

Scenario 236

OPIUM FACTOR IN AFGHAN WAR:

UNODC's SURVEY 2018:

As per UNODC records, opium accounted for around a third of ¹¹ Afghanistan's GDP. It has been the country's biggest cash crop which also ¹² provided almost 0.6 million full-time jobs. This, despite the fact that the ¹³ US military spent \$1.5m a day on counter-narcotics measures since their ¹⁴ presence there in October 2001; the US spent almost \$9bn. It was on top ¹⁵ of the trillions dollars spent fighting the war itself. *'To put it bluntly, these ¹⁶ numbers spell about ¹⁷ total failure of Americans in this field, too'* ¹⁸
In March 2000, Abdul Hameed Akhunzada, Head of the Taliban's anti-drug Commission, said in an interview with The **Washington Post**:

"We are 100 percent determined to control drugs, but we cannot do it alone. This problem existed long before the Taliban, and we need much more help from the outside world to solve it."

Ironically, the only power that demonstrated an ability to cripple the Afghan drug industry was the Taliban."

In July 2000, when the Taliban controlled most of the country, Afghan leader, Mullah Omar, had declared that opium was un-Islamic and imposed a ban on growing poppies. Much to the surprise of the world, the ban worked. Afraid to cross the Taliban, Afghan farmers immediately ceased planting poppies. The UN estimated that poppy cultivation plunged by 90% in 2000-01. There were uproar in global heroin markets and the Afghan economy got disrupted as well; but even today, Afghans recall the moment with awe and wonder. Tooryalai Wesa, a former governor of *Kandahar* province, told SIGAR in an interview:

"When [the] Taliban ordered to stop poppy cultivation, Mullah Omar enforced it with No one cultivated poppy after the order was passed. Now, billions of dollars came and were given to the Ministry of Counter-narcotics. It actually didn't decrease [anything]. The poppy [cultivation] even increased."

1 **Despite spending so enormous amounts, why is business still booming?**

2 Let us start from the day Afghanistan was attacked after 9/11.

3

4 **On 11th October 2001;** President George W. Bush, in a televised news

5 conference, four days after he launched the war in Afghanistan, said:

6

7 *"It'd be helpful, of course, to eradicate narco-trafficking out of*

8 *Afghanistan as well."*

9

10 Afghan farmers ploughed more soil to grow poppies and the British

11 struggled to cope with the opium problem. The Bush administration

12 debated whether and how to get involved in eradication of poppy

13 cultivation. Yet the bureaucratic dysfunction was just as bad in

14 Washington as it was in London or elsewhere.

15

16 The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law

17 Enforcement Affairs were supposed to take charge of US policy but

18 Pentagon was unsure about what to do with President's announcement and

19 wish. However, in a confidential **October 2004** memo, Rumsfeld wrote:

20

21 *"She [?] thinks it is important to act soon, to avoid having a situation*

22 *where drug money elects the Afghan Parliament, and the Afghan*

23 *Parliament then opposes Karzai and corrupts the government."*

24

25 **One month later**, Rumsfeld sent another confidential memo to Doug

26 Feith, the Pentagon's Policy Chief, to complain about the Bush

27 administration's aimless approach.

28

29 *"With respect to the drug strategy for Afghanistan, it appears not to*

30 *be synchronized — no one's in-charge. Department of State has to*

31 *develop a strategy. Other countries in the region want to get involved*

32 *— Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, along with*

33 *Afghanistan. Why don't you see what you can do about that?"*

34

35 As soon as America invaded and toppled the Taliban regime in 2001,

36 Afghan farmers were sowing their poppy seeds as usual. The officials were

37 concerned about a rebound in opium production but focused on other

38 priorities, such as hunting for Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders.

39 President Bush had asked the UN and NATO allies to tackle the problems

40 of opium production and trafficking; only Britain agreed to take charge.

