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**COERCION, CASH-CROPS AND CULTURE:  
FROM INSURGENCY TO PROTO-STATE IN ASIA'S OPIUM BELT**

by

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June 2008

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a comparative study of conflict and opium in the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle, focusing in particular on Afghanistan-Pakistan and Burma. It takes a state building approach to analyze the formation and composition of opiate-funded “proto-states” in the two regions, with case studies on the Taliban and the United Wa State Party. Historic, political, ethnic and cultural factors are explored in relation to each region and proto-state case. The basic argument is that opium and opiate trade provided capital for the formation of basic state-like entities that conduct all the basic state-building activities as defined in the literature. What are often called “insurgent groups” are actually armies of proto-states. What are often called “insurgencies” are actually conflicts between infant states in areas that never contained nation-states. This paradigm suggests an alternate method to study these two areas: a method that emphasizes history and anthropology to understand the basic motivations and attributes of the proto-state actors.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Good strategy presumes good anthropology and good sociology.

- Bernard Brodie, *War and Politics* (New York: MacMillan, 1973), 332.

The bulk of the world's supply of opium, licit and illicit, comes from a "greater South Asian opium belt" that stretches from the remote hills of Southeast Asia, through India, all the way to the eastern edge of the Middle East. At the west end lies the Golden Crescent, consisting of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, which is currently by far the leading producer of the world's illicit opium supply. At the east end of this belt is the Golden Triangle, consisting of Burma, Thailand and Laos, an area infamous for illicit opium in the past and still the major producer of heroin and methamphetamines in East Asia. This production feeds a booming business: there are farmers, landowners, lab workers, precursor suppliers, security providers, tax collectors, logistics networks, distributors, and consumers in a network that spans the globe. The international illicit drug trade associated with opium and its products nets billions every year.

Asia's opium belt also hosts a great deal of political instability and poverty that is particularly strong among ethnic minority groups. In addition to drug problems, most of the states mentioned above have had to deal with multiple ethnic and ideological conflicts during the past 60 years. For example, in some of these areas, nominal central states, opposition parties, insurgent groups, and warlords vie for the control of large swaths of tribal territory rich in difficult terrain and adjacent to largely disregarded "international" borders. Many of these so-called non-state actors actually occupy territory and fund themselves in part through illicit trade in drugs and other commodities.

Why are these conflicts particularly stubborn and long-lived, especially in the former colonial "frontiers" that are now Afghanistan-western Pakistan and Burma?

Many in the international community consider these entities failing states,<sup>1</sup> an idea that assumes states actually existed in the first place. Many observers, particularly in the media, describe drugs as a main, if not the main cause. In fact, drugs are only part of the story. These conflicts are complex, as they possess deep historical and cultural contexts with periodical injections of external influence. To get at these more fundamental factors, the main research question of this thesis is: how do militias and insurgents create drug-funded proto-states within Afghanistan-Pakistan and Burma?

## A. IMPORTANCE

There are two major reasons why it is important to understand how illicit drug production helps form proto-states and their armies. First, illegal drugs are correlated with insecurity in Central, South and Southeast Asia, all regions in which the international community continues to have substantial military and developmental involvement. This insecurity ranges from the conflicts already mentioned, to criminal activities that feed off the trade, such as arms dealing and human trafficking. Confronting insurgents and criminals effectively means being able to disentangle different actors and their motivations, and understanding the context in which they live and operate. The question is often asked: “Which should we target—insurgents, drug production, traffickers, poverty?” Or are there underlying factors that are more important?

Secondly, and equally significant, is that the greater South Asian illegal drug trade supplies a large part of the world’s demand. The effects of illegal drug use are clear. Many countries in Asia, such as Pakistan, Iran and Thailand, have massive addict populations, over which hovers the additional specter of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). In developed countries like the United States, illegal drug use flourishes in troubled urban centers, adding another dimension to the already daunting problems of socio-economic decay. In response, powerful members of the international community have waged a century-long “War on

---

<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan, Pakistan and Burma are ranked 8, 12 and 14, respectively, out of the 60 worst states, in: *The Failed States Index 2007*, Fund for Peace and *Foreign Policy Magazine*, July/August 2007, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=3865&page=7](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3865&page=7) (accessed May 1, 2008).

Drugs.” This “war” has cost billions of taxpayer dollars in many different countries, particularly the United States, yet its efficacy remains widely debated.

## **B. PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESES**

The main research question leads to several significant sub-questions. The most important are: What is the definition of a proto-state? How do geography and socio-cultural characteristics of the population particular to the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle contribute to the formation of proto-states? What role does the opium business play in the formation of proto-states? What are the similarities and differences between these proto-states and conflicts in which they formed? And, what can we learn from comparisons across the two different regions?

The power of the states based in Kabul, Islamabad and Naypyidaw does not extend to certain areas controlled by fiercely independent ethnic groups traditionally organized in a feudal or tribal manner. Historically speaking, neither the British Empire nor any kingdom or empire predating it ever exercised sustained control of these areas either. The 60-year old international boundaries that cut arbitrarily through these areas, created when the British left, are for the most part just lines on a map.

At different periods since the colonialists’ departure, the tribes and fiefdoms of these areas have been involved in sustained conflicts. This study argues that the economics (in particular the drug economies) of these wars, fought on one side by armies (“insurgents” to the limited states based in the aforementioned cities) from these tribes and fiefdoms, created “proto-states” in both regions. More specifically, politically mobilized armies, with certain tribal, ethnic and feudal characteristics, built these entities based (to a significant extent) on capital from the taxation of opium production and transportation. To best “farm” the opium trade in this manner, insurgents needed to control the cash-crop producing territory. Being able to lay down the law and be recognized as the legitimate coercive force in a defined territory is at the very base of state building. Viewed from a long historical perspective, it is not far-fetched to say that the areas commonly called Afghanistan, Pakistan and Burma are still in the midst of a kind of “warring states” period (with Burma probably further along in the process).

By adopting this state-building perspective, moreover, one can begin to identify the basic elements of these opium-belt “proto-states,” to provide a definition. Farmers are the human capital. Militias provide both the means of coercion and extraction. (Sometimes farmers and militiamen are one in the same.) Tribal structure provides lines of communication, trade contacts, and sometimes-hierarchical organizational structure. Landowners and militia leaders (who may also be tribal leaders, religious leaders, warlords or a combination of the three) provide the capital and management. This will be the working definition for the proto-state.

This thesis also argues that the motivations of the various actors within the proto-state are tied to the evolution of its structure. Although dealt with in greater detail later, a basic narrative using terminology from the “greed and grievance” literature (discussed in the literature review) follows. The building of an opium-belt proto-state begins when an actor (tribe or ethnic group, or a coalition of such groups) attempts to establish its own political entity, usually in an impoverished “homeland” type of space, by mobilizing support through ideology, religion, ethnicity or a combination of the three. It usually does this due to a grievance it has with the weak central state, which is really just a better-developed proto-state itself, or due to ethno-nationalism (creed), or both. Though the actor may receive outside support, it is not a proto-state until it begins to use its own scant natural resources or industry to build its own forms of coercion (militias) within certain boundaries, which it does to avoid being defeated by other actors, such as other proto-states or even states. Geographically and historically, the poor farmers of the proto-states are familiar with opium-poppo production. Either due to the “need” to survive, force, high demand, or a combination of these three, the farmers increase production. Due both to high demand and illicit status, the production of opium and its derivatives is a lucrative way to help fund a militia or army, and in some limited cases, actually provide services to the population. A theme common across both regions is that the leaders of these groups or proto-states may succumb to “greed,” and attempt to profit personally from the drug trade, which sometimes leads to fragmentation of the groups or even the proto-state.

Some proto-states with substantial drug revenues, however, have managed to survive in both regions for a prolonged period. These proto-states' relative coherence ensures that their armies are more difficult to defeat. Throughout this entire process, cultural characteristics play a very important role, which will be brought out in later chapters. The Afghanistan-Pakistan and Burma regions both offer examples of long-lasting and resilient militias (insurgents) for the very reason that proto-states exist therein, even if many of the details of the regions' respective conflicts differ. Case studies of the current Taliban movement, and the United Wa State Party/Army (UWSP/A) clearly illustrate this phenomenon. In addition, these two groups are of particular interest to the United States: the Taliban, because it is engaged in armed conflict with the U.S. and its allies, and is accused of providing a safe haven for Al Qaeda; the UWSP/A, because eight of its top leaders were indicted on "methamphetamine and trafficking charges" by a U.S. Federal Grand Jury in 2005, and the U.S. government has named the UWSA a "Drug Kingpin."<sup>2</sup>

### **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

As this study draws upon a variety of theoretical viewpoints, the literature review is broken down into three parts: the state-building literature, the "states within states" literature, and the causes of civil war literature. Each part discusses the relevancy of the literature to the topics of this thesis.

#### **1. State-building Literature**

For the purposes of this thesis, the state-building literature is applied to developments among the insurgent groups rather than the central state. It is useful for both defining the proto-state, and determining to what extent the activities of insurgent groups have actually formed proto-states. In this literature, Tilly espouses the most prevalent theory (based on a European model), which is that war makes states.<sup>3</sup> Many

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<sup>2</sup> Drug Enforcement Administration News Release, January 24, 2005, <http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/states/newsrel/nyc012405.html> (accessed April 15, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States: A. D. 990-1992* (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 1993), 20.

scholars support this, such as Rasler and Thompson, who claim a quantitative correlation between war and state building.<sup>4</sup> A subcomponent of this approach is Tilly's claim that war making and state making are the same as organized crime, in that "coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs" perpetrate the activities.<sup>5</sup> Schwartz, in agreement, points out that these "mafias" struggled for control of "microeconomies," with the end result being "mercantilism."<sup>6</sup> Also at the core of the European model is sociologist and economist Max Weber's definition of the state, particularly his discussion of the state having the "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."<sup>7</sup>

Alternative viewpoints tend to argue for a more case-particular approach and cite non-Europe centric cases. For example, Migdal examines developing countries and concludes that "social structure" is a powerful determining factor in state building. Forming "cohesive states" is extremely difficult in "societies with fragmented social control."<sup>8</sup> Herbst examines the development of states in the "absence of war," using African states as a case study, and concludes that they will remain weak because they do not have the incentive of survival that major conflict breeds. Therefore, one cannot hope that they will simply develop into strong states in the European model.<sup>9</sup> Maroya takes an even more unconventional approach, arguing that in former colonial frontier areas, the traditional state-building process needs to be entirely rethought. Citing Afghanistan and Burma among other examples, he notes that in these frontier areas

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<sup>4</sup> Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, *War and State Making: The Shaping of the Global Powers* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

<sup>5</sup> Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrick Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169.

<sup>6</sup> Herman Schwartz, *States Versus Markets: The Emergence of a Global Economy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 16-22.

<sup>7</sup> Max Weber, "Politics as Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Galaxy, 1958), 77. See also: Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978), 212-213.

<sup>8</sup> Joel S. Migdal, "Strong States, Weak States: Power and Accommodation," in *Understanding Political Development*, ed. Myron Weiner and Samuel Huntingdon (Boston: Little, Brown, 1987), 428-429.

<sup>9</sup> Jeffrey Herbst, "War and the State in Africa," *International Security* 14, no. 4 (Spring 1990): 137.

“...the roots of legitimacy for government within states are almost completely absent and political office becomes a form of predation and/or forum for advancing narrow ethno-religious interests.”<sup>10</sup>

Elements of each of these approaches are used here, in particular, application of Tilly’s simple yet powerful explanatory framework to the activities of an insurgent group to see if it has taken on any early-state characteristics. As Migdal shows, however, this analysis is lacking if it does not include how social structure (in the case of this study: tribal structure) affects how insurgents do business. Finally, Maroya’s approach, particularly due to its applicability to the regions covered here, lends credence to the idea that Afghanistan and Burma cannot really be viewed through the modern nation-state lens. Perhaps the two can be more accurately assessed as passing through “warring states” periods, in which proto-states battle for independence or supremacy and for control over the resources that sustain and strengthen their coercive power.

## **2. States within States Literature**

This literature is broad and diverse, resulting in a laundry list of terms for describing areas with limited or no nation-state influence, and the entities that arise within these areas. Scott calls such regions “geographically peripheral,” and notes their propensity for rebellion.<sup>11</sup> Rabasa uses the term “ungoverned” territories,” for areas whose defining feature is the “lack of penetration by state institutions,” but includes the caveat that “complex societies” do exist in these areas.<sup>12</sup> Goodhand, using Afghanistan as an example, describes as “borderlands” the non-state spaces in which “warlords compete with one another and embryonic central authority to establish their own regional ‘mini-

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<sup>10</sup> Alex Maroya, “Rethinking the Nation-State from the Frontier,” *Millenium – Journal of International Studies* 32, no. 2 (2003): 267-269.

<sup>11</sup> James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 197-198.

<sup>12</sup> Angel Rabasa, “Ungoverned Territories” (RAND Corporation testimony presented before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, February 14, 2008, 3), <http://rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG561/> (accessed March 10, 2008).

states’.”<sup>13</sup> McColl’s seminal work defines a territorial “insurgent state,” using the context of revolutionary conflict. He claims that it is a necessary tactic of such movements, if they are to be successful, to hold territory from which they can transition into a “guerrilla” war.<sup>14</sup> Spears applies the state-building literature in an attempt to tabulate a list of characteristics by which to evaluate state-like entities, which he calls “states-within-states.” He argues that such entities are more fully developed than so-called “shadow states,”<sup>15</sup> and that often they are more state-like than the “quasi-states” against which they compete.<sup>16</sup>

Specific to Afghanistan, Johnson makes reference to Taliban “shadow governments,”<sup>17</sup> which suggests the emergence of proto-state structures along the lines of McColl’s and Goodhand’s works. Giustozzi also references these “shadow governments,” referring to Taliban “strongholds” where limited political and judicial structures are emplaced.<sup>18</sup> Apart from the Taliban, Goodson notes that warlords long associated with their own private fiefdoms continue to wield power. Though they are ostensibly part of the fledgling central government, they control the means of coercion and economic extraction within their lands, and violent clashes still occur between some of them.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Goodhand, “Frontiers and Wars: the Opium Economy in Afghanistan,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 5, no.2 (April 2005): 193-194.

<sup>14</sup> Robert W. McColl, “The Insurgent State: Territorial Bases of Revolution,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 59, no. 4 (Dec., 1969): 614.

<sup>15</sup> William Reno, “Shadow States and the Political Economy of Civil Wars,” in *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, ed. Mats Berdal and David M. Malone (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 45.

<sup>16</sup> Ian S. Spears, “States-Within-States: An Introduction to Their Empirical Attributes,” in *States-Within-States: Incipient Political Entities in the Post-Cold War Era*, ed. Paul Kingston and Ian S. Spears (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 16.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas H. Johnson, “On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, no 2. (2007): 94.

<sup>18</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 110-112.

<sup>19</sup> Larry Goodson, “Bullets, Ballots, and Poppies in Afghanistan,” *Journal of Democracy* 16, no. 1 (January 2005): 25.



Moving on to Burma, a rather different picture comes to light. Than observes that “former insurgent groups...maintain quasi-autonomous enclaves” in the northeast border areas. These groups’ lists of state-like activities are impressive, ranging from taxation, to finance, and even “infrastructure development.”<sup>20</sup> Thomson also uses the word “enclave,” but settles for the simple designator “minority group area,” and emphasizes that the people really only recognize the authority of “clan, tribe, or chiefdom.”<sup>21</sup> According to an international development project source in the region, the UWSP possesses its own government and state apparatus, and has even built roads and other infrastructure within its autonomous regions.<sup>22</sup>

### 3. Causes of Civil War Literature

This thesis is also theoretically informed by the “greed versus grievance” causes of civil war literature. The study of ethnic conflict in particular is relevant to this thesis, and so “traditional” explanations of civil war (sometimes called “grievance explanations”) are examined first. Sambanis argues that ethnic civil wars exist, and in particular, the presence of “ethnic heterogeneity” is a significant factor in such wars being fought. He adds that ethnic wars are more likely to be influenced by political grievance than by economic factors.<sup>23</sup> Kaufmann describes a clear-cut difference between ethnic civil wars and ideological civil wars, claiming that “ethnic identities” harden over the course of conflict, while ideological identities are much more “changeable” over time. Control of territory is much more important in ethnic civil wars.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Tin Maung Maung Than, “Burma/Myanmar in 2001: A Year of Waiting,” *Asian Survey* 42, no. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 2002): 116.

<sup>21</sup> Curtis N. Thomson, “Political Stability and Minority Groups in Burma,” *Geographical Review* 85, no. 3 (July 1995): 269 and 280.

<sup>22</sup> Special Consultant to UN development project in Wa Special Region Number 2, Personal Interview, March 2008.

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas Sambanis, “Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 3 (June, 2001): 280.

<sup>24</sup> Chaim Kaufmann, “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars,” *International Security* 20, no. 4 (Spring, 1996): 138-140.

In contrast, scholars such as Collier, Hoeffler, Fearon and Laitin emphasize the greed aspect of conflict, arguing that civil wars are not possible if the groups wishing to wage them do not have the required economic resources. In a seminal study, Fearon and Laitin find that the existence of peripheral areas within a state that possess easily transported wealth—gems or drugs for example—are a significant factor related to the outbreak of civil wars.<sup>25</sup> Collier and Hoeffler, over the course of three studies (1998, 2004, 2007), eventually formulate their “feasibility hypothesis,” which “proposes that where rebellion is materially feasible it will occur.”<sup>26</sup>

Of late, scholars like Arnson and Zartman, and Ballentine and Sherman attempt to temper economy of war studies by promoting a synthesis of greed and grievance explanations.<sup>27</sup> It is the approach summarized by Zartman that this thesis uses in conjunction with its case studies, in particular: how need, creed and greed “relate to each other in causing and sustaining conflict, and how, not whether, conflict is related to these three factors.”<sup>28</sup> Greed explanations are important for breaking down the opium economies of the proto-states and examining leaders’ motives. Grievance explanations, particularly Kaufmann’s association of ethnic conflict with holding territory, are one significant element of an insurgency transforming into something more permanent. Licklider provides another finding of note with connotations for the case studies and policy recommendations of this thesis. His claim is that “identity civil wars” are more effectively ended through “military victory” than through “negotiated settlements,” while

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<sup>25</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *The American Political Science Review* 97, no.1 (February 2003): 75, 81, 88.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner, “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War,” Center for the Study of African Economies Working Paper Series 2006-10, August 7, 2006, [www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/2006-10text.pdf](http://www.csae.ox.ac.uk/workingpapers/pdfs/2006-10text.pdf) (accessed February 27, 2008).

<sup>27</sup> See: Cynthia Arnson and I. William Zartman, *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). See also: Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003).

<sup>28</sup> I. William Zartman, “Need, Creed, and Greed in Intrastate Conflict,” in *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*, ed. Cynthia Arnson and I. William Zartman (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 257.

“political/economic wars” are just as likely to end using either means.<sup>29</sup> The case studies dealt with later show the complications of predicting outcomes when wars are a combination of identity and political/economic.

There is little discussion in the literature on Afghanistan and Pakistan about the Taliban being anything other than a grievance or creed-motivated insurgency. Rashid writes that it did benefit tremendously as an organization from the pre-2001 opium trade, but its leaders did not appear to personally benefit.<sup>30</sup> There are, however, varying opinions in the literature as to what extent the current Taliban insurgency relies on opium money to fund their operations. Johnson states: “Narcotics are responsible for at least one-half the GDP in the country in one way or another and, as a result, huge amounts of cash are flowing into the war chests of the insurgency.”<sup>31</sup> However, Johnson (and others like Giustozzi) also writes that foreign funds from sympathizers in the Middle East represent a significant source of funding. It is generally agreed that the Taliban at the very least tax the opium trade in return for “safe passage” through its areas.<sup>32</sup> Hodes and Sedra claim a more extensive Taliban extraction system that includes taxation of production, transportation, and processing.<sup>33</sup>

Turning to the Burma conflict literature, Smith paints the complicated picture of a civil war driven by multiple ethnic group and political/ideological grievances against the central government.<sup>34</sup> McCoy, while agreeing with this thesis as the starting point for the conflict, shows how many of these groups were rapidly hijacked by greed due to the war economy of Southeast Asia (hot and cold), and enabling influences of both the Chinese and the Americans. Various warlords-druglords rose and fell over time, and the leaders

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<sup>29</sup> Roy Licklider, “The Consequences of Negotiated Settlements in Civil Wars, 1945-1993,” *The American Political Science Review* 89, no. 3 (September 1995): 686.

<sup>30</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 124.

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, 100.

<sup>32</sup> Giustozzi, 86-87.

<sup>33</sup> Cyrus Hodes and Mark Sedra, *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 39.

<sup>34</sup> Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Bangkok: White Lotus, 1999).

of the UWSP are one of the primary inheritors of this legacy.<sup>35</sup> Kramer disagrees, arguing that it is Chinese syndicates that control the trade, and that the UWSP is a nationalist party.<sup>36</sup> Lintner weaves a balanced narrative that obscures neither the greed nor creed aspects of the conflicts. He also brings out the aspect of ethnic group poverty that drives some peasants to grow the opium poppy out of sheer need for survival.<sup>37</sup> In response to Kramer, he claims that that the UWSP (and various insurgent groups from Burma's past), were both nationalist parties/armies and drug lords.<sup>38</sup>

Given this review of the applicable literature, it is apparent that many approaches exist to explain how conflict and loot seeking enable proto-state-building. There are also several highly descriptive and comprehensive accounts of insurgency and drugs in Afghanistan/Pakistan and Burma. However, sorely lacking are comparative studies regarding the convergence of drugs and insurgencies, how this convergence resembles a nascent state-building process, and what are the ramifications. This thesis seeks to address this gap. At the same time, an attempt is made to explain each case in its own particular context, or what anthropologist Clifford Geertz (borrowing from Gilbert Ryle) calls "thick description."<sup>39</sup> This method has the best explanatory power.

#### **D. METHODS AND SOURCES**

This thesis uses a combination of the historical, case study and comparative methods to support its arguments. A historical/anthropological method is used to explain how the interconnectedness of opium production, insurgency and socio-cultural factors set the stage for proto-state development. Then, keeping in mind Tilly's analogy that

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<sup>35</sup> Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade, Afghanistan, Southeast Asia, Central America, Columbia* (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill Books, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Tom Kramer, *The United Wa State Party: Narco-Army or Ethnic Nationalist Party?* (Washington: East-West Center, 2007), 26-27.

<sup>37</sup> Bertil Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1999).

