



All Bets are Off!

Prospects for (B)reaching Agreements and Drug Control in Helmand and Nangarhar in the run up to Transition

David Mansfield



European Commission



**Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
Case Study Series**

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About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

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David Mansfield

December 2012

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	3
2. Methodology	8
3. Nangarhar: The State’s Retreat to its Equilibrium	13
3.1 Politics at the Centre: The Return of the Nangarhari Elite	14
Encircling the Bulldozer	15
Making friends with other people’s enemies	18
3.2 Beyond the Politics of Personalities: An Analysis of the Changing Political and Economic Circumstances of Rural Constituents	20
The history of the valley plains	21
An area of economic surplus	26
3.3 Managing “Non-State Space” in Nangarhar	28
Pulling back the curtain on state policies in the southern districts	32
3.4 Conclusion	45
4. Central Helmand: The Diffusion of State Space	48
4.1 The Changing Face of Central Helmand.....	49
Introducing new blood: the naqel and the canal	49
Consolidating power in central Helmand	54
4.2 Different Livelihood Trajectories in the Canal Command Area	57
An Expanding Zone of Resilience	59
Deteriorating welfare within the canal command area	62
Shifting sands: Physical and economic transformations in the Dasht	72
4.3 Helmand: Conclusion.....	88
5. Conclusion.....	92
Annex	95
Bibliography	99
Request for Feedback	103
Recent Publications from AREU	104

Figures, Tables, and Boxes

Figures

Figure 1: Research sites in Nangarhar Province	9
Figure 2: Research sites in Helmand Province.....	11
Figure 3: Haji Qadir Mina	23
Figure 4: Land grab in Surkhrud District, Nangarhar Province (2006 and 2011).....	24
Figure 5: Land grab in Surkhrud District, Nangarhar Province (2011)	25
Figure 6: Marble Mine in Upper Mohmand Valley in Achin District, Nangarhar Province ..	38
Figure 7: Crop damage due to eradication in Achin District, Nangarhar Province	40
Figure 8: Poppy, Cannabis, and Wheat in Achin District, Nangarhar Province (April 2012). 41	
Figure 9: Eradication casualties in Nangarhar Province (2012)	46
Figure 10: Agricultural (light green) and Forest land (dark green) in Central Helmand (1975) 53	
Figure 11: Agricultural land (light green) in Central Helmand (1990)	53
Figure 12: The reduction of land under crops following a ban on opium poppy in Dasht-e Aynak, Helmand Province (2008-2011).....	67
Figure 13: Eradication casualties in Helmand Province (2012)	70
Figure 14: Land prepared for cultivation, north of the Boghra, Helmand Province	84

Tables

Table 1: Crops harvested in the districts of Surkhrud and Kama in Nangarhar Province....	27
Table 2: Gross income on crops sales reported in select research sites in Central Helmand (April - May 2012)	58
Table 3: Gross Income on crops sales reported in select research sites in central Helmand (April-May 2012)	63
Table 4: Gross Income from wheat sales after household consumption (2011-12 growing season).....	64
Table 5: Tribal groups amongst respondents in various research sites in Central Helmand (April - May 2012)	76
Table 6a: Actual costs of agricultural production in the area north of the Boghra Canal (2011- 12 growing season).....	85
Table 6b: Actual returns to different stakeholders involved in opium production North of the Boghra Canal (2011-12 growing season)	86

Boxes

Box 1: Views of the state in the zone of resilience.....	61
Box 2: Attitudes to the state where viable alternatives do not exist.....	73
Box 3: Anger in the Dasht	78

Acronyms

AGEs	Anti-government elements
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AREU	Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit
CND	Commission on Narcotic Drugs
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HIG	Hezb-e Islami - Gulbuddin Hekmatyar
HIK	Hezb-e Islami - Khaled
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISAF	International Security Assistance Forces
Kg	Kilograms
MCN	Ministry of Counter Narcotics
MP	Member of Parliament
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
PR	Pakistani Rupees (used with much more frequency than the Afghani in the southern and eastern provinces). At the time of research US\$ 1 was roughly equivalent to PR 85.
PRTs	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

Glossary

Afghani (Afs)	Afghan unit of currency. During the research phase US\$ 1 was worth approximately 50 Afs.
<i>arbaki</i>	tribally mobilised community police force in southeastern Afghanistan, could include Afghan Local Police
<i>barma</i>	deep wells
<i>bawre</i>	shallow wells
<i>biswa</i>	approximately 100 square metres (roughly one twentieth of a <i>jerib</i>)
<i>charak</i>	1.125 kg, (equivalent of one quarter of a <i>man</i>)
<i>chawarki</i>	the authority or government
<i>dasht</i>	desert
ha	hectare, roughly 10,000 square metres
<i>jerib</i>	roughly one-fifth of a hectare
<i>Jihadist</i>	a former fighter, one who fought against the Soviets
<i>jirga</i>	an ad-hoc council convened to resolve a specific dispute

<i>kafir</i>	a non-Muslim
<i>khan</i>	chief
<i>khel</i>	sub-tribe
<i>khord</i>	equivalent to 112.5 g
<i>Kuchi</i>	a nomadic people group
<i>landi</i>	dried lamb meat
<i>machalga</i>	a deposit
<i>malik</i>	village representative
<i>man</i>	equivalent to 4.5 kg
<i>maraz</i>	disease
<i>mela</i>	market
<i>mullah</i>	preacher at the mosque
<i>naqel</i>	literally meaning “chosen,” in this paper refers to the settlers that are not indigenous to Helmand
<i>owner-cultivator</i>	a household that cultivates its own land and does not hire sharecroppers or tenant farmers to cultivate their land
<i>seer</i>	unit of weight, a Kabuli <i>seer</i> is the equivalent of roughly seven kg; while a <i>seer</i> of opium in the East is the equivalent of 1.2 kg
<i>sharecropper</i>	a household that cultivates another farmer’s land in return for a share of the final yield
<i>shura</i>	community council
<i>tigha</i>	literally meaning, “placing the stone” - an unviable truce
<i>ushr</i>	traditionally an agricultural tithe paid to the <i>mullah</i> for his services to the community, however often used as a generic term for taxation along with <i>zakat</i>
<i>woliswal</i>	district governor
<i>wakil</i>	village representative
<i>zakat</i>	an Islamic tax of 2.5 percent on capital, however often used as a generic term for taxation along with <i>ushr</i>

Executive Summary

The issue of illicit drug production has largely fallen off the policy agenda in Afghanistan. In addition to the increasing focus on the part of Afghanistan's foreign partners on an exit strategy, this has been to a considerable extent due to a favourable trend in the short-term metrics by which the drugs issue is typically judged. Levels of opium poppy cultivation have seen a reduction from their peak of 197,000 hectares (ha) in 2007 to 123,000 ha in 2010. There has also been a steady increase in the number of provinces where cultivation is negligible and which are classified as "poppy free." Even a slight increase in cultivation in 2011 to 131,000 ha went largely unnoticed, as did the recurrence of cultivation in the provinces of Kapisa, Baghlan, and Faryab after years of being "poppy free."

It is plausible that even the 2012 figures, and the estimated 18 percent increase in the area under cultivation, can be "handled" by emphasising the 36 percent fall in opium production between 2011 and 2012 - even if it was due to an unprecedented cold snap in March 2012. It seems that amidst the plans for transition by the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF), concerns over the electoral process, and the cumulative impact of the war, with increases in both civilian casualties and the number of Western soldiers being killed, the uptick in cultivation continues to be of little immediate concern to Western policymakers and politicians.

Drawing on in-depth fieldwork in the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar, this report reveals that unfortunately such complacency is completely unjustified. In the simplest terms, this report reveals that cultivation in both Helmand and Nangarhar has risen in the 2011-12 growing season, raising doubt as to whether both provinces have an effective model for long-term drug control in Afghanistan. Of far greater concern are the different socioeconomic and political processes that lie behind this rise in cultivation, and what it means for both opium production and stability in the run up to transition, as well as beyond then, after Western combat operations have ceased in December 2014.