41

42 In the spring of 2002, British officials floated an irresistible offer. They

43 agreed to pay Afghan poppy farmers \$700 an acre — a fortune in the

impoverished, war-ravaged country — to destroy their crops. However, 1 details of the \$30 million program ignited a poppy-growing passion. 2 Farmers planted as many poppies as they could, offering part of their 3 yield to the British while selling the rest in the open market. Others 4 harvested the opium sap right before destroying their plants and got paid 5 anyway. See an interesting comment:

"Afghans, like most other people, are quite willing to accept large sums of money and promise anything knowing that you will go away. The British would come and hand out sums of money and the Afghans would say, 'Yes, yes, yes, we're going to burn it right now,' and the Brits would leave. They would then get two sources of income from the same crop."

On 9th December 2004; Afghan President Karzai, in a speech said:

"Opium cultivation, heroin production is more dangerous than the invasion and the attack of the Soviets on our country. It is more dangerous than the factional fighting in Afghanistan. It is more dangerous than terrorism...."

Karzai had declared the efforts to eradicate poppy cultivation as a 'holy war' which was also pushed by American Congress **to do something**. In 2004 - the INL took a hard line on it. The agency hired a small army of 1,200 security contractors to crack down against poppy farming, including mercenaries from South Africa, veterans of the Balkan wars and Gurkha soldiers from Nepal. **Ronald McMullen** took charge as Director of the Agency's office in 2006 to fulfil the mission. In his interview later he told:

"I was baffled by some of the tactics the contractors and Afghan counter-narcotics police were using. I was shocked to learn that the American-funded anti-poppy police unit was eradicating Afghan poppies by hand. We'd send a truck of counter-narcotics police out to a field of blossoming opium poppies, the police would hop out of the truck, pick up sticks and walk through the field whacking poppies with their sticks."

The fact remained that the US, British and UN officials exaggerated data to make it appear that they had destroyed far more poppy fields than they really had during McMullen's **tenure of 2005-07**. There was systematic over-reporting and intimidation but no one wanted to hear it; thus they had to end up with absurd numbers. Also that those flawed

1 eradication programs were driven by Congress wanting to see something
2 tangible, even though it was clear there was no simple solution.
3

4 In a **September 2005** diplomatic cable, the then US Ambassador **Ronald**
5 **Neumann** warned the White House and the State Department that:
6

7 *“...narcotics could be the factor that causes corruption to consume*
8 *Afghanistan’s fledgling democracy. Many of our contacts correctly fear*
9 *that the burgeoning narcotics sector could spin Afghan corruption out*
10 *of anyone’s control. They fear that the sheer mass of illegal money*
11 *from growing, processing, and trafficking opium could strangle the*
12 *legitimate Afghan state in its cradle.”*

13 But Bush administration officials could not agree on a course of action.
14 The policy makers at White House generally held the opinion:
15

16 *“.....that these are just poor peasant farmers; if we treat them like*
17 *enemies then we are just making enemies. If we are trying to stabilize*
18 *the country we don’t want to turn the populace against us. They’ve*
19 *been growing poppies for thousand years here and if we rip out their*
20 *fields we are impoverishing them.”*

21 In fact, the Pentagon and the British government were slow to recognize
22 that narcotics were fuelling the insurgency. The military didn’t want to
23 deal with the drugs issue — better to be an ostrich — had to take them
24 kicking and screaming. It created a whole new problem that the military
25 didn’t know how to deal with.
26

27 Washington couldn’t understand that a successful counter-narcotics
28 effort was going to be a function of a massive rural development effort
29 in Afghanistan; it was very different situation than of Operation Plan-
30 Colombia. INL Director McMullen, cited above, held:
31

32 *“Urging Karzai to mount an effective counter-narcotics campaign was*
33 *like asking an American president to halt all US economic activity west*
34 *of the Mississippi - that was the magnitude of what we were asking the*
35 *Afghans to do.”*

36 In **2007**, the UN published a report titled **‘Afghanistan Opium Survey.’**
37 The report detailed the extent of drug trafficking in the area, a reality
38 that underpinned the Taliban’s ability to sustain its insurgency. The
39 report found that 53% of the country’s GDP increased as a result of
40 revenue from the heroin trade. 8,200 tons of *heroin* was being shipped
41

in and out of Afghanistan annually. Intelligence asserting the Taliban's involvement confirmed that the guerrillas were using the revenue to buy arms and resources; **McCoy, Alfred**'s book titled as 'The Rise and Decline of US Global Power' [2017] Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, p99 is referred.