<sup>38</sup> Bertil Lintner, "Doing Wrong to Do Good," *The Irawaddy News Magazine*, December 2007, [http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=9482](http://www.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9482) (accessed January 3, 2008).

<sup>39</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973), 6.

state building is, in the beginning, organized crime, the case study method is used to separately analyze the aforementioned insurgent groups. The case studies use a five-part framework adapted from the separate works of Tilly and Spears to evaluate the extent to which each proto-state has developed:

1. Territory:<sup>40</sup> The proto-state's boundaries, the areas it actually controls.

2. Coercive activities: The extent to which the proto-state carries out each of these four. "i. War making: Eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force. ii. State making: Eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories. iii. Protection: Eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients. iv. Extraction: Acquiring the means of carry out the first three activities – war making, state making, and protection."<sup>41</sup>

3. Identity and Legitimacy:<sup>42</sup> The identities of the proto-state inhabitants (how they see themselves), and to what extent the coercive activities and structure of the proto-state are viewed as legitimate.

4. Political Goals and other Motivations:<sup>43</sup> The proto-state leadership objectives, and the motivations of the various actors that make up the proto-state.

5. Organization and Structure: The character of the administrative apparatus of the proto-state, the extent to which bureaucracy has developed (if any). This also includes the existing unofficial structures such as tribal hierarchies, feudalistic landowner arrangements, and informal financial networks that may function as enablers or inhibitors of proto-state development.

Finally, the two proto-states are compared and contrasted within the same five-category framework used in the case studies. The units of comparison are the Taliban from 2001-2008, and the UWSP from 1990-2008.

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<sup>40</sup> These framework headings closely mirror Ian Spears' work in: Spears, "States-Within-States: An Introduction to Their Empirical Attributes," 19-29.

<sup>41</sup> Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime," 181.

<sup>42</sup> Spears, 22.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 27.

Primary sources for this thesis include interviews with intelligence analysts, State Department officials working in the case study countries, academics, security forces in Southeast Asia, members of opposition groups in one case study country, and government and non-government agency employees working in or from the case study countries. Written primary sources include policy documents of the United States Government and the case study country governments obtained from Internet websites. Secondary sources include scholarly books and journal articles, journalistic books, newspaper articles, official government documents, private and non-government organization reports, and United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports.

## **E. THESIS OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION**

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter II looks at the Golden Crescent region of Afghanistan-Pakistan, and addresses two major sub-questions: How does insurgency create drug-funded proto-states in Afghanistan-Pakistan, and how do geographic, political, socio-cultural, and economic elements shape these insurgencies? The chapter is divided into three sections. The Background section details the geography, climate and political history of opium in the region and specifically in Afghanistan-Pakistan. The Culture section examines how ethno-nationalism, concepts of states and borders, and tribal characteristics relate to the creation of proto-states funded by the drug trade. The third section is the Taliban case study, using the methodology already discussed. The chapter concludes by summarizing its findings. Chapter III is devoted to the Golden Triangle and Burma. It asks the two major sub-questions: How does insurgency create drug-funded proto-states in Burma, and how do geographic, political, socio-cultural, and economic elements shape these insurgencies? It contains the same three sections as Chapter II, but the case study is on the UWSP. Chapter IV is the comparative analysis portion of the thesis. Using the methodology already discussed, it compares the Taliban and the UWSP point by point, with particular attention to how goals and motivations changed over time. Chapter V, the conclusion, summarizes the key findings, ventures policy recommendations and suggests areas for further research.

## **II. THE GOLDEN CRESCENT: AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

It is easy to get wrapped up in news reports proclaiming Afghanistan a narco-state (with a gross domestic product derived primarily from illicit drug trade), and the current Taliban movement as a band of narco-terrorists, or at the very least, narco-insurgents with the ability to seek refuge and regroup in the “lawless” border regions of western Pakistan. It is also easy, as is the tendency of the press and many policy-makers, to blend the insurgency and narcotics problems together, which results in broad solutions with false expectations of quick success. Thus far, the policies do not appear to be working: opium production has skyrocketed, and the Taliban insurgency continues to grow in scope and influence.

As discussed in Chapter I, the viewpoint of this thesis is that in contrast to studying the problem as counter-narcotics/counterinsurgency issue, a state-building approach—that takes into account distinct socio-cultural characteristics—offers a deeper and more complete method of analysis. With this in mind, the primary questions addressed by this chapter are two: How does insurgency create drug-funded proto-states in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region? And, how do geography, socio-cultural characteristics and the opium industry contribute to proto-state formation? An initial and important aspect of the argument presented here is that insurgents cannot be separated from the proto-states in and out of which they operate. In fact, the words “insurgent” and “insurgency” are highly charged and misleading terms. Governments and states, whether legitimate or not, typically brand armed opposition groups with this moniker in a political attempt to detract from these groups’ legitimacy. In this way, perhaps the very first part of a counterinsurgency strategy involves naming the group in question an “insurgent” organization, therefore defining the enemy. Governments want other governments, and the people, to see their enemies as illegitimate groups seeking to break away from, gain concessions from, or overthrow the legitimate regime in power.

To answer these two questions, the beginning of this chapter describes the geography, climate and historical background of the opium trade and conflict in the Golden Crescent. This backdrop shows that the war economy helped grow the nascent opium trade. The next section looks at the major non-economic proto-state enablers (which ironically, at the same time, slow or prevent the proto-state's progression to full statehood). It addresses the historical reasons why the Pashtuns in general (the ethnic group from which the insurgents mostly come) question the legitimacy of the states ensconced at Kabul and Islamabad. Two of the key proto-state enablers identified here are the ethno-nationalistic concept of Pashtunistan and the Pashtun cultural sense of space. This section also looks at what political structures exist among the Pashtuns in the absence of state power extending from these two cities into tribally or strongman-organized territories. The socio-cultural concepts *qawm* (solidarity groups), and *rutbavi* (hierarchical) social organization enable the creation of the proto-state both politically and economically, but are not causal factors. The last section is a case study of the Taliban, analyzed according to the five-part framework outlined in Chapter I. The case study shows that since 2001, the Taliban have organized a still disjointed proto-state that spans the Durand Line between Afghanistan and Pakistan, funding its coercive forces and fledgling infrastructure increasingly through the opium industry (but also through money from abroad).

## **B. BACKGROUND ON THE GOLDEN CRESCENT OPIUM TRADE**

### **1. Geography and Climate**

*Papaver somniferum*, the opium poppy, is a resilient plant that in ancient times grew only in the Mediterranean Region. For a variety of reasons, over many centuries, it spread throughout Asia. Now, opium crops can be found in a “distinctive Asian ‘opium zone’ that stretch(es) for 5,000 miles across the continent’s mountain rim.”<sup>44</sup> This zone begins in Turkey, and runs east through Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Thailand, and ends in Laos. In the Golden Crescent, it is grown at both high (rarely

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<sup>44</sup> McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 3.



higher than 2,500 meters) and low elevations (best results less than 1,500 meters). High altitude spring crops are harvested in June and July. Low altitude winter crops are harvested in April and May. The opium poppy's typical growing season is approximately 120 days.<sup>45</sup>

## **2. Historical Backdrop of Opium and Conflict**

The British Empire's wide involvement in the opium trade (not to leave out the Dutch, the Portuguese and the Americans) is regarded as a primary contributor to the reason why opium production changed in south and east Asia from small amounts being grown for medicinal purposes, to a large-scale legal trade that addicted millions of people. India, which had grown the crop in smaller quantities under the Mughals, was the main supplier. China was the main importer. The British fought two wars with China, in part to force her to continue buying opium from them. China also ended up producing its own massive crop.<sup>46</sup>

The first time Afghanistan appeared as a major opium producer was in the 1950s, when a ban on opium crops in Iran created a large supply need. Indeed, as McCoy notes: "Turkey and Afghanistan produced smoking opium for the near insatiable demand among the million plus opium smokers of Iran, which became, after the Chinese revolution, the world's leading opium consumer."<sup>47</sup> In the 1960s, under pressure from Nixon and the U.S., Turkey too cut down on its production. This only further stimulated production in the eastern Golden Crescent and elsewhere. So began the Cold War era, during which spin-off conflicts stimulated supply and demand of opium and its products throughout the world.

From 1970-1978, Pakistan and Afghanistan continued to grow opium crops chiefly for consumers in Iran. There was some international notice during this time,

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<sup>45</sup> Thomas Johnson, class notes from *Contemporary Afghanistan Politics*, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, Summer 2007. See also the Senlis Council, [http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/events/kabul/haverkort\\_slides](http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/events/kabul/haverkort_slides) (accessed January 7, 2008).

<sup>46</sup> Martin Booth, *Opium: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 107-144.

<sup>47</sup> Alfred McCoy, "Opium History Up To 1858 A.D.," <http://opioids.com/opium/history/index.html> (accessed January 12, 2008).

primarily from western user types that realized the easy and cheap availability of the drug. A small population of these types congregated in Kabul, and though the Afghan government eventually forced them out, the trafficking connections they created with the West later became important. Turkey's policy of poppy-field destruction contributed to increased production in Afghanistan during the 1970s, but Pakistan led Afghanistan in opium production during this period.<sup>48</sup> However, none of these influences put the region on the map yet as a major opium producer. At this time, the Golden Triangle produced a lot more of the drug due in large part to U.S. military-political-economic involvement in Southeast Asia.<sup>49</sup>

However, the mid 1970s saw the beginning of the Golden Triangle's decline for a variety of reasons. Anti-drug operations (primarily in Thailand), new communist governments in Laos and Vietnam disrupting traditional trafficking routes, and a long Southeast Asia drought from the late 1970s to the early 1980s contributed to a decrease in supply. Without a corresponding decrease in demand, simple economics dictated that the supply be made up elsewhere: this time in the Golden Crescent.<sup>50</sup> Followers of world opium production have long observed how suppression in one area only leads to it increasing in another area. This "balloon effect" is readily observable in the back and forth supply shifts between the Triangle, Crescent and other areas over the past fifty years.

The Iranian Revolution in 1979 caused another significant shift in the world's opium production. The new government removed the Shah's anti-drug program, limited though it had been, and both supply and demand in Iran rose dramatically. Now that Iran did not need opium from Afghanistan and Pakistan, international networks came in and

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<sup>48</sup> Ikramul Haq, "Pak-Afghan Trade in Historical Perspective," *Asian Survey* 36, no. 10 (Oct., 1996): 948-949.

<sup>49</sup> McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 285.

<sup>50</sup> Haq, 949.

started exporting it to Europe.<sup>51</sup> There was also an exodus of Iranian “heroin chemists,” many who reopened for business in Pakistan’s North West Frontier Province (NWFP).<sup>52</sup>

Then came another earth-shattering event: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and Afghan War. By 1980, the opium trade took off after a short period of suppression when the Soviet army first entered the country. Haq writes:

...Afghan narcotics traders were confronted by a radically transformed international market. Shorn from the Iranian market and with years of record crops behind them, Afghan traffickers soon learned to refine opium into heroin and discovered new outlets in Europe and North America. The latter was usually accomplished through Pakistani middlemen, especially in the United States, Canada, and Germany.<sup>53</sup>

Indirectly and with the full knowledge of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the mujahadeen used opium as an additional source of funding. Pakistan quickly acquired the status of the world’s number one heroin supplier.<sup>54</sup> The number of heroin addicts in Pakistan skyrocketed. One report put the number at 1.3 million addicts by 1985.<sup>55</sup> (At the time, Pakistan’s population numbered about 95 million.<sup>56</sup>)

In the early 1990s, the Golden Crescent eclipsed the Golden Triangle as the world’s leading producer of opium,<sup>57</sup> and heroin labs formerly based in the NWFP relocated into Afghanistan’s northeast due to Kabul’s crackdown in response to U.S. pressure.<sup>58</sup> This opiate boom occurred in large part due to the 1994-2001 rise and rule of

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<sup>51</sup> McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 471.

<sup>52</sup> Amir Zada Asad and Robert Harris, *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 123.

<sup>53</sup> Haq, 949.

<sup>54</sup> Alfred W. McCoy, “Coercion and its Unintended Consequences: A Study of Heroin Trafficking in Southeast and South West Asia,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 33 (2000): 209.

<sup>55</sup> Haq, 954.

<sup>56</sup> Abdul Razzaque Rukanuddin and Tauseef Ahmed, “Introduction,” in *Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 1990-91* (Islamabad: National Institute of Population Studies, 1991), 3.

<sup>57</sup> McCoy, “Coercion and its Unintended Consequences,” 212.

<sup>58</sup> McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 509.

the Pashtun Taliban: a group supported extensively by Pakistan. Under the Taliban, opium production grew as they captured more poppy-growing territory—most significantly Helmand province—that they taxed to fund their campaigns. They also taxed heroin production that took place around Jalalabad. By the end of the 1990s, the business was booming, affecting every one of Afghanistan’s neighbors.<sup>59</sup>

The past seven years saw the U.S. invasion and NATO occupation of Afghanistan and the emergence of the fledgling Karzai government. After a sharp drop in opium production in 2001 (see Table 1 below) due to a highly publicized Taliban-led eradication effort, opium production in Afghanistan rose every year.

Table 1. Golden Crescent Potential Opium Production in Metric Tons (After: *World Drug Report 2007*, United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime)

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
<b>Afghanistan</b>	350	875	1120	1200	1570	1980	1970	2330	3416	2335	2248
<b>Pakistan</b>	130	120	130	149	150	160	181	161	128	112	24
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Afghanistan</b>	2804	2693	4565	3276	185	3400	3600	4200	4100	6100	8200
<b>Pakistan</b>	24	26	9	8	5	5	52	40	36	39	?

The year 2007 was a banner year. Afghanistan produced 93 percent of the world’s opium.<sup>60</sup> The spillover affect in neighboring countries has been massive. For example, in 2004, a Pakistan domestic survey estimated that there were between “3.5 million and five million habitual...drug takers...The overall prevalence, expressed in terms of the whole population, is roughly a third of one percent – a ratio that is among the most severe anywhere in the world.”<sup>61</sup>

Divided and reluctant in regard to the opium problem, members of the international community involved in Afghanistan’s state-building, in conjunction with the fledgling Kabul government, made sporadic and unsuccessful attempts to curb the crop.

<sup>59</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, 33 and 123. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 509.

<sup>60</sup> *Afghanistan 2007 Annual Opium Poppy Survey: Executive Summary*, iv.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Chalk and C. Christine Fair, “Pakistan Tackles Impact of Afghan Opium Trade,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, March 01, 2005, 2, <http://search.janes.com> (accessed January 8, 2008).

Pressure mounted as yearly UNODC opium reports since 2002 showed ever-increasing poppy production. By spring 2007, many believed opium to be as big a problem as the resurgent Taliban,<sup>62</sup> if not more so, and controversy raged over the proper counter-narcotic strategy to be employed.

Clearly the drug trade in the Golden Crescent far predates the Taliban, and clearly the Taliban have other sources of funding.<sup>63</sup> However, the drug networks are now firmly entrenched after thirty years of development, following millennia-old smuggling and trade routes. (See Figure 1 below.) The UNODC estimates that 52 percent of Afghanistan's opiates exit into Iran. Thirty-three percent follows the two main routes into Pakistan: Jalalabad-Peshawar-Islamabad-Lahore and into India in the north, and through Kandahar-Quetta-Karachi in the south and then overseas. The remaining 15 percent goes north, mostly into Tajikistan. If heroin alone is considered, the bulk (48 percent) passes through Pakistan, as it has for the past three decades.<sup>64</sup> Others believe that a higher percentage of heroin goes out through Iran, or into southern Pakistan and then into Iran. There is also evidence that an increasing percentage of the trade in opiates from northern Afghanistan crops moves out through Tajikistan, where Russian mafia influence is strong.<sup>65</sup> (See Figure 1 below for a map of regional trafficking routes.)

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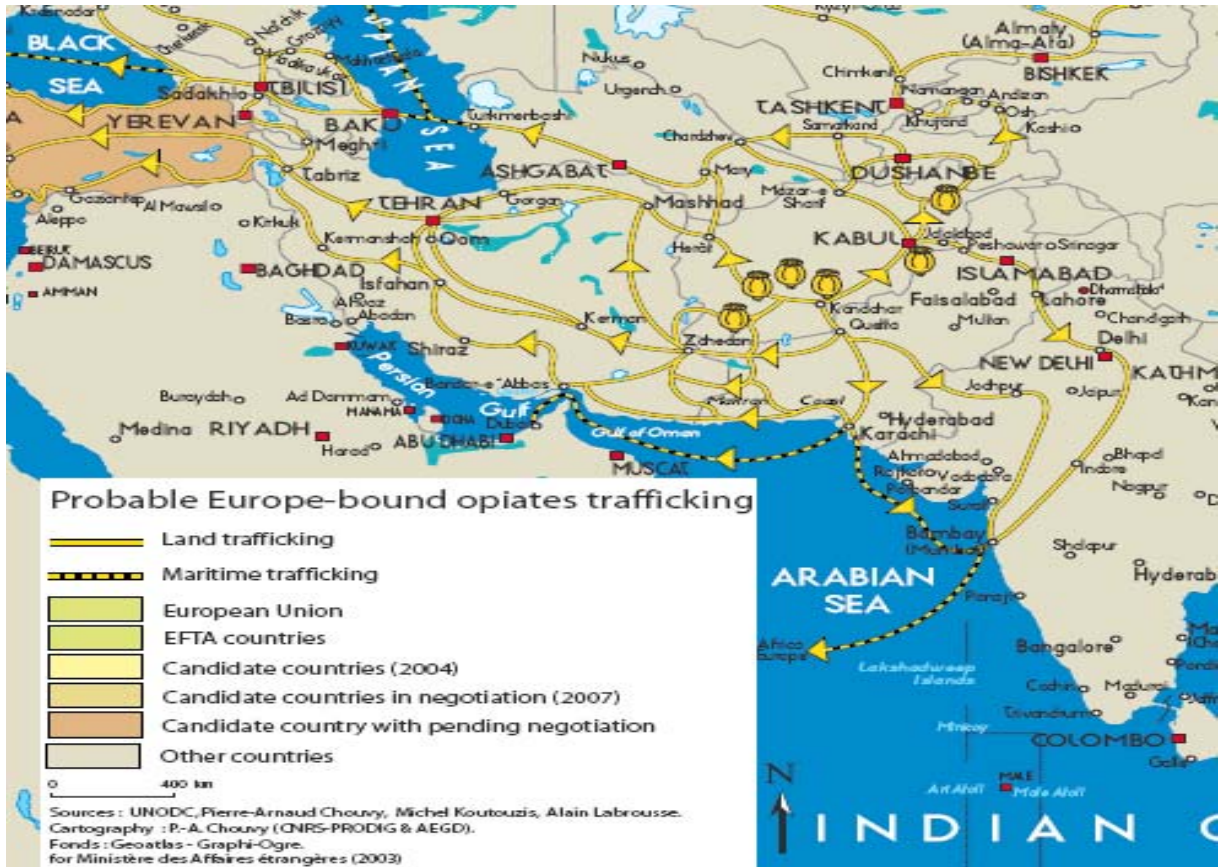
<sup>62</sup> James Risen, "Poppy Fields Are Now a Front Line in Afghanistan War," *The New York Times*, May 16, 2007, Section A.

<sup>63</sup> See the following piece for a complete discussion: Thomas H. Johnson, "Financing Afghan Terrorism: Thugs, Drugs, and Creative Movements of Money," in *Terrorism Financing and State Responses: A Comparative Perspective*, ed. Jeanne K. Giraldo and Harold A. Trinkunas 94-113 (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2007).

<sup>64</sup> *World Drug Report 2007*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (United Nations Publication, August 1, 2007), 45, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2007.html> (accessed February 2, 2008).

<sup>65</sup> U.S. Narcotics Analyst, Personal Interview, September 2007. See also: Barnett R. Rubin, "The Political Economy of War and Peace in Afghanistan," *World Development* 28, no. 10 (October 2000): 1706. See also: Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, "Opiate Smuggling Routes from Afghanistan to Europe and Asia," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 01, 2003, <http://www.pa-chouvy.org/JIR3.htm> (accessed March 18, 2008).

Figure 1. Golden Crescent Opiate Trade Routes Map (From: Geopium Website: <http://www.pa-chouvy.org/indexcartes.html>)



This is the setting of the Golden Crescent proto-state, but the geographical, historical and political background is only part of the complete picture. To understand its local structure, one must examine some important ethnic and cultural nuances of the region.

### C. PROTO-STATE ENABLERS

#### 1. The Durand Line, Ethno-nationalism and Colonial Legacy

No discussion of proto-state development in the Golden Crescent can ignore the difference between the line drawn on a map between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the reality on the ground. This largely notional boundary is the Durand Line. It was a boundary agreed upon by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan of Afghanistan and the British in

1893, and named after British India foreign secretary at the time, Sir Mortimer Durand. At the time, it marked the “border” between Afghanistan and British India, and later became the basis for the “official” border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It cuts through the traditional territories of the Pashtuns and Baluchis, and so to many of the people who actually live there, it is but an arbitrary line on a map.<sup>66</sup>

The Durand Line has never been recognized as the official border by any Afghan government. In the areas adjacent to the Line, as Roy writes: “the idea of the nation-state has given way to tribal and Islamic entities, which are more susceptible to Islamic revivalism, transformation of the tribal system...and the development of the drugs trade.”<sup>67</sup> In what direction is this “transformation of the tribal system” is headed? That is where the idea of the proto-state gains relevance for describing what political structure exists in the absence of real control emanating from Kabul and Islamabad.

The formation of the proto-state in this core tribal area is enabled by an ethno-nationalist movement incited by the drawing of the Durand Line at the end of the British colonial era in South Asia. This movement, though seemingly intermittent during the past 50 years, is also one of many factors contributing to the instability in which the drug trade thrives.

Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, which contains an estimated 25 million ethnic Pashtuns,<sup>68</sup> the “Pashtunistan” idea has persisted with varying strength on both sides of the Durand Line. At that time, many Pashtun leaders on the east side of the Line did not want their region to be part of Pakistan. Rumblings about Pashtunistan from the

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<sup>66</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, “Islamic Identity and Ethnic Tensions,” in *A History of Pakistan and its Origins*, ed. Christophe Jaffrelot (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 15 and 28.

<sup>67</sup> Olivier Roy, “Islam and Foreign Policy: Central Asia and the Arab-Persian World,” in *A History of Pakistan and its Origins*, ed. Christophe Jaffrelot (London: Anthem Press, 2004), 138.