The report highlights the fragility of the recent reductions in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. Then, through an analysis of the different factors that have led to an increase in cultivation in Helmand and Nangarhar in the 2011-12 growing season, it offers insight into how important the illegal drugs trade will be in the political economy of a post-transition Afghanistan. In particular, the report illustrates just how closely opium poppy cultivation is entangled in the socioeconomic and political fabric of the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar. It highlights how difficult it is to maintain the kinds of bargains that provincial governors have made with the rural elite to elicit their support to reduce opium poppy in areas where the welfare of the rural population is deteriorating and where the government does not have preponderant control over the means of violence. The report shows that it is under these very conditions that the current administration's desire to ban opium poppy has led to "over-governing"—striving to extend its reach into physical space where it has little history of direct engagement, where the relationship between the state and the rural elite has been at its most fragile, and where past attempts to impose central rule on the population have led to violent repercussions.

Ultimately, the report outlines two very different trajectories involving different populations in both provinces. One trajectory applies to populations in areas where the Afghan state has a history of effective control over the rural population, achieved through the rural elite whose interests largely align with those in state power. In these areas, resource endowments and market opportunities permit a sustained shift out of opium production, and it is in these areas that the state and its ban on poppy can prevail.

The second trajectory charts a very different course. It applies to populations that have a history of armed resistance against state intervention, an egalitarian tribal system, and an internally divided, competing, and unstable rural elite that includes political adversaries who are keen to capitalise on the failures of their opponents. These are areas where livelihood

opportunities are severely constrained by terrain, an effective distance from markets, and have limited resource endowments. In these areas, imposing a ban on opium production has presented the provincial and local political leadership with a significant challenge given that such bans have impoverished the rural population and compelled them to pursue coping strategies that expose them to physical risks, and have led to growing hostility toward the Afghan government and its foreign backers. It is in these areas that, in the absence of foreign military support after December 2014, if not before, the state will have little choice but to rescind its opium ban, retreat to the lowland valleys, and explore new ways to engage with the population and rural elite if it is not to find itself increasingly besieged.

The report shows that based on the evidence from Helmand and Nangarhar, rather than extending the writ of the Afghan government, as some suggest has happened, expanding bans on opium across an ever increasing geographical area, regardless of the socioeconomic and political conditions, has in fact undermined state formation, increased rural discontent, and presented new opportunities for the insurgency. This process, and the resurgence of opium poppy cultivation post-2014, will have major implications for the Afghan state and in turn implications for Western nations who plan to continue to provide development assistance and support to the Afghan state.

1. Introduction

[Afghanistan] is rich in diverse and complex local political structures. Indeed, the figurations of local politics are often changing from place to place and from valley to valley. Until this day local politics in Afghanistan is shaped by varying concepts of qawm identities (tribal, ethnic, Islamic etc), by different socio-economic constellations (land ownership, water rights, pastoral nomadism) and by a high variety of institutional and legal settings (e.g. pashtunwali, shariat).¹

Over the last few years there has been growing recognition of the importance of local context in Afghanistan in the minds of Western civilian and military policymakers. The deteriorating security situation in the east and south of the country that began in 2006, as well as the realities of operating through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), compelled many Western nations to look for more tailored local solutions to the growing number of challenges they faced while working in Afghanistan.² Shaped by a growing recognition of the influence of local tribal and political configurations, and a counter-insurgency doctrine that emphasised the importance of knowledge of the local situation, language and culture, a range of district-level interventions were launched in 2008 aimed at delivering improved security, governance, and development. This period marked the beginning of a variety of initiatives—some short-lived and many with mixed results.³ They were all in theory designed to respond to local circumstances and aimed at delivering outcomes at the local level, such as Focused District Development, District Stabilisation Teams, Community Development Volunteers, *arbaki*,⁴ and more recently, the Afghan Local Police (ALP).

In particular, awareness of the diverse local circumstances has shaped the engagement of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) in Afghanistan since late 2008.⁵ Since then interventions have not been as preoccupied with developing the policy architecture in Kabul, but has instead prioritised delivery to the rural population in areas of strategic interest. For instance, prioritising assistance to what were defined as Key Terrain Districts in 2010 reflected the realisation that most of the conflict and violence in Afghanistan at the time was occurring in a limited number of districts and that if “the population is the prize,” a more effective strategy should focus effort on those districts in which the population is concentrated rather than to spread the effort too thin.

More recently the policy of “transition”—the term used to describe the ISAF handing over security responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)—has also operated at a local level, with different tranches of municipalities and districts being handed over to Afghan forces according to measures of extant security conditions, institutional maturity, and battle readiness. The political process has also favoured bargains with local insurgent groups, in part recognising the myriad of different groups that are opposed to the current Afghan government but also by acknowledging the wider international and domestic challenges associated with trying to reach a broader political settlement with the Taliban.

In sharp contrast to the increasing importance given to local context in the wider state building project post-2009, counter-narcotics policy and the incentives designed to support it, have continued to focus on performance at a more aggregate level, with a particular focus on the provinces. The annual opium poppy survey, for example, primarily reports on provincial statistics and even when figures are offered at the district level, only sparse information is given on the context. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

¹ Conrad Schetter (2012) “Introduction,” in *Local Politics in Afghanistan: A century of Intervention in Social Order*, ed. Conrad Schetter, 8 (London: Hurst, 2012).

² Sherard Cowper Coles, *Cables from Kabul: The Inside Story of the West’s Afghanistan Campaign* (London: Harper Press, 2011), 60.

³ For a detailed review of some of the efforts at local delivery, see Frances Z. Brown, *The US Surge and Afghan Local Governance: Lessons for Transition* (USIP Special Report, 2012).

⁴ A tribally mobilised community police force in southeastern Afghanistan, could include ALP.

⁵ Schetter, *Local Politics in Afghanistan*.

and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) measure the number of “poppy free provinces”⁶ as a way of marking the concentration of opium poppy in a limited number of provinces in the South. Through the Good Performance Initiative, funds are given to provinces that significantly reduce the level of opium poppy cultivation or maintain their “poppy free status.”

In addition to the metrics of annual cultivation levels, much of the narrative on drug control in Afghanistan also focuses on provincial phenomena. Political leadership is seen as key; the commitment and personalities of Governor Mangal in Helmand, Governor Gul Aga Shirzai in Nangarhar, and Governor Mohammed Noor Atta in Balkh, are credited for falling levels of opium poppy cultivation in their respective provinces. Where cultivation does not fall, the governors are often blamed. For instance, in the province of Kandahar, successive governors, including Gul Aga Shirzai himself in 2004, were criticised for failing to curb opium poppy cultivation in the province.⁷

The desire to achieve a reduction in opium poppy cultivation in a province may contradict the efforts to understand and adapt to local circumstances that has been attempted in other aspects of the international effort in Afghanistan. The province-wide opium ban imposed in Nangarhar between 2008 and 2010, and the ongoing attempts to maintain Balkh’s “poppy free” status are the most obvious examples of interventions that do not take into consideration the diversity in socioeconomic, political, and environmental conditions within a province. Despite growing evidence of economic distress within parts of the Helmand canal command area, known as the “Food Zone,” the continued expansion of the area where farmers are forced to refrain from cultivating opium poppy (or face the eradication of their crop), is further indication of how the desire to achieve drug control targets often ignores local conditions and circumstances.

Contrary to much of the media narrative, eradication—the destruction of the standing crop—is a drug control effort that was intended to be tailored specifically to local conditions. In line with international best practice,⁸ the GIROA’s 2006 National Drugs Control Strategy called for crops to be destroyed in areas where farmers have viable alternatives.⁹ However, in many provinces it seems ambitious targets have been set and assumptions made of viable alternatives where little to none exist. In some cases (like the area north of the Boghra Canal in Helmand) governors actively pressed the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN) and Western donors to expand the target area for the eradication of opium poppy, even where it was clear that farmers had no alternative production to resort to. In other provinces, governors and their eradication teams ignored the target areas identified and instead pursued areas farmers were perceived to be weak and vulnerable in an attempt to deliver target count.