OBAMA FAILED TO TACKLE OPIUM, TOO:

On 19th November 2009; the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said at a news conference in Kabul that:

"We are starting to see results. Farmers are beginning to switch from poppies to pomegranates. Girls are attending schools."

After President Obama took office in 2009, the US policy for Afghan War changed altogether and with immediate effect. The State Department's new special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, **Richard Holbrooke**, wrote an op-ed in **The Washington Post** in 2018 blasting the Bush administration's poppy eradication efforts as:

'.....the single most ineffective program in the history of American foreign policy.'

Upon taking office, Mr Holbrooke brought eradication to a standstill. The US government shifted its focus to programs that tried to persuade Afghan poppy farmers to switch to other crops or adopt other livelihoods altogether.

The above two efforts also proved wastage of time and money. In *Helmand* province, USAID and the US military paid Afghans to dig or renovate miles of canals and ditches to irrigate fruit trees and other crops but the canals worked just to irrigate poppies only — which were much more profitable to grow. Similarly, USAID invested millions of dollars to entice *Helmand* farmers to start wheat-growing. While wheat production increased, farmers relocated their poppy fields to other parts of the province. According to UN estimates, during 2010-14, poppy cultivation across the country nearly doubled; in Afghanistan, poppy is not just another crop – it's something special for farmers.

The American military commanders were relieved by the Obama's decision to abandon poppy eradication programs because Afghanistan was not an agricultural country. Their largest industry was war, then drugs, then services; Agriculture was their fourth or fifth priority. At the

1 same time, military officials were seen more concerned because the
2 opium trade was providing a major revenue stream to the Taliban who
3 had imposed taxes on farmers and traffickers.

4
5 The commanders were not sure how to control or to curtail at least that
6 regular income of the Taliban sitting in *Helmand*'s mountains. There was
7 no civilian effort on record that told the military to perform in counter-
8 narcotics field. No coherent strategy was there because of contradictions
9 between counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency.

10
11 Counter-insurgency operations mostly relied on support of the population
12 and those were often disrupted by counter-narcotics manoeuvres that
13 were intended to eradicate opium. The commanders were always seen
14 debating and discussing the issue but at the level of policy, it was an
15 inconsistency that was left in doldrums and despair.

16
17 **OPERATION IRON TEMPEST:**

18
19 In November 2017, the US military commanders in Afghanistan launched
20 **Operation Iron Tempest**, a storm of air strikes by B-52 bombers, F-22
21 Raptors and other warplanes; the US planes did nine strikes in total, each
22 one taking out an individual building in a series of almost simultaneous
23 explosions - a jaw-dropping view of the precision bombing. The main
24 target was a network of clandestine opium production labs which was
25 helping to generate \$200 million a year in drug money for the Taliban. **Air**
26 **Force Brig Gen Lance Bunch** said during a press conference in Kabul that
27 the war changed its shade and it was their new strategy to move forward,
28 and it would definitely be a game-changer.

29
30 [The F-22 has been the most advanced stealth fighter in the world.
31 Each aircraft costs \$140m dollars and it costs at least \$35,000 an hour
32 to fly. **Lt Gen Jeffrey Harrigian**, of the US Air Forces, was anxious
33 that the policy of attacking revenue sources in Afghanistan was not
34 working as well as in Syria.]

35
36 Result: a big media caption that air-strikes killed eight civilians; videos
37 were also released 'with honour'. But, according to new research from
38 **the London School of Economics**, Operation Iron Tempest was not what
39 it seemed. The study found that, '**despite excellent intelligence [?]**', the
40 multi-million-dollar campaign could not gain a negligible effect even.

