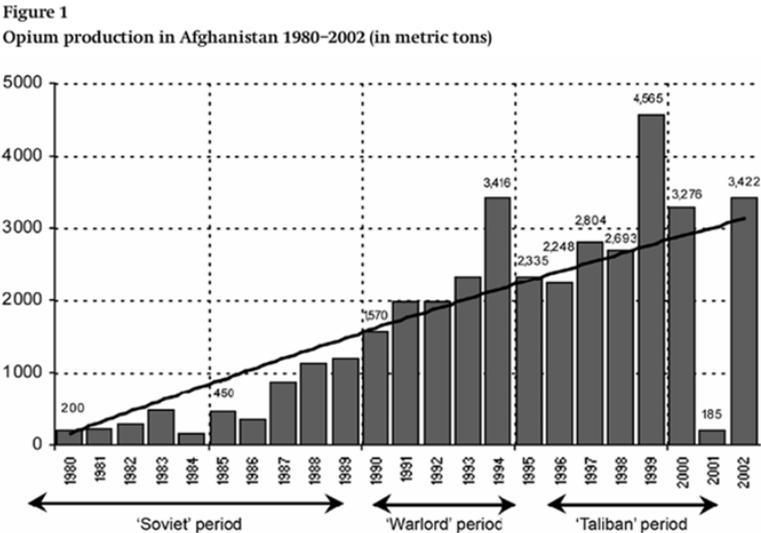
The word narco-state does not accurately define the situation of a state like Afghanistan. It assumes that the state has significant state power. The state of Afghanistan exercises no significant state power. The elements of a Weberian state did not apply to Afghanistan between

1989-1996. It lacked the ability to make and enforce laws. (Chouvy, 2017) In a realized narco-state as described above, the state controls production, but because a realized narco-state does not exist, the drugs are produced through private actors. In the case of Afghanistan, these private actors are warlords. (Chouvy, 2017). As such, a state in which non-state actors produce drugs, despite official policy to not produce drugs, is a narco-state. By this definition, Afghanistan between 1989-1996 could be a narco-state.

The state of Afghanistan produced a significant amount of opium between . As the Soviet-Afghanistan War lasted, the production increased, as visible in the graph below. This thesis argues that it is the breakdown of the state, measured through the power of the state and the presence of the state in the lives of Afghanis, that affects the opium production. This explains why this increase happened during three distinct periods and under three different ‘rulers.’

Table 4

Opium produciton in Afghanistan 1980-2002



Source: UNODC, *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan. An International Problem*, New York 2003, p. 81, http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/afg_opium_economy_2003.pdf.

Note: from UNODC, “The opium economy in Afghanistan: an international problem.” UNODC, p. 81. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/afg_opium_economy_2003.pdf

Theories for Afghanistan’s development into a narco-state.

There are several theories that could explain the development of a state into a narco-state. First, a narco-state could emerge when the government does not have the power to enforce its rules, regulate the economy or control its territory. This leads to a power transfer to non-state actors, such as warlords. The state should lack control over its territory, fail to collect a significant amount of taxes, and be unable to enforce the rule of law. Moreover, non-state actors should be prevalent, and the state should not have a monopoly on violence. These indicators were all present in Afghanistan between 1989-1996. (Maley, 2018). After the retreat of the Russians in 1990 and the fall of the Najibullah government in 1992, warlords fought a civil war against each other. Production of opium funded their militias and fed their people. (Malejacq, 2019).

The second theory is that the international demand for drugs creates narco-states. The cultivation of and trade in opium is immensely profitable on the world market, which means

nations with weak government, weak border control and suitable soil can become narco-states. (Andreas, 2011). Economics, law and logistics have historically influenced illicit activity, including the drug trade. McCoy has also investigated the decline of drug production in the Golden Crescent as a cause for the increase of drug production in Afghanistan. (McCoy, 2003). If this theory holds, Afghanistan should have shown a deliberate and conscious policy change towards drugs, with government elites invested in the production. Government elites inside the Afghan government did not profit from the drug trade. Warlords did. They demanded farmers to grow a cash crop. (Maley, 2018) Farmers cultivated the drug either under coercion or due to economic incentives and lack of alternatives. There was no deliberate policy based on international demand. (Rubin, 1995). Internal demand grew. Government criminal elites only captured the Afghan state in 1992, when warlords started entering the government as legitimate actors. (Rubin, 1995). It was not international demand for drugs that turned Afghanistan into a narco-state, although it played a role. (Dorronsoro, 2005).

The third theory is that drug producers actively penetrate and corrupt parts of the government, effectively taking over decision-making processes. This was not the case in Afghanistan for the majority of the Soviet-Afghan War. Warlords that oversaw drugs empires did enter government in 1992, but they fought the state before this. (Malejacq, 2019). This theory is unable to explain the rise of drug production before 1992. Moreover, the formation of a government was guided by the UN. (Rubin, 1995). The state did not respond to the production of drug because it could not. It did not accommodate it. (Rubin, 1995). Therefore, is not correct to say that corruption caused Afghanistan to become a narco-state.

The first theory most accurately reflects the state of Afghanistan during the 20th century. (Maley, 2018) The second theory also has some merit. Before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, other countries were producing opium. (McCoy, 2003) As their opium production fell, Afghanistan's opium production rose. This accurately reflects the political economy of drugs. (McCoy, 2003). The third theory does not explain the situation in Afghanistan accurately, as the state did not have the power to make decisions during 1980-

Indicators of the failed state in Afghanistan

The first mechanism that could indicate this failed state is the loss of state power. Weber defines states as entities that can make binding rules for their population within a determined geographical area. The state has a monopoly on violence, which it can use to enforce these rules. (Weber, 1946) This monopoly is essential because it guarantees the state has territorial control and supreme authority. As a result, the state is the highest authority to the citizenry. This authority must be rooted in legitimacy. Without this, it cannot enforce its rules. (Weber, 1946) The politicians of a state are moderators and users of that violence and must therefore be rational. Lastly, the state must be a highly efficient bureaucracy. This bureaucracy administers laws effectively, collects taxes, and manages resources. (Weber, 1946) These are the powers of the state. A state that cannot carry out these tasks is by definition a failed state.

In this Weberian definition, Afghanistan was a failed state. It was not a state, but a loosely defined territory occupied by several groups both Lieven and Dupree define as tribes. None of these groups was particularly fond of the state. (Lieven, 2013). This has been described as the tribal model. (Rubin, 1995). Tribalism occurs in non-literate societies "when kinship replaces government and guarantees men and women born into a specific unit a functioning set of social, economic and political rights and obligations." (Dupree 1980, p.659). Forced integration into the contemporary state system by the British resulted in the traditionalism and localism prevalent in Afghanistan. (Rubin, 1995). That Afghanistan is a failed state according to Western standards is thus not surprising. Taxing the rural inhabitants of Afghanistan was not

possible. In addition to the low revenue it would generate, the heavily armed Pashtun could kill the tax collectors. Collecting these taxes would have likely necessitated an army. Raising this army would likely devastate and impoverish the countryside. It would be so expensive that the taxes it would raise would not pay back the costs of raising the army. (Lieven, 2021)

Tilly defines the state differently. He argues that states are protection rackets with legitimacy: state makers are criminals who supply protection from the violence they are capable of delivering. It is simply the scale on which they can use violence that differs. (Tilly, 2017). Legitimacy does not stem from those against whom violence is exercised; it stems from other authorities. Groups capable of using great violence are more likely to be seen as legitimate, as this maintains order and avoids conflict. The monopoly on violence makes the government's claim to protect its inhabitants from violence legitimate. (Tilly, 2017). The work of Rousseau is related to that of Tilly. Rousseau argued that the state is a protection against other people. The state is a construct. People living under its authority surrender their right to be violent in exchange for protection from violence This is the essence of the social contract. (Riley, 1982).