The pursuit of aggregate targets by provincial governors, be it the achievement of a poppy free status or a significant reduction in levels of cultivation, is ill-conceived in many ways. The most obvious error is that this is an attempt to “over-govern” areas the Afghan state has traditionally had little presence in, areas where the centre maintained only fragile bonds with the rural elite and population.

⁶ The term “poppy free” province was introduced in 2007 by UNODC and was defined as any province with less than 100 ha of opium poppy cultivated. Initially brought in as a measure to highlight that opium poppy was concentrated in a small number of provinces, it later became a target for the drug control community, regardless of context. See David Mansfield, “Poppy Free Provinces: A Measure or a Target?” (Kabul: AREU, 2009).

⁷ Both UNODC and the Crime and Narcotics Centre of the United States Government produce annual estimates of the amount of opium poppy cultivated in Afghanistan. At the national level these figures are broadly in line with each other. However, at the provincial level there are some discrepancies. The greatest deviation, both in absolute terms and in long term trend, can be found in the two organisations’ estimates on Kandahar Province. For ease, this report cites UNODC figures given that these estimates are used by the GIROA for the assessment of the Good Performance Initiative.

⁸ UNODC/CND “Alternative Development: A Global Thematic Evaluation - A Final Synthesis Report” http://www.unodc.org/pdf/Alternative_Development_Evaluation_Dec-05.pdf, vii, 14-14, December 2005.

⁹ The draft of the 2012 version of the Afghan National Drug Strategy weakens the preconditions for eradication stating: “Poppy eradication will be Governor-led and the priority will be given to targeting major landowners, government land users and repeat offenders....Prior to executing eradication in the field, the MCN and the Provincial Governor should consider whether there are alternative livelihood available to farmers subjected to eradication,” Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “National Drug Control Strategy, 2012-2016” (First Draft, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, 2012).

Historically, provincial governors in Afghanistan have been able to extract rent, find conscripts, and coerce the population in the accessible lower valleys - in other words, the “state space” - in which the majority of the population resides. In these areas the governor’s control is facilitated by a hierarchical social structure in which particular tribal sub-divisions and families dominate. Further afield in more remote and hostile terrain, such as mountains and deserts, governors have recognised the limits of their power. There the attention is diverted toward managing dissent rather than attempting to impose the policies of the central government.

Here, in what James Scott¹⁰ has referred to as “non-state space,” the rural population perceives those in the provincial capitals as equally distant and “foreign” as those in power in Kabul and will, if necessary, offer violent resistance against the provincial administration’s efforts to interfere in their lives. The physical terrain combined with isolated tribal groups, each with competing interests, has thwarted the formation of a dominant tribal elite with whom the state could engage and then use to establish a more permanent physical presence in the area. In these more inaccessible areas, maintaining order has often required the governor to cede various degrees of autonomy to the local population.

There are also significant differences in the resource endowments of the population within a province. It is not a coincidence that “state space” typically includes the well-irrigated areas with agricultural surpluses, as this is where the state can extract revenue from the population. With better infrastructure, closer proximity to urban centres, access to the labour and commodity markets that this entails, as well as access to government services, the rural population in this area has both greater economic opportunities and is less exposed to environmental and economic shocks.

There are other areas in a province where the opposite is true; where small landholdings, poor soil, and a lack of non-farm income opportunities lead to household food deficits and a shortage of cash income. Cash crop production is constrained by low levels of consumer demand, poor infrastructure, and high transport and transaction costs incurred when taking goods to market in the provincial centre. In these areas, shocks, such as drought and conflict, are repeated and concurrent. These are the areas in which the state has traditionally had little economic interest and has therefore seen little reason to engage in protracted military campaigns to subdue the population. It is these fundamental differences (in the socioeconomic, political, and geographical or ecological terrain) within a province that prompted other interventions to decentralize both the management and decision-making processes, often to the district level, and to attempt to tailor interventions to local circumstances.

In contrast, the counter-narcotics effort has pursued aggregate targets and set incentives to achieve the ultimate goal of a poppy free province. The merging of such contrasting approaches and targets within the wider effort in Afghanistan is illustrative of a failure to understand the myriad of realities in rural areas and a failure to identify how a single intervention might impact and possibly undermine achievements in a range of different sectors or thematic areas of work. Eleven years of active international engagement and there still remains a tendency to operate in parallel strands of activities, objectives, and goals. Moreover there has been little consideration of how a cross-cutting issue like opium production and counter-narcotics policy will impact ongoing plans for withdrawal and a post-transition Afghanistan.

In official documents, such as those of UNODC, little is offered by way of explanation for the resurgence in cultivation in a district within a province, or in a neighbouring district, bar the usual statements about prevailing levels of security.¹¹ The complex interplay of tribal

¹⁰ James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

¹¹ The link between lack of security and opium poppy cultivation was also evident in Nangarhar Province (eastern region), where cultivation was concentrated in districts (Sherzad and Khogiani) classified as having “high or extreme security risk.” See UNODC/Ministry of Counter Narcotics, “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011 Summary Findings” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 2011), 58.

and personal politics, how economic benefits and losses are distributed, and the effects of the range of recurrent and repeated shocks that many communities are exposed to, are not examined. Instead, the reader is often presented with provincial data, and where cultivation does increase in a specific district or districts, bold statements are made that infer causality between opium poppy cultivation and insecurity without any explanation as to what were the causes of the rising levels of physical violence and increasing opium production in that location, at what specific timeframe, and what can be learned for the development of future policy.

The purpose of this paper is to place opium production within the wider socioeconomic and political context. By drawing on a body of in-depth fieldwork in the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar, the paper explores the wider implications of a counter-narcotics strategy that pursues the ambitious drug control targets adopted in recent years. In particular, it asks: How have area-wide bans on opium affected the multiple and varied population groups that exist in a province? How is this likely to effect the territorial space in which the Afghan state is able to operate during the 2012-13 growing season, and after foreign troops have ceased combat operations by December 2014?

To explore these questions, the paper is divided into four sections. The first section offers some details on the methodological approach. It gives an account of how the fieldwork was conducted in an increasingly difficult security environment in both provinces, and offers insights into some of the limitations of the data.

The second section provides a detailed review of political and economic developments in the province of Nangarhar. It begins with an analysis of some of the manoeuvrings of the provincial political elite, specifically the evolution of old *jihadi* networks and alliances as they seek to oust the current governor from office and divide formal positions of power, and the opportunities for patronage they represent. It points to the centres of power that the Nangarhari elite draw upon, both in Kabul and amongst the rural population which it claims to represent. The section then digs deeper into the rural population in Nangarhar, documenting the historical relationship between those that live in the lower valleys where the state has traditionally had the means to: coerce, conscript, and tax; and, those communities that reside in more remote areas, with limited resources, where the state's efforts at subjugation have typically failed. Discussion of the increase in opium poppy cultivation in Nangarhar in the 2011-12 growing season threads through this section as a cross-cutting theme, illustrative of the multiple and interrelated factors that led to opium's resurgence in the province, including the role of counter-narcotics policy itself.

The third section focuses on central Helmand. Initially it offers some history of the development of the canal command area. It also examines how the conflict in the 1980s and 1990s, and subsequently the patronage and factionalism of the Karzai administration, undermined efforts to develop a more cohesive and stable relationship between the state and the rural elite, and the larger population, even in an area that should be considered "state space." This section goes on to document the changes in the lives and livelihoods of the rural population in central Helmand during the 2011-12 growing season, including the impact of failure of the opium crop in that same timeframe. The rural population is divided into three distinct groups:

- (i) Those in the canal command area that have proven increasingly resilient following the opium ban and have experienced an increase in economic opportunities;
- (ii) Those in the canal command area that have experienced improvements in their physical security, but have seen a dramatic downturn in their economic position due to the prohibition of opium cultivation and the monopolisation of development assistance by the rural elite; and
- (ii) The burgeoning population north of the Boghra Canal that had been disadvantaged by the ban on opium and is increasingly settling in the former desert land controlled by the Taliban and is intensifying opium production. As in the southern districts of Nangarhar, the

explanation for the increase in opium poppy cultivation in this “non-state space” north of the Boghra Canal lies with the rejection of what is seen as a predatory and punitive Afghan government, including the way the state is perceived to have pursued its counter-narcotics policy.