<sup>68</sup> This number was derived from the estimated total population of Pakistan (167,762,040) in the CIA World Factbook, and the 15.42 percent of Pakistan’s population that claim Pashto as their mother tongue according to the 1998 census. See: *1998 Census*, Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Statistics, <http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/statistics.html> (accessed May 2, 2008). *The World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html#People> (accessed May 2, 2008). See also: Selig, S. Harrison, “‘Pashtunistan’: The Challenge to Pakistan and Afghanistan (ARI),” Real Instituto Elcano, February 4, 2008, [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_eng/Content?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/Elcano\\_in/Zonas\\_in/ARI37-2008](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_eng/Content?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/Elcano_in/Zonas_in/ARI37-2008) (accessed May 2, 2008).

Kabul government exacerbated the matter.<sup>69</sup> (Pashtuns also represent 42 percent or 13.75 million (the majority) of Afghanistan’s population,<sup>70</sup> and they have traditionally ruled the country.) This was particularly the case when Afghan Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud sent troops into the FATA area of Pakistan in 1961, and after returning to power 12 years later, revived the idea of “Pashtunistan.”<sup>71</sup> (See one possible conception of Pashtunistan in Figure 2, below.)

Figure 2. Pashtunistan (From: Senlis Council, <http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/maps>)



Since Daoud’s time, throughout the wars and conflicts that have gripped the region, this nationalism sentiment remained in the background, but was not forgotten. In Pakistan, not that long after the Red Mosque incident in summer 2007, a Pashtun suicide bomber (a military officer) invoked “nationalist slogans” before killing 19 military

69 Jaffrelot, 31.

70 *The World Factbook*, Central Intelligence Agency, [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html) (accessed May 2, 2008).

71 Arthur Bonner, *Among the Afghans* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 31-41.



officers.<sup>72</sup> In Afghanistan, Giustozzi notes that Pashtun nationalism is particularly strong in the “south-east” and in “Nangarhar province,” where in some cases Pashtun tribes straddle the Durand Line.<sup>73</sup>

Pashtun nationalist movements have been intermittent and persuasive only to some of the population, which begs a better description or different approach for understanding the Pashtun mindset. Allan offers that the concept of “an indigenous folk territory...means little to Pashtuns; they are an ethnic group that traverses and establishes long distance links of their kinship through space.”<sup>74</sup> This mindset lends itself well to all sorts of trade. He believes that although certain aspects of Pashtun culture are not causal factors in the opium trade, “...placelessness, ethnic fidelity, and long-distance trading networks, underpin the cultivation and distribution of opium outside of Afghanistan into adjacent regions.”<sup>75</sup> While this concept of space may apply to the Pashtun economic outlook and provide a ready-made network for the initial movement and processing of opium, it does not seem to apply to those Pashtun who believe that there is a proper Pashtun territory or homeland. It appears that there are two forces at work, one unifying and one fragmentary. Pashtun ethno-nationalism fosters the possibility of a Pashtun proto-state, while the Pashtun concept of territory at a more basic tribal level attributes little meaning to borders.

Another ethnic-nationalist movement, that of the Baluchi, is not the main focus of this thesis, but needs mention because the Taliban operate in some of the same areas. The Baluchi population is divided among Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. Like the Pashtuns, when Pakistan became independent, some Baluchis led by the ruler of a princely state called Kalat declared independence. Pakistan, through military might and winning over key Baluchi leaders, crushed this movement. Since then, various separatist

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72 Selig S. Harrison, “Beware Pashtunistan,” *Newsweek*, Nov. 3, 2007, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/67966> (accessed March 7, 2008).

73 Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 27 and 62-63.

74 Nigel J. R. Allen, “Opium Production in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” in *Dangerous Harvest: Drug Plants and the Transformation of Indigenous Landscapes*, ed. Michael K. Steinberg, Joseph J. Hobbs, and Kent Mathewson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 138.

75 Allen, 139.

movements have kept up the fight in low-intensity insurgencies that benefit from inhospitable terrain, smuggling, and a porous border with Afghanistan.<sup>76</sup> Baluchistan borders on Helmand, the largest opium-producing province in Afghanistan.

One final related issue is Islamabad's use of a remnant of British colonial policy to deal with the majority of the Pashtun-populated region on its side of the Durand Line. In its early years, the Pakistan government (at that time in Karachi) kept in place the British system of administration for the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) by actually formalizing it in its Constitution.<sup>77</sup> This document states in Article 223 that: "No Central Law shall apply to a Tribal Area or to any part of a Tribal Area unless the President so directs, and no Provincial Law shall apply to a Tribal Area or to any part of a Tribal Area unless the Governor of the Province in which the Tribal Area is situated, with the approval of the President, so directs."<sup>78</sup> The Constitution further states that no courts, to include the Supreme Court, have jurisdiction in the Tribal areas.<sup>79</sup> This has direct ramifications for the drug trade, given that a main smuggling route as shown above (Kandahar-Quetta-Karachi) passes directly through the FATA and NWFP (as shown on Figure 1, above). So even when Islamabad chooses to confront drug trafficking or production in these areas, it has only weak official state judicial mechanisms to enforce its will. More importantly, the autonomous nature of the region is built officially into the structure of Pakistan governance. Where no "Central Law" or "Provincial Law" exists, other tribal political / structures far older fill the vacuum, or new structures develop such as warlords or the proto-state.

## **2. Tribal Factors and Feudalism**

Goodhand discusses the concept of Afghanistan's "borderlands" wherein "warlords compete with one another and embryonic central authority to establish their

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<sup>76</sup> Jaffrelot, 28.

<sup>77</sup> Ian Talbot, *Pakistan: A Modern History* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 59.

<sup>78</sup> *The Constitution of the Republic of Pakistan* (Karachi: Manager of Publications Karachi, 1962), 103.

<sup>79</sup> Amir Zada Asad and Robert Harris, *The Politics and Economics of Drug Production on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Border* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 44.

own regional ‘mini-states’.”<sup>80</sup> These mini- or proto-states, if one hearkens back once more to Tilly, lie somewhere between “households and kinship groups” and the nation-state.<sup>81</sup> In other words, the proto-state is feudalistic in nature, but not in the traditional European model. In most cases, the term “feudalism” in Pashtun lands applies more the economics than it does political structure. This section analyzes the character of Pashtun-style feudalism.

Tribal organization in some forms and contexts is an enabler for the proto-state. Before this statement can be further pursued, however, a basic discussion of Pashtun tribal leadership structure and society is necessary. Where the traditional tribal structure is still present, it is generally organized as follows. At the village level there are elders called *maliks* or *arbabs* with limited powers for solving disputes among the up to seventy men that they oversee. The *khans* are one level up, with larger numbers of people for whom they are responsible and sources of capital under their control. The *khans* interface with other *khans* and officials of the Kabul government or other power structures, if any are present. The decisions of these tribal leaders at both levels are subject to the approval of *jirgas*, or tribal councils.<sup>82</sup>

This system is organized according to Pashtunwali: a code that governs traditional Pashtun society. It is this code that fills the vast gap between the miniscule area of the Pashtun region actually governed by Kabul and Islamabad, and it has been around for much longer period of time. As Johnson and Mason write:

Pashtunwali is neither the absence of governance, nor summary judgment, nor a lynch mob at work. Rather, it is an alternative form of social organization with an advanced conflict resolution mechanism that does not involve court houses, jails, lawyers, law schools, bailiffs, county clerks,

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<sup>80</sup> Jonathan Goodhand, “Frontiers and Wars: the Opium Economy in Afghanistan,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 5, no.2 (April 2005): 193-194.

<sup>81</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States: A. D. 990-1992* (Blackwell Publishing Limited, 1993), 2.

<sup>82</sup> Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, “‘Tribes’ and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005,” *Crisis States Working Paper Series 2* (September 2006): 3.

prisons, prison guards, judges, or policemen. It has been estimated that jirgas resolve 95 percent of the cases in which they are invoked.<sup>83</sup>

Where one falls within the tribe is called *nikat*, which is established at birth. From the individual, one's network of loyalty extends first to the family, then the extended family, and then the tribe.<sup>84</sup> These systems of loyalty are referred to as *qawm*, which Rubin defines as a solidarity group whose composition and extent varies from area to area.<sup>85</sup> Many scholars have commented on *qawm*'s impact on modern Afghan society from a variety of different angles, including the economics of its patronage networks, as they exist differently for different Pashtun tribes.<sup>86</sup> Along these same lines, this thesis posits that it is *qawm* upon which a large part of the proto-state economic structure exists today. Goodhand provides an example: "For instance, today's drugs, smuggling and religious networks draw upon pre-war social networks based on *qawm* and tribal loyalties. Warlords and profiteers play new games by old rules, mobilizing the 'economy of affection', just as other rulers have throughout Afghan history."<sup>87</sup> In what different forms does *qawm* manifest, and does it play a part in proto-state formation?

To answer these questions one might look to the degree of "hierarchization" present in poppy cultivating areas. Giustozzi and Ullah offer an analysis of two anthropologists' (Akbar S. Ahmed and I. E. Katkov) views on Pashtun social organization. They note two organization types: "*Nang*...the honour-bound Pashtuns, who still abide by the tribal code (*Pashtunwali*) in full and whose society is acephalous and segmentary," and "*Galang*...characterized by a hierarchical social structure, where

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<sup>83</sup> Thomas Johnson and M. Chris Mason, "No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 61.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Johnson, class notes from *Contemporary Afghanistan Politics*, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California, Summer 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 25.

<sup>86</sup> For an excellent discussion of *Qawm* and politics, see: Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press: 1990), 11-29. For an analysis of how *Qawm* enables the opium trade, See Christopher L. Byrom, "Dismantling the Afghan Opiate Economy: A Cultural and Historical Policy Assessment" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School Thesis, 2007), 37-41.

<sup>87</sup> Goodhand, 211.

Pashtunwali plays a more modest role and where patron-client relations are dominant.”<sup>88</sup> They go on to detail Katkov’s observations on Pashtun tribes, which he divides into three types, (two of which are virtually the same as Achmed’s): 1. “qaumi – egalitarian”, 2. “rutbavi – hierarchical, with tendency towards feudalization”, 3. “kuchi-nomadic and very egalitarian.”<sup>89</sup> All of these forms of social organization possess networks based on *qawm*, though warlords are more likely to arise from the *rutbavi* tribes.<sup>90</sup> The next step is to apply this analysis in some specific areas to see if cash cropping of opium is related in any way to the *rutbavi* structure.

Looking at the two primary opium-producing provinces of the present and past (Helmand and Nangarhar)<sup>91</sup> reveals that the *galang* or *rutbavi* social organization happens to be more prevalent. (This is discussed more below.) If opium is currently an economic pillar of *rutbavi* tribal leaders, it provides a ready-made means for proto-state capital extraction. In addition, both of these provinces border areas of Pakistan across which *qawm* extends, making for easy transit of drugs and the chemicals needed to produce heroin.

In this context, Nangarhar and Helmand Provinces are now examined in more detail. In Nangarhar, opium production in 2007 occurred in the tribal areas as seen in Figure 3 below. Various tribes are involved, but overall, no one tribal area outstripped another, because even areas showing no change are already significant producers.

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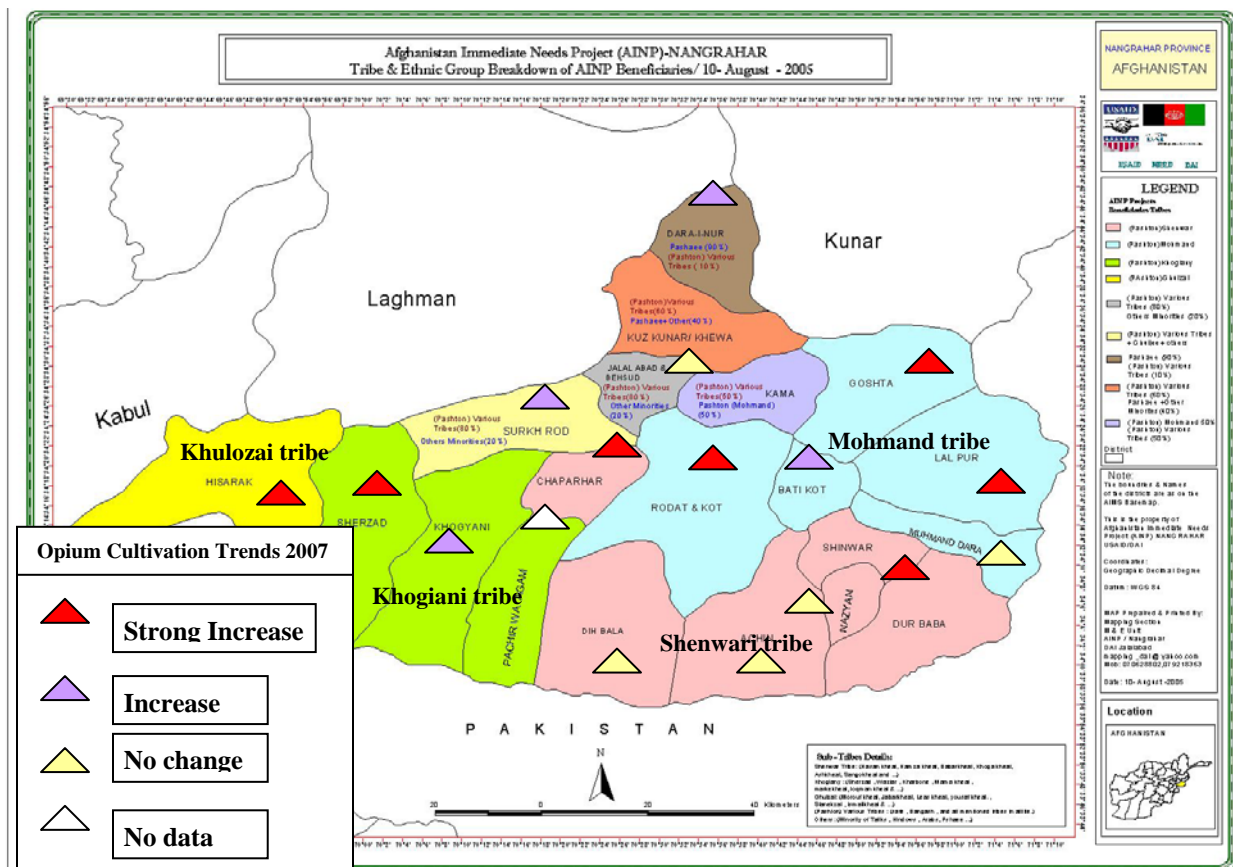
88 Giustozzi and Ullah, 3.

89 Ibid, 4.

90 Ibid, 6.

91 *Afghanistan 2007 Annual Opium Poppy Survey: Executive Summary* (United Nations Office of Drug Control, August 2007), 9, [www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07\\_ExSum\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf) (accessed January 7, 2008).

Figure 3. Nangharar Province Tribal Areas and Opium Production in 2007 (After: Map-Afghanistan Immediate Needs Project, Nangharar USAID/DAI; Opium Data- UNODC Afghanistan Opium Rapid Assessment Survey, 2007)



The majority of Pashtuns in Nangharar province are of the Sarbani clan, beneath which are many individual tribes. As can be seen from the red and purple triangles on the map, the Mohmands, Khogianis, and Khulozais participate heavily in poppy farming. The Shenwari are not increasing their cultivation this year except in their easternmost area.

Is there something about the makeup of these tribes that enables opium cultivation, or are other factors at play? Mansfield states that: “While geography is an important factor in determining the different livelihood options available in an area, ultimately it is the portfolio of assets and capabilities within each household that determines which particular opportunities are available to them...” He goes on to point out that “It is not unusual to find 20-35 members per household in districts such as Achin,

Shinwar and Pacha Wa Agam,”<sup>92</sup> which all happen to be situated in Nangarhar’s south where opium crops are so prevalent. Many of these families own only very small tracts of land, and so grow opium to get the most out of their land and ensure they can feed all the mouths. Families closer to Jalalabad, with larger plots of well-irrigated land, can subsist off of licit crops and plant opium poppy as insurance because they have more space.<sup>93</sup>

This example, coupled with the fact that opium crops are grown by all the tribes residing in rural areas of the province, seem to point to the fact that it is not a tribal-based cultural preference for growing poppy, but an economic reason. This may be true, but as Edwards points out from his Taliban-era research in Nangarhar:

While a handful of dominant political leaders associated with the provincial shura governed these most lucrative (government) posts, there was a hierarchy of commanders just below them, some of whom exercised control over greater or lesser governmental posts and some of whom operated independently as local strongmen in their village or district.<sup>94</sup>

This suggestion of a more hierarchical *rutbavi* structure at play in this province matches the evidence provided by Dorrnsoro that shows the historical propensity for Nangarhar’s land-owning commanders to be involved in opium cultivation and its movement into Pakistan via tribal links.<sup>95</sup> *Rutbavi* does not appear to be a cause of the opium production, but there is a correlation.

In turning to Helmand province, one sees that generally it has been Afghanistan’s top opium producer since the early 1990s. As evident in Figure 4 below, opium production is expected to increase all throughout Helmand in 2007.

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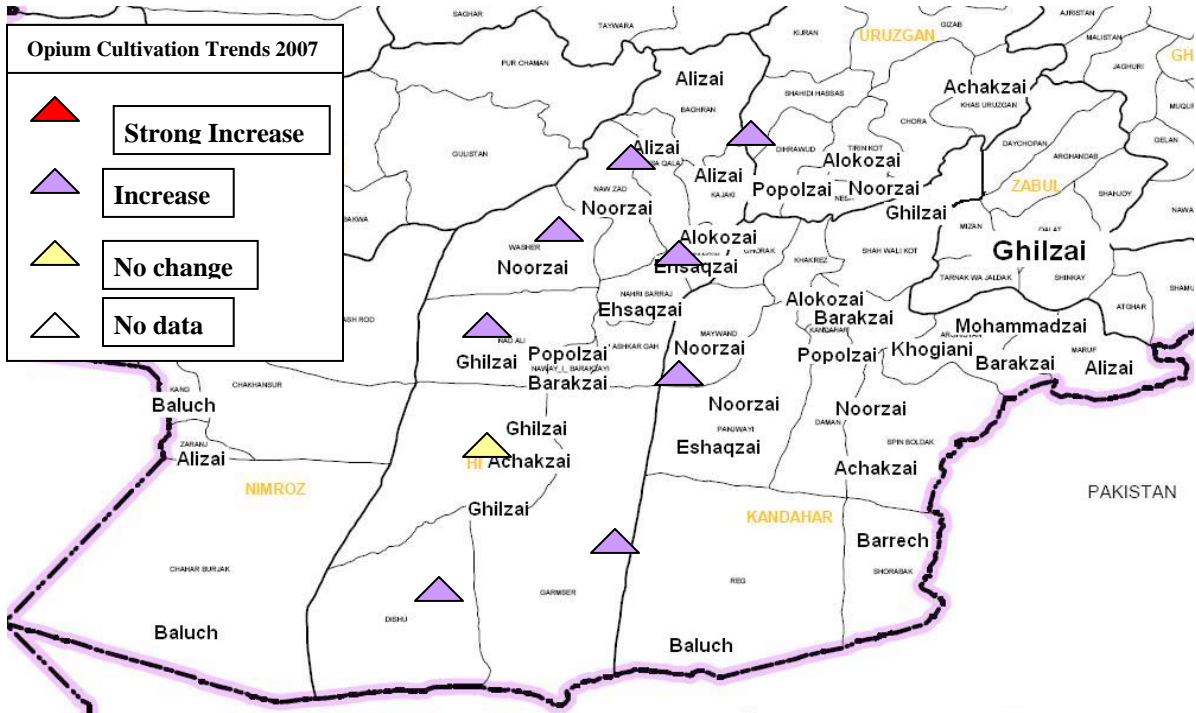
92 David Mansfield, “Responding to the Challenge of Diversity in Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan,” in *Afghanistan’s Drug Industry: Structure, Functioning, Dynamics, and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*, ed. Doris Buddenberg and William A. Byrd (November 28, 2006), 52-53.

93 Ibid, 53.

94 David B. Edwards, “Learning from the Swat Pathans: Political Leadership in Afghanistan, 1978-97,” *American Ethnologist* 25, no. 4 (November 1998): 721. Parenthetical insertion within the quote is this author’s.

95 Gilles Dorrnsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 136.

Figure 4. Helmand Province Tribal Areas and Opium Production in 2007 (After: “Tribes and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan 1980-2005,” Antonio Giustozzi, Crisis States Research Centre; Opium Data- UNODC Afghanistan Opium Rapid Assessment Survey, 2007.)



It appears that the Ghilzai minority and the Durrani (Alizai, Noorzai, Alokozai, Ehsaqzai, Popolzai, Achakzai and Barakzai) majority all participate in opium production. There is a strong similarity to the Nangarhar pattern discussed earlier. Mansfield points out that in the northern districts of Helmand (Durrani), where landholdings are small, larger percentages of land are used to cultivate poppy. In the central part of the province, landholdings are bigger and have better access to water.<sup>96</sup>

Therefore, similar to Nangarhar, poppy farming appears to have stronger linkages to poverty than it does to any particular clan or tribe. Also present in both provinces, is the *rutbavi* or hierarchical-feudalistic structure that Giustozzi and Ullah write: “sometimes even lead(s) to creation of states” when a unifying force such as a warlord comes along.<sup>97</sup> This thesis argues that the Taliban are one such unifying force.

<sup>96</sup> Mansfield, 51. Closely paraphrased.

<sup>97</sup> Giustozzi and Ullah, 4. Parentheses are this author’s.



Helmand's recent history bears out the relationship between tribal commanders and the opium trade, who since the 1980s have taxed it and provided security, much as the Taliban are doing now. As far as the opium-export system is concerned, there is a difference from Nangarhar's *qawm*-based system in which the same Pashtun tribe (the Shenwari)<sup>98</sup> lives on both sides of the Durand Line. In Helmand, it is Baluchi smugglers (with tribal ties in Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan) that move opium across international borders,<sup>99</sup> so an inter-ethnic linkage (Pashtun to Baluchi) has developed to facilitate medium-ranged trade in this area.

#### **D. CASE STUDY: THE TALIBAN**

Until now, this chapter has discussed enabling factors for proto-state development. This section looks at an organization, the Taliban as it currently exists, and evaluates according the characteristics of a proto-state. The Taliban passed through many phases since its birth as an organization in the early 1990s: from an ISI-supported, anti-mujahadeen warlord army, to the autonomous rulers of most of Afghanistan, to an “insurgent group” fighting a International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and United States backed state in Kabul. While the conventional view is that the current iteration of the Taliban is an Islamic insurgency, this case study attempts to view it through a state-building lens.

