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ILLICIT DRUG BUSINESS AND ARMED CONFLICTS: THE SCOPE AND LIMITS OF THE LINKS

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Illicit drug business may be linked to various forms of armed socio-political violence in many ways and areas. However, it is in the regions of expanded drug cultivation and production that drugs and armed conflict are most closely interlinked, in a complex interaction with other socio-economic and political factors. Each of the world's three main illicit drug producing regions—the “Golden Crest” in Southwest Asia, the “Golden Triangle” in Southeast Asia and the Andean Belt—has at its center an area of a protracted armed conflict such as Afghanistan, Myanmar and Colombia, respectively. This does not mean that the massive drug production, trade and transnational trafficking inevitably lead to armed conflict. Nor does it imply that the conflict is a *sine qua non* for the effective functioning of illicit drug business, as the latter can also flourish at the time of relative peace and in fact, try to avoid areas of most intense fighting. In sum, the global interrelationship between the drug business and armed conflicts is more accurately described in terms of mutual influence that, in some cases, amounts to interdependence, rather than strict conditionality.

In addition to unorganized everyday violence related to drug abuse in consumer countries, drug business can itself generate organized armed violence: drug entrepreneurs, cartels and smaller groups have armed guards, may operate private mini-armies in drug-producing regions in “source” countries, as well as along the main trafficking routes, attack security forces and engage in turf wars among themselves. Trafficking-related cross-border clashes are daily occurrence, especially on borders between source and transit countries, such the Tajik-Afghan, Iranian-Afghan, Myanmar-Thai, or Colombian-Venezuelan border. But this violence retains its essentially criminal character and can hardly gen-

erate genuine socio-political armed conflict over government or state territory.

If, however, an armed conflict goes beyond trans-border tensions (is a genuine socio-political conflict over government or territory),¹ illicit drug business, in addition to generating criminal violence, becomes a "conflict resource"—a major or key source of financing for politico-military actors. This resource is a standard source of funding for armed groups in drug-producing areas, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and, to a lesser extent, the National Liberation Army (ELN) in Colombia, the anti-Soviet mujahidin in Afghanistan under the NDPA regime in the 1980s and the Taliban insurgents and other "anti-government elements" in the post-2001 Afghanistan, the Shan, Karen and multiple other insurgent groups in Myanmar. Drug business also serves as a major resource for groups based or operating along the major trafficking routes; for example, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in Turkey and Iraq, the Hizbullah in Lebanon, especially in the 1980s–early 1990s, or the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asian states.

The possibility of the direct use of drug revenues as a conflict resource by the state (or a *de facto* government) itself or by the elements of the state apparatus cannot be entirely excluded, as demonstrated by the examples of Myanmar² or the *de facto* Taliban government in Afghanistan in the second half of the 1990s.³ Most states, however, remain the key counter-narcotics actors and are incomparably less inclined to directly use illicit drug profits as a conflict resource than non-state actors. Still, less direct links with illicit drug business may stem from state malfunctionality, poor governance and corruption—the factors that are

¹ The definition of "armed conflict" used in this chapter builds upon the Uppsala University Conflict Data Programme (UCDP) definition (Uppsala Conflict Data Programme), but extends it to apply not only to conflicts where one of the parties is the state (state-based conflicts), but also to conflicts without participation of the state, fought between or among non-state actors (non-state conflicts). Thus, the armed conflict is defined here as "contested incompatibility concerning government or territory over which armed force is used by organized military forces of at least two parties, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year".

² The extent of the involvement of elements of the Myanmar military junta in illicit drug business is heavily disputed by experts and has been largely reduced to facilitation of large-scale legalization of illicit drug revenues, with possible re-direction of some of these funds for the modernization of the national armed and security forces (Ball 1999, Hawke 1998, Stepanova 2005a, 183–192).

³ For more detail on the Taliban involvement in drug business, see below.

both among the main conditions for the continuing violence and conflict and may themselves be aggravated by armed conflict. As for the direct role of the drug business in the financing of armed actors, the primary actors of concern remain non-state groups that are in conflict with governments, or are in some way affiliated with government, or are in conflict with one another (i.e., are engaged in non-state conflicts).

I. Rebels and criminals in illicit drug business: similarities and differences

Non-state actors in armed opposition to governments, usually have limited possibilities to finance themselves from legal sources (with a few exceptions, such as most violent Islamist groups that are at least partly financed through transfer of funds that are initially collected as legitimate religious donations).⁴ Most of these groups by default operate primarily within an informal economy and search for the ways and means to fund their armed struggle and organizational needs mainly by engaging in various forms of shadow economic activity. During the Cold War years, major non-state armed actors in ideologically polarized conflicts often enjoyed large-scale external financial support, particularly from the states of the two competing blocs. In a sphere of shadow economy, local armed groups often acted through criminal intermediaries. With the weakening of external financial and military support from former Cold-War antagonists and their allies, many insurgency movements and other armed groups had to become partly or completely self-financed. They became more actively involved in various forms of shadow economic activity, including illicit drug business, and started to more actively use criminal methods for accumulating funds, both through upgraded co-operation with professional organized crime groups and, increasingly, in direct forms, by trying to act without criminal intermediaries, in order to maximize financial gains.

The closest parallels⁵ between criminal structures and armed non-state actors engaged in socio-ethno-political and other violent conflicts

⁴ For more detail on the specifics of the funding of Islamist violent actors, as compared to other types of armed actor, see, for instance, Stepanova, 2009b, Stepanova 2005b, 165–170.

⁵ For a detailed analysis of parallels between insurgents' engagement in criminal and shadow economic activity and organized crime groups, see, among others, Naylor 2002.

and using drug revenues as a “war resource” can be observed in their *sources and methods of financing* and their engagement in either or both *predatory* (violent extortions) and *parasitical* (racketeering or collection of “revolutionary” taxes) activities. In addition to similar methods of accumulating funds,⁶ both insurgents and organized crime groups are interested in the general *weakening of state control* and law and order system, in maximum freedom of movement and porous borders, etc. The two types of group also demonstrate some *structural parallels*. Both are non-state actors that may display a wide range of organizational forms and patterns, but overall enjoy greater levels of structural and organizational flexibility than states do. While there are some examples of the more hierarchically organized structures (such as large drug cartels or the more strictly organized military formations of FARC in Colombia for several decades or the Maoist insurgents in Nepal until the late 2000s), the general trend is clearly, for both types of group, toward a greater role of hybrid and network elements and more horizontal and latent (informal) links between structural elements.⁷ This trend is most evident among the relatively new or recent armed non-state groups, both local (such as Al-Qaqa Martyrs’ brigades) and transnational (al-Qaeda network and post-Qaeda, or Qaeda-inspired, cells and groups).⁸

Despite these financial and structural parallels, the more fundamental differences—between criminal groups, including those engaged in illicit drug business, and armed opposition groups or other violent actors that use drug revenues as a conflict resource—persist. They are evident even in the financial sphere, particularly in the structure of expenditures of the two types of group: much of the armed non-state actors’ financial resources are used for maintaining their military potential, meeting social needs of the population providing support to the group and administrative needs of “governing” a certain territory, and, in some cases, for broader political, religious, ideological and other purposes. These distinctions stem from the different nature, origins and *raison d’être* between (a) purely criminal organizations whose ultimate goal remains maximum material gain and (b) armed non-state groups pursuing po-

⁶ For more detail, see next section.