In its final section, the report offers a conclusion and prognosis for Afghanistan following transition in December 2014. It suggests that the conditions that have led to lower levels of opium poppy cultivation in both Nangarhar and Helmand cannot hold. In particular, it suggests there will be a major shift with the withdrawal of the Western military from the rural areas of Afghanistan. The Afghan government can prevail in the lower fertile valleys of Helmand and Nangarhar where there is a long history of state dominance and where the population has seen improvements in its welfare over the last decade. However, where state power is contested in these provinces, in part due to the economic impact of the prohibition of opium, governors will no longer be able to rely on the coercive power of foreign military forces to exert their authority over the rural population and maintain low levels of opium poppy cultivation. In these areas, state actors, including Afghan security personnel, are more likely to reach an accommodation with local farmers and the rural elite on opium poppy cultivation, recognising the role that opium production can play as a source of rent in the face of dwindling Western funding and by admitting that imposing a continued ban would risk alienating the rural population and increasing support to the insurgency. Given this scenario, the Afghan government and Western nations face a limited number of options in the run up to transition and must recognise that pressing forward with a strategy of coercing farmers to abandon opium production in areas where they do not have viable alternatives would only serve to weaken the position of the Afghan state after December 2014.

2. Methodology

This report covers fieldwork undertaken in the provinces of Nangarhar and Helmand during the opium harvest season of 2012. Both provinces have been significant producers of opium, and the focus of considerable counter-narcotics and development activity, making them useful sites for comparative research. Fieldwork was primarily undertaken by colleagues from the Organisation of Sustainable Development and Research (OSDR). The focus of the fieldwork was on rural households and what changes they experienced in their lives and livelihoods over the preceding twelve months.

This fieldwork builds on a larger body of research that has been undertaken by the author and OSDR during the harvest season in Nangarhar since 2005 and in Helmand since 2008. It also follows research undertaken during each winter planting season in both of these provinces dating back to 2002. It is not the purpose of this report to synthesise this large body of accumulated data. Instead, this report provides an account of the socioeconomic, political, and environmental developments that have affected households in the 2011-12 growing season and how these have impacted household livelihoods, including their decision to cultivate opium poppy.

The research approaches opium poppy as one crop within a wider range of activities that households are involved in. This approach recognises that simply asking households why they do or do not cultivate opium is insufficient, since the complex and interconnected factors that inform household decision-making cannot be distilled into a single answer. Interviewers also avoided asking direct questions about opium. This was to reduce the risk of households exaggerating the returns on opium as a way to “negotiate” for greater development assistance in return for giving up the crop. Extensive experience with interviewing has shown that where opium poppy is cultivated, respondents typically will include it when recounting the different crops that they grow and sell. The fact that interviews were conducted in the field during the planting and harvest season for the winter crops, including opium poppy, allowed fieldworkers to verify – and where necessary, challenge – respondents’ answers.

The research also addresses the inherent problems associated with primary data collection when researching an “illegal” or “underground” activity by focusing its enquiry on household livelihood strategies. The pressure to act against opium cultivation and trade has made illicit drugs a more sensitive topic for discussion with farmers and other stakeholders than was the case in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, the rural household remains the most accessible unit of analysis when looking at the opium economy in Afghanistan; it offers a basis for cross-referencing findings both with other work on rural livelihoods in Afghanistan, and with other research on the specific role of opium production in rural livelihood strategies in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Discussions also focused on the direct experience of respondents and their households rather than on a wider geographic area, where answers become increasingly speculative.¹² Individual interviews with farming households were conducted in the field as farmers tended their crops, since holding interviews in the household compound can attract attention from others and become subject to repeated interruptions and biases. Group discussions with farmers were avoided, as they: tend to be dominated by community elites; are inappropriate for discussing sensitive issues; and, increasingly represent a security threat in rural Helmand.¹³

Interviews were conducted with 75 rural households in the five districts of Achin, Kama, Khogiani, Shinwar, and Surkhrud in Nangarhar Province (See Figure 1). Interviews were also

¹² Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, “Farming Systems of Nad Ali District, Helmand Province,” in *Agricultural Survey of Afghanistan*, Report 15 (Peshawar: SCA, 1992), 1.

¹³ Ira Moore Stevens and K. Tarzi, “Economics of Agricultural Production in Helmand Valley, Afghanistan” (Washington, DC: United States Department of the Interior Bureau of Reclamation, 1965), 1; Jonathan Goodhand, “Research in Zones of Violent Conflict” (Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2001 [unpublished]), 13; Frydoon Shairzai, Ghulam Farouq and Richard Scott, “Farm Economic Survey of the Helmand Valley” (Kabul: USAID, 1975 [unpublished]), 13.

conducted with shopkeepers and daily wage labourers in the provincial centre of Jalalabad, Kahi Bazaar in Achin, and the town of Markoh located on the Torkham road in Shinwar district. Three more household interviews were undertaken in Jani Khel in Bati Kot District, an area close to the bazaars of Markoh and Ghani Khel that has seen increasing levels of agricultural diversification over the last five years. Each of these households in Jani Khel form part of a longitudinal data set that dates back to work initially undertaken for the European Commission-funded Water, Opium, and Livestock project in April 2006, implemented by AREU. In total 98 interviews were conducted in Nangarhar in April 2012.

Due to the prevailing security conditions, fieldwork in Helmand Province was limited to the central region and included the districts of Lashkar Gah, Marjah, Nad-e Ali, Nahre Seraj, and Nawa Barakzai (see Figure 2). Interviews were conducted with rural households at 29 research sites. This included eight research sites north of the Boghra Canal of which two research sites have been the locations for repeated fieldwork since May 2008, while six more sites became focal points for the research in 2011 and 2012 following the realisation that there has been and continues to be rapid expansion in the amount of land coming under agricultural production in this area, largely in response to the a ban on opium production in the canal command area.¹⁴ As with the fieldwork in Nangarhar, interviews were also conducted with a number of shopkeepers and with those looking for daily wage labour in the main bazaars. In total, 462 interviews were conducted in central Helmand Province between April and May 2012.

Research in Nangarhar and in the Dasht area north of the Boghra Canal was funded by AREU as part of the Natural Resources Management project funded by the European Commission. This project has also funded research in Balkh and Badakshan. In Helmand, fieldwork in the area south of the Boghra Canal was funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the UK Government as part of ongoing impact monitoring work on the “Food Zone” that has now collected data in the same research sites over five consecutive growing seasons dating back to May 2008.

Caveats

Research in Afghanistan is always subject to biases. This is even truer in a chronically insecure environment such as that found in Helmand and in the southern districts of Nangarhar. The paucity of reliable demographic data hinders establishing a representative sample in such areas, both fieldworkers and respondents have legitimate concerns for their own safety (particularly in rural areas), and it is difficult to provide oversight for data collection in the field. The research methodology outlined above is designed to address these challenges, but nevertheless a number of caveats must be noted, particularly given the security environment in both Helmand and Nangarhar, and the types of sensitive issues the study raises.

The most important caveat relates to the impact the conflict has had on fieldwork. Insecurity in both provinces limits the geographical coverage of fieldwork (often at short notice), rules out formal structured interviews in more insecure rural areas, and makes central Helmand and the southern districts of Nangarhar difficult environments for conducting field research. While a focused research design and a core team of experienced local staff allowed fieldwork to proceed in areas exposed to the ongoing conflict, results of the research were inevitably shaped by the prevailing security situation. For example, lack of security prevented an extended visit to Doh Bandi, and research had to be abandoned following crossfire at a police checkpoint. Fieldwork in the upper Mohmand valley in Achin, and in Pirakhel and Zawah in Khogiani also proved impossible given the pervasive presence of armed groups in these valleys and warnings from local villagers.