##### **1. Territory**

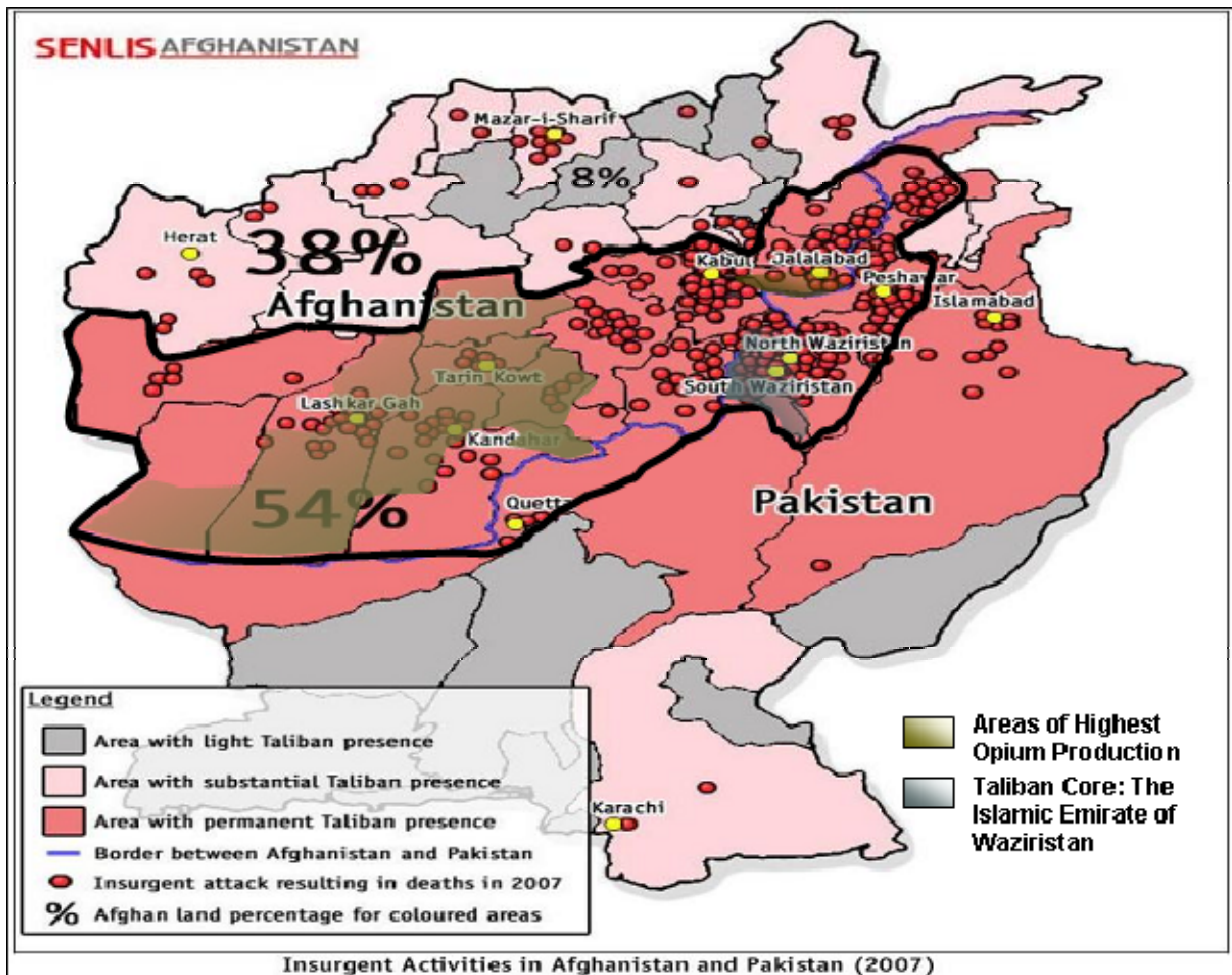
It is difficult to define the boundaries of a possible Taliban proto-state due to the warfare that grips the region and lack of reliable information. In addition, as in any state-like entity, the degree of control and organizational structure varies throughout the claimed territory. Figure 5 represents one effort at depicting the Taliban presence. Their primary area lies inside the heavy black line, and note also the areas of highest opium production.

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<sup>98</sup> “Ethnic Identity in Afghanistan,” Center for Culture and Conflict Studies at the Naval Postgraduate School, [http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/Ethnic\\_identity.html](http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/Ethnic_identity.html) (accessed May 2, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> Dorronsoro, 135.

Figure 5. Taliban Presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan (After: Senlis Council, <http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/maps> and UNODC World Drug Report 2007)



To evaluate this territory as a proto-state, one must look for the Taliban-controlled areas where, as put by Giustozzi and Ullah, “it is possible to speak of a tendency towards feudalization, such as the increasing reliance on dependent sharecroppers as a source of revenue and power.”<sup>100</sup> This can be seen in the “permanent” Taliban presence in the primary opium-producing (and Pashtun) areas as depicted in the above Figure, much of which lie in and adjacent to Helmand province, and to a lesser extent Nangarhar, as discussed in the last Section. (Of note: According to the UNODC *World Drug Report*

<sup>100</sup> Giustozzi and Ullah, 4.

2007: “In Pakistan, where opium poppy is grown in the Afghan-Pakistan border region, the Government reported a 59 per cent reduction of opium poppy cultivation bringing the total to just 1,545 ha.”<sup>101</sup> One must ask how the Islamabad government can accurately report on opium production in an area it does not even control, and barely maintains a presence.)

The most defining measure of the proto-state’s territory must be, however, the extent to which it legitimately dominates its population.<sup>102</sup> On the map above, this is depicted by the Taliban Core, which has been named The Islamic Emirate of Waziristan by Taliban commanders, and lately fallen under the control of an alliance of Taliban commanders called the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan under Baitullah Mehsud.<sup>103</sup> Whereas ISAF forces can move through most areas in Afghanistan (though they may be attacked by the Taliban or other groups), the Pakistani Army is essentially denied the ability to project power into much of the FATA. From this Core area, and other smaller areas along the Durand Line, the Taliban conduct many proto-state activities and launch operations into other areas, as discussed below.

## **2. Coercive Activities**

### ***a. War Making***

The Taliban clearly conducts war against NATO, United States, Kabul, and intermittently against Islamabad. The line between its war making (use of force to defeat enemies outside its borders) and state making activities (defeating enemies within) is not easy to discern for the very reasons discussed in the Territory Section. In the terms of the proto-state definition, it has not fully monopolized the use of force in the areas in operates, and one of its objectives is to expand its territory. Its forces for carrying out

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<sup>101</sup> *World Drug Report 2007*, 38.

<sup>102</sup> Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1978), 212-213.

<sup>103</sup> Bill Roggio, “Talibanistan: The Establishment of the Islamic State of Waziristan,” *The Fourth Rail Blog*, article posted December 1, 2006, [http://bilroggio.com/archives/2006/09/talibanistan\\_the\\_est/php](http://bilroggio.com/archives/2006/09/talibanistan_the_est/php) (accessed March 4, 2008).

both war making and state making activities are estimated at the low end “between 7,000 and 12,000 men,”<sup>104</sup> and at the high end 17,000 in Afghanistan and 40,000 in Pakistan.<sup>105</sup>

**b. State Making**

Under this category of coercion, which refers to the elimination of internal rivals to power, the Taliban is active in stamping out local opposition. In the FATA, for example, it has slain “...more than 150 pro-government maliks, or tribal elders...” from 2003-2008.<sup>106</sup> During the same time period, in southeast Afghanistan, the killing of “pro-government mullahs” was commonplace, as was the execution of central government officials.<sup>107</sup> Where tribal structures do not support it, it seeks to eliminate the tribal structures. In some areas, tribal structures are conducive to its extraction activities, which may influence its approach for bringing those areas under its sway.

**c. Protection**

Protection is the “elimination or neutralization of the enemies of (one’s) clients.”<sup>108</sup> This helps to build support and legitimacy. The Taliban protects farmers’ opium crops by killing or scaring away Kabul eradication teams. It protects the transportation of illicit crops and other trade goods, and the operation of heroin labs. In some areas it sets up courts to mete out justice according to its interpretation of Sharia law, and settles the disputes of people.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Cyrus Hodes and Mark Sedra, *The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 26.

<sup>105</sup> Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 35. He compiles his estimates from a combination of “press reports, NATO sources, ISAF sources, U.S. military sources, (and) UN sources.”

<sup>106</sup> Nicholas Schmidle, “Next-Gen Taliban,” *The New York Times*, January 6, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/06/magazine/06PAKISTAN-t.htm> (accessed March 15, 2008).

<sup>107</sup> Giostozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 46 and 102.

<sup>108</sup> Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” 181.

<sup>109</sup> Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 111.

*d. Extraction*

The Taliban's war making, as for any such group, necessitates the raising of capital, and raising capital means using force to hold on to sources of capital. Although it has external sources of revenue, taxing the drug trade appears to be of growing importance for lining its coffers. According to one analyst:

All poppy farmers pay a poppy tax called 'usha' to the local mayor or malik. This is about 10% of their profits after the harvesters have taken their cut (the harvesters take 25% of the opium they harvest- and in many cases they will harvest everything for the farmer, so that amounts to 25% of everything). We do know that in the south of Afghanistan the Taliban are forcibly taking half of the poppy tax that is collected. (Kandahar, Helmand, Nimroz, Zabul and southern Urozgan) This amounted to \$25m last year...and if you add in \$3m from eastern Farah, the grand total that we know of last year was about \$26m. All indicators are that this year the cultivation levels in the south are the same as last. So, in two years over \$50m will be available but, and this is key, this is ready money, available, on the spot, right here and right now as it is kept in biscuit (cookie to you!) tins under people's beds. A lot of money to buy bullets and pay tier 3 Taliban salaries (as much as \$5 per day?).<sup>110</sup>

This is only one means of extraction related to the drug trade. The Taliban are now known to tax virtually every step in the process. There is a 15 percent tax on heroin laboratories, a 15 percent tax on "transit," and an 18-20 percent protection tax paid by traffickers.<sup>111</sup> Aside from its extractive capabilities, the Taliban also draw upon financial support from Islamic charities that funnel money from throughout world through the Hawala networks. Much of this comes in to the Pakistan tribal areas, and then into Afghanistan.<sup>112</sup> It is therefore important, as many have noted, that elimination of opium will not hamstring the Taliban. However, controlling areas that grow opium cash crops provides a starting point for consolidating a geographical base that is self-sustaining.

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<sup>110</sup> Anonymous Afghanistan Analyst, Electronic Correspondence, April 2008.

<sup>111</sup> Hodes and Sedra, 39.

<sup>112</sup> "Taliban Profile," Jane's Information Group, April 16, 2008, [http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwit0270.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod\\_Name=JWIT&keyword](http://www8.janes.com.libproxy.nps.edu/Search/documentView.do?docId=/content1/janesdata/binder/jwit/jwit0270.htm@current&pageSelected=allJanes&backPath=http://search.janes.com/Search&Prod_Name=JWIT&keyword) (accessed April 15, 2008).

### 3. Identity and Legitimacy

The Taliban occupy territory under several different guises, some of the most prominent names being: the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Islamic Emirate of Waziristan, and the lately founded, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.<sup>113</sup> Despite these differences, it is important to understand, as Niazi writes: "...that the Taliban on both sides of the Durand Line, which separated Pakistan from Afghanistan, pledge their allegiance to Mullah Omar. As the Taliban do not recognize the Durand Line as an 'international border,' it asserts its identity as Taliban, not as Afghan Taliban or Pakistani Taliban."<sup>114</sup> (It is important to note that there is substantial evidence that in the beginning of 2008, a fracture has occurred between the Taliban operating on either side of the Durand Line. The ability of Mullah Omar and the Quetta Shura to repair the damage is yet to be validated.)<sup>115</sup>

Taliban identity is many-layered. At its most basic root, the national identity of the Taliban proto-state is the ethnic Pashtun. This is not to say that tribal and familial identity are not present and usually more important, but rather Pashtun identity is what connects the Taliban of Afghanistan and Pakistan, even more deeply than Islamic religious identity.<sup>116</sup> As already discussed, it is common for many Pashtuns to not recognize the Durand Line as the boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan. For example, in a recent non-scientific survey of Taliban Pashtun soldiers, the belief was pervasive that western Pakistan belongs to Afghanistan, to include the FATA areas and Quetta.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Schmidle, "Next-Gen Taliban."

<sup>114</sup> Tarique Niazi, "Pakistan's Peace Deal with Taliban Militants," *TerrorismMonitor* IV, no. 19 (October 5, 2006): 4.

<sup>115</sup> Alec E. Metz and Harold Ingram, "The Taliban Divide: Baitullah Mehsud and Mission Creep," *The Culture and Conflict Review* 2, no. 2 (March 2008), [http://www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS/Journal/Mar08/Metz\\_Ingram.html](http://www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS/Journal/Mar08/Metz_Ingram.html) (accessed April 20, 2008).

<sup>116</sup> Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan," 119.

<sup>117</sup> Graeme Smith, "Talking to the Taliban," March 22, 2008, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/talkingtothetaliban> (accessed March 31, 2008).

One level up from ethnic identity is religious identity. While not all Pashtuns practice the same brand of Islam that the Taliban embrace, the shared Islamic roots are powerful. The Taliban, especially the upper tiers, believe in Deobandi Islam, a South Asian conservative movement akin in many aspects to Wahhabism, that has over time taken on many aspects of Pashtunwali.<sup>118</sup> While the leadership speaks the language of this ideology, using it to explain their political objectives, run Sharia courts, recruit for its army, and mobilize support, its translation and affect among the common folk is variable. As in any organization or institution, identity and worldview is not uniform at all levels. Peasant farmers in Taliban-controlled areas are like peasant farmers the world over: they want to maintain or improve their means of living so that they can feed their families and hopefully save a little extra money. The basic foot soldier's outlook is very similar in that one's livelihood (often poppy farming) must be protected, and that family deaths due actions taken by foreigners and their puppet regimes must be avenged (part of the Pashtunwali code). At this level, due to a lack of education, very little is known about the world or even the nature of the infidel enemy. Knowing that they must fight the infidel, and that the 'ulema support these actions, is enough for them.<sup>119</sup>

Overall, Taliban legitimacy appears to be an initial state building stage reflective of Mao's famous line: "Political power comes out of the barrel of gun."<sup>120</sup> In general, Taliban legitimacy is stronger where traditional structures have broken down, described by Roy as a phenomenon in which "tribal ideology" no longer has the ability "to shape social relations of people inside Afghanistan."<sup>121</sup> Its legitimacy is also stronger where Kabul's influence is weak, and it can step in to enforce order and threaten or kill competitors. In these cases, its legitimacy is based on it being the best of several undesirable alternatives.

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<sup>118</sup> Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002), 58 and 228.

<sup>119</sup> Graeme Smith, "Talking to the Taliban."

<sup>120</sup> Mao Zedong, *Selected Works, Volume II* (Peking, China: Foreign Languages Press, 1954), 272.

<sup>121</sup> Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 219.

In areas where it has been more successful, however, its legitimacy goes beyond just the threat of force. Giustozzi argues that tribal leaders and Taliban gain legitimacy among the populace in different ways. The Taliban use “religion/’ideology’ and skills in building bridges among local communities,” while tribal elders use residual tribal traditions, control over wealth/land and community management skills...”<sup>122</sup> In this respect, the community-linking ability of the Taliban is much more a state-building force than the influence of the tribal elders, whose power is largely limited to their own families.<sup>123</sup> Areas of weak tribal power are scattered throughout Pashtun lands, and correspond very closely with Taliban centers of power. South Afghanistan, parts of southeast Afghanistan, and the NWFP and FATA areas of Pakistan all provide examples.<sup>124</sup>

A final note must be made of the Taliban propaganda campaign, which is widely viewed by analysts as a sophisticated and effective as compared to that of its competitors, for strengthening its legitimacy among the populace. It is extremely quick to pounce on the mistakes made by Kabul, Islamabad, and ISAF forces that result in the deaths of innocent civilians. It also uses radio stations, compact disks, DVDs, VCDs, television, web sites and “night letters” to communicate its messages. Taliban media is pervasive, culturally sensitive to its Pashtun audience, and a powerful tool eliciting desired behavior from those the organization is attempting to govern. <sup>125</sup>

#### **4. Political Goals and other Motivations**

Considering the importance of the Taliban to the conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan, there is a surprising (or perhaps unsurprising) lack of discussion about its

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<sup>122</sup> Giustozzi, 49.

<sup>123</sup> Johnson and Mason, “No Signs until the Burst of Fire,” 62.

<sup>124</sup> For discussions of the weakened traditional Pashtun tribal structure, see the following works: In southern Afghanistan, Giustozzi and Ullah, “Tribes and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005.” In southeastern Afghanistan, Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop*, 52. In Pakistan, Johnson and Mason, “No Signs until the Burst of Fire,” 71.

<sup>125</sup> Hodes and Sedra, 28-30. Giustozzi, 121. Thomas Johnson, “The Taliban Insurgency and an Analysis of Shabnamah (Night Letters),” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18, no. 3 (September 2007): 318-319.



political objectives. Instead there is a lot of talk about its military strategy, but as students of Clausewitz know, one must look beyond just military strategy to what it is being used to accomplish. In one sense, the political objectives of the Taliban seem relatively clear. According to a 2005 document called the Constitution of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, approved by the Supreme Shura Council, the Taliban want to reinstitute a government similar to the one it was building prior to 2001. Probably the most defining characteristic of this vision is contained in Article 5, which states: “The Islamic Sharia is the only source of lawmaking in the country, governing all aspects of individual and social life of the people in the light of life constructive teachings of Islam. Laws and resolutions should not be, in any way, contrary to religious provisions and foundations.”<sup>126</sup> It is important to note that this objective cannot always be seen to directly correspond with actions taken on the ground, due to differing motivations at different levels of the organization, and the decentralized nature of its structure.

To achieve this objective, the Taliban need a territory in which to train, regroup, re-supply and steadily expand its state building activities. Based on this, strategic and political sub-objectives emerge. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) identifies three overarching Taliban goals: 1) “Defend the FATA,” 2) “Destabilize the Government of Pakistan,” and 3) “Defeat the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).” All three are required to clear the region of non-Islamic forces and institute the Constitution.

## **5. Organization and Structure**

There are many different analyses of the Taliban structure due to lack of information and the fluid nature of warfare in the region. For the most part, this section

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<sup>126</sup> *The Constitution of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan*, Open Source Center Translation, August 13, 2007, <https://www.opensource.gov/login/login.fcc?TYPE=33554433&REALMOID=06-0005c357-460d-1240-80bf-8348fefff3b&GUID=&SMAUTHREASON=0&METHOD=GET&SMAGENTNAME=osc-frontdoor&TARGET=-SM-http%3a%2f%2fwww%2eopensource%2egov%2flogin%2findex%2ehtml> (accessed March 30, 2008).

used information from the CSIS Report referenced above, and the recent works of Hodes and Sedra, and Giustozzi for its assessment of the Taliban's attempt at instituting a state-like organization in its territory.

It is generally agreed that leadership Shura of the Taliban is based in Quetta, with Mullah Omar as the supreme leader. The Shura has had 10-33 members since its creation in 2003. According to Hodes and Sedra, as late as 2007:

From the Shura stem three military commands: one in Quetta, which runs operations in southern Afghanistan (Kandahar, Helmand, Uruzgan and Farah); one in the NWFP capital Peshawar, which runs operations north of the Khyber Pass (in Jalalabad, Kunar, Logar and Laghman); and one in Miran Shah, the capital of North Waziristan, which oversees operations in the eastern provinces of Khost, Paktya and Paktika.<sup>127</sup>

Within Afghanistan, this southern command is divided between a south and southeastern commander, and the Kabul region may have its own commander separate from the Peshawar command. This structure is not strictly hierarchical, nor is it set in stone. Several Taliban commanders have been killed, fired by Mullah Omar, or moved.<sup>128</sup> As mentioned above, the structure in Pakistan has been more fractious than usual since December 2007, and future relationship between the Quetta Shura and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.

Below the regional commands are leaders at the province and district levels, and below these, "tactical commanders" with squad to platoon-sized elements.<sup>129</sup> The Taliban are often divided into "tiers" for the purposes of describing recruitment and motivations in the organization:

- Tier 1: "Purely ideologically driven madrasa students."
- Tier 2: "...jihadist recruits provided by village mullahs..."

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<sup>127</sup> Hodes and Sedra, 25.

<sup>128</sup> Giustozzi, 90-92.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 91.

- Tier 3: This tier represents the base of support, the citizens of the proto-state so to speak. “communities and opportunists”
- Tier 4: “Mercenary elements.”<sup>130</sup>

It is the members of these tiers that carry out the coercive activities outlined earlier, using existing cultural networks as needed, such as *qawm* and mullahs sympathetic to its cause.

## E. CONCLUSION

This chapter opened by describing a brief history of the opium trade in the Golden Crescent, showing that the drug business boom in Afghanistan is due to a wide variety of factors that significantly predate the Taliban. Next, it delved into proto-state development enablers, such as the British colonial policy for the NWFP and FATA, which after being codified into law by Pakistan, essentially meant no governance of the region at all by Islamabad. The Durand Line’s lack of impact as an international border was discussed, as was the nationalistic Pashtunistan concept as it affects politics and social mobilization. Next, Pashtun tribal factors were examined in relation to the drug business. A correlation between *Rutbavi* (hierarchical) tribal structure and opium cash cropping was identified, and *qawm* was discussed as an enabler for moving drugs internally through the region.

Finally, the case study analyzed the Taliban according to the proto-state definition and framework elucidated in Chapter I. This exercise showed that the Taliban possess many apparatuses of a proto-state, but structurally are still quite fragmented throughout the Golden Crescent region. Its identity, motivations, and legitimacy are as uneven as the areas it controls, although in the south of Afghanistan, and especially in the FATA, it has established core territories. Extraction of capital from the opium business has become a mainstay of its organization, and it exercises strong control over the highest producing areas for this cash crop. This combination of controlled territory and a viable cash crop are the factors that stand out the most in viewing the Taliban as an evolving proto-state.

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<sup>130</sup> Giustozzi, 42.