⁷ For a classical study of the global shift to the more networked structures among different types of non-state actors see Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001.

⁸ On organization forms of such groups at the local, regional and transnational level, see Stepanova 2008a, 100-150.

litical, social, ideological, religious and other agenda (that may also include economic motivations, such as the need to finance themselves).

These basic distinctions, however, do not preclude the possibility of gradual criminalization and political/ideological degradation of politico-military actors engaged in local armed conflicts into purely criminal groups or various forms of interaction closer than pragmatic “business-type” relationship. Under certain conditions, the distinctions between these two types of group tend to get increasingly blurred or simply erode. This pattern is becoming increasingly widespread in the recent years and is most likely to form in conflict areas in particularly weak, dysfunctional or failed states. It is often referred to as “warlordism”, but maybe more accurately described as a high degree of fragmentation of armed violence and multiplication of violent actors of increasingly mixed types and at all levels: from militarily viable and organizationally cohesive armed groups with some identifiable political agenda to the more localized tribal, clan or sectarian militias, mini-powerbrokers fighting for control of power and resource at the local level and predatory-parasitical groups that engage in criminal violence and exploit opportunities offered by the insecurity and war economy in conflict zones (Stepanova 2008b, 44-71), not to mention that such fragmentation also blurs the line between organized and unorganized crime itself. In such fragmented setting, especially at the local level, it is often impossible to draw clear distinctions between various armed actors, who engage in different types of activity at once, and to single out more politically-oriented or more criminally-dominated groups out of the complex web of localized violence.

Otherwise, the basic distinctions in motivation, the level of political involvement, and the attitude towards the state between armed groups taking part in socio-political, ethno-political and other conflicts and criminal organizations persist. The goals of the first type of group cannot be reduced to material gain and retain political, religious, ideological, cultural, identity and other non-economic motivations. In contrast, illicit drug business, like any other shadow business, remains essentially *apolitical* or, to be more precise, even if it actively tries to penetrate politics, it is altogether politically opportunistic. This political opportunism of organized crime is demonstrated by the ultimate prevalence of criminal goals over any other agendas. While drug cartels and other organized criminal groups may, for instance, be interested in penetrating politics and corrupting state officials, this primarily serves as an instru-

ment to advance their ultimate goal—to maximize economic gain. Opportunism is also reflected in the fact that organized crime is as ready, if not more ready, to engage in illicit cooperation with, for instance, corrupt state officials or with government-aligned armed actors, as it may be interested in establishing links with rebel groups. In fact, while organized crime at its most advanced stages aims at forming a symbiosis with the state and with legal economy, armed opposition actors usually seek to undermine the state, build a new state or significantly change the nature of the governance system.

II. Illicit drug business as a “conflict resource” for non-state actors

The post-Cold War decline in external financial and military support from former superpower antagonists and their allies has led many local armed actors to search more actively for alternative means of funding and to get more heavily and directly involved in various forms of shadow economic activity. The growing involvement of many such groups in illicit drug business is to a large extent determined by (a) their main areas of operations or origin (i.e. whether the groups are primarily or partly based and operating in areas along the major trafficking routes or in source countries) and (b) the comparative high profitability of this business, which may even allow some groups in source countries—for example, FARC which is the world’s largest supplier of coca paste and cocaine—to achieve full financial self-sufficiency. It is important to note that while the links between militant-terrorist groups and drug business are closest in source countries and in conflict areas along major trafficking routes, drug profits in these regions are not the highest. At the turn of the century, the combined income of drug crops cultivators (1–5% of the total profit) and of the local traders and refiners within the drug-producing regions (15%) are lower than profits from transnational trafficking (26%) and considerably lower than profits from retail trade and street distribution in consumer countries (54%).⁹

The closest link between drug business and insurgent and other local armed non-state actors can be observed in areas of expanded drug cultivation and production. Classic guerrilla warfare is linked to con-

⁹ For global assessment for the end of the 1990s see UNESCO 1999. For a discussion of the highly uneven distribution of drug profits throughout the narco-chain for the Afghan opiate see, for instance, Van Der Schuerburg 2002.

rol over certain territory, usually relatively remote rural or mountainous areas not controlled by the government. In the world’s main drug producing regions, it is these areas that are often used for drug cultivation. For rebel groups that operates in such areas involvement in some form of control over drug cultivation (for example, taxing the farmers in exchange for protection) and initial processing, and sometimes in local drug trade, is almost inevitable. In this context, of all politico-military actors, the ones most closely linked to drug production are those armed groups that continue to engage in guerrilla warfare, control certain territorial enclaves for long periods of time and at least partly represent the interests of tens of thousands of local peasants and farmers growing opium poppy or coca. Modernization and organizational evolution of such groups and movements and expansion of their activities to a larger territory and/or urban areas and to other methods of armed struggle—such as terrorism—increase their financial needs and may further boost their role in controlling local drug production and trade. Initially—some time for as long as a decade or two—this control does not extend to more advanced stages of the illicit drug business, such as international drug trafficking dominated by professional criminal groups. Apart from professional traffickers and drug dealers who increasingly dominate the later stages of the narco-chain, various forms of cross-border trafficking also often involve armed non-state actors of other types. These are (a) trans-border tribal groups (like the Pashtu tribal militias across the Afghan-Pakistani border which they had never recognized), including those partly based in drug producing countries and (b) organizations based and operating in major transit states along the main trafficking routes (like the IMU or PKK).