41
42 **UK's Dr Mansfield** studied the Afghan opium industry for 2-decades
43 plus. He jumped over his seat when he saw the video clips of air-strikes,

saying - '*what is the target here?*' Yet American Forces were claiming the attacks were a success. Dr Mansfield's conclusion was surprising. Despite the incredible resources the American military were pouring in, Dr and 3 his team were convinced that ***the US Air Force was using 21st century 4 fighter jets to bomb little more than mud huts.***

Opium is woven deeply into the fabric of conflict in Afghanistan which turned into the longest war in American history. Allegedly, the profits from the heroin were used to fund the Taliban – but the history tells otherwise. The Taliban in their 1st stint of rule had banned poppy-cultivation by law. In 2016 when a BBC reporter travelled through some poppy farms, that institutionalised poppy cultivation was in a government-controlled area; and then there was President Ghani's rule – a paid puppet of the US.

The farmers didn't feel any need to disguise what they were growing, as thousands of swollen opium poppy heads nodded cheerfully in a field just half an hour from *Mazar-e-Sharif* airport, and right at the main road. The 5-6 farmers were at ease under the protection of an ominous looking man with an AK47 slung over his shoulder – he was the local policeman.

[Growing opium is a very serious crime in Afghanistan, punishable with death, yet here was a policeman welcoming a BBC reporter to a poppy field at the height of the harvest.]

By 2017, the evidence of the Allied failure to contain opium production had become impossible to ignore. Four days before ***Operation Iron Tempest*** began in November, the UNODC had announced that poppy cultivation had risen multiple times. When US and British forces invaded Afghanistan in October 2001 poppies were grown over c74,000 hectares - 285 square miles. The new figures showed production had increased more than four-fold in 15 years: ***the opium was being grown on 328,000 hectares - 1,225 square miles in Afghanistan.***

And there had been another change too. In the past the opium latex would be dried and smuggled out of Afghanistan as a sticky paste to be refined elsewhere. In 2017-18, Afghan and western officials were estimating that half, possibly more, of Afghan opium was being processed either into morphine or heroin within Afghanistan. It made smuggling easier and also massively increased the profits for drug traffickers while the Afghan government used to take ***tax @ 20%*** of profits.

1 This spike in heroin production was deeply felt when America was
2 struggling to contain its own *opioid crisis*. The White House declared it
3 a national public health emergency in October 2017; as about two
4 million Americans were found addicted.

5

- 6 • November 2017's sudden **Operation Iron Tempest** became
7 understandable because Afghanistan was the biggest producer of
8 opium in the world then – taking 90% share.

9

10 *It makes up 95% of the market in Europe; 90% of the Canadian
11 market – and only 1% of US supply is from Afghanistan. Virtually all
12 the heroin used in America comes from Mexico and South America.*

13

14 The logic of **Operation Iron Tempest** was simple – to hit the Taliban
15 where it could hurt i.e. their finances. The US commanders then
16 estimated that around 60% of the Taliban's finances come from the
17 narcotics trade so attacking the drug trafficking networks would reduce
18 the insurgents' revenues. The campaign was highly celebrated for its
19 success but, as had been so often in the history of conflicts in Afghanistan,
20 this **campaign miserably failed within one year**.

21

22 Heroin production in Afghanistan was not an industrial process, says
23 Dr Mansfield. The makeshift workshops where Afghans used to refine
24 opium should not really be described as 'laboratories' either; no white
25 coats, Bunsen burners or sterile rooms. Heroin is usually made in an
26 ordinary Afghan housing compound - a mud outer wall with up to six,
27 usually mud-built, buildings inside. And, because it involves poisonous
28 fumes, it usually takes place in the open. That makes the process hard to
29 hide because it leaves a distinctive pattern of fire-pits, usually in rows.

30

31 An active site would also have piles of oil drums, a press to extract the
32 morphine, fuel - gas canisters, coal or wood - for the fires, and barrels
33 containing chemicals, as well as people and vehicles coming and going.