Since a strong central state never existed in this region, instead of looking at the conflict through an insurgency-counterinsurgency lens, it is much more useful to view it as a competition in state building. In many ways, the Taliban appear to be ahead of Kabul. The ultimate level of cohesion achievable by the Taliban, however, is questionable. Under the obvious layer of Islam ideology that drives its actions, the Taliban is made up of Pashtuns. As Johnson and Mason stress, “Pashtun tribal society is...inherently resistant to externally or internally imposed hierarchical order.”<sup>131</sup> Perhaps proto-state-ness is the greatest extent of state-building it can achieve while mobilized under a religious banner

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<sup>131</sup> Johnson and Mason, “No Sign until the Burst of Fire,” 62.

### **III. THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE: BURMA**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The “Golden Triangle,” consisting of Burma, Laos, and Thailand, is one of a few regions in the world where the “perfect storm” of ethnicity, opium, difficult terrain, and nationalism combine to create an environment ripe for drug-influenced politics and stubborn insurgencies. While international political and media focus on the region has slowly faded, especially with the end of the Cold War and the rise of other conflicts, lessons can be drawn from the six decades-long conflict and illicit drug production and trafficking that still continues there. Burma in particular remains a major source of Mainland Southeast Asia insecurity. The spillover affects its low intensity conflict, such as illicit drugs, refugees, human trafficking, and refugees, remain a regional and international concern.

As discussed in Chapter I, this thesis argues that a state-building approach is better for studying “insurgencies” in general, and especially conflicts with an apparent correlation with illicit drug production. This approach must be tempered by an understanding the socio-cultural characteristics of the people involved in the conflict. The questions addressed here are similar in scope to those in Chapter II: How does insurgency create proto-states in Burma? And, how do geography, socio-cultural characteristics and the drug industry contribute to proto-state formation? As stated earlier in this work, the word “insurgent” is a political term. Using the state-building approach, this thesis prefers to look upon insurgents neutrally as the security and defense apparatus of the proto-state. For many people living in the proto-state, these so-called insurgents are relied upon for protection and justice.

To answer these two questions, this chapter begins by outlining the geography, climate and historical background of opium as it relates to conflict in the Golden Triangle. This section will be somewhat longer than the similar section in Chapter II, because the large-scale drug production related to civil war has been going on in Southeast Asia for nearly twice as long as it has in the Golden Crescent. Like the Golden

Crescent, a burgeoning war economy helped grow the trade in opiates and provided a source of funding for various armed groups fighting against the Burman state in Rangoon. The next section looks at the major non-economic proto-state enablers, specifically in the Shan State, which is the predominant opium-growing area. It addresses the historical, political and cultural reasons why ethnic groups in Burma's opium-growing region have sought autonomy from the lowland Burman majority. The key proto-state enablers identified here are divided into three categories. The first is the British colonial legacy that left Burma with boundaries drawn around areas that had never really been part of the Kingdom of Burma, and a nationalist Burman majority with little desire to affect equitable political solutions with the multitude of ethnic minorities living in these areas. The second enabler is described within very large category of ethno-nationalistic and communist driven conflict, and how it led to fragmented, largely autonomous enclaves throughout the Shan State that depended on opiate production and taxation of trade for capital (or just plain survival). The third category of enablers is found within the socio-cultural realm. Two main items are identified. The first is *gumsa* as a feudal political and extraction system that provided a baseline structure that armed groups used for capital. The second is the idea of *guanxi* (in its meaning as a relationship network in which people cooperate with each other for mutual gain), and its enabling of certain individuals that were either members of the armed groups or just allowed to operate in their areas, to construct loosely organized regional trafficking networks.

The last section is a case study of the United Wa State Party (UWSP), one of many ethnic groups parties/militias in northeastern Burma, and probably the most successful in establishing its own proto-state in the region. The same five-part framework outlined in Chapter I and applied to the Taliban in Chapter II is used here, but a more historical approach is used. This is because the "Wa proto-state" is in a later stage of development compared to the "Taliban proto-state" (a much more nebulous and hotly contested entity). The case study shows that the Wa leveraged their army, geography and opium production to secure a largely autonomous territory and a ceasefire with the Burmans. A key enabler in this process (in addition to the general enablers described in

the last paragraph) was and continues to be China's foreign policy that sees Northeastern Burma as a "buffer state" for border security and a foothold for squeezing economic benefit out of its xenophobic neighbor.

## **B. BACKGROUND ON THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE OPIUM TRADE**

### **1. Geography and Climate**

The bulk of Golden Triangle opium production has always occurred in Burma, and within Burma, predominantly in the Shan State (this chapter's sub-region of focus). This area is situated on a plateau with its own system of valleys and hills separate from lowland Burma; it shares international borders with China, Laos and Thailand. The Salween River, fed by the waters of the Himalayas, bisects the plateau. Much of the terrain is heavily forested, and the hot, rainy climate of this tropical region (there is a short dry season) creates many challenges for its agrarian inhabitants. Taken as a whole, it is an exceedingly difficult and unforgiving environment.

Farmers who grow poppy in this area usually plant their fields at "300-800 meters elevation," and due to the topography of the region, usually on the sides of hills.<sup>132</sup> These poppy farmers grow other crops as well, such as corn and rice. The opium poppy (a relatively hardy plant) is usually planted as insurance, should other crops fail. In Southeast Asia, it is planted in October or November, and harvested by February.<sup>133</sup>

### **2. Historic Backdrop of Opium and Conflict**

While there is evidence that opium was present in Mainland Southeast Asia at least as early as the 1300s, it is unclear exactly when opium poppy farming first came to the highland area of the Golden Triangle. Chinese-Muslim merchants—running mule trade-convoys from Yunnan to Siam—were probably the first to introduce it to tribes already dwelling in the remote hills and mountains. Until the 19th century, it was

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<sup>132</sup> Ronald D. Renard, *The Burmese Connection: Illegal Drugs and the Making of the Golden Triangle* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 95.

<sup>133</sup> Entrance Exhibit, Hall of Opium tour, Golden Triangle Park, Thailand, February 2008.

predominantly grown for medicinal purposes, and in small quantities. Migrations caused by conflict and population pressures in Yunnan during the 1800s, brought more hill tribes (the Hmong, Yao, Lisu, Kachin and Lahu among others) to the region. Opium was a mainstay crop for these people, and they brought the seeds with them.<sup>134</sup>

Groups already present, like the hill tribe Wa, Palaung, En and others, also began to cultivate opium more widely during the 1800s. While these peoples were not the main source of opium in Southeast Asia during this time—most came from India, and hill-tribe crops were illegal due to the colonial and Siamese legal monopolies—the practice became well-entrenched and affected overall supply and prices in the opium market.<sup>135</sup>

The British, French and Siamese at first suppressed Southeast Asia hill tribe opium crops to maintain a grip on their respective monopolies. Political events in Siam changed this. In 1932, a successful coup forced the Siamese King to abdicate and the new government implemented a constitutional monarchy. After this, the Siamese military began to import much more opium from the hill tribe areas of Southeast Asia, to include tribes in Burma's Shan State.<sup>136</sup>

The next major opium production-increasing event occurred when World War II (WWII) trade route disruptions cut off the supply of opium flowing from Persia and India to Southeast Asia. The French responded by forcing hill tribes in Indochina to increase production.<sup>137</sup> The Thai solution involved the occupation of a part of Burma's Shan plateau (with Japanese approval), as Wyatt writes: "This campaign may have been motivated by the Thai need to develop a new source of opium to replace opium previously obtained from British India."<sup>138</sup>

Despite these developments, Southeast Asia, to include Burma, was still not a major producer of opium prior to WWII. Locals consumed the part of the crop not taken

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<sup>134</sup> Martin Booth, *Opium: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1996), 256. Renard, 14-15.

<sup>135</sup> Booth, 257.

<sup>136</sup> McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin*, 101-103.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, 115-120.

<sup>138</sup> David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2003), 248.



by the Siamese or Chinese, and even used opium as a form of currency (an aspect exploited by American forces: some hill tribes in Burma fought against the Japanese for the United States in exchange for opium flown in from India).<sup>139</sup> It took regional conflict, international geopolitics, and the “war on drugs” to make the Golden Triangle the center of a trade with lucrative profits that were once legal and the foundation of kingdoms and colonial empires.

The real opium boom started soon after Burma gained its independence from the British in 1948. Civil war almost immediately broke out in the former colony: a combination of ethnic groups fighting for states separate from a Burman-dominated state of which they had never been a part, and an even more threatening Communist opposition. This situation was exacerbated by elements of the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) army being pushed into the Shan State (which Burma claimed as its territory) by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) forces in 1950. The KMT supported itself through the native opium trade and clandestine U.S. aid, but after trying and failing several times to mount successful offensives back into China, it settled in to stay. As Kaufman notes, it set up “a state within a state,” with opium exports (traded with the help of the Thai army) as its primary industry.<sup>140</sup> This lasted until 1961 when the Burma Army, with considerable assistance from the Chinese People’s Liberation Army, drove the KMT from its strongholds and across the border into Thailand.<sup>141</sup>

After this, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and many ethnic militias followed the KMT’s example of protecting and taxing the opiate business. Of course, with the heavily involvement of the United States in Southeast Asia as part of its Cold War anti-communism efforts, the CPB was another enemy to be dealt with at all costs. Through the Thai military, border police and intelligence groups (that were also fighting

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<sup>139</sup> Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948*, 71.

<sup>140</sup> Victor S. Kaufman, “Trouble in the Golden Triangle: The United States, Taiwan and the 93rd Nationalist Division,” *The China Quarterly* 166 (June 2001): 441-445.

<sup>141</sup> Lintner, 201-202.

their own armed communist movement), the CIA supported certain ethnic militias in Burma against the CPB. At least some of these groups were at the same time benefiting from the opium business.<sup>142</sup>

Throughout the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s, notable warlords with fuzzy motivations arose in the Shan State. It was often unclear whether they were ethno-nationalists or communists, drug lords, cronies of Rangoon, or a combination of these. The most predominant such leaders were: General Li of the KMT (commanding groups in Burma from Thailand), Li Hsing Ho of the Rangoon-supported “home guard,” also known as the Ka Kwe Ye (KKY), Kyi Myint (Zhang Zhiming) of the CBP, and the infamous Khun Sa of the Shan United Army (SUA).<sup>143</sup> The high level of corruption in Thailand continued to contribute to the trade, despite coups and other changes in the internal political arena.<sup>144</sup>

Although the Golden Crescent by most reports did not surpass the Golden Triangle in opium production until 1990-91,<sup>145</sup> 1975 marked the beginning of events that would eventually result in the bulk of world production shifting to the mountains of Central Asia. This happened for a variety of reasons: new communist governments in Laos and Vietnam disrupted traditional trafficking routes; a long Southeast Asia drought lasted from the late 1970s to the early 1980s; and Thailand increased its anti-drug and crop substitution programs, and its growing economy provided economic alternatives.<sup>146</sup>

In Burma, the CPB continued as the most powerful player in the Shan State, a state in and of itself, supported by the opiate trade, until it finally disintegrated in the late 1980s. Surrenders, splits, and betrayals continued to occur within and between the various ethnic militias. The existence of the KKY home guard, allied to the government, showed that some ethnic leaders could be co-opted through promises of a cut of the opium trade and

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<sup>142</sup> Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, 277.

<sup>143</sup> Lintner, 480-495.

<sup>144</sup> Booth, 275.

<sup>145</sup> *Global Illicit Drug Trends 1999*, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, (United Nations Publication, 1999), 23, [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/news\\_and\\_publications.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/news_and_publications.html) (accessed December 10, 2007).

<sup>146</sup> Ikramul Haq, “Pak-Afghan Trade in Historical Perspective,” *Asian Survey*, 36, no. 10 (Oct., 1996): 949.

amnesty. Through the KKY, even the government had found a way to benefit from the opiate business. At one point, Khun Sa, the most powerful warlord and drug king pin, made a secret deal with the government to attack Shan nationalists “in exchange for a free hand in the opium trade.”<sup>147</sup>

In the 1990s, Rangoon forces “captured” Khun Sa with no noticeable long-term reduction in the heroin trade.<sup>148</sup> This led to rise of a new power in northeast Burma, Bao Youxiang of the United Wa State Army (UWSA). Bao, an ex-CPB commander, organized his 20,000-man force around the Wa ethnic group that had once formed the core of the CPB army. The bulk of Burma’s opium and heroin trade took place in UWSA territory, and now it purportedly controls the bulk of Burma’s methamphetamine production as well.<sup>149</sup> According to Jelsma: “Today about 700 million tablets (methamphetamine) are thought to be shipped from Burma across the border to Thailand, corresponding to about twenty tons of methamphetamine or 7.5 percent of global manufacture.”<sup>150</sup> So despite the reduction in Golden Triangle opium production (see Table 2 below), the regional opiate and drug problem has not simply faded away.

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<sup>147</sup> Lintner, 461.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 412-414.

<sup>149</sup> Andrew Marshall and Anthony Davis, “Soldiers of Fortune: Once a Reclusive Clan of Headhunters, Burma’s Wa Tribe has become Asia’s Most Dangerous Drug Cartel,” *Times International*, December 16, 2002, <http://www.time.com/time/asia/covers/1101021216/story.html> (accessed February 10, 2008). See also: Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, “The Yaa Baa Phenomenon in Mainland Southeast Asia,” *Harvard Asia Pacific Review* 9, no. 2 (Fall, 2005): 19-22.

<sup>150</sup> Martin Jelsma, “Burma in the Global Drug Market,” in *Trouble in the Triangle: Opium and Conflict in Burma*, ed. Martin Jelsma, Tom Kramer and Pietje Vervest (Chiang Mai: Silksworm Books, 2005), 169.

Table 2. Golden Triangle Potential Opium Production in Metric Tons<sup>151</sup>

	1940	1944	1970	1979	1981	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990*	1991
Burma	15.5	97	713	161 (Drought)	650	935	997	1125	1544	1621	1728
Laos						?	198	267	278	202	196
Thailand						26	24	17	31	20	23
				<b>Drought</b>							
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Burma	1660	1790	1580	1660	1760	1670	1300	895	1080	1090	828
Laos	128	169	120	128	140	147	123	124	167	134	112
Thailand	14	17	3	2	5	4	8	8	6	6	9
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007						
Burma	810	370	312	315	460						
Laos	120	43	14	20	9						
Thailand	5	2	2	3	4						

\* 1990-91 was the period in which most reports say the Golden Crescent passed the Golden Triangle in total opium poppy production.

In summary, opium had different effects at different times, depending on resources available and changing political strategies. This suggests opium was not a *cause* of conflict or peace, but rather could be used as an *enabler* of either. As Snyder observes:

...in Burma, opium initially fueled *chaos* by providing income for rebel armies. After 1990, however, lootable resources had a different effect: They contributed to the consolidation of a *stable military regime* that ended the civil war and forcibly imposed political order. The successful construction of institutions of joint extraction by the Burmese military transformed opium from a source of conflict into a source of order.<sup>152</sup>

Relative to the last 60 years of history in Burma, this observation is accurate on the surface. While it is probably true that the military regime is stronger, the jury remains out on whether drug money's corrupting influence will actually make it more stable. In addition, the imposition of political order to which opium contributed is highly debatable. The cease-fires Rangoon enjoys with these proto-states (funded in significant part by opium and methamphetamines) are delicate matters. One can argue that the longer some

<sup>151</sup> After: UNODC *World Drug Report 2007* and *Opium Poppy Cultivation in South East Asia 2007: Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand* (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, October 2007). Alfred W. McCoy, *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade*.

<sup>152</sup> Richard Snyder, "Does Lootable Wealth Breed Disorder? A Political Economy of Extraction Framework," *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 8 (2006): 955.

of these entities are allowed autonomy to develop their own economies, without disarming, renewed hostilities could result in much larger problems with Naypyidaw (the new center of Burman state power). A basic question is: at what expense to Naypyidaw's state influence and penetration did this "order" result?

### **C. PROTO-STATE ENABLERS**

This section focuses on the Shan State of Burma, since as mentioned above; it continues to be the epicenter of opium production in the Golden Triangle, in addition to one of the hotbeds of warfare within the region. It is also in the Shan State that the proto-state of this chapter's case study emerged.

#### **1. Borders and Colonial Legacy**

Since migrating from southern China into the highland valleys of Burma more than 10 centuries ago, the Shan ethnic group alternately conquered or were conquered by the lowland Burmans, and fought Mongols, Chinese, and other ethnic hill tribes (including the head-hunting Wa) on different occasions. The Shan were powerful rivals of the Burmans for several centuries until 1604, when they capitulated to a loose suzerainty under the lowlanders.<sup>153</sup>

Later, during the colonial period of the late 1800s, a small British force traveled throughout what was then known as the Shan States to establish the Empire's own suzerainty of the various Shan princes or *Sawbwas* and the hill tribes. Some resisted more than others. The British wanted to ensure control over the inhospitable region between its India-Burma colony and French Indo-China, and claim access to the wood and mineral resources.<sup>154</sup> In fierce competition with the French in Mainland Southeast Asia, Britain employed the buffer strategy used elsewhere throughout its empire. A British governor oversaw the territory as the Federated Shan States, with an attendant

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<sup>153</sup> Josef Silverstein, *Burmese Politics: The Dilemma of National Unity* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1980), 9.

<sup>154</sup> John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1958), 135-136.

council. This system fell outside the parliamentary political system set up to govern the lowland area of central Burma. Shan feudal lords ruled the Shan states (around 30 in number) throughout the entire British colonial period, outside of the political processes and bureaucratic development taking place in Burma's center.<sup>155</sup> For the Shan, it seemed that whoever ruled Burma made little difference, as long as they enjoyed autonomy.

It was during this period that the British settled with its neighbors some the external borders of the Shan State as they appear on maps today. The Siam-Shan State border was established in 1892 and the Mekong River marked the line with French Indochina (Laos). Much of the border between the Shan State and Yunnan, China, including a "200-mile border stretch of Wa-Lahu country," was not "demarcated" at this time.<sup>156</sup> In fact, demarcation of the entire China-Burma border was not accomplished until 1960.<sup>157</sup> (Although one must question the validity of a state's border demarcation if it controls very little of the territory adjacent to this border.)

Like in so many places where European colonial powers drew arbitrary boundaries in the interest of their empires, "international" borders mean little to the people living near them in Northeastern Burma/Southwestern Yunnan. Two excerpts in particular illustrate this point. First, as Chin and Zhang describe:

China and Myanmar share more than 2,000 kilometers of a common border, most of which is loosely guarded. Local villagers have for centuries traversed back and forth without regard to which country they may step on in carrying out commercial, agricultural, as well as familial activities. Chinese farmers lease land from their relatives or friends on the Myanmar side to grow and harvest crops. Local women and children comb the hills straddling the two countries to gather mushrooms and herbs each year...Because of dense vegetation in this near-tropical climate region, it is often difficult to tell where Chinese territory ends and Myanmar begins. Local people use official border crossings because they

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<sup>155</sup> Lintner, 53-55.

<sup>156</sup> Cady, 136.

<sup>157</sup> David Arnott, "China-Burma Relations," in *Challenges to Democratization in Burma* (Stockholm, Sweden: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2001), 79, [http://www.idea.int/asia\\_pacific/burma/index.cfm](http://www.idea.int/asia_pacific/burma/index.cfm) (accessed April 10, 2008).

are on main roads and are easier for transporting heavy goods. Otherwise, unguarded pathways over the hills are just as convenient for those who want to avoid the border police.<sup>158</sup>

Specific to the Shan State's borders with neighboring countries, Arnott writes:

In areas like mountainous northeast Burma/southwest China, people moved where their needs took them. Family or cultural links to the local populations or the demands of local warlords or village heads were more important than any concept of nationality. Thus, Chinese-speaking people have been moving in and through and out of Burma for thousands of years. The Wa, Lahu, Shan and Kachin live on both sides of the China/Burma border.<sup>159</sup>

The picture painted by these authors is of ethnic groups with easy mobility across an international boundary. This gives them a sort of “economic depth” (albeit a poor one, as poverty lies on both sides of the line). Shared culture and language make trade more efficient, particularly in the Eastern Shan State and Wa areas. For example, as an official Chinese website states, most of “The Va (Wa) ethnic minority, with a population of 396,610, live in Ximeng and Cangyuan,” which are called “autonomous counties,”<sup>160</sup> and situated directly across the border from Shan State Wa country.

## **2. Ethno-nationalism and Communism**

In the Shan State, the challenging terrain of isolated valleys and highlands, combined with many migrations of people over the centuries, created a veritable stew of tribes and ethnicities. The Shan ethnic group (related to the Thai and Lao) is the

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<sup>158</sup> Ko-lin Chin and Sheldon X. Zhang, “The Chinese Connection: Cross-border Drug Trafficking between Myanmar and China” (final report to the United States Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs National Institute of Justice, April, 2007), 22-23, [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218254.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218254.pdf) (accessed January 12, 2008).

<sup>159</sup> Arnott, 79.

<sup>160</sup> “The Va Ethnic Minority,” China Internet Information Center, State Council Information Office and the China International Publishing Group in Beijing, <http://www.china.org.cn/e-groups/shaoshu/shao-2-va.htm> (accessed May 2, 2008).

traditional plateau valley dweller, while smaller hill-tribes live in the uplands, particularly in areas adjacent to the Chinese border.<sup>161</sup> (See Figure 6 below.)

Figure 6. Burma (Myanmar) and the Shan State (After: United Nations Department of Public Information map and Curtis N. Thomson article.<sup>162</sup>)



<sup>161</sup> "Shan State," *The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), <http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0844700.html> (accessed December 13, 2007).

<sup>162</sup> United Nations Department of Public Information, January 2004, <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/myanmar.pdf> (accessed December 13, 2007). Ethnic group distribution inset map from: Curtis N. Thomson, "Political Stability and Minority Groups in Burma," *Geographical Review* 85, no. 3 (July, 1995): 278.



As the largest ethnic minority in the ethnically complex Shan State, the Shan make up nine percent or 4.2 million of Burma's total population of 47 million. Most Shan practice Hinayana Buddhism.<sup>163</sup> Smaller ethnic groups with notable population sizes (above 100,000) are the Akha (100,000), the Chinese (400,000), the Kachin (500,000-1,500,000), the Lahu (170,000-250,000), the Palaung (300,000-400,000), and the Wa (400,000).<sup>164</sup> Many other smaller groups also exist.

