

**Drug Lords and Domestic Terrorism in Afghanistan**

**[NAME]**

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## **Outline**

### **Synthesis**

1. Drug lords are able to become productive and profitable through successfully recruiting the poor people to work for them as drug dealers.
2. However, aside from exploiting the poverty in Afghanistan, these drug lords have also been proven to be helping terrorist groups in order to ensure the success of their operations.

### **Overview of Drugs and Drug Lords in Afghanistan**

1. It is a well known fact that drug lords in Afghanistan are able to sustain their profitability and productivity through their effective cultivation of the opium crop.
2. During the leadership of Mullah Mohammed Omar, Taliban even sought the help of the United Nations to ensure that the production of opium in Afghanistan will be stopped permanently.
3. Drug lords in Afghanistan were still actually able to find a way to become profitable out of opium even if this was being eradicated all over the country.
4. The resurgence of the opium production was also further bolstered by the failure of the American troops to secure the participation of the warlords in Afghanistan in terms of tracking and stopping the activities of the drug lords.
5. The drug lords in Afghanistan consider Iran as their primary trading partner in terms of opium.

### **Drug Lords and Domestic Terrorism in Afghanistan**

1. There are many ways through which drug lords in Afghanistan are guilty of participating in domestic terrorism. The first and most obvious way is by providing financial support to Taliban.
2. The mere fact that the drug lords in Afghanistan are able to create chaos through supporting the Taliban group which in turn commits violence against the US troops and the indigenous population of the country makes them guilty of being involved in domestic terrorism.
3. Because drug lords in Afghanistan are able to cause corruption which results to some government officials to pledging support to Taliban and being protectors of the opium trade, this makes them guilty of domestic terrorism.

### **Conclusion**

1. The US troops and the government officials in Afghanistan remain optimistic that they will be able to find a way to finally solve these problems and put an end to the misery and suffering of the people in this country.

## **Synopsis**

It is undeniable that drug lords in Afghanistan have truly negatively influenced the society of this country and have caused chaos and violence. These drug lords are able to become productive and profitable through successfully recruiting the poor people to work for them as drug dealers. However, aside from exploiting the poverty in Afghanistan, these drug lords have also been proven to be helping terrorist groups in order to ensure the success of their operations. Thus, the goal of this paper is to uncover the massive influence that these drug lords are able to have in terms of domestic terrorism and prove how dangerous they can truly be for the people of Afghanistan.

## **Methods**

To be able to address the issue, a review of related research materials or literature has been done. This research came from reliable textbooks that are related towards the topic about drug lords in Afghanistan.

## **Literature Review**

### **A. Overview of Drugs and Drug Lords in Afghanistan**

It is a well known fact that drug lords in Afghanistan are able to sustain their profitability and productivity through their effective cultivation of the opium crop. In fact, Afghanistan is the world's top producer of opium, and the drug lords have been able to successfully earn millions of dollar annually out of opium trade.

The production of opium in the country has been increasing after America decided to initiate the takeover of Afghanistan in 2001. This is very surprising as this increase was never really experienced by the country when it was still under the governance of the Taliban group. Aside from this, it has been observed that there has also been an increase with regard to the lands that are being cultivated to plant and harvest opium (Barton 2007, p. 43). The opium farmers actually get the least of the profits being obtained through the opium trade, as the majority of the profits are being obtained by the drug lords, terrorist groups and corrupt government officials.

There was actually a time when the Taliban was very much opposed in the production of opium. During the leadership of Mullah Mohammed Omar, Taliban even sought the help of the United Nations to ensure that the production of opium in Afghanistan will be stopped permanently. Omar believed that the production of opium violated the principles of Islam, and so he used his leadership in order to orchestrate an effective initiative towards the eradication of opium all over Afghanistan at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Shanty 2011, p. 68). This initiative was able to significantly lessen the hectares of land being allocated to the production of opium, including the Helmand Province which had been notorious for being the primary area of opium cultivation in Afghanistan. This initiative was even acknowledged by the Bush government that it provided a financial reward for Taliban.

However, what the Bush government did not realize was that the drug lords in Afghanistan were still actually able to find a way to become profitable out of opium even if this was being eradicated all over the country. There was actually a price increase for opium products that was implemented while Taliban was busy in eliminating opium in Afghanistan, but this was actually a strategy of some drug lords to be able to control the market. For example, drug lords were still able to make significant profits out of dried opium because this product had a very long

shelf life. They were still able to find a way to hide dried opium in places that they knew that the Taliban won't be able to trace. This is a clear proof of how crafty the drug lords in Afghanistan can truly be.