Legitimacy of government comes when citizens give up their right to violence to the state, leading to a state's monopoly on violence. Different social contract thinkers argued this monopoly on violence is guided by different things. Rousseau argued it is guided by a rule of law representing the general will. Hobbes argued it is guided by near absolute powers in monarchs. Locke argued it is guided by a government guaranteeing inalienable rights. They all agreed that without a monopoly on violence, the social contract would fall apart. (Riley, 1982) If a regime is legitimate, people must express their grievances in a way that allows the state to survive. Legitimacy means that people do not revolt when they express these grievances. (Petit, 2012). The only legitimation of the social contract is the lack of an efficient rebellion against the government. (Petit, 2012) In such a definition, the powers and legitimacy of the state are rooted in a monopoly on violence. A legitimate state with state power has a monopoly on violence. An explanation arguing that Afghanistan's failure as a state aided its transformation into a narco-state must then demonstrate that Afghanistan lacked state powers, a monopoly on violence, and legitimacy during this development. The state did not possess territorial control. (Malejacq, 2019). Non-state actors, particularly warlords, supplanted the state. The regions they governed could, to varying degrees, be regarded as proto-states. (Malejacq, 2019). This reinforces the failed state hypothesis.

The second indicator of the failed state is the failure to influence the daily lives of Afghans. The state should be an order, an impersonal entity that guarantees all those existing within it a continuous, persistent sphere of activity adapted to their day-to-day needs. (Dusza, 1989). Foreign aid allowed the state of Afghanistan to exist even without influencing the day-to-day lives of Afghans. The state lacked legitimacy. (Lieven, xx). Foreign aid allowed the state to operate without taxing the population and without setting up the structures needed to tax the population. The state never did anything for the average Afghan. Most Afghans in the countryside never encountered the state. (Rubin, 1995). As a result, the bureaucracy and state apparatus never embedded itself in Afghan society, at least not beyond the cities. This is in direct conflict with Weberian state ideals.

Between 1989 and 1996, Afghanistan had no bureaucracy capable of effectively influencing the day-to-day lives of its citizenry. A majority of citizens did not wish for the state to interfere with their affairs. They did not accept the state as the authoritative institution in their lives. (Rubin, 1995). A notable exception is the judiciary. The judiciary was accepted due to its religious authority, but the state was unable to effectively resolve conflicts or organize the judiciary. (Rubin, 1995). Rural inhabitants of Afghanistan lacked a formalized central authority or legal system. Communities were often small and led by a religious figure, not governed by a

state-appointed public servant. Conflict resolution was an essential mechanism for conflict resolution. (Rubin, 1995) Due to the inflow of weapons during the Soviet War almost every male group had access to military-grade weapons, which escalated feuds these groups had had for decades and for which there were ritualized forms of resolution, from bar fights to full-blown conflicts. (Rubin, 1995). The state has never been able to penetrate society like other modern states have been able to. As such they did not feature in everyday life even before the Soviet-Afghan War. (Rubin, 1995) .

During and after the Soviet-Afghan War, the state did not feature in everyday life. On the contrary, foreign aid to mujahideen commanders deepened the divide between groups and allowed these warlords to replace the state. This foreign aid helped the country develop into a narco-state. The pipelines through which the foreign aid was brought into Afghanistan were also used to transport drugs out of the country. (Rubin, 1995). Foreign aid allowed the mujahideen to become independent of the villages from which they hailed. This caused a separation between the mujahideen and these villages. When foreign aid was cut off in 1992, these armed veteran fighters needed a different source of income. A violent civil war broke out. (Rubin, 1995). This civil war further facilitated the rise of the narco-state, as many mujahideen continued fighting under a different banner, including that of the Taliban, or started cultivating drugs. After over a decade of dependence on foreign aid, there were few other options. (Rubin, 1997). As such, foreign aid was an essential mechanism in Afghanistan's development into a narco-state, through both the active facilitation of the drug trade and the dependence it fostered on this foreign aid. (McCoy, 2003) Due to foreign aid, the absence of the Afghan state in Afghanistan's countryside became even more pronounced. Afghans relied on warlords, who in turn relied on foreign aid. If they could not rely on a warlord, they relied on opium trade or agriculture. (Rubin, 1995)

Loss of state power and the failure to influence the daily lives of inhabitants are linked, but not the same. State power is the ability to administer taxes, make and enforce laws, and have an efficient bureaucracy. (Weber, 1964) The absence of the state means that the state is not providing education, judicial rulings or healthcare to the people. In the Afghan context, this is due to foreign aid filling this role. (Rubin, 1995) The two mechanisms are tied to the debate on how to measure state power. State power can be measured by what the state produces or by how the state functions (Manning & Holt, 2014) States, as understood by Tilly and Weber, are measured by their capacity for violence. This is linked to the rise of warlords. The ability to influence the daily lives of Afghans, through education, healthcare and the judiciary is linked to foreign aid. This foreign aid was responsible for education, food security, the resources of the military. (Rubin, 1995). This meant that the functioning of the state was dependent on foreign aid, and as soon as this stopped, the state collapsed.

Data collection

If the theory that the breakdown of the state in Afghanistan led to the development of the narco-state holds, a positive correlation between the production of opium (measured in tonnes of opium cultivated) and state performance should exist.

There are two problems with this initial approach. Operationalizing a process like state breakdown or buildup is a complex task. One can measure procedures, output, autonomy and capacity. (Fukuyama, 2013). According to Fukuyama, a two-dimensional approach, including capacity and autonomy approaches, is the most useful. The World Bank uses this approach, with slight adjustments, to measure the strength of central agencies. (Manning & Holt, 2014)

However, Fukuyama specifically speaks of the executive branches and their bureaucracies. Afghanistan was severely lacking in this regard. (Rubin, 1995).

Second, the trade in drugs is illegal and thus hard to measure. Estimates and official figures are not always accurate. The drug trade is an international business. While the cultivation of poppy happens in Afghanistan, the refinement into heroin and sale often occurs outside of the country. (Peters, 2009). Both the illegality and the segmentation of the production make accurately measuring the impact of the drug trade complex.

As such, this paper will use literature on Afghan state formation, as well as research from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other organizations on drug production in Afghanistan, both during 1989-1996 and later. For the period between 1989-1996, there are only a few accurate records on the sale and production of opium and heroin. It was not a top priority. This includes the American agencies that oversaw the transfer of funds to Pakistan's ISI (Peters, 2009). This is why the economic section uses data from later years. It will look at both the state power and the presence of the state.

