

# Financing Terrorism by Means of Drug Trafficking

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*Abstract:* - Drug trafficking represents one of the most important threats to modern society. Usually terrorists are constant seeking ways to finance their illegal plans and expensive attacks through illicit means such as drug trafficking. By these means the society, the health of it's citizens and also it's serenity is being affected by drug trafficking, and by the chaos that terrorists attacks induce.

*Key-words:* - drugs, drug trafficking, illicit trade, terrorism, narcotics, chaos, money- laundering.

## 1 Introduction

Firstly, the illicit trade in drugs will not be eradicated by focusing on system issues. Improving the reporting or licensing system only deals with the symptoms of the disease. What is required is that we deal with the issues that give rise to the need to acquire drugs in the first place, in this regard we would like to acknowledge the work of national Governments and donor agencies in improving the quality of life of our people so that opportunities for the use of drugs are minimized.

More efforts however need to be directed towards this especially amongst the prosperous members of the international community of nations. This includes taking cognizance of the degenerative effects of uncontrolled trade liberalization on developing states.

Within Governments it would mean also the meaningful encoding of community views and needs into national policies, frameworks and systems, and the decoding of market requirements in ways that unlock the positive

capacities of communities and peoples.

Secondly we need to promote a culture of peace in our communities. By culture of peace we mean the summum of total values, attitudes, behaviors and ways of life which reject violence and prevent conflicts and drug dependency by tackling their root causes through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and States. A culture of peace comprises all efforts that are undertaken with the intention of transforming a "culture of violence" into a culture which strengthens the peace momentum through dialogue.

## 2 Actions need to be taken in order to ensure a safe environment in our society

Among the activities that could be pursued, we would like to suggest the following:

- 1 The sensitization of the population on the risks

that they could face or could cause their communities to face by owning, accumulating or using weapons abusively;

2. The need to orientate education, both formal and informal, towards the values of tolerance, moderation and peace;

3. The institution or the strengthening of local discussion forums;

4. The maintenance of permanent dialogue between different communities,

5. The constant building of consensus among local actors on their understanding of what the main stakes are and their understanding of the sources and ways of resolving local conflicts in their communities.

Lastly, we need to ensure that the state guarantees the security of citizens. One of the valid reasons often cited by citizens living in weak, failing or failed States to justify the culture of self preservation, is the perceived as a real lack of ability by the police and/or security forces to provide security for individual citizens and their rights.

Under these circumstances, it is imperative that the State should be supported in fulfilling its obligations towards its citizens, that of providing them with security. Some efforts have been made already at the level of the international community with the wide-spread adoption of the philosophy of "security first". This is the recognition by the international community that socio-economic development can only occur in an environment where security has first been established.

We think that more practical and concrete efforts need to be made especially in the domain of building the capacity of the police and security forces. Any such training, to make up for the shortcomings of current training programs, should include a course ethics on small arms.

### **3 Dealing with the threat of terrorism and drug trafficking**

The financing of terrorism through illicit

drug trafficking has been touted as a major problem since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Indeed, during the last decade, Afghanistan has been the most important opium producing country in the world. It was under Taliban rule in 1999 that opium production reached its height with a 4,581-ton yield. Moreover, the fact that al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden found a safe haven in that country, raised concerns about the possible emergence of a more global and pernicious alliance between drug traffickers and terrorists.

But three years after the ouster of the Taliban, Afghanistan's opium production is expected to exceed even 1999's record high, thus raising concerns that the country is on the verge of becoming a "narco-state" and a bastion of "narco-terrorism." Antonio Maria Costa, the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, warned of "mounting evidence of drug money being used to finance criminal activities, including terrorism," and declared that "fighting drug trafficking equals fighting terrorism."

The fact that the very term "narco-terrorism" appears to be too vague and counterproductive in terms of addressing either drug trafficking or terrorism - since it brings very different actors into too broad a category - has not kept most observers and politicians from resorting extensively to such a notion. Still, it is worthwhile examining the extent to which terrorism is funded by the illicit drug economy, if only to highlight the minimal role this plays in al-Qaeda's finances.

A few cases have been highlighted by the media as evidence of al-Qaeda tapping into the opium economy of Afghanistan, even though the claims in themselves do not constitute an argument for the existence of any organized form of "narco-terrorism." Doubtless, terrorist outfits are not less likely than others to at least try to benefit from such a resource, especially in a country like Afghanistan where the opium economy is estimated to equal half of the country's legitimate gross domestic product.

However, for the term not to become hackneyed, it seems that "narco-terrorism" should

not refer to terrorist groups that have been only partly funded by illegal drugs, but rather to identify organized narcotics traffickers who seek to affect the policies of a government by terrorist means.

Moreover, when one considers the direct and/or indirect involvement of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence in the drug trade, it further complicates the adequacy of a category such as "narco-terrorism" and would require comparing how different actors like resistance guerrillas, intelligence and counter-insurgency agencies, and terrorist organizations use the drug economy[7].