It was from this ethnic stew that numerous militias emerged during the first decade after British departure. Within the Shan State, the Shan were one of the last to rise up, while smaller ethnic groups like the Pa-O fought with Rangoon almost from the beginning. With the approach of Burma's independence, many Shan feudal princes smelled the winds of change. They threw their lot in with the Nationalist Burmans, under the independence movement leadership of the charismatic Aung San, and signed the Panglong Agreement in February 1947. This document guaranteed them "full autonomy in internal administration" and "the right to secede from the Union of Burma after a ten-year period of independence—that is, in 1958—should they be dissatisfied with the new federation."<sup>165</sup> The 1947 Constitution also included these rights for the Shan, with all the individual fiefdoms combined into a single Shan State.<sup>166</sup>

Ten years passed, and Prime Minister U Nu stated Rangoon's position on the possibility of Shan secession clear, saying that the Union must be preserved:<sup>167</sup> this despite the promises of the Constitution and Panglong Agreement. Soon thereafter, the first Shan army grew out of a local Shan militia—armed by the Burmese Army to fight the KMT—that was sympathetic to a Shan nationalist named Sao Noi. He founded the Noon

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<sup>163</sup> "Burma," *CIA World Factbook*, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html> (accessed December 11, 2007).

<sup>164</sup> For all smaller ethnic group populations except the Wa: Martin Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma: Development, Democracy and Human Rights* (London: Anti-Slavery International, 1994), 34, [http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs3/Ethnic\\_Groups\\_in\\_Burma-ocr.pdf](http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs3/Ethnic_Groups_in_Burma-ocr.pdf) (accessed April 30, 2008). For the Wa: Special Consultant to UN development project in Wa Special Region Number 2, Personal Interview, March 2008.

<sup>165</sup> Lintner, 81.

<sup>166</sup> Smith, 79.

<sup>167</sup> Lintner, 184.

Suk Harn, or “Young Brave Warriors,” genuinely dedicated to freedom for the Shan. The initial core group of this movement was motivated primarily by grievance against Rangoon. However, the KMT had set the example for the region by funding itself with the opium trade, and from the beginning, the Shan resistance followed suit. It set its first camp up near the Thailand border so it could maintain friendly contacts with the Thai authorities and exact protection taxes from opium mule caravans traveling through its territory. More people joined, some university students, dissatisfied with Ne Win’s new Caretaker Government. Some came because they wanted freedom for the Shan, and some came to benefit from smuggling and other border business ventures.<sup>168</sup>

One of the chief problems with this first armed movement was that it was in no way associated with established Shan political leaders, and had no real political voice. In fact, Lintner records that (text in parentheses is my own):

On 24 April 1959—during the reign of Ne Win’s Caretaker Government—all thirty-four *saohpas* (Shan princes) had formally given up their position...The Shan states had become Shan State (again!), administered by an elected state government. Rangoon probably viewed this as a victory over the “feudal chiefs” who had “surrendered their powers,” while the Shans saw it was the formal finalisation of a movement that had begun several years before: the *saohpas* did not hand over power to Rangoon, but to the elected Shan State government.<sup>169</sup>

Even in 1959, most of the Shan State leaders believed that a peaceful solution was possible that involved a better federal system. They, like the central government, thought the Shan State was better off within the Union. U Nu agreed to hold talks. For the Shan leaders, the central government still offered an open ear, while the military was a beast ravaging its land. The discussions for an equitable solution slowly continued, past the end of the Caretaker Government in 1960 that saw U Nu’s return to the position of Prime Minister, and all the way up until 1962.<sup>170</sup> It was this split between traditional Shan

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<sup>168</sup> Smith, 185-189.

<sup>169</sup> Lintner, 202.

<sup>170</sup> Smith, 192-194.

elites and Shan “educated youth” with “anti-feudalist” sentiments that caused the “disunity of Shan nationalism.”<sup>171</sup> This is a primary causal factor of the fragmentation this section details.

Out in the countryside, the armed Shan resistance was already transforming. By 1960, after its first clash with Burmese forces, the Noon Suk Harn became fragmented when a group split off and formed the Shan State Independence Army (SSIA). This began a long string of break-offs and general fragmentation that ensured the Burmese Army never faced a fully unified Shan resistance. Nor did the various other ethnic minority groups form effective alliances between themselves or with the CPB, despite many efforts. (See Figure 7 below.)

Figure 7. Armies in the Shan State: Fragmentation<sup>172</sup> (Blue= Shan, Gray= Chinese, Pink= Communist, Yellow= Other Ethnic, Boldface= Major drug trafficking organizations, *Italics=Still Fighting*)

Name of Armed Group	Years Fighting Rangoon/Status
Nook Suk Harn “Young Brave Warriors”	1958-?? (now defunct)
Shan State Independence Army (SSIA)	1960-1964
Shan National United Front (SNUF)	1961-1964
Shan National Army (SNA)	1961-1964
<i>Shan State Army South (SSA-S)</i>	<i>1964-present</i>
Shan State Army North (SSA-N)	1995-present (cease-fire)
Shan State National Army (SSNA)	1995-2005 (cease-fire, then joined SSA-S in 2005)
Shan National Independence Army (SNIA)	1966-1968
Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA)	1969-1984 and combined named used until 1998 by SSA-N/S/SSNA
Tai-land Revolutionary Council (TRC)	1984-1985
<b>Mong Tai Army (MTA)</b>	<b>1987-1996 (a Khun Sa outfit)</b>
Shan Nationalities People’s Liberation Army (SNPLA)	1974-1989
Tai Independence Army (TIA)	1978-?? (now defunct)
<b>Kuomintang (KMT)</b>	<b>1950-1961 (after 1961, operated through proxies)</b>
Kokang Revolutionary Force (KRF)	1963-1964
Kokang People’s Liberation Army (KPLA)	1967-1968
Shan State Revolutionary Army (SSRA)	1976-?? (now defunct)

<sup>171</sup> David Brown, “From Peripheral Communities to Ethnic Nations: Separatism in Southeast Asia,” *Pacific Affairs* 61, no. 1 (Spring, 1988): 71.

<sup>172</sup> After: Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948*, 430-495. Maung Chan, “Ten Years After Mong Tai Army’s Surrender,” *Burma Digest*, January 25, 2006, <http://burmadigest.info/2006/01/25/ten-years-after-mong-tai-army-s-surrender/> (accessed May 2, 2008). “SSA, Non-ceasefire Wa Cement Alliance,” *Shan Herald Agency for News*, March 27, 2007, [http://www.bnionline.net/index.php?Itemid=6&id=1482&option=com\\_content&task=view](http://www.bnionline.net/index.php?Itemid=6&id=1482&option=com_content&task=view) (accessed May 2, 2008).

Shan United Army	1972-1985 (a Khun Sa outfit)
<b>Communist Party of Burma (CPB)</b>	<b>1939-1989 (in Shan State from 1968-1989)</b>
<b>Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAP)</b>	<b>1989-present (Main drug trafficking organization in Burma in 1999)</b>
<b>United Wa State Army (UWSA)</b>	<b>1989-present (verbal cease-fire in 1989 but have had sporadic skirmishes with govt. forces)</b>
<b>National Democratic Alliance Army</b>	<b>1989-present (cease-fire in 1989)</b>
Shan State Communist Party (SSCP)	1956-1958
Akha	1967-1970 (joined communist group)
Pawngyawng National Defense Force (PNDF)	1949-1950 (joined CPB; Kachin ethnic group)
Kachin Independence Army (KIA)	1961-present (cease-fire agreement signed in 1994)
Lahu National United Party/Lahu State Army	1973-1984 (surrendered in 1984)
Pa-O groups (five iterations, now Pa-O National Army, as a junta-recognized militia)	1948-present (signed peace treaty in 1991)
Pa-O People's Liberation Organization (PPLO)	1991-present (camped near Thai-Burma border)
Kayan Newland Party (KNLP)	1964-present (peace treaty in 1994)
Palaung National Front (PNF)	1963-1964
Palaung State Liberation Army (PSLA)	1976-present (signed peace treaty in 1991)
<i>Wa National Army (WNA)</i>	<i>1974-present (ally of SSA-S)</i>

It is important to note that many of the armies that operated or still exist in the Shan State are not purely Shan. Sometimes groups contain members with many different ethnic identities. Other groups without Shan members, or very few, used the word “Shan” to identify themselves for political reasons: a prime example being warlord/druglord Khun Sa’s Shan United Army (SUA) that was mostly “ethnic Chinese.”<sup>173</sup>

In 1962, the Burman military under General Ne Win staged a coup during which it promptly removed (murdered or jailed) many prominent Shan leaders, and soon released “The Burmese Way to Socialism” document to justify its actions. Ne Win also discarded the 1947 Constitution.<sup>174</sup> When the military slaughtered students protesting the coup at Rangoon University, the ranks of the Shan armies swelled (as did other armed ethnic militias and the CPB all around the country).<sup>175</sup> By 1964, the ethnic militia and CPB surge expanded well beyond its previously limited area of operations: “The government soon controlled little more than major towns and occasionally, the roads between them.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Smith, 39.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid, 79.

<sup>175</sup> Lintner, 210-215.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 224.

This CPB resurgence, after being slowly squeezed throughout the 1950s by Rangoon, was also function of considerable (and very open) Chinese support.<sup>177</sup> In 1968, as part of the group's overarching strategy, it began to establish a strong base in the eastern Shan State with the eventual goal of linking up with its traditional core areas in central Burma. In the Northeast, it made many attempts to incorporate the plethora of ethnic groups under its banner, with mixed success. The Kachins and Wa in particular put up stiff resistance. Eventually, it established four major "War Zones" in the Northeast and dealt Rangoon's army many losses. Its plan to link up with the center failed, however, and by 1975 it had lost its traditional lowland strongholds. In contrast, its territory in the Northeast took on the character of a proto-state, with its own "civil administration," "schools," "clinics" and taxation system.<sup>178</sup>

The loss of the central strongholds, combined with Mao's death in 1976, set into motion the long, slow decline of the CPB. China's new leadership under Deng focused on economic growth and regional stability. Sponsorship of the CPB and other communist groups in Southeast Asia did not support these new goals and so support gradually waned. China's new foreign policy led to warming of relations between Burma and China, which resulted in trade deals and Chinese investment. Faced with these major setbacks, the CPB revived efforts at alliance with ethnic armies in the Northeast, but experienced only limited and temporary success.<sup>179</sup>

For the ethnic minorities that did fight for the CPB, the motivation for fighting Rangoon stemmed from ethno-nationalism or the desire for ethnic group self-determination, rather than from communist ideology. These ethnic minorities comprised the bulk of the soldiers and small unit leaders, with two-thirds coming from the Wa ethnic group. There were also Kokang Chinese, Shan and Kachin among others.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Lintner, *Burma in Revolt: Opium and Insurgency Since 1948*, 215.

<sup>178</sup> Bertil Lintner, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB)* (Ithaca, New York: Southeast Asia Program Cornell University, 1990), 25-28 and 40.

<sup>179</sup> Smith, 360-363.

<sup>180</sup> Lintner, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB)*, 31 and 35.

Another concern of the CPB included securing new sources of funding. At first, it relied heavily upon the taxing of all trade that passed in and out of its area, to and from China, and to a lesser extent on taxing the people of its territory. This worked during the late 1970s because it controlled the majority of the main border crossings. In 1980, however, the Chinese open trade all along its border with Burma. With so many alternate routes now open, CPB trade taxation revenue dwindled. The CPB turned to the only two cash crops in its territory, tea and opium, with opium being by far the more lucrative.<sup>181</sup> As Lintner writes:

The CPB...allowed increasing numbers of heroin refineries to operate within its own base area...they had to pay “protection fees” and other taxes...The CPB’s official policy was confined to collecting 20 percent of the opium harvested in the base area...In addition, there were a 10 percent ‘trade tax’ on opium that was sold in the local markets and a 5 percent tax on any quantity leaving the CPB’s area for other destinations.<sup>182</sup>

While this trade helped the CPB and its proto-state lengthen its existence, it also weakened it in some ways: such as by corrupting local commanders into setting up their own systems for profiting from the lucrative drugs, and corrupting the basic structure so that the nascent nationalistic feelings of its foot soldiers (especially the Wa) heated to boiling point.<sup>183</sup>

The CPB broke up in 1989 when many ethnic sub commanders mutinied, (key among these were Wa and Kokang Chinese leaders). Its old Burman leaders were offered amnesty in China. With the Chinese working behind the scenes, Rangoon co-opted the United Wa State Army (UWSA), made up of troops that once formed the core of the CPB, and used it to fight against the remaining Shan army (the SURA) in exchange for a great deal of autonomy. It employed similar tactics with the other remnants of the CPB (see Figure 7 above), and with other ethnic militias throughout the 1990s. One by

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<sup>181</sup> Lintner, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB)*, 39-40.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid*, 40.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

one, the majority of the armies in the Northeast that still fought against Rangoon came to verbal or written cease-fires or peace agreements.<sup>184</sup>

In summary, the result of all these years of conflict, with myriad groups competing for territory in which to scrounge resources for fighting Rangoon, was a mish mash of “special regions” throughout the Shan State. (See Figure 8 in the case study below.) These “special regions” as they exist today enjoy different degrees of autonomy, and some display many state-like attributes, as will be examined in the case study. The fact that the largest minority group, the Shan, have more than one “special region”, was due predominantly to the fragmented ethnic nationalism caused by the split between traditional elites and the younger educated class. Another more basic reason is geography, as pointed out by Thomson:

...the distributional pattern complicates the situation, because few groups occupy a single contiguous territory. Interaction between most groups is especially tenuous: they have been unable to forge viable, broad-based political units for long periods. Clan-based loyalty and incompatible minority-group territories, combined with the extremely complex pattern of distribution, make any effort to delimit a single minority-group area an impossible task.<sup>185</sup>

Nonetheless, he goes on to acknowledge that groups like the Shan “control substantial amounts of territory and have sufficient support derived from external aid, taxes, and trade, they have been the most successful in maintaining separatist objectives.”<sup>186</sup> The evidence shows that ethno-nationalism contributed to proto-state formation, but geography and political factors limited this formation to areas significantly smaller than total ethnic group distribution.

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<sup>184</sup> Smith, 365.

<sup>185</sup> Curtis N. Thomson, “Political Stability and Minority Groups in Burma, *The Geographical Review* 85, no. 3 (July 1995): 280.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, 283.

### 3. Feudalism and Cultural Factors

As has been touched upon earlier, the traditional Shan system of government approximated a “feudal hierarchy.”<sup>187</sup> The extent with which this feudal structure incorporated the various hill tribe ethnic groups within the Shan State varied, but it followed a pattern according to different types of agricultural areas. In agricultural areas that Leach terms “Zone B,” where rice is grown in the valleys (by Shan), and cash-crops like opium are grown on the hill sides (by hill tribes), a compromise between the Shan feudal system and a more tribal egalitarian system developed so that the hill peoples (like the “Kachins, Palaungs, Wa, etc.”) could get enough food to support themselves. He calls this social-political organization *gumsa*.<sup>188</sup>

One must be careful, however, in extrapolating the particular characteristics of the *gumsa* system to all Shan-hill tribe relationships, because Leach’s study specifically concerned the Shan-Kachin areas. In extending the idea of *gumsa*, to say, the Wa region, one must take into account that many Wa communities, perhaps more than any other hill tribe, were highly isolated and independent due to geography and in some cases, headhunting practices. In most Wa areas, however, Shan and Wa cultural interchange was significant, and had occurred over a 500-year time period.<sup>189</sup> Hill tribes that grew opium used it as a form of currency to purchase food and other goods from the valley dwellers in Southeast Asia and Yunnan well into the 20th century.<sup>190</sup>

This pattern continues today. Despite feudal relationships having broken down in many areas, poor hill tribe farmers still grow opium to buy the food they need to survive

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<sup>187</sup> E. R. Leach, *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure* (London: The Athlone Press, 1977), 8.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

<sup>189</sup> Ronald D. Renard, Personal Interview, March 2008.

<sup>190</sup> Opium as currency in late 1800s, see: Renard, *The Burmese Connection*, 20. In 20th century South China, see: Ann Maxwell Hill, *Merchants and Migrants: Ethnicity and Trade among Yunnanese Chinese in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1998), 43.



from the better-off valley-dwellers.<sup>191</sup> In the past, it was feudal lords that taxed the sale of the opium cash crop (or took a portion of the crop themselves), while in modern times it was often the ethnic militia or proto-state playing the same role as the feudal lord where the *gumsa* system had broken down, or taxing the hill tribe to valley dweller transactions. The *gumsa* social framework seemed to enable the transition to the current cash-crop extraction framework used by proto-states in Northeastern Burma.

A last socio-cultural concept to be explored as a proto-state enabler is that of the nebulous system of opiate distribution that takes the product from the farmer, to the local lab, and then into China, Thailand or Laos, and then sometimes beyond. It is this network, after all, that provides the proto-states the capital they need to fund their armies, administration, and infrastructure development activities. In some ways, these networks owe much to *guanxi*, a Chinese word defined here with the help of Yin Fang as an active relationship based on either blood or birth, or acquired (a friend, co-worker, etc.), that involves “reciprocal exchange between two persons for a specific purpose.” It is a kind of “social investment.”<sup>192</sup> As pointed out by Yawghwe, referring to the Shan State opiate business in 1993, buyers of opium/heroin at the Thai and Chinese borders with Burma are: “tied to larger, informal and loosely structured networks of finance, kinship, patron-client clusters which extend beyond border areas...”<sup>193</sup>

Indeed, Lintner, and Chin and Zhang agree (in opposition to some recent studies) that the drug trade leaves ethnic militia and proto-state areas predominantly through “loose networks,”<sup>194</sup> as opposed to “triad-type criminal organizations.”<sup>195</sup> This is significant, because it means that the proto-states are not being directly propped up by a

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<sup>191</sup> *Opium Poppy Cultivation in South East Asia 2007: Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand* (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, October 2007), 53 and 57, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/2007-opium-SEAsia.pdf> (accessed November 29, 2007).

<sup>192</sup> Yin Fang, “Questioning Guanxi: Definition, Classification and Implications,” *International Business Review* 11, no. 5 (October 2002): 47-52.

<sup>193</sup> Chao-Tzang Yawghwe, “The Political Economy of the Opium Trade: Implications for Shan State,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 23, no. 3 (1993): 314.

<sup>194</sup> Chin and Zhang, 45.

<sup>195</sup> Bertil Lintner, “Doing Wrong to Do Good,” *Irawaddy News Magazine*, December 2007, [http://www.irawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=9482&page=1](http://www.irawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=9482&page=1) (accessed February 1, 2008).

just a few powerful transnational mafia organizations, nor are the proto-states in command of international drug distribution networks (there are some individuals proto-states leadership positions who are involved in these networks for private gain). There is also a lot of room for entrepreneurs in the region to find a place in the trade.<sup>196</sup>

#### **D. CASE STUDY: THE UNITED WA STATE PARTY**

Until this point, this chapter has focused on proto-state enablers in the Shan State subsection of the Golden Triangle. This section narrows the focus to the UWSP as a proto-state. Throughout the protracted conflict, the Wa ethnic group was not as united as it is today, nor did it always fought on the same “side.” It has fought in tandem with Shan militias, formed the bulk of the CPB army, signed a ceasefire with Rangoon, fought against Shan militias, and now controls significant and relatively economically lucrative areas along the Thai and Chinese border. As proto-states stand in Burma, the UWSP is the most developed and the most autonomous. It is the most prominent example of a proto-state built through a combination of geography, ethnic self-determinism, extraction from illicit cash crops and external support/connections.

##### **1. Territory**

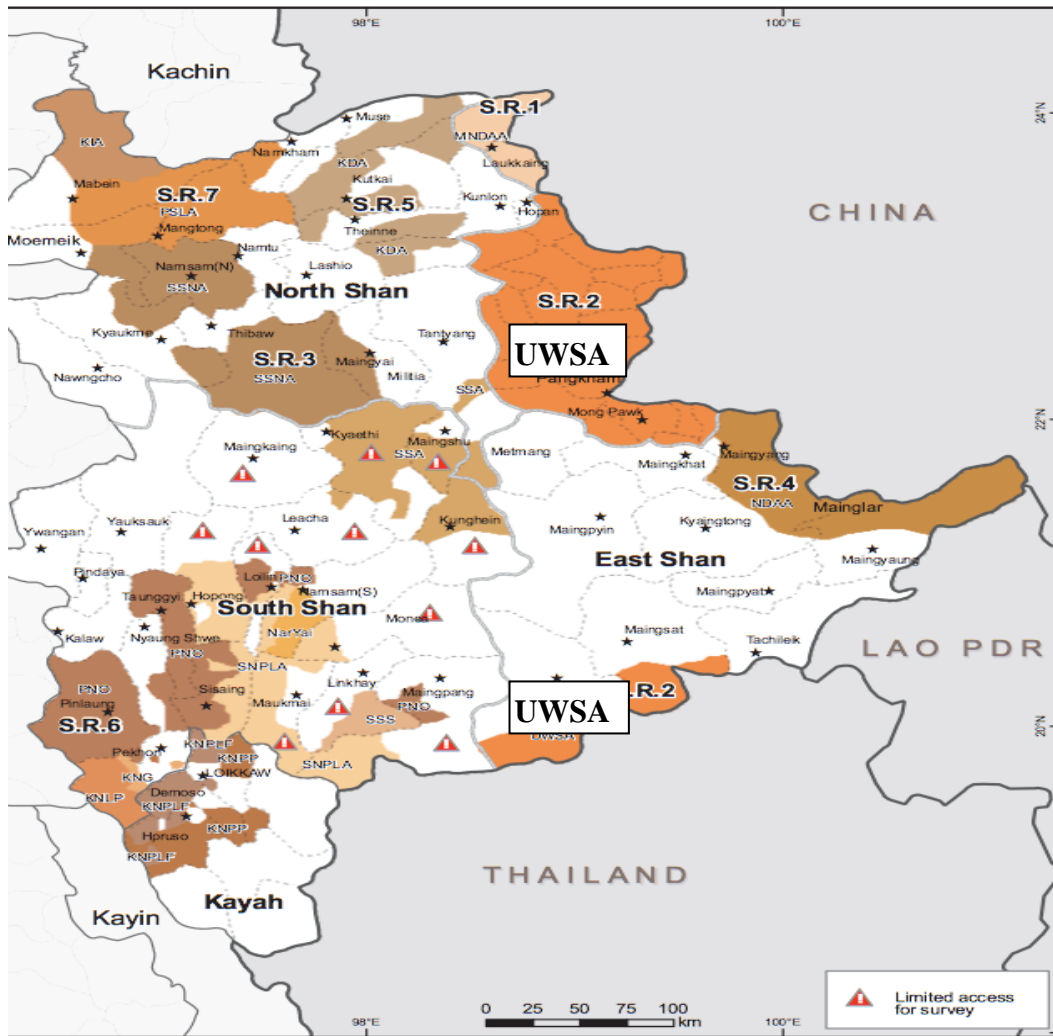
The current “Wa proto-state” territory is well defined. Its core area, governed by the UWSP, is called “Special Region 2” by the Burman state, and situated directly on the border with China, represented by the large dark orange area in Figure 8 below. The capital of the Wa proto-state is Panghsang. As discussed earlier, the Wa people live on both sides of this border, which facilitates trade, but the Wa governance structure does not extend into China. The current northern Wa territory sits in the heart of what used to be the CPB proto-state, and is actually larger than the traditional Wa region, because the Wa continued to occupy the areas the CPB used them to hold. Therefore, in addition to the estimated 285,000 Wa that live in the north, there are also 16 other ethnic groups that make up another estimated 115,000 inhabitants.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Lintner, “Doing Wrong to Do Good.”