Empirical findings

a. Loss of state power

The modern state of Afghanistan was established with foreign aid from the British. It was established as a buffer state to protect the British Empire against the Russian Empire in a conflict called the 'Great Game' (Dorransoro, 2003). The British wanted to protect their trade interests in British India, while the Russians were interested in expansion into Central Asia. The British fought three wars with the Afghans and won the second and third wars decisively. Still, they granted Afghanistan sovereignty in 1918. (Dorransoro, 2005). The British abandoned Afghanistan in 1919. They found the country hard to rule. The USSR and the USA came to share that opinion during the thirty years of conflict they endured on Afghan soil, which contributed to the myth of the 'Graveyard of Empires'. (Fergusson & Hughes, 2019). But from its inception, the Afghan state was a superimposed structure established by and run with foreign aid. This is one of the reasons it never gained the legitimacy or transformed into a modern state. (Maley, 2018).

A lack of funds and the absence of mechanisms to impose taxes made establishing and maintaining a sophisticated bureaucratic apparatus impossible. Government presence in the countryside was almost non-existent, and the state was dependent on a Kabul elite for governance. (Dorransoro, 2005) This created an isolated state lacking legitimacy and control over the everyday lives of people in the country. As a result, some regions functioned autonomously. (Malejacq, 2019) Due to this centralized rule, tribal and religious leaders were excluded from government, despite their influence (Dorransoro, 2005). Additionally, the state could not establish a monopoly on violence. Almost every male in Afghanistan owned a weapon, and the state lacked the resources to enforce its will beyond suppressing organized movements of resistance. (Rubin, 1995) The state failed to establish a right to private property and also lacked the fiscal base to undertake developmental programs, as was the case with states in South Asia. Despite developments in Kabul, the countryside remained rural. (Roy, 2020) Afghanistan had no private industries with taxable income. It never developed them, either. (Malejacq, 2019) The state lacked legitimacy due to its ethnically divided population and the communist rules imposed by the Soviet Union. These rules, which completely ignored Afghan customs and religious law, further eroded the legitimacy of the Afghan state. (Lieven, 2021)

Afghanistan has never been a Weberian state. In a Weberian state, the state is a set of offices governed by established rules. Power in this state is depersonalized, an office (Dusza, 1989). The Afghan state never managed to extend its power beyond the cities before 1979. As a result, power in the countryside was never tied to an office. Power was tied to people. (Malejacq, 2019)

As a result, politics were not professionalized. A professional political and bureaucratic class never emerged. This led to a parliament with widely varying interests and an overrepresentation of landowners. These landowners did not have to work and could therefore afford to engage in politics. Unsurprisingly, policies often favoured them. Corruption was rampant. (Dorransoro, 2005). There were no peasants in parliament, and it had no strategy to reach rural people. Everything depended on the ability of actors in Kabul to control institutions. In addition, the representative system was ineffective. When the quota for votes was not met, legislation could not be adopted. The king could also refuse to ratify a law. These mechanisms together resulted in low turnout during elections. In the 1974 election, 10% of those eligible voted. (Dorransoro, 2003). This was an indicator of the state's low procedural strength.

Another indicator of the Afghan state's low procedural strength was the number of coups it endured. These coups were reliant on the support of the military. Because the Soviet Union trained Afghan army officers, the influence of these army officers was significant. (Rubin, 1995). Even so, they did not participate directly in either Daoud's successful coup in 1973, which made the country a one-party state, or the 1978 Saur Revolution, which made the PDPA, a socialist, Soviet-aligned party, the sole party governing Afghanistan. (Rubin, 1995) The 1973 Revolution had repercussions for leadership in the country. The law in the Afghan countryside depended heavily on customs, and local leaders had always enjoyed significant autonomy. When the PDPA attempted to implement widely unpopular socialist policies that upended these social structures, the countryside revolted. In their reforms, there was no consideration for the conservative, state-averse and religious population outside the cities. This is also an example of their procedural weaknesses, as the state failed to implement policy autonomously or effectively.

As a response to these revolts, the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979. When it did, religious authorities declared jihad against the Soviets, and local mujahideen fought them. These groups were often small and loosely organized. (Rubin, 1995). As their resources grew, they became increasingly independent from local villages. They received sophisticated weaponry from abroad and training in Pakistani training camps. This sometimes included training from allied special forces. (Rubin, 1995). Command over these men and resources increased the power of commanders and decreased Afghanistan's state power. In 1986, the CIA supplied the mujahideen with Stingers, a sophisticated surface-to-air anti-aircraft missile. At the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, some commanders commanded large units of men with sophisticated weaponry and, in some cases, sophisticated training. (Rubin, 1995). Even so, there was no hierarchical control in those groups: local commanders sought an alliance with the groups in Afghanistan that received weapons. Bigger coalitions were usually temporary (Rubin, 1995).

During the Soviet-Afghan War, mujahideen commanders expanded their personal power through access to foreign aid. They undermined the procedural strength of the Afghan state by establishing courts, taxes, and militias, transforming these commanders into warlords. (Malejacq, 2019) "Warlords are political entrepreneurs with a proven ability to organize violence and control violence, who exert and transform authority across different spheres (ideological, economic, military, social and political) and at different levels of political affairs (local, national, and international). As such, warlords remain first and foremost powerful individuals." (Malejacq,

p.4). They are the principal suppliers of justice in their region. As such, warlords are a direct threat to the state power of the Weberian state. The development of warlords in Afghanistan does not prove the loss of state power in Afghanistan, however. As stated earlier, the state in Afghanistan never had state power. Warlords in Afghanistan became threats to state power because they became heads of militia hailing from different villages. These villages governed themselves before the Soviet invasion and were now engaged in jihad under a single commander (Malejacq, 2019)

Warlords are the consequence of state failure, taking advantage of a disintegrating central authority (Malejacq, 2019). They are defined by their relationship to the state. Their existence and ability to organize violence are a direct symptom of the failing Weberian state. A warlord is not a warlord solely because he commands a certain amount of territory or men, receives foreign funding, or because he is capable of rallying groups of voters behind him; a warlord is a warlord because they can exert levels of control locally, nationally, and internationally. (Malejacq, 2019).

The legitimacy of the state or those supplying governance is not necessarily determined by the people it rules over, but by other states capable of delivering violence to them. (Tilly, 2017) Tilly’s theory of state formation argues that European states became states because rulers who were more efficient at organizing violence, which included raising armies, collecting taxes, and building administrative capacity, outcompeted other rulers. This competition led to centralization under a single ruler. (Tilly, 2017) It also led to the rise of the bourgeoisie as a trading class. (Tilly, 2017). Both these elements cannot be realized in Afghanistan, due to the opposition to dictators and the drugs the merchant class trades in. Warlords actively occupy the political space that is needed for these developments. (Malejacq, 2019)). As long as these warlords are around, there will be no Weberian state.