Militant groups that use drug money as a source of funding, usually along other sources, range from leftist guerrillas to rightwing extremists, from secular nationalists such as the PKK or ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*, “Basque Homeland and Freedom”) to Islamist organizations¹⁰ such as the Hizbullah at the time of the civil war in Lebanon or the

¹⁰ It is important to note that for most Islamist organizations, especially for larger grass-root movement whose activities go far beyond armed fighting (such as Hizbullah), the role of illicit revenues in self-financing is rarely dominant—while their financial sources are diversified, one of their main sources of funding are rechanneled funds originally collected as largely legitimate religious funds and donations. The involvement of such Islamist groups in illicit drug business is usually limited to collecting “taxes” from traffickers passing through the territory controlled by these groups.

IMU. The extent to which such groups are engaged in drug business and depend on it as a source of funding may vary greatly: from about 10% of the overall income for the mujahideen in Afghanistan in the 1980s¹¹ to up to 48–50% for all leftist insurgents in Colombia and, in the case of FARC, possibly to over 60% of the movement's total income by the end of the century (Library of Congress 2002, 51, 55). A militant group's involvement in illicit drug business may remain more or less stable, in terms of scale and type of involvement, as in the case of the Liberation Tigers Tamil Eelam (LTTE) or significantly change over time—usually towards expanded and deeper involvement in illicit drug economy such as FARC or a number of violent Islamist groups in Afghanistan.¹² Militant-terrorist groups may participate in different aspects of illicit drug business. These may range from imposing taxes on cultivation, production and local trade to all forms and levels of trafficking: from the couriers—"mules"—provided by the LTTE to FARC's growing involvement in international trafficking, especially in the 2000s. Terrorist-militant groups and networks may also engage in narcotics-related money laundering, as demonstrated by al-Qaeda's role in laundering the drug revenues for the Taliban regime (Felbab-Brown 2005, 55–72).

Politico-militant actors involved in drug business display different *forms of links—or stages in relations*—with organized crime.¹³ The following main stages of such engagement may be identified; even as a group may gradually evolve from one stage to another or different parts of the same armed movement may be more or less integrated in illicit drug business and display different stages of such integration at the same time.

¹¹ The total revenues from taxing drug cultivation and trade and engaging in trafficking for the Afghan mujahideen could amount to about 20 million USD a year (i.e. roughly 10% of their overall financing, primarily provided by external; state donors, such as the USA, Saudi Arabia, etc.). On that, see UN expert Doris Buddenbert, quoted in Dorronsoro 1996, 174. For more detail on the financing of the anti-Soviet Islamist opposition in Afghanistan see, Stepanova 2005a, 55–57.

¹² A number of insurgency groups in Shan and Karen States of Myanmar can serve as few exceptions, by providing examples of armed actor disengaging at least from illicit poppy drug cultivation and production (while not necessarily from other forms of illicit drug business, such as those related to synthetic drugs).

¹³ For a general matrix of stages of armed groups' integration with organized crime see Shelley 2005, 34–39.

(a) *Activity appropriation and limited cooperation with organized crime.* This stage, in one form or another, had to be passed by all militant groups engaged in illicit drugs: while some organizations (LTTE or Hizbullah) stopped at this stage, others upgraded and expanded their links with organized crime to go far beyond it. For militant groups engaged in criminal activity other than drug business (such as burglary or brigandage), it is possible to simply "imitate" or "mirror" criminal methods used by professional crime (*activity appropriation*) without necessarily engaging in cooperation with organized crime groups. In contrast, militant actors involved in any form of drug-related activity usually have at least some degree of direct interaction with organized crime. In terms of limited cooperation, the most direct links can be observed between a group's involvement in drug business and its demand for arms and links to illegal arms dealers. Often it is the pressing need to finance the acquisition of arms and material that stimulates the group's turn to drug business in the first place (as in the case of the Afghan mujahideen in the 1980s). In all conflicts in drug-producing areas the barter exchange of drugs for arms, and vice versa, is widespread. Another form of cooperation when organized crime outsources some of the functions (such as providing guards to traffickers or control of local cultivation and trade) to insurgent or other militant groups based in, or controlling, the area. Militant/terrorist groups' limited role in drug trade in consumer countries (IRA or ETA) would also fall under this category.

(b) A much more advanced stage, usually observed in conflict settings in drug-producing areas, is a *symbiotic relationship* between militants and criminals. This implies multi-faceted cooperation and inter-dependence, sometimes on a national scale. One of the "model" examples of a symbiotic relation with illicit drug business is the FARC (the movement as a whole). In Colombia, a certain division of labour emerged, with the rebels basically dominating the first stages of narco-chain, particularly control over cultivation, production and trade at the local level, while organized crime groups and syndicates are primarily focused on regional and trans-regional trade and transnational trafficking. Another classic case is the Taliban in Afghanistan in the 1990s: while it only partly depended on drug revenues as a source of funding, it established a thorough control over much of the poppy cultivation—effectively collecting regular *ushr* payments from poppy-growers—and at least tried, with much less success, to systematically collect *zakayat* payment from traders. At the same time, much of drug production, operation of drug

laboratories and cross-border trafficking remained the specialization of the smuggling networks.¹⁴

(c) While at the symbiotic stage, the case in point is full interdependence and broad, almost unlimited, cooperation between what is still two different types of group (politico-militant actors and organized crime groups), the next stage implies the full *merger* of such groups and/or functions. At this stage, it is usually no longer possible to identify a group as either predominantly politico-militant or a purely criminal one, as it integrates both functions. Examples include Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (Naumkin 2003; Stepanova 2005a, 237-240; Stepanova 2005b), as well as select, most heavily criminalized segments of some of the FARC units or fronts.

(d) The final stage is complete *criminalization and political/ideological degradation* of groups that originally emerged as genuine socio-political actors (or elements and splinter factions of such groups). One of the likely cases in point is the Abu Sayaf group in the Philippines that originally split from the genuine Islamist/separatist Moro National Liberation Front, but quickly became radicalized and increasingly involved in predatory and other criminal activity (from taking hostages for ransom to involvement in drug business), to the point when its ability to retain any of the genuine political goals is heavily disputed. Other examples include some of the heavily criminalized IRA splinter groups or certain remnants of Peru's Sendero Luminoso that moved to control *paco* distribution in Buenos Aires slums.