<sup>197</sup> Ronald D. Renard, Personal Interview, March 2008. Also: Jeremy Milsom, “The Long Hard Road Out of Drugs: The Case of the Wa,” in *Trouble in the Triangle: Opium and Conflict in Burma*, ed. Martin Jelsma, Tom Kramer and Pietje Vervest (Chiang Mai: Silksworm Books, 2005), 65.

Figure 8. The Wa Proto-State and other Ethnic Proto-states in the Shan State (After UN *Opium Poppy Cultivation in South East Asia 2007*)



The separate “Southern Command” area of “Special Region 2” is not a traditional Wa ethnic homeland. It exists due to Rangoon agreeing to let the UWSA (soon after the latter’s formation) occupy an area along the Thailand-Burma border in return for fighting against Khun Sa’s MTA. The UWSA accepted the offer and moved down to merge with a non-communist Wa National Council (WNC) that already had small bases there. The UWSA was told at the time to keep whatever territory it conquered. Ethnic groups in the Shan State particularly valued such territory because it allowed trade access with Thailand.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>198</sup> Kramer, *The United Wa State Party: Narco-Army or Ethnic Nationalist Party?*, 21-23.

The junta considers this a temporary arrangement, however, and recently it has pressured the UWSA to return to the north.<sup>199</sup> Ultimately, the junta wants the UWSP and its army moved away from *all* borders, and returned to the pre-1970s Wa region. In addition to UWSA units, many Wa peasants also live in this region after being forced by Wa leaders to relocate from the north beginning in 1999. This brings the estimated Wa population in the south to 115,000.<sup>200</sup>

## **2. Coercive Activities**

### ***a. War Making***

The UWSA is not currently fighting any other groups. As part of the CPB from 1974 to 1989, it staked out its territory through warfare against the junta and other ethnic militias. Immediately after establishing itself in 1989, UWSP negotiated a verbal ceasefire agreement with Rangoon, which grants it veritable autonomy within this territory.<sup>201</sup> The UWSA consists of an estimated 20,000 soldiers armed in part with weapons left over from its days with the CPB. Since then, however, it may have received arms from China or purchased more from black market sources. Although the UWSA has fought along with junta forces against the SSA-South several times over the past two decades, some reports say that recent clashes are largely for show.<sup>202</sup> In terms of the proto-state criterion, the UWSA has monopolized the use of force within its territory. It appears to be set on maintaining its current territory as opposed to expanding it.

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<sup>199</sup> “Burma issues citizenship cards to cease-fire groups for May referendum,” *Irawaddy News Magazine*, March 3, 2008, [http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art\\_id=10671](http://irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=10671) (accessed April 19, 2008).

<sup>200</sup> Ronald D. Renard, Personal Interview, March 2008.

<sup>201</sup> Lintner, *The Rise and Fall of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB)*, 49, 53, 86-91.

<sup>202</sup> Thai Government Official, Personal Interview, February 2008. See also: Michael Black, “On Myanmar-China Border, Tensions Escalate Between SPDC, Narco-Militias,” *World Politics Review*, December 13, 2006, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articlePrint.aspx?ID=413> (accessed March 10, 2008).

***b. State Making***

The UWSP enforces order within its territory and tolerates no internal rivals, although UWSA commanders often have more power than political officials in many areas. The Burman junta has two army battalions stationed within the region, but they are completely disarmed, highly demoralized and play virtually no role as an active or effective security force. The junta has so little influence along in the Wa state and along the Wa state's border with China, that if it wants anything accomplished, it must actually go through Beijing, as it did to cut down on illegal lumber trade in 2005. There are, however, two administrative areas that are very autonomous and apparently have strained relations with Panghsang.<sup>203</sup> In securing the "Southern Command area," the UWSA occasionally clashes with the SSA and Lahu militias, which are groups that are marginally internal rivals to power.<sup>204</sup>

***c. Protection***

Simply put, those who do not have permission to run businesses within the Wa state are subject to the ungentle ministrations of the UWSA. It provides protection to trade flowing through its territory and to opiate and methamphetamine labs operating in its territory. It does not appear to provide a great deal of protection to the peasants other than maintaining a very rough sort of law and order. It showed preference to Wa peasants when displacing other poor ethnic minority peasants to make room for them in the "Southern Command" area.<sup>205</sup>

***d. Extraction***

To maintain itself and its armies, the UWSP extracts a good deal of revenue from drug production within its borders, even though it has reduced actual poppy production (the most visible form of drug involvement). Lintner succinctly describes the process:

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<sup>203</sup> Kramer, 38-40. Also: Ronald D. Renard, Personal Interview, March 2008.

<sup>204</sup> Kramer, 31.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, 31, 38-42.

In fact, any independent operator who wants to manufacture heroin or amphetamine-type substances (ATS) inside the UWSP's territory must get permission from a committee consisting of the top leaders of the organization, mainly chairman Bao Yuchang and his brothers. For this, they pay a fee and that is how the UWSP and its allies finance their activities, apart from income from their own laboratories.<sup>206</sup>

According to a U.S. State Department official, the Wa are making more money off of methamphetamines (yaa baa) than they ever did off of heroin.<sup>207</sup> For example, in Thailand, a single yaa baa pill costs 30 Thai baht (a little less than U.S.\$1) along the border with Burma. If even half of the 800 million pills estimated to have been manufactured in Burma in 2002<sup>208</sup> were sold for the Thai border price, the revenue would be around U.S.\$375 million. Further down the line, a single pill costs 200 baht (U.S.\$6.25) in Chiang Mai, and 400 baht (U.S.\$12.50) on the streets of Bangkok. The tiny pills are easier to transport and labs are easier to hide.<sup>209</sup> How much of this revenue goes to the Wa proto-state, how much goes to the Burman junta, and how much lines the foreign bank accounts of certain leaders and commanders is difficult to calculate. What *is* clear is that infrastructure is still woefully undeveloped throughout the proto-state.

Many observe that certain Wa leaders are extremely rich, and have invested in many businesses both within and outside the Wa proto-state.<sup>210</sup> These cases provide examples of *guanxi* these individuals have maintained throughout Southeast Asia and Southern China. It is unclear if the UWSP provides a cut of its extraction activities to the Burman junta at a central level, while evidence exists that local extraction cooperation occurs between UWSP/UWSA officials and junta officials (as is the case with all cease-fire groups involved in drugs and junta officials.)<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> Lintner, "Doing Wrong to Do Good."

<sup>207</sup> U.S. State Department Official, Personal Interview, February 2008.

<sup>208</sup> Chouvy, "The Yaa Baa Phenomenon in Mainland Southeast Asia," 20.

<sup>209</sup> Thai Government Official, Personal Interview, February 2008.

<sup>210</sup> Kramer, 43-45.

<sup>211</sup> Chao-Tzang Yawnghwe, "Shan State Politics: The Opium-Heroin Factor," in *Trouble in the Triangle: Opium and Conflict in Burma*, ed. Martin Jelsma, Tom Kramer and Pietje Vervest (Chiang Mai: Silksworm Books, 2005), 30-31.

In the early 1990s, as the UWSP emerged from the wreckage of the CPB, it relied heavily on opium income, all the while making pronouncements that it planned to eliminate the crop within the next two decades. To collect capital from this and other taxation schemes on agriculture, import duties, and road tolls, the UWSP established a tax system and a central treasury.<sup>212</sup> Bao Youlinang and Wei Xuegang currently head the financial arm of the proto-state. Wei is believed to be a major player in the illicit trade, which is a reputation he has had since his days as Khun Sa's banker, prior to joining the UWSP.<sup>213</sup> Some believe that he is trying to slowly work his way out of the illicit business, and point to his reinvestment of profits from his private companies to improve the lives of Wa peasants.<sup>214</sup> While opium cultivation is now practically non-existence in the northern area, rising levels are reported in the south where external agencies have little penetration.<sup>215</sup>

### **3. Identity and Legitimacy**

On the surface, Wa ethnic identity seems to make one a bonified member of the Wa state, and the glue that binds the proto-state together. However, as Kramer points out: "The UWSP leadership has included members of other ethnic groups in the region, including Lahu, Kachin, Akha, and Chinese. The extent of the UWSP's demand for the formation of a Wa State seems more based on current territorial control than on ethnicity."<sup>216</sup> That said, Wa nationalism trumps ethnic equality in the proto-state, as is demonstrated by its treatment of other minority groups in the south (see previous section). In the immediate region, the Wa identify much more closely with the ethnically related Chinese than they do the Burmans. The CPB facilitated this connection by using Chinese as its "working language" due to having so many different ethnic groups under

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<sup>212</sup> Ronald D. Renard, Personal Interview, March 2008.

<sup>213</sup> "Changed Titles Change Druglord's Status Little," *Shan Herald News Agency*, March 31, 2008, <http://www.shanland.org/drugs/2008/changed-titles-change-druglord2019s-status-little/> (accessed April 3, 2008).

<sup>214</sup> Milsom, 74-75.

<sup>215</sup> Lintnter, "Doing Wrong to Do Good."

<sup>216</sup> Kramer, 30.

its banner. This brought the Wa closer together since many had to learn Chinese.<sup>217</sup> Finally, the Wa do not identify wholly with any one religion. Some are Buddhists from either the Hinayana and Mahayana traditions, while others are Christians or animists.<sup>218</sup>

The UWSP's main claim to legitimacy comes first and foremost from being the group with the most guns. This is augmented by development projects accomplished by the Wa leadership since the demise of the CPB. Naypyidaw does virtually nothing for the border areas, and even less for the Wa region due to its remoteness and isolation. To the Wa, therefore, anything is better than the nothing they have experienced for so long. Roads, hydroelectric power plants and rubber plantations—built in part by Chinese investment and foreign aid—are some of the developmental highlights of the UWSP's nearly two decades in power.<sup>219</sup> Despite this, north region farmers are struggling with the effects of the strictly enforced poppy ban.

#### **4. Political Goals and other Motivations**

While it is true that the UWSP has formed its own largely autonomous proto-state, this was not accomplished without compromise with Rangoon. Kramer claims, "...the main political aim of the UWSP is to achieve the formation of a Wa State directly under control of the central government in Rangoon and not administered through the Shan State."<sup>220</sup> It wants this state to include the area along the Thailand border, which is something with which Rangoon strongly disagrees. To this end, the Wa have established a law code, which states:

Starting now, the basic mission of the Wa people is to concentrate on peaceful development, solidify various rules and regulations, promote democracy, strengthen the legal system, and to become self-sufficient by

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<sup>217</sup> Ronald D. Renard, Personal Interview, March 2008.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Milsom, 71.

<sup>220</sup> Kramer, 28-29.



working together to develop our industry and agriculture, to develop the Wa Region into a self-sustaining autonomous region.<sup>221</sup>

The UWSP has thus far maintained its autonomy by attempting to cultivate good relations with all of its major neighbors (with varying results). It is particularly close to China, which independent sources agree wants the UWSP there as a “buffer” and “source of leverage” against the Burman junta.<sup>222</sup>

## **5. Organization and Structure**

The Wa inherited the old CPB hierarchical structure of state and government. At the top of the pyramid (theoretically) is the UWSP leadership which consists of the “Politburo,” currently headed by Bou You Xiang, and below this the Wa Central Committee. This central authority oversees the UWSA and the “local administration.” All three entities, the UWSP, the UWSA, and the “local administration” have presence at the lower levels (districts and townships), in which the senior UWSP official is supposed to have highest authority.<sup>223</sup> The bureaucratic structure of the state is diagrammed in Figure 9 below:

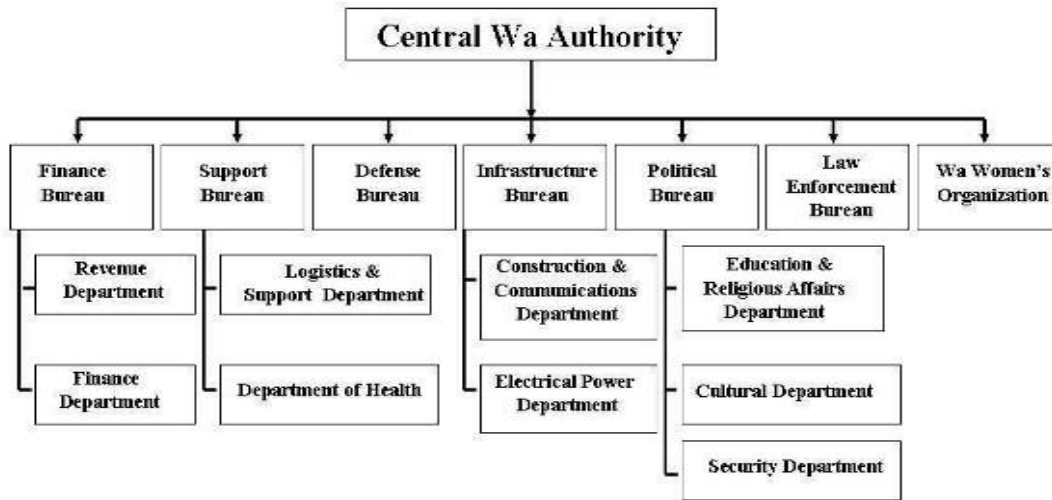
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<sup>221</sup> *Wa Region Basic Law*, 2005, Unofficial Translation from Chinese, obtained from Special Consultant to UN development project in Wa Special Region Number 2.

<sup>222</sup> Black, 3. This opinion was also expressed by U.S. and Thai officials during Personal Interviews, February 2008.

<sup>223</sup> Milsom, 69.

Figure 9. Organization of the Wa Proto-state Bureaucracy (From: Ronald D. Renard)



Despite its authoritarian bent, governance in the Wa proto-state remains weak. Kramer attributes this to lack of education, lack of experience setting up state institutions, “low or nonexistent” salaries, and extremely limited delegation of decision-making.<sup>224</sup> Efforts to improve governance continue, but isolation and lack of outside assistance continue to slow Wa development.

## E. CONCLUSION

This chapter opened by describing the history of the opium trade in the Golden Triangle with a focus on Burma’s Shan State, since it has been the highest-producing area. This section showed that the opium trade was present in the region as part of fully legal opium monopolies of the British, Thai and others. In the Shan State (and Golden Triangle), production remained low compared to other parts of the world until launched onto the world stage due to the war economy of Southeast Asia in the second half of the 20th century and the opium ban in Mao’s China. Next, proto-state enabling factors were examined, beginning with the British colonial legacy and its attempt to incorporate huge swaths of Shan and hill tribe land under a central Burman state that never had more than

<sup>224</sup> Kramer, 39-40.

an extremely weak claim to these territories. After this, the decades-long ethno-nationalist and communist war against the Rangoon state was examined to see how ethnic separatist movements led to the formation of proto-states. Geography (causing wide distribution of ethnic groups within difficult terrain) and internal political divisions played a role in armed group fragmentation (even within ethnic groups). Finally, a hybrid of Shan feudalistic governance that developed in certain agricultural zones with hill tribes was found to correlate with opium production, and set the stage for proto-state extraction schemes.

The last section dealt with the case study of the UWSP as a proto-state, evaluated according to the five-part framework laid out in Chapter I. This evaluation showed that the UWSP quite clearly meets the criteria of a proto-state built in significant part by opium cash cropping, and now methamphetamine production. Due to its isolation and lack of alternatives, however, this reliance on illicit drugs is due to the six decades old survival strategy that has been ingrained in all the armies fighting the Burman junta. It is not a relationship that is easy to break, and change relies on providing lucrative economic alternatives to the farmers that engage in poppy farming also just to survive.

As in Chapter II, viewing the conflicts in Northeastern Burma through a state-building lens has been useful for sorting out why strife has lasted for so long. While the cease-fires with the proto-states have more or less held for 15 or more years, if the junta is not willing to develop the region, or force the groups to lay down their arms and embrace licit business pursuits, how long can the relative calm last? China's interests in the region relative to its security and economic agenda may play the deciding role in whether the region degenerates again into general conflict.

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## IV. PROTO-STATES COMPARED

### A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters described how the borders of Afghanistan-Pakistan and Burma, as they exist on a map today, encompass areas that are in embroiled in a kind of “warring states” periods in which new political entities are arising out of old feudal and tribal structures. Drawn to suit British colonial interests, the lines did little to help decide which sub-group within would have legitimate state and national power. This is why the process of “figuring it all out” continues. In conventional terms, the long-running conflicts in these two places are considered “insurgencies” and “civil wars,” but these terms assume that some kind of nation-state exists within these arbitrary borders. This thesis maintains that no nation-states exist in these borders. They are not “weak states” or “failed states.” Instead, there are proto-states *within* these areas that are at various stages of development. Both proto-states contain (or did until recently) peasant farmers who grow the opium poppy for “cash” in addition to other crops, and feudal political structures that correspond with these cash cropping areas. The primary questions this chapter seeks to answer are: what are the significant similarities and differences between the Taliban and UWSP proto-states, and how can these help one understand proto-state formation?

The main argument of this chapter is that while there are many differences, the similarities show why the two proto-states have not become subsumed by other powers. Both have established core territories in which they are the legitimate coercive force in the eyes of the population, and they both use capital from illicit proceeds and external sources and allies to fund their armies. These similarities represent major reasons why other states, proto-states and external powers have not been able to defeat them. While the Taliban are at war against Kabul and its Western allies, they have negotiated a temporary peace with Islamabad from a position of power. The UWSP has had a cease-fire with Rangoon/Naypyidaw for 20 years, and without laying down its arms, enjoyed considerable autonomy.

This chapter first provides a macro-level overview comparison of the two regions. This includes touching on historical similarities, looking at some common indices, and commenting on opium production differences. It then compares the two proto-states of the case studies, using each category of the five-part case study framework. The conclusion provides a summary of the most significant comparative findings.

## **B. MACRO-LEVEL OVERVIEW**

Historically, both regions contained ethnic territories and fiefdoms incorporated into arbitrary states by the British colonial empire. These fiefdoms contained mixed tribal-feudal political structures with peasant farmers at the bottom end of the social scale who grew opium poppies in small quantities in addition to food crops. Many factors, chief of which were internationalized war economies in the latter half of the 20th century, led to increased opium production (and accompanying opiate production, such as heroin) in both regions. This occurred for two reasons. First the depredations of war caused already poor and neglected peasants to become even more poor and neglected, so opium cash cropping became crucial to their survival. Second, armies on all sides benefited (or just survived) by protecting and taxing opiate production and transportation. The internal networks of the drug economies, and sometimes-external links, were built largely on culturally specific social-business networks (*qawm* in the case of the Golden Crescent; *guanxi* in the case of the Golden Triangle).

What were the results of this potent mixture of misfortune? This can be seen below on Table 3, which lines up Afghanistan, Pakistan and Burma in some of the well-known indices used to evaluate the world's nation-states.

Table 3. Regional Comparisons (See footnotes for data sources.)

	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Burma
<b>Level of Freedom<sup>225</sup></b> (on scale of 1-7, with 1=most free, and 7= least free)	Partly Free (political rights=5 civil liberties=5)	Not Free (political rights=6 civil liberties=5)	Not Free (political rights=7 civil liberties=7)
<b>Regime Type<sup>226</sup></b> (ranked from Full Democracy to Authoritarian, out of 167 countries, 1=most democratic, 167= least)	Authoritarian (135/167)	Authoritarian (113/167)	Authoritarian (163/167)
<b>Failed States Index<sup>227</sup></b> (these rankings are out of the 60 worst in the world, 1=worst)	8/60	12/60	14/60
<b>Corruption Perceptions Index<sup>228</sup></b> (out of 179 countries surveyed, 179=worst)	172/179	138/179	179/179
<b>Human Development Index<sup>229</sup></b> (Developing Countries Average= 0.691; World Average=0.743)	HDI not available	136/177 (0.551)	132/177 (0.583)
<b>Gross Domestic Product<sup>230</sup></b> (Purchasing power parity (PPP), Official exchange rate (OER))	\$35 billion (PPP) \$9.9 billion (OER)	\$446.1 billion (PPP) \$106.3 billion (OER)	\$91.13 billion (PPP) \$13.7 billion (OER)
<b>GDP per Capita (PPP)</b>	\$1,000.00	\$2,600.00	\$1,900.00

<sup>225</sup> Freedom in the World 2007 Report, Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=372&year=2007> (accessed April 28, 2008).

<sup>226</sup> Index of Democracy 2007, Economist Intelligence Unit, <http://www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences/cgi-bin/fullrecord.pl?handle=20070423-091817> (accessed April 28, 2008).

<sup>227</sup> The Failed States Index 2007, Fund for Peace and *Foreign Policy* Magazine, July/August 2007, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=3865&page=7](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3865&page=7) (accessed May 1, 2008).

<sup>228</sup> Corruption Perceptions Index 2007, Transparency International, [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2007](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2007) (accessed April 28, 2008).

<sup>229</sup> United Nations Human Development Report (United Nations Publication, 2007/2008), 231-233, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008/> (accessed April 28, 2008).

<sup>230</sup> GDP and GDP per capita figures from: World Factbook, Central Intelligence Agency, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (accessed April 28, 2008).