Warlords do not exist parallel to the state, nor necessarily in opposition to it. They are entrenched in society because the services they can facilitate make them indispensable. Warlords will adapt and co-exist with the institutions meant to replace them because “they represent alternative forms of authority that are well suited to certain circumstances (at times better suited than states) and will not disappear under the increasing pressure of state centralization.” (Malejacq, 2019, p.20).

The typology developed by Malejacq to describe the Afghan warlords is useful when we discuss the relationship between the state and these warlords. It

Table 5

A typology of political orders in areas of weak and failed statehood.

Table 1. A typology of political orders in areas of weak and failed statehood

		State resources	
		Low	High
Warlord resources	High	Regional authority <i>(1990s northern Afghanistan)</i>	Parallel authority <i>(post-2001 Afghanistan)</i>
	Low	Fragmented authority <i>(1990s southern Afghanistan)</i>	Consolidating authority <i>(projected Afghanistan)</i>

Note: from “Introduction”, R. Malejacq, In *Warlord Survival: the delusion of state building in Afghanistan* (p. 25), 2019, Cornell University Press. Copyright 2019 by Cornell University Press.

In this typology, political order is defined by comparing the power of warlords and the state. In Afghanistan between 1979 and 2001, the state never had access to abundant resources. Warlords’ access to resources differed between regions. Only the projected state of Afghanistan, has the power to defeat local warlords and centralize power to become a Weberian state. (Malejacq, 2020)

The state of Afghanistan between 1979 and 2001 lacked legitimacy, a functioning bureaucracy, and a monopoly on violence. It allowed warlords to take control after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. It did not have state power. Foreign aid and income from the drug trade helped warlords expand their power and be more effective against the Soviets. Their increased capacity deteriorated the state further and allowed it to receive more foreign aid. This spiral eventually led to proto-states led by warlords. This was especially visible in the North. (Malejacq, 2019). The presence of proto-states is the clearest sign of state power loss in Afghanistan.

The number of mujahideen fighters and the amount of territory these mujahideen controlled rose as the Afghan-Soviet War lasted. It supports the hypothesis that the narco-state developed as the power of warlords and the number of mujahideen they commanded grew. (Malejacq, 2019) Their influence peaked in 1993, a year after the end of the Soviet and USA foreign aid programs. As the mujahideen grew more powerful, Afghan opium production increased. After 1993, the mujahideen started losing territory and power to the Taliban. It lost fighters to the Taliban as well. (Dorronsoro, 2003).

When the Soviet-Afghan War ended, the fighting did not stop. As the last Soviet troops retreated from Afghanistan in 1989, an interim Afghan government was set up under Najibullah, the former chief of the Afghan Secret Service (KHAD). A civil war immediately broke out between several mujahideen factions and the government. The interim government secured the support of local minority groups with Soviet aid. The regime survived for some time, despite a coup in 1990 that nearly killed Najibullah (Rubin, 1995). The government only attempted to control the vital roads and the capital, ceding control of the rest of the country to warlords. (Maley, 2018). It tried to negotiate with the countryside, offering money, power, and titles to local commanders if they could ensure the roads remained open. (Rubin, 1995). The state under Najibullah still did not have state power. It had no monopoly on violence, no ability to set taxes, and no efficient bureaucracy. It lacked procedural power and could not improve outcomes for Afghans. (Dorronsoro, 2005)

The USA and Saudi Arabia supplied 1,300,000,00 USD worth of conventional weapons after the Soviets retreated in 1989, expecting the civil war to be over quickly. The mujahideen launched an attack at Jalalabad in 1989 and expected a decisive victory on the government troops of Najibullah. (Rubin, 1995) It was not. The battle of Jalalabad was a decisive victory for the government troops instead, due to poor planning and the lack of coordination between several groups of mujahideen. It did prove the dependence of the Afghan government on Soviet foreign aid. Food, fuel and weapons delivered by the Soviets were essential for the survival of the regime under Najibullah and the continued resistance against the mujahideen. (Rubin, 1995) When the Soviets cut off this aid in 1992, the government swiftly fell. It also shows the lack of state power.

Massoud and Hekmatyar, mujahideen warlords, along with Dostum, who fought for Najibullah, were the only commanders with sufficient mobile troops to assault the capital

following the retreat of the Soviet Union in 1989. (Rubin, 1995). However, Hekmatyar hated Massoud. Even before the Soviets retreated, Massoud and Hekmatyar frequently fought. Hekmatyar developed a reputation for attacking the forces of other mujahideen commanders. He did this so often that there were doubts in Washington D.C about his loyalty. (Coll, 2005) Additionally, Hekmatyar was the preferred client of Pakistan's ISI until they shifted their support to the Taliban. (Coll, 2005) Tomsen claims that the ISI hired Hekmatyar in 1990 to govern Afghanistan per Pakistani interests (Tomsen, 2013). This would explain his antagonistic attitude towards other warlords. It also makes sense, given the amount of foreign aid that Hekmatyar received. A foreign nation deciding who'd lead the country exemplifies the absence of state and procedural power in Afghanistan.

Despite attempts to prevent bloodshed, Hekmatyar attacked Kabul in 1992. He had refused to enter negotiations, despite a request from Massoud. Heavy fighting broke out in the streets of Kabul. It devastated the city. The state did not intervene because it could not, underlining the power of the warlords and the men fighting under them (Rubin, 1997) When the regime of Najibullah fell, society was too fractured to build a new regime. Several powerful players built their alternative states themselves as a result. (Rubin, 1995) They had the means and the manpower to deliver violence to each other, the state, and the people they ruled over. (Malejacq, 2019). They had a monopoly of violence in the territory they ruled over and had legitimacy from its inhabitants. They did not have highly efficient bureaucracies, but the Council of the North, with highly educated Jamiat officers and no tribal rivalries, approached a state closely. This proto-state had a secret service, civilian institutions, and even a welfare system to guarantee that the economically productive population would not flee the area. Massoud led these commanders in the northeast of the country. (Malejacq, 2019). It was the ultimate confirmation of the absence of state power. The state could not produce outcomes.

Loss of state power and the effect on the development of the narco-state

The political economy of opium is tied to the loss of state power and the rise of warlords.