It is also worth noting that the security situation in Helmand prevented repeat visits to the same households during successive rounds of fieldwork. Repeated visits to the same households

¹⁴ See David Mansfield, Alcis Ltd and OSD, “Managing Concurrent and Repeated Risks: Explaining the Reductions in Opium Production in Central Helmand between 2008 and 2011” (Kabul: AREU, 2011).

every six months would arouse suspicions from anti-government elements (AGEs) and their supporters, and would put both fieldworkers and respondents at risk. In the more insecure parts of the canal command area and in areas north of the Boghra Canal, fieldworkers had to work with existing contacts at a research site as well as establish new ones without alerting those in the wider community of their work as researchers.

Fieldworkers had to be discreet, preferring to interview individual farmers at work in their fields where there are no bystanders and an outsider's presence would not be as conspicuous. Notes were not taken during interviews but were written up after the fieldworker and respondent parted company. While this approach presents some challenges with regard to recall or memory bias, such risks are reduced by the high level of experience of the fieldworkers. The less formal and more conversational style of the interviews also reduced the potential for social desirability bias¹⁵ that has been shown to affect the results of more quantitative techniques such as polling in chronically insecure areas, exemplified in much of Helmand and increasingly so in the southern districts of Nangarhar.¹⁶

The research does not claim to cover a representative sample of households or communities in either province, as this is unattainable in the current environment. Instead, it draws on household livelihood trajectories and geospatial data collected over an extended period of time in a number of specific and quite different research sites. By merging such detailed and historical household, local and geospatial data across such diverse areas, it is hoped that this research will produce what R. Yin has referred to as "analytic generalisation,"¹⁷ offering findings that are relevant to other parts of Afghanistan.

¹⁵ The tendency of respondents to reply in a manner that will be viewed favourably by others.

¹⁶ DFID Afghanistan, "Data Quality Assessment of the Asia Foundation Surveys of the Afghan People, 2006-2009" (Unpublished report, September 2010).

¹⁷ R. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (London: Sage, 1994), 31.

3. Nangarhar: The State's Retreat to its Equilibrium

Nangarhar is at a decisive moment in its history of dealing with opium poppy. At the political centre of the province there is growing dissonance that has manifested in the breakdown of the political settlement between the provincial ruling elite and Governor Gul Aga Shirzai. Disputes over rent extraction and the distribution of government positions and patronage, as well as personal acrimony, have led to the regrouping of old *jihadi* alliances and the formation of new coalitions against the Governor. The competition for control over state institutions has become particularly challenging with the resurgence of prominent former *jihadi* commanders and their families following their election to national and provincial representative bodies in 2009 and 2010.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the stability of Nangarhar will be determined solely by the manoeuvrings of the current political and military elite, many of whom have had control over state power on a number of occasions over the last two decades. In part, these leaders derive their power from the rural communities that they claim to represent, and in part, from the political and military support they can draw on when necessary. Consequently, what is happening in the rural areas and to the different population groups that reside there will also have a decisive impact on the future of the province. In fact, the reverberations from events in the rural districts of Nangarhar will also be felt in Kabul given the significance of the Nangarhar economy, its role as a regional hub and strategic border crossing point between Peshawar and Kabul, and the importance of some of Nangarhar's political actors in national politics.

Opium production is also part of this equation. Over the last two decades, opium production, and thereby counter-narcotics policies have played a pivotal role in the bargains made between the rural population, local elites, and those vying for power in Jalalabad. The province-wide ban on opium production imposed by Governor Gul Aga Shirzai in the 2007-08 growing season has since broken down. There has been resurgence in opium production in the southern districts of Achin, Khogiani, Nazian, Pachir wa Agam, Chapahar, Sherzad, and Deh Bala in the 2011-12 growing season. For the first time since 2008, small amounts of opium poppy cultivation can also be found in the lower valleys of Shinwar and Bati Kot.

Discontent over the impact of the opium ban on the rural economy of the southern districts has now manifested itself in violent resistance. For example, the eradication campaign launched in the spring of 2012 led to the death of 48 people, even though the campaign avoided the more hostile areas of Sherzad, Achin, and Khogiani where AGEs are more deeply entrenched. The rural elite that had facilitated the state's imposition of the ban in these areas and maintained the Taliban presence to a minimum, now finds itself marginalised in the face of growing rural discontent and rising insurgency.

However, the opium ban cannot be considered in isolation, and nor can it be assumed that its impact is uniform across the different population groups within the province. This section of the report positions the effect of the opium ban within the wider context of recent political and economic developments in the province. It differentiates between areas where the state historically has been able to impose order and those where it has merely sought to better manage dissent. Drawing on data from fieldwork in the 2011-12 growing season it also charts the difference in livelihood trajectories of the populations in these different areas, how this has impacted their decision to return to opium poppy cultivation, and their attitudes toward the state.

This section is divided into three parts. The first part discusses developments at the political centre of the province: the networks and rivalries within the provincial political elite. It charts the breakdown in the political settlement between Governor Gul Aga Shirzai and the old *jihadi* commanders which served as a source of stability in the initial years of his governorship. This part also documents the provincial elite's links in the rural areas of Nangarhar, from which they draw their political legitimacy and military power.

The second part of this section examines the rural areas, first offering a historical account of the relationship between the state, the population, and the emerging rural elite. Then it analyses more recent political developments and how they have impacted security, social order, and opium poppy cultivation. In recognising that a state which systematically undermines a population's welfare and exposes them to asset-depleting risks also endangers its own legitimacy, this part also examines the economic opportunities that are (or are not) available to different groups within the rural population, and whether the opium ban and other shocks have led to signs of economic distress. This part is structured so that it distinguishes between areas where the Afghan state has a history of coercion, taxation, and conscription, and those where the state has limited its engagement to one of managing dissent.

Finally a conclusion is offered that presents two very different trajectories within the province of Nangarhar. The first is that of the population in the accessible valleys—what Scott¹⁸ has referred to as “state space”—around the provincial centre, where economic opportunities continue to expand, where security is maintained, and where political and economic interests of the Afghan state and the rural elite are intimately entwined. Here the report will explore how the opium ban has been largely maintained and has neither undermined economic growth nor led to political instability.

The second trajectory charts a very different course. It belongs to the population in what Scott would term “non-state space,” the southern districts of the province of Nangarhar, which have a history of armed resistance, an egalitarian tribal system, and competing and unstable rural elites that contain political adversaries who are keen to capitalise on the failures of their opponents. These are areas where livelihood opportunities are severely constrained by terrain, effective distance from markets, and limited resource endowments. In these areas, imposing a ban on opium production has presented the provincial and local political leadership with a significant challenge, as it has impoverished the rural population and compelled them to pursue coping strategies that expose them to physical and other risks. In conclusion, it would seem that the rise in opium poppy cultivation that is occurring in the southern districts of Nangarhar and the violent reaction to eradication in 2012 is less an issue of the lack of commitment that Governor Gul Aga Shirzai has shown to counter-narcotics in the current growing season, and more a function of the blind commitment he showed in delivering a “poppy free” province in the early years of his tenure as governor.

3.1 Politics at the Centre: The Return of the Nangarhari Elite

Gul Aga Shirzai was appointed as Governor of Nangarhar in July 2005. Between then and 2010 he presided over what has been referred to as a “model” province in Afghanistan, and succeeded in extending the writ of the state into some of the most remote parts of the province.¹⁹ In 2007, 2008, and for much of 2009, the security situation was more favourable in Nangarhar than in any other province bordering Pakistan.²⁰ With support from United States military and civilian government agencies there was also a dramatic increase in the delivery of development assistance, rising from around US\$ 8 million in 2007 to approximately \$140 million in 2009,²¹ earning the Governor the nickname, “the Bulldozer.” For the international community and the central government in Kabul, the effective implementation of a province-wide opium ban in 2008, and relatively low levels of cultivation in 2009-2010, was the ultimate indicator of the Governor's ability to project state power.