34

35 **The US military released 23 videos showing attacks on supposed heroin
36 labs.** Dr Mansfield said it was clear just from looking at them that there
37 was no heroin production in any premises of them.

38

39 However, **within a year it was Thuss...** Operation Iron Tempest had
40 fizzled out. Many of the suspected labs turned out to be empty, mud-
41 walled compounds. After more than 200 air-strikes, the US military
42 concluded it was a waste of resources to keep blowing up primitive
43 targets with advanced aircraft and laser-guided munitions. **What a rogue**

and bogus intelligence collection it was; the tax payer Americans asked; 1 as of all the failures in Afghanistan, the war on drugs was perhaps the 2 most useless. The key players in anti-narcotics campaigns acknowledged 3 that none of the measures had worked and, in many cases, they 4 made things worse. Ehsan Zia, a former Afghan cabinet minister, told 5 SIGAR that:

"The US and other NATO countries never settled on an effective strategy; they just threw money at the opium problem. They constantly changed policies and relied on consultants who were [totally] ignorant about Afghanistan. The only thing they are experts in is bureaucracy."

Negating the US efforts to restrict opium cultivation in Afghanistan, the opium production skyrocketed over the course of 20-year war. In 2018, Afghan farmers grew poppies on four times as much land as they did in 2002. With business booming, the opium industry has tightened its stranglehold on the Afghan economy, corrupted large sectors of the Afghan government and provided the Taliban a rising source of revenue; US, European and Afghan officials were on the same page.

The biggest problem was corruption in Afghanistan and drugs remained part of it – factually inseparable. The US and Britain tried all sorts of strategies to shrink opium production; they bribed farmers to stop cultivating poppies, hired mercenaries to invade poppy fields and drew up plans to spray defoliants from the sky - but the poppies spread anyway. For most of the war, the US military kept on struggling but had to discontinue on various counts – mainly perhaps got alarmed if its force could become the poppy-farmers' friends or business partners. During President Bush times, most US Generals didn't approve battle over opium - they saw it as a distraction to their primary mission of dealing with Al-Qaeda.

It was after 2009, during the Obama era, when the US military collected evidence that drug money was financing the insurgency – so felt it as a military threat. Even then they were seen reluctant to take action that could alienate poppy farmers — a large chunk of the population — or US-friendly warlords had earned huge profits from opium trafficking. **Andre Hollis**, Pentagon's top official in 2001-03 and later an Adviser to the Afghan Counter-narcotics Ministry said:

"The US Defence Department fundamentally didn't understand what getting involved in counter-narcotics entailed. Everyone was focusing

1 *on traditional roles. They would only talk to those in their battle space.*
2 *From a DOD perspective, it was tactical and about finding and killing*
3 *al-Qaeda. Everyone had his own agenda and counter-narcotics were*
4 *way down the list.”*

5 **SIGAR's 270-PAGES REPORT ON OPIUM:**

6 In June 2018, SIGAR published a 270-page report that documented the
7 failure of the war on Afghan opium and made policy recommendations.
8 The report concluded that:

9 *“A whole-of-government US counter-narcotics strategy should be*
10 *developed to coordinate various agencies around shared, long-term*
11 *goals. The strategy should be aligned with and integrated into the*
12 *larger security, development, and government objectives of the United*
13 *States and the host nation.”*

14 Together, the Pentagon documents revealed that many people involved in
15 the war on opium thought the policies they were carrying out made no
16 sense. Till June 2016 at least, the outcome was a legacy showing what
17 the US military did in OPIUM WAR was harmful; partly because most
18 people were stupid and partly because they deliberately chose not to
19 listen. Some officials gave similar accounts of foolishness and blamed
20 bureaucratic infighting for many of the problems. There remained a
21 violent competition in Washington not only within Congress, between
22 the Pentagon, Capitol Hill and the administration - also between
23 different parts of the administration. It was sad to see so many people
24 behaving so stupidly.