Such a possibility may become more realistic as the armed confrontation becomes protracted, its intensity stabilizes at a relatively low level, and the likelihood of a group's declared political goals to be realized in any foreseeable future diminishes or fades away. While far from imminent, a possibility for gradual criminalization of such groups to reach a critical point appears to be most likely in two cases. On the one hand, in a case of a military defeat of an armed opposition, its leftover units may be pushed to further intensify their involvement in criminal activities, although such decisive military crack-downs are not very typical for most protracted conflict environments. On the other hand, in case

¹⁴ The Taliban got three times more revenues from taxing transnational smuggling of mostly licit consumer and other goods (according to the World Bank 75 million USD in 1997) than from drugs (no more than 27 million USD for the same year). Even in the record-setting 1999, the revenues from opium for the Taliban did not exceed 45 million USD (Schulenburg 2002).

of a more or less effective peace process, when some of the major armed groups are included in the political process and gradually demilitarize, more radical, often off-shoot groups and units remaining outside the peace process framework (such as some of the post-IRA factions) may lose most of the popular support, become more isolated and, as a means of survival, degenerate into organizations whose activities are increasingly dominated by various forms of crime.

III. The multifunctional role of drug business during and after conflict

At any of these stages, however, illicit drug business at the time of conflict is never fully subordinated to the needs of actors engaged in armed confrontation, even in major drug-producing regions. Drug dealers tend to establish contacts with all parties to a conflict, including corrupt elements of the state system itself, sometimes, as in the post-civil war Tajikistan and especially in the post-Taliban Afghanistan, amounting to pervasive drug-related corruption at all levels of government.¹⁵ As noted above, in rare cases, the *state* may even use drug revenues as a conflict resource. More frequently, former warlords turned senior state officials, especially at the regional level, and parts and segments of government security forces operating in insecure areas of booming drug production, such as the Afghan National Police in the southern Afghanistan in the late 2000s, are "at best... complicit in the trade and at worst... directly involved" and even perceived by the population to be "more involved in the drug trade than Anti Government Elements" (Mansfield 2008, 47, 48). In this context, it is hardly surprising that pro-government or government-aligned militias and right-wing paramilitaries, such as the United Self-Defense Forces (AUC) in Colombia (1997-2002)¹⁶ or their more fragmented, but even more heavily crimi-

¹⁵ On impunity of government officials connected to drug business, see, e.g., Mohammad Nader Nadery, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, and Abdul Karim Brahowie, Afghanistan's minister of tribal and frontier affairs, quoted in Baldauf and Bowers 2005.

¹⁶ In a frequently quoted statement made in 2000, the AUC head Carlos Castaño put the share of illicit drug revenues in AUC's operational expenses at 70% (*Washington File* 2002). At the peak of their activity, AUC had moved further up the narco-chain than the rebel groups had at that time, including operation of drug laboratories and involvement in transnational trafficking.

nalized successor groups (International Crisis Group 2007) may be as deeply, if not deeper, involved in illicit drug business than the rebels.

While drug business remains a practically inexhaustible resource for conflicts and terrorism and helps sustain both, it always retains its own shadow economic logic and dynamics. Its role in the course of a protracted armed conflict is not limited to being part of the “war economy” and financing the armed confrontation. At the time of conflict, illicit drug business plays a multifunctional role by: (a) financing armed actors engaged in armed conflict (“conflict resource”); (b) allowing criminal entrepreneurs—mostly traders at farm-gate/local and regional levels, operators of drug laboratories and especially transnational traffickers—to gain illicit profit and forming one of the mainstays of a broader shadow economy that spans beyond the conflict area itself; and (c) playing an adaptive function as a socio-economic survival strategy for sectors of the population, especially in marginalized peripheries with little of no state presence and poor security.

The peasants’ choice for drug crops as a coping strategy, or even as a way of economic survival, is primarily shaped by the social and economic structures that govern access to land, credit and labour, rather than by the sheer profitability of the drug crops (United Nations 2003; Mansfield 2002). While broader armed conflicts are among major factors of risk and uncertainty that peasants face (alongside, for instance, climate factors, such as droughts, rainfalls, cold winters, etc.), these are hardly the only forms of organized and less organized collective violence that they suffer from or are affected by. Local, inter- and intra-communal tensions over resources, particularly land and water and extortion by criminal groups or corrupt police may affect the peasants more directly than larger-scale hostilities between combatants or one-sided, direct and intentional, violence against civilians by all types of armed actor. Broader armed conflict, however, also acts as a unique catalyst of multiple other risks and threats to human security—like mass displacement, insecurity of movement, including transportation of goods— that may affect peasants and traders involvement in drug cultivation, production and trade at the local level. Armed conflicts and widespread insecurity and instability can also stimulate drug consumption in source or transit countries where it may not necessarily have been spread before.

The links between illicit drug business and armed conflict are not only two-sided ones, but also quite complex and both direct and latent. Overall, the role of the drug business in the political economy

of the armed conflict seems to be clearer and relatively easier to trace than the “reverse” impact of the armed conflict on the drug cultivation, production and trade. This impact is (a) limited and (b) highly uneven and ambiguous. Sometimes, devastating socio-economic consequences of armed conflict and protracted insecurity serve as a major incentive to the expansion of drug business; for example, in Afghanistan during anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s. At times, however, during the protracted armed conflict in Afghanistan armed violence and instability in certain areas reached such a scale that a lack of basic security and a state of complete chaos impeded even illicit drug trade (as well as other form of smuggling activity) and damage to the basic infrastructure was so significant that it even made hard for peasants to grow opium poppy. In contrast, it was actually the ability of the Taliban to improve basic security conditions on the territory under their control in the second half of the 1990s that initially stimulated the surge of drug production (as well as other agricultural production) in the Taliban-controlled areas. While at the turn of the centuries the Taliban regime effectively imposed a ban on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan, the growth of illicit drug business resumed after the fall of the Taliban. Drug production continued to rise in Afghanistan at the “post-conflict stage”—during the first three–four years in the early 2000s, immediately after the fall of the Taliban, when the level of violence in Afghanistan degraded to more traditional lower-scale and more fragmented clan and tribal tensions. At the later stage, Afghanistan became the scene of both further rapidly expanding opium economy and a progressively intensifying neo-Taliban insurgency against the US and NATO forces and the Karzai government.