However, after a number of years of relative stability, the security situation began to deteriorate in Nangarhar in late 2009. Of particular significance was the growing sense that Gul Aga Shirzai was no longer the dominant force in provincial politics that he once had

¹⁸ Scott, *Art of not being Governed*.

¹⁹ For a detailed account of Gul Aga Shirzai's governorship, see Dipali Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors and State Building in Afghanistan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

²⁰ Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors and State Building*.

²¹ Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors and State Building*.

been. Amongst the rural population there was growing disquiet about the Governor's close relationship with an increasingly overt United States military presence, the deteriorating security situation in the southern districts, and Gul Aga Shirzai's unwillingness to travel much beyond the city of Jalalabad without logistical support from his foreign backers. By late 2009 the cumulative impact of the opium ban, imposed since the 2007-08 growing season, was also impinging on the welfare of the population in the mountains, leading to increasing resentment towards the Governor and the rural elite responsible for its implementation, as well as a rise in insurgent attacks. This backdrop of growing rural discontent presented opportunities for the indigenous political elite to rise up again and regain the formal reins of power that it had held during the 1990s and after the initial collapse of the Taliban.

Encircling the Bulldozer

In March 2008, Gul Aga Shirzai had been voted "Afghan of the Year" in a radio poll and was alleged to be preparing himself for the 2009 presidential elections.²² There was speculation in the press and amongst western analysts that Gul Aga Shirzai represented a real challenge to President Karzai, and there were even claims that the United States Government would support his candidacy following a visit by the then-Senator Barack Obama to Jalalabad in July 2008, and Gul Aga Shirzai's attendance at President Obama's subsequent inauguration ceremony in January 2009.²³ In Kabul, concerns over Gul Aga Shirzai's popularity were such that there were rumours of President Karzai having made a number of personal appeals to the Governor to withdraw his candidacy. By May 2009 Gul Aga Shirzai announced that he would not run for president and would back the incumbent. More significantly, the announcement of his withdrawal was accompanied by a visit to Jalalabad by his old adversary in Kandahar, Ahmed Wali Karzai, the half-brother of President Hamid Karzai. Ahmad Wali Karzai's visit was interpreted as a sign that Gul Aga Shirzai would be rewarded with a senior post in cabinet in return for his decision not to run against President Karzai.²⁴

In hindsight, the decision by Governor Shirzai to initially propose himself (or allow others to suggest his candidacy) for President and then to withdraw was not wise. Once Gul Aga Shirzai decided not to stand, he lost much of his political leverage over President Karzai. The President's failure to immediately promote the Governor, and the fact that rumours of the potential jobs he might be given shifted from that of Minister of the Interior Affairs in 2010, to transferring him to another governorship in 2011, exposed how little political capital Gul Aga Shirzai had in Kabul. Furthermore, it suggested that he largely relied on US support to retain his position as Governor of Nangarhar. Despite growing concerns for his own safety and numerous reports of his request to be transferred, the Governor was seen to languish in Nangarhar, making him vulnerable to his political opponents in the province - who by the close of 2009 were growing in number and in strength.

The Nangarhar provincial council elections in 2009, and the parliamentary election in 2010, further weakened Gul Aga Shirzai and tilted political power in the province back towards the *jihadi* commanders and ruling elite that had gained prominence during the anti-Soviet resistance. The old guards of jihadist commanders who had been manoeuvred out of office in the province in the early years of the Karzai administration, had in many cases "retired" to parliament, joined a new generation of politicians from the influential Arsala family in an attempt to oust the Governor from office and regain control of the province's political institutions. Unlike his political opponents in the province, the Governor could claim no popular mandate. In fact, the Governor was in a far weaker position; he owed his position to a President who in late 2009 and early 2010 was increasingly perceived as weak, and who showed little favour to Gul Aga Shirzai and to US military forces that were increasingly being blamed for the civilian casualties by the rural population.

²² Sonia Winter, "Afghanistan: Radio Free Afghanistan names person of the year," Radio Free Europe, 20 March 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079668.html>.

²³ It is worth noting that President Karzai was not present at this ceremony. Matthew Rosenberg, "US Courts Former Warlords in its Bid for Afghan Stability," *Wall Street Journal*, 20 March 2009.

²⁴ Abdul Waheed Wafa and Carlotta Gall, "Afghan Governor Leaves Presidential Race," *New York Times*, 2 May 2009.

Of particular importance was the fact that the provincial council and parliamentary elections delivered political office to the next generation of the leaders from the Arsala family, including two of Haji Qadir's sons, Haji Zahir and Haji Jamal, as well as their cousin and Haji Din Mohammed's son, Nasratullah. Haji Zahir, Hajir Qadir's eldest son, was elected to the *Wolesi Jirga* (lower house), and Haji Jamal and Nasratullah to the Nangarhar Provincial Council. Events since 2009 indicate that the election of this new generation of the Arsala family has been catalytic, providing the vehicle for the former *jihadists* and their families to plot against the Governor, using both formal state institutions and the informal power they have generated through local patronage networks and the threat of violence.

The Arsala family has been a powerful force in Nangarhar and national politics for generations. Originally from the district of Hesarak, the family settled in Surkhrud where they now have significant landholdings. During the *jihad* against the Soviets, two brothers from the family, Abdul Haq and Haji Qadir, were prominent commanders in the Hezb-e Islami party of Yunous Khales, while a third, Haji Din Mohammed, was the political deputy to Khales himself. Following the mujahidin's capture of Nangarhar, Haji Qadir took up the position of Head of the Eastern Council in 1991, before being finally expelled by the Taliban in August 1996. After the fall of the Taliban the family returned to its traditional role with senior positions in government: Haji Qadir²⁵ became Governor of Nangarhar and subsequently Minister of Interior until his assassination in July 2002, after which Haji Din Mohammed occupied the post. In May 2005 Haji Din Mohammed was removed from his post as Governor of Nangarhar, ostensibly for failing to quell the riots in Jalalabad, and he was transferred to the governorship in Kabul. With the removal of Haji Din Mohammed, a generation of the Arsala family that had fought against the Soviets and occupied the most senior positions of power in Jalalabad subsequently graduated to national politics, and a new generation took centre stage in Nangarhar: Haji Zahir, Haji Jamal, and Nasratullah.

Previously, Haji Zahir had spent a period of time as Head of the Border Guards in Nangarhar (2004-2006), before being transferred to Takhar and Taloqan in 2007. While there, Haji Zahir's bodyguard (and cousin), Bilal Wali Mahammad, and four of his men, were arrested and subsequently imprisoned for trafficking 120 kg of heroin, only to be released in April 2009 as part of the President's amnesty arranged by Haji Din Mohammed (Zahir's uncle) who was acting as President Karzai's campaign manager.²⁶ Since Haji Zahir's election to the *Wolesi Jirga* in 2010, and subsequently following his appointment as deputy speaker in early 2012, he has actively worked against Gul Aga Shirzai, accusing him of corruption and for being responsible for the deterioration of the security situation in the province.²⁷ He has, on occasion, also been an ardent critic of President Karzai.

Haji Zahir has been joined by his brother, Haji Jamal, in his efforts to remove the Governor who was elected to the Nangarhar Provincial Council in 2009. Locally, Haji Jamal's tendency towards violence and predation has become legendary. In Jalalabad, reports circulate that he canvassed in Jalalabad in 2009 by threatening passersby over a speaker system - "If you do not vote for me I will kill you and f*** your wife."²⁸ It is also claimed that he stabbed his cousin Nasratullah, when the latter received more votes than Jamal and was elected as the Chair of the Provincial Council (a position that was subsequently appointed to Haji Jamal in January 2011). In late 2009, a time when Haji Jamal is thought to have been supported by Gul Aga Shirzai in his candidacy for Chair of the Provincial Council, Jamal is alleged to have beaten Mufti Moeen Shah Haqqani, the then Deputy of the Provincial Council, for his public criticism of the Governor on Spinghar Radio.