Due to the absence of the state and the absence of state power, no Afghan farmer could be stopped from poppy even before the Soviet-Afghan War. It lacked the manpower and legitimacy to forbid the Afghan farmer anything. Combined with the economic incentives for the cultivation of poppy and the detestation of agriculture, a number of Afghans resorted to the cultivation of opium. (UNODC, 2004). Opium was part of an economic system and could be paid with. (Byrd & Ward, 2004). It also kept its value and could be used to store value,. (UNODC, 2004)

Warlords encouraged the cultivation of poppy. By the end of the Soviet-Afghan War, the control of warlords over the territory in which poppy was cultivated assured their intimate involvement. Opium was a key revenue source. (Coll, 2005). For example, Hekmatyar governed Helmand province, the drug capital of Afghanistan. Hekmatyar was "the only leader to exploit the opium profits systematically as a basis for a hierarchically organized party and conventional army" (Rubin, p.257, 1995). Hekmatyar did not govern Helmand by himself. Mullah Nasim, one of the most powerful warlords in the country, demanded that poppy was cultivated on half the fertile land in Helmand. He castrated and killed those who did not obey this directive. (McCoy, 2003). Warlords also taxed opium. Opium cultivation and transport across the border were important revenue streams. (Goodhand, 2008)

The power of these warlords increased as the agricultural economy was destroyed. The elites that had built their power on this agricultural economy were weakened, which paved the way for warlords. (Malejacq, 2019) Food production fell by half to two-thirds during the Soviet-Afghan War. For several months out of the year, Afghans had to rely for food on aid or cash

purchases at high prices (Rubin, 2000). Such a situation created tremendous incentives for cash-producing activities, mainly smuggling of consumer goods and opium growing. As early as 1987, roads became more secure, and trade and humanitarian assistance that had previously travelled by pack animal over mountain trails could now go by truck (Rubin, 2000). This increased the drug trade. (Rubin, 2000),

Warlords were able to fill the power vacuum after the retreat of the Soviet troops and the fall of the Najibullah regime in 1992 through poppy cultivation. After the regime fell, inter-faction fighting intensified and gangs roamed the streets of Kabul as warring parties fought for command over the seat of government. (Malejacq, 2019) Their power, dependent on foreign aid before the fall of the Najibullah regime, came from the ability to take care of their people. (Malejacq, 2019). Cultivating opium, which yielded high profit, was easy to store and grew well in the Afghan climate, helped them achieve this. Opium helped them gain political power, as it helped them maintain their support base. (Malejacq, 2019) The drug trade became institutionalized. As roads became more secure, the drug trade revived, becoming the premier source of cash after the retreat of the Soviets (Rubin, 2000). Warlords became dependent on the drug trade for income. As warlords became entrenched in the state system, so did the drug trade. (Malejacq, 2019). Drug production generates high profits, and the risks of capture and arrest are relatively small when compared to the potential profits (Shelly, 2014).

While warlords are an important part of the development of the narco-state in Afghanistan, they would never have gotten so powerful if the Afghan state had been present. Due to the influx of foreign aid from the USA and its allies, warlords and other non-state actors were able to bypass the state on an unprecedented scale. “Khans feed the people” is an age-old adage in Afghanistan. (Malejacq, 2019)

b. Absence of the state

Afghanistan did not establish its own borders. Foreign aid made Afghanistan a state in 1918. (Dorransoro, 2003). Foreign aid allowed the state of Afghanistan to survive throughout the 20th century. Afghanistan was an agricultural country at the beginning of the 20th century and remained an agricultural country for most of the 20th century. Its inhabitants were mostly dependent on pastoralism or agriculture. This was unsuccessful, as Afghanistan is only partly arable and water-poor. A high birth and death rate kept the country thinly populated throughout the 20th century. (Roy, 2020) Additionally, there was almost no agricultural development. Localized famines were a regular occurrence. (Dorransoro, 2005). Afghanistan remained an isolated nation that had slow development between 1920 and 1945. The state occasionally put down revolts (Maley, 2018). The state failed to improve the lives of its citizens and their outcomes.

After World War II, Afghanistan increasingly relied on foreign aid. In the 1960s, it accounted for over 40% of the state budget. (Haq, 1996) During these years, the Soviet Union aided Afghanistan heavily, first through foreign aid and afterwards through the purchase of its gas. The budget was mainly made up of gas sales and foreign aid. (Haq, 1996). This aid was used to pay for projects such as infrastructural programs and several foreign departments in Afghan universities. (Malejacq, 2019). There was some development of the cities, but the majority of the population remained dependent on agriculture. In the 1970s, 85% of the population was still dependent on agriculture. In the cities, there was light modernization, with women being allowed into positions of power. (Rubin, 2000)

Soviet foreign aid was used to set up an education system in the sixties. This led to some economic development and produced a well-trained young elite. There was also relative freedom in the press and academia. (Malejacq, 2019). This young elite rarely found jobs, especially if they were minorities. Success after education depended on the personal connections a student had when graduating, not the qualification itself. Students came to the city to study and could not go back. Salaries were terrible. They were highly educated and stuck in a country with no place for their ambition. The majority of the population was illiterate. This also troubled young army officers, who were kept from important positions. This led to a radical left-wing intelligentsia. (Dorrnsoro, 2005) As a result, the cities where these young people were trained, especially Kabul, became hotbeds for radicalization. (Malejacq, 2018) . The state was unable to offer security even to those that it educated. It failed to produce outcomes for them.

Due to Soviet aid, taxes that would have been highly unpopular were unnecessary. This aid was not free of consequences. The Cold War and subsequent investments from the USSR led to an increasing Soviet influence in the Afghan government. As a result, Afghanistan adopted a Soviet-style state-led developmental model. (Dorrnsoro, 2005) This model was focused on economic development through industrialization. It included policies such as the development of state farms, industrialization of land, redistribution of land and the expansion of education, health services, civil liberties, and democracy. Due to heavy Soviet involvement, the state lacked agency over its development (Malejacq, 2019). Further divides in the population due to ethnic diversity, religious division and poor infrastructure complicated ruling Afghanistan. (Rubin, 1995). -This meant that the Afghan state was not present in the lives of any Afghan. Soviet foreign aid led to some state presence in the cities and none in the countryside. The state was already absent from the lives of most Afghans before the Soviet-Afghan War. Again, the Afghan state fails to produce outcomes or to independently and efficiently implement policy.

Due to the dependence on foreign aid, the Soviet Union's invasion led to the collapse of the Afghan state. It also fragmented the population. When the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, the USA and its allies started giving aid to the mujahideen. The ideological reasoning was straightforward. Trapping the Soviet Union in a guerrilla war against a mobile enemy on inhospitable terrain during the Cold War would be an ideal tactical situation for the United States. Indeed, they hoped the USSR would invade Afghanistan. This way, they could ' give them their own Vietnam'. This rhetoric led two consecutive US presidents, Carter and Reagan, to the decision to arm the mujahideen, although Carter was only president for a few months before being beaten by Reagan. (Hayden, 2021)

The Soviet Union was well aware of the danger of a proxy war with the United States and the history of other great powers occupying Afghanistan and actively avoided the invasion of Afghanistan. Their hand was forced by a coup d'état of Afghan political parties, disillusioned with the current regime. They were ideologically different but willing to join forces (Maley. 2018). They tried to force a top-down revolution. Most Afghans woke up the morning of the revolution and were surprised to hear there had been a coup d'état. The people soon revolted. When the army also revolted against the revolution in March 1979, the state requested support from the USSR. The chairman sent back a reply that would be prophetic.

“The deployment of our forces in the territory of Afghanistan would immediately arouse the international community and would invite sharply unfavourable multipronged consequence ... I would again like to underline that the question of deploying our forces has been examined by us from every direction; we carefully studied all aspects of this action and concluded that if our troops were introduced, the situation in your country would not only not improve, but would worsen. One cannot deny that our troops would have to fight not only with foreign aggressors but also with a certain number of your people. And people do not forgive such things.” (Maley, 2018,

p. 17). The chairman stepped down due to ill health a few months after this reply. In December 1979, the USSR invaded Afghanistan.