25 Referring to the **BBC-Reality Check** dated 25th August 2021:

26 **The Taliban claimed opium poppy cultivation was stopped and the**
27 **flow of illegal drugs halted when it was last in power in Afghanistan;**
28 yes, there was a sharp drop in 2001 - when it was last in control. The
29 poppy cultivation had risen in subsequent years.

30 *Afghanistan has been the world's largest producer of opium and still it*
31 *is. Its opium harvest accounts for more than 80-90% of the world's*
32 *supply. In 2018 the UNODC estimated opium production contributed*
33 *about one third of the country's economy; but that was President Ghani,*
34 *the American puppet's government not of Taliban. After the Taliban*
35 *took control of Afghanistan in August 2021, spokesman Zabihullah*
36 *Mujahid said:*

**“When we were in power before, there was no production of drugs. 1
We will bring opium cultivation to zero again and that there would be 2
no smuggling”. 3**

At first, opium poppy cultivation rose substantially under Taliban rule - 5 from around 41,000 hectares in 1998, to more than 64,000 in 2000. 6 This was largely in Taliban-controlled *Helmand* province, which 7 accounted for 39% of the world's illicit opium production. Following 8 the Taliban's ban on opium poppy farming, there was a noticeable dip 9 in opium and heroin seizures globally in 2001 and 2002; then things 10 changed after 9/11 event. 11

Referring to an APP Report appeared in daily **THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE** 12 dated 22nd September 2021 on the subject of PM Modi's involvement in 13 **Drug Trafficking Network:** 14

“The pin-drop silence of Indian PM Narendra Modi is in question after 16 the seizure of 3000 kg of heroin worth INRs:210 billion [\$3 billion] 17 at the Mundra Port in Gujarat, operated by his friend and financier 18 Gautam Adani. 19

In the biggest-ever single drug haul in India, the heroin was shipped 22 via two containers from Afghanistan to the port operated by the Adani 23 Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited.” 24

The daily **Hindustan Times** dated 25 20th September 2021 is referred. 26

The consignment, originating from Afghanistan was shipped to Gujarat, 27 India, on September 13-14 via Iran's Bandar Abbas Port and was hidden 28 inside two containers of semi-processed Afghan talc, imported by a firm 29 based in Andhra Pradesh. Gautam Adani, who hails from the Modi's 30 constituency Gujarat, owns nearly one-fourth of the cargo movement in 31 INDIA and manages 13 domestic ports in seven maritime states of 32 Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and 33 Odessa. 34

Also, the information regarding the 25% share of PM Modi in the port 36 raised many eyebrows, with fingers pointed at him for promoting drug 37 smuggling in the country. 38

The topic dominated social media conversations as politicians, civil 41 society and journalists targeted Adani Group and the Modi government 42 over the confiscation of so much 'powder' from the Mundra port. 43

1 The Congress attacked PM Modi asking how such a drug syndicate was
2 operating in India '**under the nose of the government**' as well as the
3 Narcotics Control Bureau [NCB]. Adani, as all knew, was chief financier
4 of Modi in 2014 elections. Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said at
5 a press conference:

6
7 *"Why are Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit
8 Shah, who are from Gujarat, unable to break this drug syndicate?
9 The smuggling of drugs into India had increased substantially in
10 the last few years. This will not only destroy the future of the youth of
11 India, but it is the potential funding route for the terrorist organizations
12 globally."*

13
14 BJP's Rajya Sabha MP Subramanian Swamy offered to file a Public
15 Interest Litigation after the capture of heroin of '**very high quality**'.
16 Leader of Telugu Desam Party, Dhulipalla Narendra Kumar said:

17
18 *"It was a '**shame for India**' to emerging as the epicenter of the
19 contraband mafia. How is it possible for the international drug and
20 uranium mafia to operate in Andhra Pradesh [Indian State] without the
21 support of the government and top police officers?"*

22
23 **INDIA IN AFGHAN-DRUG TRADE:**

24
25 Referring to an analysis appeared in daily **THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE**
26 dated 22nd October 2021 on the subject of India's **Drug Trafficking
27 Network:**