²⁵ Abdul Haq was captured and then killed by the Taliban in October 2001.

²⁶ Farah Stockman, "Karzai's Pardon Nullifies Drug Court Gains: Well-known traffickers set free before elections," *Boston Globe*, 4 July 2009. It is alleged that the men were transporting the heroin in an official Afghan Border Police car at the time of their arrest. The men were each sentenced to prison for between 16 and 18 years.

²⁷ The political rhetoric on insecurity increased in particular after a brutal attack on the Jalalabad branch of the Kabul Bank in February 2011 which killed 35 and injured 92. See Rory Brown's excellent work on eastern Afghanistan (forthcoming) for a detailed account of this event.

²⁸ Interview with Jalalabad resident, April 2010

Nasratullah was also elected to the Provincial Council in 2009. He is younger than his cousins, Zahir and Jamal, and locally is considered the most respectable of the new generation of leaders from the Arsalas family.²⁹ Despite his differences with Haji Jamal over leadership of the Provincial Council in 2009, Nasratullah aligned himself with his cousins, and all of them put aside their family dispute with the Pashai commander, Hazrat Ali, to try and oust Governor Gul Aga Shirzai in February 2011.

This alliance has involved Fraidoon Mohmand, another member of the Wolesi Jirga, and former commander under Hezb-e Islami - Khales (HIK), and old opponents of the Arsalas, such as Hazrat Ali, the Pashai commander who had been the Provincial Police Chief until 2004 before becoming a member of parliament (MP). It has also drawn on the support of influential rural *maliks* and former comrades from HIK, such as Malik Niaz³⁰ from the Mohmand valley in Achin in pressing for the removal of Gul Aga Shirzai, both directly³¹ and through President Karzai.³² It is alleged that the conspiracy was so advanced that those involved divided the important posts in the provincial administration amongst themselves, including that of governor in readiness for Gul Aga Shirzai's departure.³³

There are many rumours as to what provoked this attempt to unseat the Governor, most of which focus on a breakdown in the arrangement between Gul Aga Shirzai and members of the alliance over the division of unofficial payments at the Torkham border crossing.³⁴ Complaints also circulated that the Governor monopolised reconstruction contracts through his company and did not share the revenues he generated from the Nangarhar Reconstruction Fund. Locally, most people simply believe that the old jihadists elite wish to regain control over the key positions of power that they held in the initial years of the Karzai administration.

While unsuccessful in its bid to remove Governor Shirzai in 2011, despite a particularly aggressive effort to unseat him following the attack on the Kabul Bank in Jalalabad in February 2011,³⁵ the alliance between the Arsalas family and the other *jihadi* commanders persists. The appointment of Aga Jan, a cousin of Hazrat Ali, as Chair of the Provincial Council in 2012 is thought to reflect the continuing cooperation between the jihadists and highlights their continued ambition to regain control of the formal offices of the province. Although they were more restrained in their efforts to oust the Governor in 2012, attempts to curtail the worst excesses of the old *jihadi* elite have proven ineffective. For example, in March 2012 Haji Jamal was arrested following allegations that he was behind a series of robberies and kidnappings of local businessmen, including the theft of 40 million Afghanis (Afs) from a prominent Nangarhari businessman and close ally of Governor Gul Aga Shirzai, Haji Farooq.³⁶ Haji Jamal was subsequently released from captivity in mid-April 2012, after which he

²⁹ Fabrizio Foschino, "Conflict in the East, Part II" (Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 17 August 2011).

³⁰ Malik Niaz is a former HIK commander who fought under Haji Qadir.

³¹ It is rumoured that in response to the request that he leave office in two days, Gul Aga Shirzai informed Hazrat Ali that, "As Governor I am appointed by the President and only the President can remove me." It is also alleged that the Governor told Hazrat Ali that if the commander "were really a powerful person he should be able to find his wife" - a reference to the kidnapping of Hazrat Ali's family in 2008.

³² In this division it is claimed that Fraidoon Mohmand was given the right to appoint a person of his choice to the post of governor. Haji Zahir was given the same opportunity to appoint someone to provincial security commander and Hazrat Ali to appoint head of customs. See Khalil Jawad, "Is the Bulldozer running out of Fuel?," *Afghanistan Today*, 26 March 2011.

³³ Fabrizio Foschini, "Sherzai Staying or Leaving? A Nangarhar Tug of War" (Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 8 March 2011).

³⁴ There are reports that as many as six commanders, including Haji Zahir, Fraidoon Mohmand, and Hazrat Ali were unofficially receiving payments from the cross border trade at Torkham. It is alleged that these payments date back to 2008 when initially a 1000 Afs charge was imposed on each truck crossing the border. It is alleged that by December 2010 these unofficial charges had reached as high as 10,000 Afs per truck, prompting a demonstration by truck drivers and a commission being sent from Kabul to investigate complaints. It is claimed that the commission arrested the representatives of the commanders who were collecting the money and put a stop to the payments thereby upsetting the political order. See also Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors and State Building*; Jawad, "Is the Bulldozer Running out of Fuel?"

³⁵ A number of Gul Aga Shirzai's political opponents used the massacre at the Kabul Bank to suggest that the Governor had failed to maintain security in the province. See Jawad, "Is the Bulldozer Running out of Fuel?"

³⁶ Abdul Mueed Hashmi, "Arrest Warrants for Provincial Council Member Issued," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 4 February 2012.

immediately staged a parade through the streets of Jalalabad, bringing traffic to a standstill—an act that impressed on the population that he can continue to act with impunity and that it is only a question of time before the next generation of the Arsala family once again take over the reins of office in Nangarhar.

Making friends with other people's enemies

Although Gul Aga Shirzai retained his position as Governor of Nangarhar during the President's removal of ten governors in September 2012,³⁷ he continues to be increasingly marginalised within the province itself. The population and officials generally refer to the Governor as a spent force, in power only because President Karzai does not know what else to do with him, and remaining in Nangarhar to prevent Gul Aga Shirzai from returning to his home province of Kandahar, where his influence within the Barakzai tribe, his ambitions, and his wealth would undoubtedly unsettle the current political order that continues to favour the Karzai family and their Popalzai tribe.

Recognising how politically vulnerable he is in Nangarhar, Gul Aga Shirzai has been building relationships with those that oppose the Arsala family and their old *jihadi* allies. He has, for example, drawn on the support of the surviving family members of another *jihadi* commander and bitter opponent of Haji Zahir, Haji Zaman Ghamsharik, as well as other members of the rural elite that fear a return to the old political order.

The reasons for the rift between the Arsala family and Haji Zaman Ghamsharik in particular are well known. Haji Zaman Ghamsharik left Afghanistan for Pakistan (and then for France) in July 2002 after being accused of planning the assassination of Haji Qadir. Repeated attempts to return to Afghanistan by Haji Zaman, on some occasions at the invitation of President Karzai himself, were allegedly blocked by Haji Zahir. Then, in 2007, Haji Zaman's brother, Aman Khairi, was arrested and imprisoned in Afghanistan, accused of being involved in the murder of Haji Qadir, as well as of being an informant for the Drug Enforcement Administration with information on Ahmed Wali Karzai, the President's brother.³⁸ In September 2008, the prolonged incarceration of Aman Khairi provoked demonstrations in upper Khogiani and the rumour of Haji Zaman's return to Zawah, where he allegedly threatened unrest if his brother was not released immediately.

In 2009, following the mediation of the President's advisor, Asadullah Wafa, Aman Khairi was released from prison in time to run an unsuccessful campaign for the Wolesi Jirga. At around the same time, Haji Zaman Ghamsharik's exile was also lifted, and he travelled across the border at Torkham to much fanfare before being transported to Kabul by government helicopter.³⁹ In February 2010, Haji Zaman Ghamsharik was killed in a suicide attack along with fourteen others while visiting the Chemtala refugee camp on the border of Khogiani and Surkhrud.⁴⁰

Locally, many believed Haji Zahir was behind the attack and that Haji Zaman Ghamsharik was killed in revenge for the murder of Haji Qadir in July 2002. While both sides deny involvement in the murder of each other's fathers, there remains considerable suspicion and a belief that the families agreed to a truce to avoid a protracted conflict that would undoubtedly impose significant costs in terms of lives and capital.⁴¹

³⁷ Nathan Hodge and Zia al Haq Sultani, "US Ally Fired in Afghan Shake-up," *Wall Street Journal*, 21 September 2012.