<b>% GDP opiate sector<sup>231</sup></b>	40%	No data available	1% (this is extremely difficult to even estimate)
<b>Yearly Total Income: opium poppy growing households</b>	U.S.\$ 3,933.00 <i>U.S.\$ 1,965.00</i>	No data available	U.S.\$ 501.00 <i>U.S.\$ 227.00</i>
<i>Italics=amount from opium</i>			
<b>Opium Farmgate price</b> (farmgate price is the price the farmer gets for sale of opium)	\$86/kg	No data available	\$256.00/kg
<b>Average opium yield per ha</b>	42.5 kg/ha	No data available	16.6 kg/ha

Unsurprisingly, there are many similarities: the regimes of the so-called central states are oppressive and authoritarian, state capacity is extremely weak, and corruption is rampant. One of the noticeable differences appears in Pakistan’s significantly larger GDP, however, the per capita GDP in the NWFP and FATA is 40 percent below the rest of Pakistan.<sup>232</sup>

Among the opium data, one standout is Afghanistan’s percentage of GDP based on the opiate sector, as estimated by UNODC, showing how thoroughly the illicit economy penetrates the region. Another striking difference is in “yearly total income” between opium poppy growing households in Afghanistan and Burma, and the large difference in opium yields. The opium farmers in Burma appear overall significantly poorer, while farmers in Afghanistan seem to be beating the GDP per capita for the country. The yield difference is attributable to the strain of opium poppy grown (bulb size, weather and cultivation techniques).<sup>233</sup>

A final trend of interest is reflected in Table 4 below. The possibility of a correlation appears if one contrasts this data with other activities in the regions. First, the cease-fires the Burman junta signed with ethnic militias and proto-states in the early 1990s as discussed in Chapter III, and the steady decline of opium cultivation occurred

<sup>231</sup> All opium information from: *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007* (United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, October 2007), 7, [www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan-Opium-Survey-2007.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan-Opium-Survey-2007.pdf) (accessed April 10, 2008). *Opium Poppy Cultivation in South East Asia 2007*, 1.

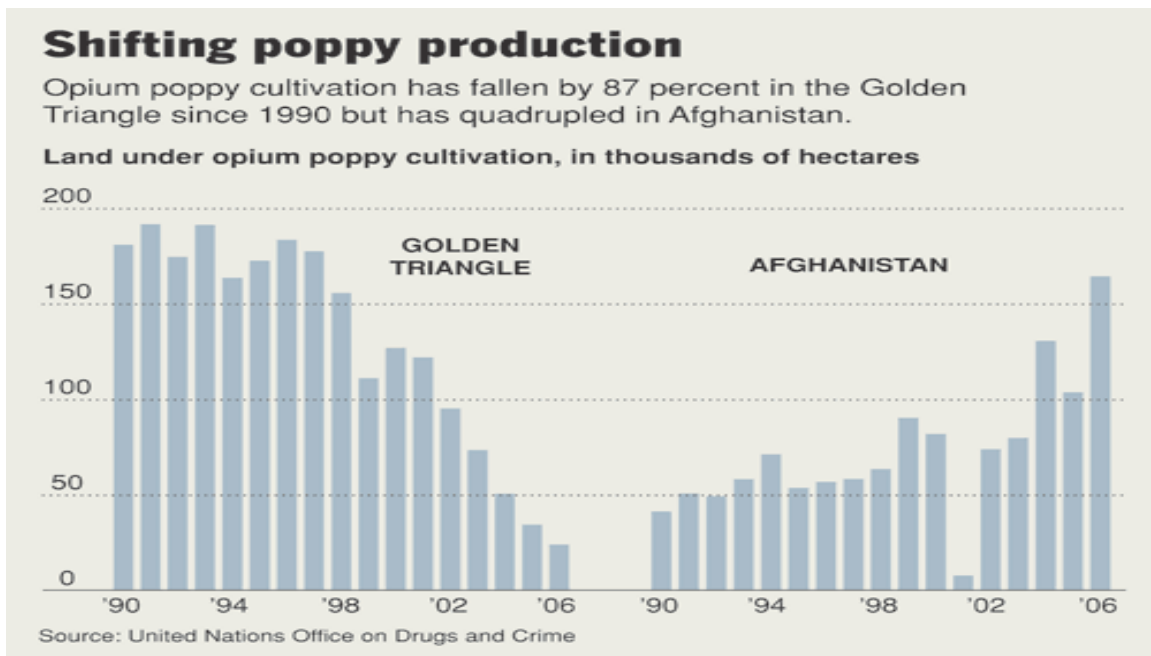
<sup>232</sup> *North West Frontier Province Economic Report* (The World Bank, 2005), iv, <http://www.worldbank.org.pk/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/PAKISTANEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20764712~menuPK:293057~pagePK:64027988~piPK:64027986~theSitePK:293052,00.html> (accessed April 16, 2008).

<sup>233</sup> *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007*, 63-69.



during the same time. Cultivation in Afghanistan has climbed steadily since the early 1990s, which as Chapter II noted, was the same period in which the Taliban emerged and began their once nearly successful conquest of Afghanistan. In short, opium cultivation decreased in the Golden Triangle when war ceased and proto-state borders were defined, while in Afghanistan, opium production increased (and continues to increase) as conflict continues and the Taliban increasingly rely on opiates for funding. While other factors are also at play, this possible connection bears further consideration.

Table 4. Regional Opium Cultivation Comparison (From: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)



**C. MICRO-LEVEL: THE TALIBAN AND UWSA/UWSP**

On the surface, these two proto-states look very different. When lining up the two according to the case study framework, some parallels and divergences emerge, as can be seen on Table 5 below.

Table 5. Taliban and UWSP Comparison<sup>234</sup>

	Taliban	UWSP
<b>Estimated Ethnic Group Populations (total, not just in proto-state)</b>	Pashtuns: Afghanistan- 13,750,000 Pakistan-25 million	Burma: 515,000-600,000 China: 396,610
<b>Estimated Army Size</b>	7,000-17,000 Afghanistan 40,000 Pakistan	20,000
<b>Length of Existence</b>	1994-present (14 years)	1989-present (19 years)
<b>Territory</b>	Unconsolidated, power varies by area and often challenged internally.	Consolidated, but split into 2 unconnected areas; power unchallenged internally
<b>Coercive Activities</b>		
<b>War making</b>	External conflict- trying to regain territory lost in 2001	Occasional skirmishes with other ethnic militias; cease-fire with Burman junta
<b>State making</b>	Internal conflict- trying to maintain hold on territory in Afghanistan and Pakistan	Internal competition eliminated; a few autonomous army commanders
<b>Protection</b>	Protection of farmers, drug labs, trucker mafia, traffickers; Local justice based on Sharia Law	Protection of officially approved business (some illicit) and border trade; Local justice based on Wa/CPB traditions
<b>Extraction</b>	Taxation of cash-crops (opium), opiate and other drug production, and trade	Taxation of cash-crops (opium), methamphetamine production, trade, other agricultural business
<b>Identity &amp; Legitimacy</b>	Religious, Ethnic; legitimacy varies by area; strongest in FATA core; swift justice meted out by	Ethnic; legitimacy strong except among a few small minorities; swift justice meted out by local leaders

<sup>234</sup> The source information for this Table is taken from earlier chapters of this thesis.

	local leaders	
<b>Political Objectives</b>	An Islamic State in Afghanistan	Autonomous state within Union of Burma
<b>Organization &amp; Structure</b>	Decentralized; largely autonomous regional leadership	Hierarchical

The territorial situations of the Taliban and UWSP are simultaneously alike and unlike. Both have core areas, the Taliban in Waziristan, and the UWSP in the northern “Special Region 2.” The primary area of opium extraction for the Taliban (southern Afghanistan), however, does not lie in its core area. The UWSP’s primary opium extraction area used to lie within its core area, but now exists in its “Southern Command” area. In addition, the UWSP does not seek additional territory at this time, while the Taliban still claim the goal of controlling Kabul and in effect all of Afghanistan. For the Taliban, contestation by other powers of all but its core area remains very strong. For the UWSP, contestation of its territory by the Burman state exists, but currently is very weak.

In general, the coercive activities practiced by both proto-states are similar to those practiced anywhere in attempting to achieve and maintain sovereignty. The Taliban are in effect starting over at an earlier stage of state building after their major defeat in 2001, and so in the realms of war making and state making, face serious competition and challenges. The UWSP, having been since 1988 only involved in small skirmishes outside its territory and virtually uncontested within, is further along in the state building process. For many years, it has concentrated on development of governance and infrastructure, with considerable help from the outside.

The Taliban and UWSP share the greatest similarities in the activities of protection and extraction. At the most basic level, both benefit from taxing the trade that passes through their territories, licit and illicit. Regarding opiates (and now methamphetamine for the Wa), protection of production and transportation is nearly identical for both proto-states, differing only in the percentages. The profits could be considerable. For example, during the two regions’ peak producing years of the last two decades, opium harvest taxation alone brought the Taliban an estimated \$25 million

(2007)<sup>235</sup>, and the UWSP an estimated \$5-7 million (early 1990s).<sup>236</sup> In neither case have these proto-states ever been forced to completely rely on the opiate economy and trade taxation alone. As discussed in the earlier chapters, both enjoy external support, the Taliban from supporters in Pakistan other Muslim countries, and the UWSA from China. It is therefore inaccurate to posit that somehow destroying the drug economy would cause proto-state collapse.

In the category of identity and legitimacy, ethnicity is at the basic level of both proto-states' identity, but in the Taliban's case, religious identity overlays this at the ideological level. In comparison, the UWSP appears to be without ideology save for residual communistic influences. As mentioned in Chapter III, however, the working Wa law code claims to seek the promotion of democracy. Legitimacy for both proto-states relies first and foremost on the gun, but unlike the Taliban who are still locked in conflict, the UWSP has been able to accomplish some development, which helps boost its legitimacy.

The political objectives of the UWSP and the Taliban widely differ. The UWSP is a separatist proto-state, but does not seek its own nation-state. It prefers to be an autonomous state within the Union of Burma, as opposed to a sub-entity of the Shan State, and is willing to fight to achieve this goal. The Taliban, on the other hand, possess a core area like the UWSP, but still seek to expand their influence. The Taliban proto-state has ambitions to control the entirety of Afghanistan, and institute an Islamic state. The more limited extent of the UWSP's objectives may ensure its continued survival, which is a factor the Taliban may eventually consider in negotiations with Kabul as the conflict continues.

The organizational structure of the two proto-states differs considerably. While the Taliban are decentralized, the UWSP retains the rigid hierarchical structure that the CPB copied from the Chinese Communist Party. The decentralization of the Taliban is a necessary strategic survival mechanism in the face of pressure from the United States, the

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<sup>235</sup> Anonymous Afghanistan Analyst, Electronic Correspondence, April 2008.

<sup>236</sup> Ronald D. Renard, Personal Interview, March 2008.

ISAF and the Kabul state. It is also quite likely a function of independent leaders and differing Pashtun tribal associations in different regions.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

The comparative framework of this chapter started at the macro-level, and then focused on the case studies. The chief conclusion is that by viewing “insurgent” groups that hold territory and extract capital from the resources of this territory as proto-states, a more effective analysis can be made of their capabilities, and therefore, the trajectory of the conflict. The Taliban and UWSP are both building states, but are at different stages of the process. Similarities between the two cluster around opiates, which is the general answer to this chapter’s main question.

As far as conflict trajectory is concerned, these examples show that the opiate business has mixed influence on proto-state formation. While providing capital for maintaining armies and in some cases even infrastructure, its illicit status—and therefore potential for large, easy profits—facilitates corruption. Depending on the form this corruption takes, state legitimacy might be threatened. As Geffray writes: “Any kind of legitimacy is based on faith, as corrupting criminals well know – and they are careful to have an official betray the ideal of the State less out of greed than out of adherence to the clientelist ideal that they represent...”<sup>237</sup>

The taxation of opium cash cropping, opiate production, opiate transport, and the protection of all three has been a correlating factor in the longevity and resilience of both the Taliban and the UWSP, the full extent of which is yet to be measured. Both have also benefited extensively from external support in capital and materiel, so it cannot be said cash cropping was the sole factor in their survival. Nor is it possible to tell of the absence of either would result in their demises. The Wa proto-state was built in large part with funds extracted from opium cash-cropping and opiate production. Ironically, while these funds helped build the state, they could also help fragment it. The lure of huge profits is too much for some sub-commanders, whose private armies are powerful enough to carve

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<sup>237</sup> Christian Geffray, “State, Wealth, and Criminals,” *Lusotopie* (2002): 92.

out their own little fiefdoms within the proto-state.<sup>238</sup> This “greed” effect could also occur within the Taliban, as local commanders become warlords concerned more with lining their own pockets instead of pursuing the high leadership’s political objectives.

If the Taliban proto-state is unsuccessful in achieving its primary goal of establishing an Islamic state in Afghanistan, is there a chance it could end up with an autonomous area of its own similar to the UWSP? Negotiations between some Taliban leaders and Kabul have taken place, but talks with Mullah Omar have been “ruled out.”<sup>239</sup> If a deal were somehow struck (that Kabuls external supporters also agreed to), and ISAF/U.S. forces did pull back or pull out completely, it is possible some type of more stable Taliban proto-state might come into existence, and in the absence of alternatives, opium might continue to be a source of income for farmers and the Taliban governing “structure.”

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<sup>238</sup> Kramer, 38.

<sup>239</sup> Carlotta Gall, “Karzai says he has held meetings with Taliban members,” *International Herald Tribune*, April 6, 2007, <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2007/04/06/news/kabul.php> (accessed April 28, 2008).

## V. CONCLUSION

### A. SUMMARY

The main research question of this thesis asked: how do militias (insurgents) create drug-funded proto-states within Afghanistan-Pakistan and Burma? Chapter I suggested a multi-faceted situation existing in these two regions that is conducive to proto-state formation. A statement of the main argument followed, which was that ethnic and/or religious groups and their armies opposed weak and illegitimate states in Kabul, Islamabad and Naypyidaw, in part by occupying territory of opium production and extracting capital from the opiate business. To slightly modify Tilly's statement: "war made proto-states and proto-states made war." Next, the chapter reviewed the applicable literature broken down into the categories of state building, states within states and causes of civil war, finding that the state building approach provided the best explanatory for conflict in the two regions studied, since nation-states never existed in them in the first place. The words insurgency and civil war are actually misleading in characterizing these conflicts. Finally, it proposed a five-part framework for analyzing two case studies of proto-states, one from each region.

Chapter II looked at the Afghanistan-Pakistan, attempting to answer the main research question specifically in this region. An additional sub-question was also addressed: how do geographic, political, socio-cultural and economic elements shape these conflicts? It first provided a background of opium and conflict, followed by an in-depth examination of proto-state enablers such as Pashtun ethno-nationalist sentiments, concepts of states and borders associated with the Durand Line, feudalism and its connection to opium cash cropping, and the role of *qawm* in the opiate business. The last section was a case study of the Taliban, which concluded that the Taliban did in fact have a very rudimentary and still fragmented proto-state with a large chunk of its economy based on opium. It discussed the territory of the Taliban as straddling the line between Pakistan and Afghanistan, but with a core in Pakistan's FATA area, and its primary political objective the establishment of a Sharia-based Islamic state in Afghanistan.

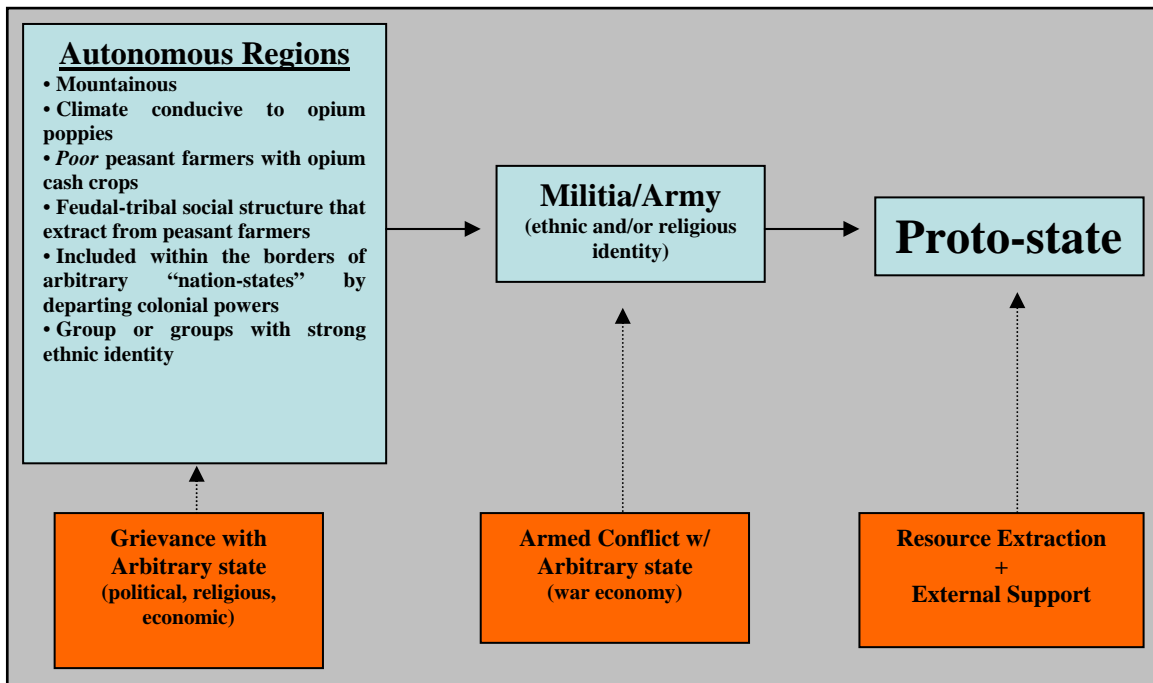
Chapter III used a structure very similar to Chapter II to describe the situation in Burma, but with a more history-focused approach. To answer the same two questions, it discussed Southeast Asia hill tribes and opium, and provided a historical background of conflict and opium in Burma beginning in 1948, showing how nationalism and political failures resulted in increasing ethnic militia fragmentation. At the same time, the opium economy grew as it fueled not just the ethnic militias, but also the Burman state. Next, proto-state enablers were examined in the categories of porous borders and colonial legacy, ethno-nationalism and communism, feudalism, and cultural factors such as *guanxi* in the Shan State. The last section detailed the UWSP as a proto-state, showing how after the fall of the CPB, it quickly secured an autonomous area through a tenuous cease-fire agreement with Rangoon, followed by development based in part on its opiate economy. Later it largely phased out opium in its territory, but began to rely on methamphetamines and other ventures for funding. It sought to maintain its autonomy, but not to declare independence from the Union of Burma, and so far refused to lay down its arms.

Chapter IV compared the two regions at both a macro- and micro-level, asking: what are the significant similarities and differences between the Taliban and UWSP proto-states, and how can these help one understand proto-state formation? The macro-level units of comparison were Afghanistan-Pakistan and Burma, and the micro-level units of comparison were the Taliban and UWSP as proto-states. The macro-level section briefly touched on the colonial, tribal-feudal, and opium/war economic similarities between the two regions. It also compared some of the key indices and measurements of government, development and economics in order to show the results of years of conflict and illicit flows. The micro-level comparison section highlighted that the most striking similarities between the Taliban and UWSP proto-states existed in the coercive activities of protection and extraction. Other similarities appeared in the establishment of core territories and legitimacy through force and retributive justice. Primary differences manifested in political objectives and identity, in which the Wa sought ethnic autonomy and self-determination, while the Taliban wanted to take Kabul and install Islamic Sharia law in Afghanistan.



The basic thread woven throughout this thesis has been that proto-states funded by illicit cash crops of opium explain why the so-called insurgents, who are the proto-states' armies, are so hard to defeat. Once an army or militia establishes a core territory with legitimacy and structure, it is no longer just a battle against a rootless, guerilla band. A simple distillation of the main argument's qualitative argument is offered in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10. Formation of the Proto-state



## B. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The policy implications of this study lie primarily in the realm of conflict analysis. The state building approach, with attention to historical and cultural nuance, provides a more comprehensive dissection of the problem. (As opposed to, for example, a military counterinsurgency approach, or greed versus grievance evaluation.) Plainly, opium cash cropping is not a cause of conflict in these two regions. It is driven by poverty (and the fact that opium is illegal), which in turn is exacerbated by lack of development and war.

One of the fundamental pillars of proto-state legitimacy lies in its ability to protect its people, including from those seeking to undermine their livelihood. That is why the UWSP opium ban is so interesting. Due to the lack of viable economic alternatives, many Wa farmers are suffering. Now that three years have passed, they are increasingly asking their leadership to allow them to again grow poppies. Will the leadership lose support if it refuses and continues to fail to provide alternatives? In Afghanistan, the Taliban's legitimacy is boosted by its protection of peasant farmers from Kabul's eradication teams. Attacking peasant livelihood without providing an alternative that is at least as lucrative is not the way to build a legitimate state.

For policy makers, if the antagonists of a conflict display the attributes of a proto-state, a much more comprehensive approach is needed. This includes an emphasis on negotiating an end to conflict, followed by a heavy investment in development and operations to gain legitimacy. Bullets and bombs simply cannot solve such conflicts. The internal opium issue cannot be effectively dealt with until the proto-state is first addressed. Overall, a comprehensive approach is needed that involves economic reform at all levels, a gradual crop substitution scheme, and a counter-drug campaign that goes after warlords and traffickers, vice the producers. *Security and substantial economic development must first be established* for crop substitution methods to work.

### **C. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

While this thesis attempted to address the lack of comparative studies regarding cash crop drugs and conflict, it represents just one small step in this direction. A case study of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC), using the same framework, would strengthen the hypothesis. In addition, more field research is needed to gather quantitative data to supplement the qualitative arguments already put forth. Specifically, more data regarding actual proto-state revenue would be extremely helpful, but this remains an extremely daunting task. Interviews such as those of Taliban soldiers conducted by Graeme Smith's associate (see footnote in Chapter II) are particularly useful for gaining insight into proto-state workings.

Another area of research involves determining the full extent to which opium poppy production is returning to Pakistan (to see the increase compared to 2002, see Table 1), particularly in the Taliban proto-state core (the FATA). Since UNODC opium production reporting lies in part on visual spot checks (usually with the local authority's assistance), and access to the FATA by outsiders is virtually impossible, is an accurate assessment of this even possible? Opium production in the Taliban core would be particularly well protected and easily exploitable by the proto-state, compared to the more contestable areas in many parts of Afghanistan.

Understanding the relationship between opium and conflict is a critical step towards finding solutions for problems in the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle. If this thesis has no other implication for policy or strategy related to conflict and illicit cash crops, it should at least highlight the need for a thorough understanding of the historical and cultural context, and show that political decisions that do not take into account the ground truth are doomed to failure. This hearkens back to Bernard Brodie's quote at the beginning of this thesis: "Good strategy presumes good anthropology and good sociology." In addressing the deep-rooted conflicts that plague certain regions of the world, one can afford no less than to take this maxim to heart.

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