In fact, the so-called “post-conflict period” is often more favorable for illicit drug production than the ongoing armed confrontation itself. This is hardly surprising, given the multifunctional nature of illicit drug business. With the end of large-scale fighting (e.g., as a result of military defeat or significant military damage suffered by one or several parties to a conflict) the role of illicit drug business as a “war resource” decreases. However, its other functions, such as that of a profitable shadow business activity and a powerful strategy of socio-economic adaptation, come to the forefront and stimulate further expansion of illicit drug production and trade. This scenario is most likely when conflict management process, whether in the form of enforced solution or in the form of peace-making (peace process), is not accompanied or fol-

lowed by addressing the structural causes of armed violence and illicit drug economy and by socio-economic support to and development of the war-torn areas or areas under the control of the former armed opposition groups.

While the need for conflict actors to finance themselves and their militant activities may be one of the factors directly stimulating the growth of narco-business, the indirect impact of conflict on drug business may be even more important. Armed conflict, including collective armed violence at a relatively low-scale level, and the instability it generates help create more favourable conditions for illicit drug business by generally weakening the state and preventing its access to the most unstable and insecure or insurgency-controlled areas. These are often socially, politically and economically marginalized areas long-neglected by central government. These are the very same areas where drug crops are traditionally concentrated (coca-growing areas in the Andean ridge), or areas to which these crops migrate (expanded areas of poppy cultivation in south and east of Afghanistan in the 1980s–2000s, which are not historically known for major poppy cultivation), or areas where such crops are started to be grown “from the scratch”, such as southern Iraq in the post-2003 invasion period, particularly since the mid-2000s (Cockburn 2007).

At a macro-level, the limited influence of armed conflicts on the narcotics economies in drug producing regions and the uneven and ambiguous character of this influence is illustrated by the highly disparate overall dynamics of the drug business in conflict areas in the world's three main drug producing countries. While, of course, highly context-specific, fought over different incompatibilities (territory in Myanmar and government in Colombia and Afghanistan) and having dynamically changed their character and intensity over decades, the armed conflicts themselves are at least comparable in terms of the main dyads involved—insurgents *versus* government (with the exception of a non-state conflict among various mujahideen groups in Afghanistan in the early-mid-1990s). In terms of intensity, all three conflicts repeatedly reached the level of a major armed conflict.¹⁷

¹⁷ Major armed conflict is a special category designed by the UCDP and SIPRI to identify the most intense armed conflicts. ‘Major armed conflicts’ are armed conflicts that at least once cross the minimum threshold of 1000 battle-related deaths/year and continue to result in at least 25 battle-related deaths in the following years.

In Afghanistan, the drug production continued to grow throughout 1990s and 2000s, despite changes in the type, level and composition of the armed conflict, with the only exception of the temporary sharp decrease of poppy cultivation in 2001 as a result of the effectively enforced Taliban ban on poppy cultivation. The poppy cultivation reached its historic peak of 193 000 ha in 2007,¹⁸ under Karzai administration backed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and facing an expanding insurgency by the Taliban and other “anti-government elements”. In Colombia, coca cultivation and production have displayed a somewhat cyclic character: their progressive expansion since the 1980s and especially in the 1990s, in parallel to intensification of an internal armed conflict, reached its peak in 1999–2001 and was followed first by gradual decline and then by stabilization throughout the 2000s¹⁹. While below the overall figures for 1990s, cultivation and production remained high and relatively stable by the end of the 2000s; that is, despite the government's ongoing efforts to integrate the former paramilitaries and major successes in countering the FARC insurgency by the end of the decade. In contrast, in Myanmar, the poppy cultivation and opiate production steadily declined in both relative and absolute terms since the mid-1990s, in the context of multiple mini-peace processes and resumed fighting with many insurgent groups in drug-producing north-east of the country.²⁰

Apparently, any analysis of illicit drug business and armed conflict as two abstract, context-independent factors, interconnected in a closed self-regulatory system is simply untenable.

¹⁸ In 2008, the cultivation declined by 19%, but the opium production remained relatively stable, at 7700 tons of opium (UN Office on Drugs and Crime – UNODC 2008a, vii, 3).

¹⁹ A somewhat sharper, 27% increase in coca cultivation in Colombia in 2007 resulted in cultivation area (99 000 ha) comparable to the cultivation levels a decade ago, in 1998. The overall stabilization of cocaine production rates at 600–610 tons in 2006–2007 is comparable to the levels of the early 2000s. Colombia accounts for 55% of the global coca cultivation (UNODC 2008b, 13–14, 16–17).

²⁰ In Southeast Asia that used to be known as the Golden Triangle for its heroin production, the production of opium fell from over 50% of the global total in 1990 down to 33% in 1998 and just 5% in 2008 (424 tons, including 410 tons of opium produced in Myanmar, with production and cultivation primarily localized in one region of Myanmar—the Shan State).

IV. Meeting the dual challenge of drugs and conflict: global markets and functionality and legitimacy of the state

To break the real links between drugs and conflicts, we need to understand that these links are part of broader and more complex set of interactions and produce certain effect only in a combination with other variables. Of these intervening variables, two are particularly important.

At the transnational level, a major factor is, first and foremost, the global *macro-economics* of illicit drugs. The dynamics of illicit drug business always depends on and is affected by such regional and global economic factors as the economic, trade and tariff policy, especially, but not solely, of other states of the region, the situation at the world markets and the general trends in global narcotics supply and demand. These factors have their own, less direct, but powerful impact on the links between drug business and local armed conflicts in major drug producing and trafficking areas. For instance, the significant decline of poppy cultivation in Myanmar since the mid-1990s was partly made possible by the growing role of Afghanistan as the leading supplier and partly—by the surge in regional production of synthetic drugs. Or, for instance, in the longer term, the surge in demand and production of synthetic drugs, particularly the amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), in contrast to slower growth or stabilization of cocaine and opiate markets, may make illicit drug business generally less dependent on natural cultures, such as opium poppy and coca, and less tied to particular geographical regions and thus affect the dynamics of global drug cultivation. Such factors have their own long-term impact on the links between drug business and armed conflicts in drug producing areas and may help weaken these links.

In addition to the dynamics of the global narcotics markets, other, not necessarily drug-related global macro-economic processes may have a major effect on drug business and its links to armed conflicts. A good illustration is provided by a clear shift towards wheat cultivation in Afghanistan in the 2007/08 growing season, partly at the expense of poppy crops. This development has much less to do with the government counternarcotics strategy than with the implications of the escalating global food prices in general, and wheat prices, in particular, that affect wheat price levels in Afghanistan and a related problem of deteriorat-

ing food security, including for the rural population. Thus, sharply rising food and especially wheat prices and the urgent need for cultivators to provide for basic food security for themselves mutilate against highly labour-intensive poppy crops, the farm-gates prices for which have been gradually falling, even as economic sustainability of moving from one annual cash crop to another is questionable (Mansfield 2008, ii, iii.). No eradication campaign or deliberate alternative crop strategy in Afghanistan proved to be as effective, as the sharp worldwide rise in food prices and demand for wheat and global food crisis. While the effect of such macro-economic factors could also be multiplied if they are combined with environmental and climate factors, the latter are usually more context-specific, limited to certain geographical areas and rarely affect all areas of drug-cultivation, especially in larger drug-producing regions.