In post-Taliban Afghanistan and prior to 2004, the U.S. has condoned opiates production both in areas traditionally controlled by the United Front (Badakhshan) and in areas held by various local commanders whose support was deemed strategically necessary to fight the Taliban and al-Qaeda. Since then, some media reports have alleged continuing links between terrorists and illicit drug traffickers and have claimed that organizations involved in or benefiting from drug trafficking include al-Qaeda, Taliban remnants and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-e-Islami. According to Western intelligence agencies, "recent busts have revealed evidence of al-Qaeda's ties to the trade." Such ties were inferred by various seizures of narcotics such as the one made by the U.S. Navy in the Arabian Sea on a small fishing boat aboard which "several al-Qaeda guys sitting on a bale of drugs" were found [5]. In another case, the Kabul house of a drug trafficker was raided and a dozen satellite phones, used to call numbers "linked to suspected terrorists" in Turkey, the Balkans and Western Europe, were found. Hitherto, arguably the most serious case involving a connection between drug traffickers and "terrorists" is that revolving around the network of Haji Juma Khan, an Afghan national. According to some reports, western intelligence agencies are said to believe that Khan is the head of a heroin-trafficking organization that is a "principal source of funding for the Taliban and al-Qaida terrorists." Khan's

boats would allegedly ship Afghan heroin out of the Pakistani port of Karachi and would return from the Middle East loaded with arms for both al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Midways Yasini, the head of Afghanistan's Counter Narcotics Directorate, who estimates that the Taliban and its allies derived more than \$150 million from drugs in 2003, also alleges that there are "central linkages" between Khan, Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden. Conversely, the independent commission investigating the September 11th attacks recently declared that "the US government still has not determined with any precision how much al Qaeda raises or from whom, or how it spends its money."

According to this report, al-Qaeda is mainly funded by rich individuals from the Persian Gulf and by some Islamic charities. Of greater interest, still, is the commission's assertion that there is "no substantial evidence that al Qaeda played a major role in the drug trade or relied on it as an important source of revenue either before or after 9/11." [2]

However, if al-Qaeda is connected to the opium economy of Afghanistan, it would not be at the production level but higher up in the chain of drug processing and trafficking, most likely involving the protection of heroin laboratories and trafficking caravans. As for where the money generated from drug production and trafficking goes, it has always been divided iniquitously, in Afghanistan and elsewhere, among farmers who receive the smallest share; producers/warlords who condone or encourage production in their territory, and local and regional traffickers who get the biggest share [6].

Moreover, al-Qaeda is likely to have become involved in the drug trade after the ouster of the Taliban who were after all levying taxes on the opium trade.

It is also important to stress that it was the Taliban who benefited from al Qaeda's funding and not the other way round. Indeed, as stated by the 9/11 commission, "prior to 9/11 the

largest single al Qaeda expense was support for the Taliban, estimated at about \$20 million per year." Moreover, knowledgeable observers agree that the drug trade was at that time the Taliban's second source of revenue, estimated at \$80 or \$100 million in 1999.

This reliable estimate casts serious doubt on allegations that the Taliban earned more from drugs in 2003 than in 1999 when opium production was higher and when they controlled 85% of Afghanistan. Besides, the 9/11 commission declared that "intelligence collection efforts have failed to corroborate rumors of current narcotic trafficking. In fact, there is compelling evidence the al Qaeda leadership does not like or trust those who today control the drug trade in Southwest Asia, and has encouraged its members not to get involved.

In the absence of evidence pointing to "narco-terrorism" in Afghanistan or elsewhere, reports alleging its existence seem to originate from "political intelligence" for which "truth is not the goal" of intelligence gathering - it is "victory." [3]

Hence, it may be that recent efforts to link the narcotics economy to terrorism really aims at linking the war on drugs to the war on terrorism, and vice-versa. While drugs and terrorism are not necessarily the two faces of the same coin in Afghanistan, the war on drugs and the war on terrorism may serve the same political agenda.

A clear example is the current efforts of the U.S. Southern Command to guarantee the prolongation of its enhanced funding by raising the threat of "narco-terrorism" in Latin America, where "U.S. military aid and training, which previously were focused on counter-narcotics operations, have now been re-tasked as counter-terrorism responsibilities." [4]

## 4 Conclusion

The argument that the threat of narco-terrorism - whatever its definition - in

Afghanistan and elsewhere is hyped by political and sectional interests rather than originating from hard intelligence is clearly not without foundation.

Moreover while there is little doubt that some proceeds of the illicit drug trade contribute partially to the funding of some terrorist outfits, drug trafficking is still far from being the main financing source of global terrorism.

Indeed, it is clear that terrorists and drug traffickers have differing long-term goals which should be considered in the methods used to counter both. Thus, fighting drug trafficking does not necessarily equate to fighting terrorism, even though "narco-terrorism," depicted as a threat by certain sectional interests, arguably legitimates and reinforces a failed global war on drugs.

Usually terrorists and drug traffickers seek new means to finance themselves every day, they try to keep the first hand in dealing with law enforcement tactics in order to have an advantage upon those organizations that have as main goal catching traffickers and bringing them to justice.

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