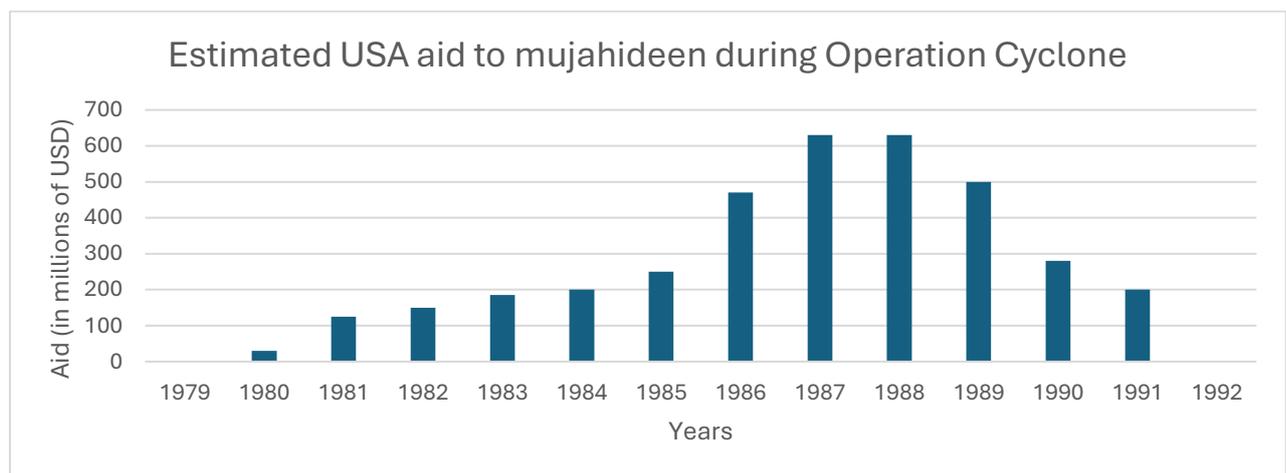
The USSR did not want to commit a large number of troops, eager to avoid the United States' mistake in Vietnam. The plan was to have USSR troops defend the distribution routes and train the Afghan army so that the Afghan army could do the fighting. The Afghan army was ill-equipped and underfed, however. (Dorrnsoro, 2005). Despite hoping to avoid overinvestment, the USSR invested almost 5,000,000,000 USD into Afghanistan annually. (Rubin, 1995). Despite hoping to limit their military presence in Afghanistan to six months, the USSR committed 100,000 troops in 1979 and had boots on the ground for nearly ten years. (Rubin, 1995)

As a result of the foreign aid the United States and its allies sent to Afghanistan, the Soviet-Afghan War became a proxy war between the USSR and the USA and its allies. Documents show that the United States' main criterion for mujahideen groups to receive foreign aid was to be good at killing Soviets. (Coll, 2005). While USA allies such as Saudi Arabia invested considerable sums of money into arming of the mujahideen, it was the USA that bore the brunt of the costs. Over 3,000,000,000 USD was funnelled into the country through a foreign aid pipeline. The money and resources were brought to Pakistan. From there they were dispersed by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). In Reagan's own words, the plan was simple: "We win and they lose" (Allen, 2000). It was named Operation Cyclone.

Billions of dollars were funnelled into Afghanistan Operation Cyclone (1979-1992). The investment of the USA into Afghanistan during 1979-1992 is graphed below. The positive relation between aid between foreign aid and drug production is weak. The significant amount of foreign aid in 1986 and 1987 does not correlate with increased drug production.

Table 5

Estimated USA aid to mujahideen during Operation Cyclone



Note: This graph is compiled from data in the book "Ghost Wars" by Steve Coll (2005).

Western aid was dispersed by the ISI mainly among what would later become known as the "Peshwar Seven". The Peshwar Seven consisted of seven groups of mujahideen: the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan (NIFA), Afghanistan National Liberation Front (ANLF), Movement of Islamic Revolution (HAR), traditionalist groups, and Hezb-I Islami Gulbuddin (HIG / Hezb), Hezb-I Islami Khulis (HIK / Hezb), Islamic Society of Afghanistan (JIA) , and the Islamic Union for

Freedom of Afghanistan (IUFA, political Islamist groups. (Rubin, 1995) The HIG and HIK were formed after Hezb split in 1989. (Rubin, 1995). Six groups received nearly all of the aid dispersed by the ISI. (Rubin, 1995). The seventh group, IUFA, mainly received aid from Saudi Arabia.

The Islamists got almost all of the American funds because they were the best at killing the Soviets. They served the USA's foreign policy goals the best. (Rubin, 1995). The Islamists also served Pakistani foreign policy goals the best. Pakistan subscribed to Islamism as its primary ideology. Hekmatyar was their primary client. (Coll, 2005). The USA was acutely aware of the anti-Western elements within the mujahideen groups receiving the majority of the funds. Specifically, the Western and Pakistani commitment to the openly anti-Western Hezb group, led by Hekmatyar, was questioned more than once by Massoud, who complained they were not doing any fighting. He said USA foreign aid was creating a monster of Frankenstein that it would have to deal with one day. (Maley, 2018). While the CIA claims it did not give more than between a fifth and a quarter of their funds to Hekmatyar, the private Saudi and Arab donations skewed the result heavily, with as much as 25,000,000 USD a month transferred to Afghan Islamists. McCoy claims that Hekmatyar received more than half of the funds the CIA sent to Afghanistan. He did not have strong popular support in the country. (McCoy, 2003)

By using ISI to distribute aid, the USA had plausible deniability on the international stage. It also served to warm the USA-Pakistan relations. (Rubin, 1995). Pakistan had two aims: a friendly regime in Kabul and a stable border region. In return for independence from the British in 1919, the Afghans had recognised the Durand line, the border between British India and Afghanistan. This border would later be the cause of conflict between Pakistan and Afghanistan, as it effectively cut the Pashtun population in the region in two. (Maley, 2018). With millions of Afghan refugees in camps in Pakistan, it was deemed unwise to arm a universal and unified resistance. Such a resistance could pose a serious threat to border security. They attempted to install a friendly regime in Kabul by primarily funding Islamist groups. (Rubin, 1995). Hekmatyar was their primary client. (Coll, 2005). Despite fears of a united Afghan front that could threaten Pakistan, there was no unified Afghan front of mujahideen groups when the war started. This united front did not develop during the Soviet-Afghan War either. This had three main causes.

First, the ISI did not demand the mujahideen groups receiving aid to have a social base inside the country. It distributed weapons to commanders according to Pakistan's political and military goals. Zia, the general in charge of Pakistan, had authority over every dollar and weapon that went into Afghanistan. He was focused on not letting the CIA run kingmaking operations, keeping the Afghan mujahideen divided. (Coll, 2005).

Second, the seven parties had widely differing ideologies. This ensured there would be no unified national Afghan leadership. (Rubin, 1995).