At the national level, especially in source and transit countries, the single most important factor is the *functionality and credibility of the state* and its institutions. While the term 'good governance' is often used to imply both functionality and credibility (or legitimacy) components of state power, functionality and legitimacy are the terms preferred in this chapter as the more neutral and less ideologically, culturally and politically loaded ones. In fact, the most fundamental effect of the armed conflict on the dynamics of illicit drug economy may be other than the ones produced by the more direct and obvious links between the two (e.g., through the need for armed actors to finance themselves, including, where possible, from illicit drug revenues). Armed conflict's most fundamental contribution to the growth of the illicit drug economy may be through the role of conflict in the general weakening of the state, in terms of further undermining the legitimacy and functionality of the state.

The general functionality of the state, such as its ability to exercise state's main functions, and an even minimal level of the local, *domestic* state legitimacy and the ability of the state to establish some *positive* presence in marginalized areas beyond security-oriented enforcement is of a more critical importance than the exact type of political system or broader *international* legitimacy. This does not mean that provisions such as democracy-building are not important element of this "functionality and legitimacy" scheme in areas of drugs and conflict under any conditions, regardless of the context. The way the combination of functionality and legitimacy has or could be achieved in different parts of the world and in socio-political contexts as diverse as Afghanistan,

Myanmar. Thailand or Colombia *will be different and heavily context-specific for each area*. In some contexts, such as Andean countries, improving the level of state legitimacy will require, among many other things, strengthening democracy and human rights protection (Colombia) or, in states with some authoritarian past (or present), elements of democracy-building (Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela). However, in other contexts, such as Afghanistan, mired in an Islamist insurgency against a weak and poorly representative regime and the international forces that back this regime, an excessive emphasis on the democratic agenda as the main guiding principle for the state-building process, especially when this emphasis is made by external actors, or the refusal to engage major local players (such as insurgent groups, including those that are involved in illicit drug business) into the political process under the pretext of their non-democratic nature, may not add to the legitimacy of the governance structure. Thus, the disproportionate prominence of a democratic agenda is more likely to further undermine the legitimacy of the regime and help prevent the sought combination of both functionality and legitimacy to be achieved. In sum, while in some areas emerging from violent conflict and struggling with illicit drugs and broader shadow economy, the conditions would allow for democracy-building to be incorporated into the state-building process, while in other cases, other types of governance arrangements could be better suited to produce a combination of functional authorities enjoying non-confrontation attitude on the part of the population

This combination of the functionality and local legitimacy of the national state also appears to be a more critical factor in addressing the dual challenge of drugs and conflict than the scale of foreign counter-narcotics assistance. In fact, no significant drop in drug production has ever come primarily as a result of foreign aid; countries that receive the largest foreign counter-narcotics aid have either proved to be unable to radically limit the drug output (Colombia) or even showed significant rise in drug output and expansion of drug economy (Afghanistan).

Governments, such as the US administration, and international actors who prioritize the need to decisively "eliminate" drug cultivation in such areas should be reminded that *in principle* only very rigid authoritarian regimes have had sufficient enforcement capacity to achieve radical decline in cultivation in a relatively short period of time. Cases in point include Maoist China or the Taliban (with its unprecedentedly effective 2000 ban on poppy crops that led to over 90 per cent

decline in cultivation).²¹ Whenever sharp decline in drug cultivation and production had been achieved by rigid methods and authoritarian regimes—it was also done in complete disregard of human, social and economic repercussions of such policies for affected populations. For example, the Taliban ban on poppy cultivation did not provide for any compensation to peasants and its immediate socio-economic implications for the cultivators were disastrous.²² In contrast, when anti-drug policy is carried out by democratic states and by international actors and when counter-narcotics is not the only, but one of several important priorities—that also include socio-economic development, political and economic modernization, democracy consolidation, lasting solution to an armed conflict—, quick and radical progress in "eliminating" the drug problem cannot be expected. In that case, states, international and non-governmental actors must find more complex, longer-term, *integrated* ways of addressing the problem.

Unfortunately, the need for an "integrated" solution to drugs and conflict has largely been interpreted by governments in at least two of the world's largest drug producing countries (Colombia and Afghanistan) as the need to merge militarized counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency policies and methods. When combating drug production in conflict or post-conflict areas, merging counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency strategies or substituting one for another addresses only part of a problem: for example, while armed opposition groups may be deeply involved in drug business, its more advanced stages usually remain under control of professional criminal groups. The "merger" absolutizes the links between drugs and conflict, but ignore the fundamental differences between illicit drug business as part of shadow economy and the socio-political opposition. Counterinsurgency strategy is as ineffective in combating drugs as the heavily militarized anti-drug strategy is insufficient and inadequate for fighting rebel organizations that may engage in drug business, but also pursue some genuine socio-political

²¹ According to the UNODC, following two decades of continuing growth, the 2000 Taliban ban on opium poppy cultivation has led to a 91% (!) decrease in the total area of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan in the course of just one year, i.e. from 82,172 ha in 2000 to just 7,606 ha in 2001 (UN Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention 2001, ii). 80% of Afghan opiates in 2001 were produced on territories controlled by the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.

²² The monetization of credits for poppy cultivation increased the peasants' debts to traders and lenders and led many of them to slaughter livestock or migrate in search of work to Pakistan.

agenda. Among other things, stepping up counter-narcotics operations at the stage of ongoing peace negotiations with the rebels based in drug-cultivating areas and enjoying the support of coca or opium poppy-growing peasants may adversely affect the prospects for a peace process, as it often happened in Colombia.

"Integrated" solution to drugs and conflicts or drugs and terrorism in a conflict or unstable environment does not mean "simultaneous" solution. In practice, no state or international organization has so far succeeded in "having it both ways at the same time", i.e. in securing stable cease-fire or lasting peace with militant-terrorist opposition groups dependent on drug business for their funding and achieving also a sharp decline in illicit drugs.