The success of the initiative of the Taliban to eradicate opium all over Afghanistan did not really last for long. Towards the last quarter of 2001, the country's economy experienced a downfall which led to the decrease in the opportunities for livelihood among the people. Because of this, the Afghan people simply decided to just go back to their old ways and cultivate opium in order to survive and feed their families. It did not take that long before the production of opium in Afghanistan returned to a massive scale, and this could also be blamed to the presence of corrupt people in the government who eagerly accepted bribes to allow the opium trade to push through.

The resurgence of the opium production was also further bolstered by the failure of the American troops to secure the participation of the warlords in Afghanistan in terms of tracking and stopping the activities of the drug lords. Because Taliban was already out of the picture, the warlords took over the management of the production and selling of opium (Cooley 2002, p. 106). However, the American troops were hesitant to engage on a direct conflict with these warlords because of the reality that they were also beneficial in terms of providing the American troops with important intelligence information and helping them to fight the Al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorist groups. These warlords sometimes were even willing to join the American troops in certain attacks on the hideouts of the Al-Qaeda and Taliban terrorist groups. Thus, the US troops were worried that if they forced the warlords to stop their participation in their opium trade, they would get upset and stop providing assistance.

The resurgence of the opium production certainly came as good news for the drug lords because this only meant that they could already go back to their profitable ways once again. What was ironic was the fact that Taliban, the terrorist group that orchestrated the plan to eradicate opium all over Afghanistan, came asking for financial assistance to these drug lords after they were removed from power. The Taliban members became desperate to survive, and so they thought that the only way for them to be able to get sufficient funds was to seek the help of the drug lords.

The drug lords in Afghanistan consider Iran as their primary trading partner in terms of opium. As a matter of fact, there are certain places in Iran that sell opium in a very expensive price as the demand from the people is also very high. This is further bolstered by the fact that even if there are specific laws in the country that make opium possession, use and selling as crimes, they are not really being implemented effectively (Shams 2008, p. 39). The drug lords in Afghanistan are able to establish excellent business deals with the drug lords in Iran which make both sides very profitable. This is the reason why it is not that surprising to know that there are plenty of Iranians who get caught of possessing or using opium. With such a profitable and stable opium trade relations with Iran, it can be expected that the drug lords in Afghanistan will continue to become prosperous over the long term. They will continue to become serious threats to the safety and security of the Afghan people and become even more influential in supporting terrorist groups like Taliban.

## **B. Drug Lords and Domestic Terrorism in Afghanistan**

There are many ways through which drug lords in Afghanistan are guilty of participating in domestic terrorism. The first and most obvious way is by providing financial support to Taliban. It is not that very hard to understand why these drug lords would be willing to provide financial support to Taliban. By giving financial support, the drug lords can essentially depend on Taliban to protect their opium business to ensure its sustained profitability and productivity over the long term. This is very crucial considering that the US troops and the Afghan forces have already tightened up and intensified their efforts to hunt down the drug lords who are responsible for providing financial support to Taliban. The Taliban can help the drug lords to still operate effectively in Afghanistan/

With continuous financial support coming from the drug lords, Taliban is also able to keep increasing its strength and capability to inflict more terror, chaos and violence all over Afghanistan (Giacomelli 2007, p. 114). The drug lords certainly do not really care about these activities by Taliban for as long as they are able to do their job in protecting their opium business in the country. With sufficient funds, Taliban is able to purchase weapons and recruit more members which are all crucial towards its long term success. Taliban can have the money to bribe government officials to be in their favour and be able to also provide them with the protection they need against the law enforcers in the country. There is no doubt that Taliban can truly do so many evil things with the funds that are being provided to them by the drug lords in Afghanistan including domestic terrorism.

The mere fact that the drug lords in Afghanistan are able to create chaos through supporting the Taliban group which in turn commits violence against the US troops and the indigenous population of the country makes them guilty of being involved in domestic terrorism. Taliban has always been notorious for its illegal and criminal activities all over Afghanistan especially after they were ousted from power in 2001. They really have no regard for anybody who will stand in their way, and they will eliminate all threats and obstacles to make sure that they are able to succeed in their targets and objectives. They will be willing to intimidate and kill even innocent Afghan people and US soldiers just to be able to get their objectives accomplished according to plan.

Because the Taliban group is obliged to protect the drug lords and their opium business in exchange for the financial support that they are getting, they are certainly more than willing to resort to violent acts to make sure that they are able to do what they have been paid to do (Pieth 2006, p. 80). They will do everything they can to protect the opium plantations that could be attacked by the US troops. They will also keep recruiting poor Afghans to work for the drug lords and harass other people who will stand in their way. Thus, it will be difficult to imagine a peaceful and orderly Afghan society for as long as the Taliban group and drug lords are exerting their power and influence over the people. There will be constant chaos and disorderliness in Afghanistan all because of opium and the massive power and influence that are being possessed by the drug lords.