Third, the ISI actively undermined attempts by Afghan commanders to establish a unified resistance. Pakistan had concrete fears that a united Afghanistan would threaten the nation. The ISI explicitly excluded as criteria for the receipt of aid the extent of a party's political support among Afghans or its potential for establishing a stable government. (Rubin, 1995). It would actively weaken commanders who were not acting according to Pakistani priorities by supplying their rivals or subordinates. (Rubin, 1995). Even after the foreign aid providers started to demand that the seven parties they supplied weapons to receive those weapons, the ISI continued providing weapons to individual commanders. Due to the significant influx of arms, prices fell. Weapons were circulated, resold, or stashed. Commanders who received weapons had total control over their use. This further complicated the chaotic situation and hindered Afghan state-building. (Rubin, 1995).

When the USSR retreated in 1989, it maintained a high level of financial and material aid to the government until 1992. This made Afghanistan the 5th largest importer of weapons between 1986 and 1990. This aid constituted between 3-4,000,000,000 USD per year. (Rubin, 1995). After the USSR and USA cut off foreign aid, Afghanistan still received hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid between 1992 and 1996. Especially the Gulf states remained staunch donors, even as the influence of the Taliban grew. (Coll, 2005)

The failure of Afghanistan as a state, which aided its development into a narco-state, was aided by a precise and deliberate Pakistan policy. The USA was at best not interested in state-building and at worst actively worked against it. (Coll, 2005)

Absence of the state and its effect on the development of the narco-state.

Afghanistan's drug production was relatively minor until the 1950s, as the British did not encourage its production and there was minor demand outside of the country. (Haq, 1996) Opium was grown for domestic use. This changed in the mid-fifties, as Iran banned the cultivation of opium in 1955 following a rapidly growing number of addicts, with well over a million addicts in Iran in the fifties. (Haq, 1996). Afghan opium traffickers found it well worth the risk despite the death penalty on drug possession. (Haq, 1996) Western drug tourists in Kabul strengthened the ties with the European market until strict regulation in 1973 saw most of them depart. The drug trade was developing, but it was still relatively minor until the Soviet-Afghan War. (Haq, 1996)

During the Soviet-Afghan War

The Soviet-Afghan War changed the drug trade completely. Its impact cannot be overestimated. From 1978 to 1987, an average of 240 Afghans died every day. Countless violations of international law and war crimes were committed. Millions of Afghans were displaced. Of Afghanistan's 13,000,000 inhabitants before the war, over 6,000,000 lived abroad in 1990. (Maley, 2018). Rural Afghanistan was immensely impoverished. Over half the villages in the countryside were bombed. More than a third of all arable land was no longer cultivated. Irrigation systems failed, and livestock died. (Byrd & Ward, 2004). Due to the scorched earth policy of the Soviets, the rural economy collapsed. Agricultural products had been responsible for 30% of national exports. Rural inhabitants only produced what they survived on. (McDonald, 2007). Moreover, the wars of the past had always spared the fragile systems of agriculture, as the peoples in the mountains were dependent on pastoralism, orchards, and annual field crops to survive. Additionally, agricultural systems were already strained in the 1970s. The Soviet-Afghan War devastated these fragile systems. (McCoy, 2003). Foreign aid kept the Afghan state together during the Soviet-Afghan War. (Maley, 2018).

The political economy of opium is also tied to foreign aid and the absence of the state. Foreign aid allowed non-state actors to develop networks of drug trade. (Maley, 2018). Foreign aid could provide the funds for weapons, food, and other necessities. Armed groups cultivating drugs went from carrying single-shot rifles to automatic machine guns, wielding as much destructive power as government officials in either Pakistan or Afghanistan. (Haq, 1996). The state lacked the power to prohibit the drug trade. These factors strengthened drug networks. As a result, the majority of the world's heroin was cultivated and refined in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the Cold War. High-ranking officials in both countries were found to have ties to the drug trade, which prevented them from acting against the industry. (McDonald, 2007). This ties into the theory of criminal state capture (Andreas, 2011). Foreign aid allowed warlords to further solidify their position, which included their command over the drug trade. (Maley, 2018)

During the Soviet-Afghan War, the foreign aid pipeline into Afghanistan was important to the drug trade. Significant amounts of aid were smuggled into Afghanistan, sometimes by CIA officers with duffel bags full of cash, characterizing the haphazard nature of the operation. (Coll, 2005). Weapons and necessities were often transported in convoys. The cost of transportation could rise to 20 USD per kg. (McCoy, 2003) These convoys were sources of income for commanders and mujahideen. They were prone to corruption. Commanders could pretend to lose the weapons or underreport the amount transferred to the fighting forces and then resell these weapons. (Rubin, 1995). Foreign aid was a way to bypass the Afghan state. The Afghan state was unable to prevent this foreign aid pipeline, highlighting the weakness of its power. The weapons could be used to strengthen their positions, which indirectly strengthened the drug trade as well.

The transports also functioned as drug transports, as the empty crates that would have to be sent back could be filled with drugs. (Rubin, 1995). The CIA protected these supply lines, while the Pakistani Central Bank processed its profits. While the CIA did not directly profit from the drugs that the mujahideen sent into Pakistan and did not use the profits to fund its operations, they allowed the mujahideen to do so, directly involving themselves in the drug trade. (Coll, 2005). Opium was grown in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This opium was then refined into heroin in laboratories in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan. This heroin accounted for 60% of the USA demand (McCoy, 2003). The CIA, once it had decided that the mujahideen were partners in the fight against communism, allowed these mujahideen to cultivate and transport drugs with impunity. The impunity caused a surge in drug production in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Their support meant that the production and transport of drugs would remain unpunished. It gave the mujahideen immunity; their vans were never checked and important actors were never arrested. (McCoy, 2003). The CIA was never directly involved in handling opium. The counter-narcotics officers the USA had stationed in Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, were not allowed to interfere with the drug trade by the mujahideen. (McCoy, 2003). The CIA was fighting this war against the Soviets with an army that was financed by the drug trade, as it had done in Vietnam (McCoy, 2003)

The CIA was fully aware of the damage the Soviet-Afghan War was doing to the global population. Drug production rose massively and the effects were felt around the globe, including the USA. The number of heroin addicts and deaths due to heroin overdoses rose steadily as the war in Afghanistan wore on. In Congress, it was clearly articulated that the war on drugs would be sacrificed to win the Cold War. This was a part of a pattern shown earlier in Burma, Nicaragua and Colombia. (McCoy, 2003). The USA sacrificing the war on drugs for the Cold War turned Central Asia, specifically Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, into the epicentre of drug addiction. It has ruined millions of lives and destabilized the Middle East up to the present day. (Coll, 2005) Mujahideen commanders used the income from the drug trade, partially generated through these drug transports, to build up their capabilities. As an increasing amount of infrastructure got destroyed, the mujahideen leaned on drug profits more and more. For a significant number of poor people, poppy growing was not only the most profitable activity available but also the only way to meet their needs. (McDonald, 2007). Afghanistan only became the biggest producer of drugs in the world after the Western-backed mujahideen got involved. Without foreign aid, Afghanistan would likely not have become the premier producer of drugs (Maaß, 2011). “The influx of external funds contributed to the rapid monetization of the economy, and provided the start-up capital for commanders to begin investing in the production, processing and trafficking of opium.” (Goodhand, 2008, p.407)