Against this background, Myanmar presents an interesting case of effectively addressing the problem of expanded and deeply entrenched opium economy and especially drug cultivation in the midst of internal armed conflict comprised by multiple separatist insurgencies. In contrast to the exponential growth of opium economy in Afghanistan in post-Taliban Afghanistan (by 95% between 2001 and 2007),²³ the 'Golden Triangle' opium-producing area of Southeast Asia has, according to the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), seen a remarkable 81% (!) reduction of cultivation in 1998-2008, mainly due to declining cultivation in Myanmar.²⁴ This sustained reduction over a decade-long period is historically unmatched, with cultivation now mainly limited to parts of Myanmar's Shan State. The regional opium production also declined by 70% since 1998, primarily due to decline in Myanmar, and accounted for just 5% of the global opium production in 2008, compared to 50% in 1990. Yet, in the mid-1990s, Myanmar used to have the same area under opium poppy as Afghanistan.

How can this significant decline in opium economy in Myanmar be explained? External involvement can hardly account for this decline, as the semi-isolated, authoritarian junta has only received very limited counter-narcotics assistance, primarily from China and, to a minimal

²³ The poppy cultivation reached its historic peak of 193,000 ha in 2007—a 95% increase since 2001 (the year when the Taliban ban on cultivation was in force). In 2008, the cultivation declined by 19%, but the opium production remained stable, at 7,700 tons (UNODC 2008, vii, 3).

²⁴ Poppy cultivation in the region's largest producer—Myanmar—declined by 83% in 1998-2006, followed by a modest upward trend in 2007 and a *de-facto* stabilization in 2008 (UNODC 2008c, 3). The survey for Myanmar was conducted jointly by the UNODC and the Government of the Union of Myanmar.

extent, from other donors. Macro-economic factors, such as the emergence of Afghanistan as the world's leading producer and the regional boom in synthetic drugs in Southeast Asia, can only provide a partial explanation.

Another part of the explanation lies in the unique combination of conflict management and drug reduction strategies chosen by the Myanmar government. In terms of the links between drugs and conflict, the military junta faced a particularly difficult situation of a "merger" of the main militant non-state actors (dozens of ethnic insurgencies in the northeastern part of the country) and drug economy actors: in Myanmar, insurgent militant groups were also the main actors engaged in illicit drug business. Trying to break this merger, the government decided to *disaggregate counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency at the earliest stages of the peace process.*

Having caused a major military blow to the largest insurgent/illicit drugs actor (the Mong Tai Army led by one of the region's main traffickers Khun Sa) in 1996, the junta was still facing multiple smaller-scale ethnic insurgencies most of which were part of the opium economy in the northeast, especially in the Shan and Karen States. As the government had no stable functional presence in areas of drug production under insurgent control, it decided to first subordinate counter-narcotics to the needs of a peace process. Since 1996, the junta initiated the first round of ceasefire agreements with insurgent groups: by the end of the 1990s, such agreements were signed with 23 of 37 main insurgent groups. These initial ceasefires did not contain strict demobilization and disarmament provision and allowed (!) such groups to continue with their economic activities, including cultivation of poppy, in exchange for ceasefire agreements, recognition of the sovereignty of state and establishment of at least minimal state presence. In addition to the need to secure ceasefires and establish at least minimal security presence in the insurgency-struck areas, another possible rationale for "relaxed" drug provisions could be the government's hope to encourage the legalization of drug revenues and use this source to help cover some of the most urgent post-conflict reconstruction needs (which the government had limited or no domestic or external funds to meet).

Only after the ceasefires stabilized, the "ceasefire" rebel groups started to feel the benefits of peace and security situation improved, the government started to renegotiate ceasefire agreements to toughen the counter-narcotics provisions. The government pressed the rebels to reduce

opium poppy cultivation on the territory under their control, establish first “drug cultivation free” areas and insisted on ex-rebel groups establishing deadlines for stopping illicit crop cultivation completely. While the compliance was not secured overnight, at this stage the ceasefire groups, under growing pressure by the government—which in the late 1990s was also partly reinforced by recurring drought—, were more willing to gradually phase out poppy cultivation in exchange for lasting peace. As a result, Special Region 4 became poppy free in 1997, Special Region 1 (Kokang-Chinese)—in 2003 and Special Region 2 (Wa)—in 2006. It is only at this later stage, when the illicit cultivation was already significantly reduced on a “voluntary”, or at least agreed, basis that the government stepped up its eradication efforts. According to UNODC in 2008 Myanmar, where the cultivation area is about five times smaller than in Afghanistan, eradicated as much opium as Afghanistan did. In the long run, this coordinated policy—disaggregation of ceasefires and counter-narcotics at the first stage of the peace process and increasingly, but gradually, combining them at the later stages—significantly contributed to major long-term decline of poppy cultivation in Myanmar for a decade since 1997 (Stepanova 2005a, 159-196; UNODC 2003; UNODC 2004).

This success has, of course, been far from complete and limited by several factors. Despite major decline in opium economy, the Greater Mekong sub-region has emerged as one of the world’s major hubs of synthetic drugs. Despite an overall compliance with cultivation bans, drug trade continues in some of Myanmar’s ceasefire areas. The general impact of opium economy is decreasing, but poppy remains a significant cash crop and still involves several hundred thousand people in parts of the Shan State. Adverse socio-economic implications of the poppy bans for the local population include the loss of 60-70% of their cash income and the growing migration to other regions (UNODC 2008c, 58, 62-67, etc.). As a result, the possibility of return to large-scale poppy cultivation cannot be excluded even after a decade-long downward trend (UNODC 2008c, 19, 43), in case massive development programmes, especially in the post-cultivation areas, are not launched soon (the main stumbling bloc is the lack of resources for such programmes). However, all possible reservations *do not diminish the importance* of the unprecedented decade-long decline in opium cultivation in Myanmar, by means going beyond strict enforcement alone (in contrast to the 2000 opium poppy ban by the Taliban in Afghanistan).

Outside the framework of a formal peace process, the logic of establishing minimal security first, increasing positive state security presence in order to improve relations with the local population and then starting to implement a range of counter-narcotics measures could also be traced in at least one NATO ISAF operation in Musa Qala district of Helmand (December 2007) that tried to balance counterinsurgency and counter-narcotics objectives. The ISAF and Afghan forces first achieved security objectives—including by securing the cooperation by the former Taliban commander in the area and defeating the smaller armed groups—and then, after having established security presence, stepped up interdiction efforts and a campaign to destroy opium processing labs (Rubin and Sherman 2008, 15). Even this rare experience, however, may not ultimately prove efficient unless these actions are followed by establishment of the positive state security presence in the area accompanied by larger rural development projects.