Because drug lords in Afghanistan are able to cause corruption which results to some government officials to pledging support to Taliban and being protectors of the opium trade, this makes them guilty of domestic terrorism. There is no doubt that these drug lords are certainly very profitable and wealthy, which is why they do not really worry about the money that they have to pay as bribes for these government officials who are willing to sell their conscience and ethics in exchange for getting wealthier and more powerful (Gurulé 2008, p. 44). These drug lords certainly make sure that they will offer bribes that will be difficult for the government officials to refuse. Thus, because of the presence of such corrupt government officials in Afghanistan, it becomes truly difficult for the country to truly create a strong effort to address the problem of drugs and wipe out the drug lords.

The corruption being caused by the drug lords certainly make it very difficult for the US troops to also completely trust in the Afghan government in the fight to eliminate opium in Afghanistan. The drug lords are certainly too tough and difficult to be able to be controlled. Thus, the US troops are trying so hard to figure out which among the government officials of Afghanistan can truly be trusted to be able to help them in their fight against Taliban and the drug lords. For as long as the US troops are not able to secure the complete support of Afghan government in their fight against drugs and Taliban, they will be fighting a losing battle over the long term. They will be losing more men than the number of drug lords and Taliban members that they will be able to bring down.

The drug lords also use the Taliban to be able to further spread their opium business by giving them the capabilities to engage in drug trafficking activities, money laundering and acquisition of weapons. The Taliban somehow serves as the military force of the drug lords that they can just command whenever and however they like to. With such tremendous power being provided to the Taliban by the drug lords, it is certainly not that surprising to know that the US troops are having a difficult time in controlling them (Kassimyar 2009, p. 142). They are simply so powerful to the extent that they are also able to get the sympathy of the poor Afghan people for what they are fighting for. They have been able to influence the poor Afghan people and make them think that opium is necessary for their survival.

With such level of influence by the drug lords and Taliban, it is safe to say that they have a fearsome level of control of Afghanistan. The very reason why there are US troops still present in this country is that Afghanistan's own military forces and government are not capable in stopping these formidable forces that have combined to engage in domestic terrorism. As the drug lords continue to become productive and profitable over the years, it will only mean that they will also be able to provide more support to the Taliban group. Once this happens, this can only mean more bad news for the people of this country and the US troops as well as they will have to exert more efforts and work even harder to be able to put a stop to the increasing power of the drug lords and the Taliban group in Afghanistan.

Nonetheless, in spite of the alarming increase in the power and influence of the Taliban and the drug lords, there is still hope that this problem can be addressed in the long run. The US troops and the government officials in Afghanistan remain optimistic that they will be able to find a way to finally solve these problems and put an end to the misery and suffering of the people in this country. However, it is important that the government and the US troops are able to make concrete plans and strategies to be able to have sustained success in their efforts (Hafvenstein 2007, p. 103). It is important that the plans and strategies that the government and the US troops are making are very realistic, attainable and have specific timetables so that they can be able to measure the level of success that they are at. It may take a long period of time to defeat the Taliban and drug lords in Afghanistan, but for as long as the US troops and the government officials are working hard and seeking the support of the people to join them in their efforts to deal with this problem, there is reason to be optimistic about the possibility that their efforts will eventually pay off in the long run.

## **Results**

Based on the literature review connected to the overview of drugs and drug lords in Afghanistan, it was discovered that drug lords in Afghanistan are able to sustain their profitability and productivity through their effective cultivation of the opium crop. During the leadership of Mullah Mohammed Omar, Taliban sought the help of the United Nations to ensure that the production of opium in Afghanistan will be stopped permanently. However, drug lords in Afghanistan were still actually able to find a way to become profitable out of opium even if this was being eradicated all over the country.

Aside from this, it was also discovered that the resurgence of the opium production was also further bolstered by the failure of the American troops to secure the participation of the warlords in Afghanistan in terms of tracking and stopping the activities of the drug lords. The drug lords in Afghanistan consider Iran as their primary trading partner in terms of opium.

Based on the literature review conducted about the topic on drug lords and domestic terrorism in Afghanistan, it was revealed that there are many ways through which drug lords in Afghanistan are guilty of participating in domestic terrorism. The first and most obvious way is by providing financial support to Taliban. Aside from this, the mere fact that the drug lords in Afghanistan are able to create chaos through supporting the Taliban group which in turn commits violence against the US troops and the indigenous population of the country makes them guilty of being involved in domestic terrorism. Lastly, because drug lords in Afghanistan are able to cause corruption which results to some government officials to pledging support to Taliban and being protectors of the opium trade, this makes them guilty of domestic terrorism.

## **Conclusion**

There is no doubt that the drug lords in Afghanistan are guilty of participating in domestic terrorism by virtue of supporting the Taliban group and its terrorist activities. The Taliban has certainly become even more powerful and fearsome because of the support from the drug lords, but the persistence of the US troops and the government provides a glimmer of hope that these problems can be resolved in the long run.

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