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29 *"The sudden exit of the United States and its allied forces from
30 Afghanistan has caught the Indian drug trafficking network in a highly
31 compromising situation as New Delhi is currently trying to destroy
32 evidence of its links to drug money.*

33
34 *Ignoring its disastrous impacts on Indian society and pouring of illicit
35 money in the national kitty, India indulged in the drug trade[so
36 deep]."*

37
38 India seemed to be the major beneficiary of the 20 years long war in
39 Afghanistan. India invested \$3bn in Afghanistan during the longest war
40 from 2001-21, New Delhi claimed. However, the estimates showed that
41 it might have reclaimed this spending in multiple times through the
42 Afghan-opium trafficking and that too in multiple amounts.

The narcotics were headed to Delhi, the Mundra Port shipload of heroin originated from Kandahar and was loaded into two containers at Iran's Bandar Abbas Port.

An earlier seizure in Mumbai had also originated from Iran's Chabahar Port, owned by an Indian company and managed by India business tycoon Adani. This raised serious questions as to how the Mundra Adani Port benefited from the consignments landing there. It also raised questions whether the drug cartels were aware of the coming of the Taliban so they wanted to clean up the fields as they had earlier banned opium cultivation.

India's illegal drug business swelled to Rs:300 billion and the state-seizures made roughly around 10% of the trade. The exponential increase in the size of Indian domestic drug consumption owing to cheap and uninterrupted supply could be judged by a 2019 report by the Indian Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment pegged *opioid* use in India at 2.6% of total drug use, thrice the global average of 0.7%.

After the Taliban ouster in 2001, poppy and its derivatives' (un-official) trade in Afghanistan jumped to 3,400 tonnes in just a period of two years from 180 tonnes because the Taliban had banned opium cultivation.

According to the UNODC, by 2003 the Afghan drugs were raking in \$2.3 billion from growing poppies to trafficking its derivatives. Amidst the presence of international forces in Afghanistan, the poppy trade had reached astronomical levels of around 9,000 tonnes.

The drug mafia was rescuing this bountiful crop of 2020-21 from the Taliban, who ironically were being accused by India and the West for living off drug proceeds.

An estimated 1 million cocaine users in India can afford to pay upwards of Rs:5,000 a gram. A 2019 study by two JN University professors, based on the National Family Health Survey 2015-2016, found that, at 70.8%, the prevalence of substance abuse among north-eastern men was 20% higher than the rest of India.

The two major seizures of drugs, mentioned above, in India within a month raised alarm bells and serious concerns regarding the credibility of Indian security agencies in international drug regulatory bodies.

But strangely, what never gets traction is the complicity of Western powers in the expansion of poppy plantations in the war-ravaged

History of a Disgraceful Surrender [2021]

1 country. The western media, which monopolised the coverage of
2 Afghanistan, never seriously blamed the occupiers as they went about
3 perpetuating a myth of the country being a '*graveyard of empires*'.

4
5 The acclaimed analysts and mainstream international media were
6 inclined to draw solid conclusions based on the above quoted events and
7 past facts regarding the Indian state's involvement in a worldwide
8 sophisticated drug peddling network. In the recent past, the world
9 witnessed how India became an international market for radioactive
10 material.

11
12 Indian state's patronage sponsored ***dangerous business of sale*** and
13 purchase of weapon grade radioactive material further supported the
14 flourishing India's radioactive market; radioactive material taken out
15 from Afghanistan in clandestine way. This indicated towards Indian
16 governments' greed for easy money to further speed up its regional
17 power ambitions.

18
19 The analysts believed that the Indian intelligence network managed and
20 completely controlled the supply chain of poppy products starting from
21 the plantation, processing, smuggling and sale in the international drug
22 market. They urged the world not to turn a blind eye towards the Indian
23 involvement in the illegal highly dangerous business of drug trafficking.

24
25 The UNODC should have inquired about the issue to unearth the
26 ground realities and that the international community must fulfil its
27 combined responsibility to demand immediate control measures to
28 safeguard the future of human generations.

29