After the Soviet-Afghan War

When foreign aid from the Soviet Union and the United States ended in 1992, mujahideen and the local population had to find a different way to sustain themselves. Not everyone succeeded. In 1992, up to 550,000 people in Kabul were still eligible for food coupons supplied by the Soviet Union. (Rubin, 1995). Both the amount of drugs traded and the land cultivated rose considerably after 1992. (Rubin, 1997). The drug trade and other illicit activities sustained Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghanistan War, together with interference and aid from foreign countries. While this war was raging, an entire generation grew up with limited education and no professions except fighting for the men and silence for the women. As a result, opium production increased. When the aid ended in 1992, Afghanistan had more weapons than Pakistan and India combined. (Rubin, 1995) The decision to abandon Afghanistan after the West had invested 1,500,000,000 USD into its destruction was a catastrophic failure. Without foreign or diplomatic support, a civil war broke out between factions of mujahideen. (Dorrnsoro, 2003) This led to destructive fighting in the capital and thousands of deaths. The instability also furthered the dependence on drug trade and gave drug lords the chance to increase their influence and production. (McCoy, 2003)

The civil war also led to the rise of the Taliban. The Taliban took control over a significant amount of territory during the civil war. They conquered Kandahar in 1994, Herat in 1995 and Kabul in 1996. (Maley, 2018). They did so with foreign aid from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and, according to some, the CIA. The USA has always denied direct links between the mujahideen and the CIA. Even so, the rise of the Taliban helped develop Afghanistan into a narco-state. (Rubin, 2000) When the movement first rose to prominence in 1994, they did not trade in opium. They traded in illegal and legal goods that were brought into Afghanistan duty-free per a trade agreement with Pakistan. These goods were then smuggled back into Pakistan, where they could be sold far cheaper than legal Afghan goods. This smuggling business was hindered by warlords that set up toll booths along the road. (Vanda Felbab-Brown, 2021) In response, the Taliban set up a one-toll system. The tolls gained from this system were invested in buying off opponents. Their original position was that drug use, production and trade were forbidden. The fear of reprisals halved the land opium was cultivated on in 1994. Prices shot up. They then came down when the Taliban kept its word. As the Taliban expanded towards Helmand, the largest drug-producing province in Afghanistan, they quickly understood the profit potential. As a result, the cultivation and trade in opium were allowed. Muslims did not use opium and its use remained forbidden. The Taliban heavily taxed the opium production and trade, which gave them capital and allowed the production of opium to expand. (McCoy, 2003). This explains the rise in price in the rest of the Taliban period.

The motives of the USA and its Western allies for these interventions are increasingly questioned. At best, this foreign aid enabled the mujahideen to transform Afghanistan into a narco-state. At worst, the CIA and its Western allies actively participated in and profited from this process. Afghanistan evolved into a narco-state following the foreign aid provided to the mujahideen from 1979 to 1992. After opium production fell significantly when the Taliban banned its cultivation in 2000, the USA created ideal conditions for the revival of opium production by invading Afghanistan in 2001. The most important players in the opium trade were all members of the Afghan government. (Scott, 2010) After the USA abandoned Afghanistan in 2021, the Taliban once again prohibited opium production. (Litmaye, 2023)

Conclusion

This thesis has analysed Afghanistan's development into the premier producer of opium worldwide. It has shown how the absence of legitimacy, bureaucracy and a monopoly on violence, as well as the presence of warlords and mujahideen fighting the Soviets, facilitated the

development of Afghanistan into a narco-state between 1989-1996. The failed state of Afghanistan, through the rise of non-state actors and the influx of foreign aid, has developed the Afghan state from a nearly drug-free nation to the world's top producer of heroin, among other drugs (UNODC, 2024)

Developing Afghanistan from a narco-state into a modern Weberian state is a herculean task. To integrate the entire government into society, establish a tax base, set up a bureaucracy, monopolize the right to violence, assert territorial control, defeat the contenders for power, which includes warlords and the Taliban, end the centuries-old conflict against the state and bridge the gaps between forms of Islam, ethnicities and the distance will not be easy. It would have been difficult with the full commitment of the United States and without mass cultivation of drugs. With no directive to have an effective drug policy and no commitment to state building in Afghanistan, some of the outcomes seen now could be argued to be inevitable. Significant amounts of cash and weapons, a fragmented society, and a territory suited for guerrilla warfare ultimately defeated the Soviets. After that, ethnic and religious cleavages, a weak state, disinterest in state building, and a lack of good counter-narcotic policies defeated the Americans. The moniker "graveyard of empires" was not earned solely because the country is hard to conquer. It is because it is hard to govern. (Fergusson & Hughes, 2019)

The failure of the Afghan state between 1989 and 1996, expressed in the absence of the state and the lack of state power, caused an increase in opium production. This thesis has shown that it could indeed have aided Afghanistan's development into a narco-state. This is visible through the increase in cultivation of and trade in opium in Afghanistan between 1989 and 1996. Warlords used foreign aid to buy weapons and further control opium-producing territories. They supplanted the Afghan state. The foreign aid pipeline was also used to smuggle drugs out of the country. The Afghan state lacked good procedures and the ability to produce good outcomes

The failure to build a state in Afghanistan has not only led to the production of tonnes of drugs in Afghanistan and its neighbouring states, it has also hurt millions of people in Afghanistan, given birth to a radical religious organization and created millions of refugees. The Taliban is in power now, after twenty years of American presence in Afghanistan. They have committed themselves to fighting against the cultivation of opium, at which they seem successful. Production has dropped by 95% in 2023. (Giommoni, 2024).

When USA foreign aid stopped in 1992, Operation Cyclone was considered a success. (Hayden, 2011). Afghanistan would prove to be a hotbed for terrorism. The terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, orchestrated by Osama Bin Laden, trained in a Pakistani training camp, veteran of the Soviet-Afghan War and leader of Al Qaida, a terrorist organization with ties to the CIA and founded after the Soviet-Afghan War, took place in 2001, 9 years after the end of Operation Cyclone. (Coll, 2005). Milton Bearden, the CIA station chief in Islamabad, recalled, "Did we really [care] about the long-term future of [Afghanistan]? Maybe not. As it turned out...we didn't" (Coll, 2005, p. 173).

This failure would lead the American invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. This operation, named Operation Enduring Freedom, would cost the United States of America trillions of dollars and thousands of American lives. (Mukhopadhyay, 2014). Operation Enduring Freedom would focus on destroying al-Qaeda's military capability and instituting regime change. Counternarcotics were not considered integral to the effort. (Felbab-Brown, 2013)

Developing the failed state of Afghanistan will remain a vital part of the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The Taliban are hard at work to gain recognition from international organizations

and governments and have already made considerable strides in the eradication of the drug economy. Maybe they can succeed where the Americans have failed.

For future research, investigating the failure of the state in similar countries to discover if the narco-state is a result of these factors could be interesting. Research on state building with a focus on countries that have seen a large influx of foreign aid and weapons could also be interesting.

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