V. Conclusions

At the earlier stages of transition from conflict to peace the tasks of securing peace and fighting drugs cannot be solved at once: one of these tasks needs to be to some extent subordinated to another. In any case, *the first priority should always go to the peace process* as one of the main conditions for ending the conflict and restoring the credibility of the state, its ability to fulfill its main functions and to get access to, and implement rural development programs in, drug-producing areas. This imperative has important implications for the anti-drug policies and strategies, both at the national and at the international level.

First, tough security measures such as forced, especially aerial, eradication have proved to be largely inefficient and even counter-productive, especially in conflict areas (Rubin and Sherman 2008). Most other, softer antinarcotics measures, including alternative development programmes, are often impossible to implement due to high levels of insecurity and the lack of state access to these areas. Furthermore, all softer measures can only be implemented with the genuine support of the local population, including the cultivators. Major alternative development programmes can work, but on condition that (a) the population of the drug-producing area has at least non-confrontational attitude to the state and the state has at least some access to and positive presence in these areas (as in the case of successful alternative development pro-

grams in Thailand over the past three-four decades or voluntary eradication in the Chapare growing area in Bolivia under Evo Morales—the head of the association of coca producers—as Bolivian President) and (b) these programmes are part of a broader strategy of rural development (sometimes requiring as much as elements of an agrarian reform). If the situation is aggravated by protracted armed conflict, the optimal conditions for alternative development are when ceasefire agreements are already in place, the security situation has relatively stabilized, the state has gradually extended its presence to peripheries and illicit cultivation is in decline. Positive state presence is not possible to expand in absence of effective indefinite ceasefire or an ongoing peace process. The strengthening of the functionality and credibility of the state and its positive presence on levels from local to national is thus the most direct way to increase the effectiveness of the anti-narcotics efforts.

Second, what stems from the above is that, ironically, in those areas of drugs and conflict that receive the bulk of international counternarcotics support, including alternative development support (Afghanistan or Colombia), this assistance does not appear to make any major positive difference, due to absence of other essential conditions; that is, lasting ceasefires, security, state functionality and access to areas in question. For the world's leading donors it is, of course, easier to politically justify large-scale counter-narcotics investment in the source countries and conflict areas with the largest drug output. Still, it may be more rational to shift at least part of that assistance to areas with more appropriate conditions where the anti-drug strategies *can* make a major, even decisive, difference. However, this approach is not applied to cases such as Myanmar for political (ideological) reasons and constraints on dealing with 'non-democratic' actors. In contrast, if anti-narcotics assistance strategy were to be formulated (a) in terms of state functionality and a proper balance between peace process and anti-narcotics in a recipient country and (b) by international actors less tied by political or ideological constraints, but eager to upgrade their international image and to positively contribute to solution of the some of the world's most difficult problems, such as addressing drugs and conflicts—that could lead to greater donor flexibility, wider range of policy choices, more efficient antinarcotics investment, including investment in alternative development, and perhaps even a possibility to use this assistance to promote at least socio-economic development and modernization (Stepanova 2009a).

Third, the effectiveness of counter-drug policies, especially in conflict areas, should be assessed not only on the basis of sheer number of square miles of coca or poppy cultivated areas under eradication or similar indicators, but also on the basis of whether and how they contribute to the goal of effective state-building, strengthening state capacity, functionality and legitimacy or may in fact be more counter-productive in that sense in the long term.

Fourth, the balance in anti-drug measures mostly evolves around the balance of hard, security-oriented enforcement and alternative development. Calls for new approaches to addressing illicit drug problem in producing countries avoid sweeping generalizations about specific counternarcotics strategies, such as claiming that forced interdiction is an evil in itself or that alternative development is the main or only solution. The effect of these measures tends to be highly context-specific even in different areas of the same drug-producing country or region (that may display diverse cultivation patterns, different security conditions, etc.). The same set or combinations of measures may have very different effect in different regional, political and socio-economic contexts. The general recommendation, however, would be that state and social institution-building and institution strengthening should become a standard part and a third, integral element of any counter-narcotics strategy for a conflict-affected region.

Finally, as this chapter shows, links to armed conflicts tend to seriously complicate counter-narcotics efforts at the supply side, i.e. in major drug-producing region. This, in fact, could provide an additional strong argument for intensifying *counternarcotics efforts at the demand side* of the narco-chain, i.e. in consuming countries, including both developed Western, Asian and other states and developing states in regions such as Southwest and Southeast Asia and Latin America that are increasingly affected by growing drug consumption and abuse. After all, even as trafficking and distribution of drugs are much less concentrated than drug crops cultivation and, thus, harder to focus 'enforcement' and coercive measures on, it is in these transit and consumer regions that the greatest drug-related profits are gained. Precisely because in these areas the link between illicit drug business and armed conflicts is much less systematic than in states central to the world's largest drug-producing and drug cultivation regions (Afghanistan, Colombia, Myanmar), there are no or less conflict-related complications and limitations for pursuing a more proactive and compre-

hensive anti-narcotics strategy, integrating law enforcement, health and development issues.

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MEXICO: FROM AUTHORITARIAN SECURITY TO INSECURITY DURING THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION^{1*}

LUIS ASTORGA

I. Introduction²

The field of drug trafficking in Mexico was born subordinated to politics since the time of the Mexican Revolution and remained so in post-revolutionary state, dominated by the state-party (National Revolutionary Party - Party of the Mexican Revolution - Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI), for several decades. Traffickers were simultaneously monitored and protected by the state's security apparatus. The dismantling of the political-police in the eighties, the later democratization process and the fragmentation of political power, along with the diversification and growth of the illegal drug market, triggered a shift in this relationship of subordination as dealers achieved greater autonomy. As a result of this process the drug domestic market grew, as well as the levels of violence between organizations and against the police and the military. In the absence of state security policy and to the disastrous situation of hundreds of corrupt police forces, disorganized and ill-prepared -and a weak law enforcement system - the federal government, from the administration of President Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000) to President Felipe Calderon (2006-2012), has increasingly and desperately relied on the military to control issues related to illegal drug trafficking. Mexico evolved from *authoritarian security to insecurity in the democratic transition*.

This text shows some effects of the drug policy in Mexico during the process of democratic transition, emphasizing the weakness of se-

¹ * Translated by Alberto Fohrig.

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