³⁸ In an interview with the *New York Times*, Aman Khairi is cited as saying that he was an informant for the Drugs Enforcement Administration who had provided information on the involvement of the President's half brother, Wali Karzai, in the drugs business. See James Risen, "Reports link Karzai's brother to Afghanistan heroin trade," *New York Times*, 5 October 2008.

³⁹ Rod Nordland, "Afghan Warlord with Many Enemies, and Possibly One Notorious Ally, Killed by Suicide Bomber," *New York Times*, 23 February 2010.

⁴⁰ Nordland, "Afghan Warlord with Many Enemies."

⁴¹ For example, Haji Zahir owns a large amount of prime property in Jalalabad which he rents to international organisations. Both Haji Jamal and Haji Zahir are alleged to have been involved in a series of land grabs in southern Surkhrud, including the development of housing in Haji Qadir Minar. Haji Jamal is also known for preying on local businesses. Haji Zaman Ghamsharik's family is believed to have interests in the import of spare parts and vehicles from South Korea and Dubai, as

While the murder of Haji Zaman Ghamsharik did not lead to outbreak of violence between the Arsala family and that of Haji Zaman, it did herald new entrants into the political order and produced an alliance between Gul Aga Shirzai and both Haji Zaman's brother, Aman Khairi, and son, Jawed Zaman.

Appointed by Gul Aga Shirzai, Aman Khairi now leads the Nangarhar Tribal Unity Council. He has also been involved in a number of commissions at the behest of Gul Aga Shirzai, including attempts to resolve the land conflict between the Mohmandi and Alisherkhel divisions of the Shinwari tribe. Aman Khairi has also joined the National Front of Afghanistan, a national political party that includes: former Vice President Ahmad Zia Massoud; the founder of Jombesh, General Abdul Rashid Dostum; and, MP Mohammed Muhaqqiq (Kabul), leader of Hezb-e Wahdat.⁴² Following his return from France, Haji Zaman's son, Jawed Zaman, became a member of the Provincial Council, an ally of Gul Aga Shirzai, and an ardent critic of those looking to unseat Gul Aga Shirzai as governor.⁴³

Other allies of Gul Aga Shirzai in 2011 include people that opposed the return of the old *jihadi* political order. For instance, following the attempt to unseat the Governor in February 2011, tribal elders who were not part of the conspiracy led by the Arsala family, Hazrat Ali and Fraidoon Mohmand, sent a delegation to Kabul to request President Karzai keep the Governor in his post. This group were in part resentful over their exclusion from the original alliance to oust Gul Aga Shirzai, but also concerned about the potential return of a dominant clique of *jihadi* commanders to positions of power in the province. At the time, some of the elders who attended the meeting with President Karzai requesting for the Governor to stay on in Nangarhar, explained that their motives were not out of support for Gul Aga Shirzai but were in defiance of the Arsala family and their allies.⁴⁴

However, even this group is now showing signs of abandoning the Governor, and there are indications that the multiple alliances and business deals that Gul Aga Shirzai has entered into since moving to the province are further undermining his political base. In particular, the numerous land grabs that have taken place in the province, with either the Governor's implicit or explicit consent, are becoming an increasing source of tension in the province. The Governor's direct involvement in land acquisition and development, or at least his decision not to act against those who are seen as culpable, is an increasing source of resentment. For example, in April 2012, prominent Mohmandi elders, who had previously advocated retaining the Governor in 2011, publicly criticized Gul Aga Shirzai's alleged involvement in a land-grab in Rodat.⁴⁵ The land dispute between the Alisherkhel and Mohmandi in Achin has also created a fissure between the Governor and Malik Niaz of upper Achin. Niaz had been an important ally in the Shinwari tribe, facilitating the implementation of the poppy ban, and a protagonist in tribal efforts to exclude the Taliban from the Spinghar piedmont.

There are now clear signs that there is a limit to the amount and conflicting bargains that the Governor has made with elites in Kabul and in Nangarhar itself. Maintaining political order has become increasingly difficult over time. In part this is simply a result of the years that the Governor has been in office and the cumulative exposure the population and elites have had to agreements that are reneged upon, promises that are not met, and political alliances that are highly unstable. The Governor has also seen his authority challenged by a further round of provincial and parliamentary elections that have delivered government posts in Kabul and Jalalabad to the old *jihadi* commanders and their families. The insurgency has also gained ground in the southern districts, limiting the physical space in which the state can now operate (see Section 3.3), and serving as a visible reminder of the Governor's weakness.

well as the cross border trade in vehicle fuel. Aman Khairi is alleged to have taken over 1,000 plots (400 square metres, or 4 biswas, each) of land adjacent to Chemtala refugee camp.

⁴² Gran Hewad, "The New National Front: A Dark Horse Returns - with Three Riders" (Kabul: Afghanistan Analysts Network, 1 December 2011).

⁴³ Jawad, "Is the Bulldozer running out of Fuel?"

⁴⁴ Interview with a village elder in Kama, April 2011.

⁴⁵ Abasin Zaher, "Sherzai Accused of Grabbing State Land," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 2 April 2012.

Most importantly, time has revealed that Gul Aga Shirzai doesn't have the backing of Kabul, and appears only to be tolerated by the central government. This has made the Governor all the more vulnerable to the indigenous political elite in the province that believes it has a right to rule. With what is believed to be his closest ally, the United States military showing increasing signs of impatience with the Governor's performance and the increasing number of allegations of corruption against him,⁴⁶ as well as their withdrawal in 2014, the Governor is rapidly facing a scenario in which he will have few powerful allies left in the province. The substantial business interests he is alleged to have in construction and land development in Nangarhar, as well as his control over the Nangarhar Reconstruction Fund⁴⁷ – none of which he will be able to transfer to another province – make his removal from office all the more appealing to an indigenous political elite keen to regain its control over state power and the Governor's "commercial interests."

While it seems clear that Gul Aga Shirzai will eventually move on, it is far less apparent what kind of political settlement will follow his departure from office. The potential for a stable alliance around the Arsalas seems unlikely given the history and characteristics of the next generation of political leaders in the family. Once the Governor is removed, old enmities in the current alliance may well resurface, and disputes over the division of rent seem inevitable. It is also unclear what territory such an alliance would preside over given developments in the southern districts of Nangarhar and the rural population's growing resentment towards the Afghan government and its representatives amongst the rural elite. In order to explore the political and geographic limits of any future political deals in Nangarhar the next part of this section delves deeper into the rural areas from which the Nangarhari political elite draws its political support, and examines the bargains reached and breached between both the provincial and rural elites and those with rural communities.

3.2 Beyond the Politics of Personalities: An Analysis of the Changing Political and Economic Circumstances of Rural Constituents

Having experienced the loss of power in 1996 when the Taliban took Jalalabad, the current political elite knows only too well how quickly existing political settlements can collapse and new ones form, and how today's political allies can quickly become tomorrow's adversaries (and vice versa). However, the current fight for power in Nangarhar should not just be seen solely through the prism of the interests and bargains of the provincial political elite. This elite group is not autonomous and still derives part of its power from its capacity to draw political, and if necessary, military support, from its rural constituents.

Governor of Nangarhar, Gul Aga Shirzai, for example, although not from the province himself, who owes his official position to Kabul and the military and financial backing of the United States Government, has had considerable support from the rural population. This has been due to his reputation for delivering development assistance⁴⁸ and for the relationships he had developed with influential tribal elders, such as Malik Usman and Malik Niaz of the Shinwaris.

There are, therefore, tiers of "mini bargains" and conflicts, shaped by the interests of local elites and the rural population that intimately tie those in the outlying districts of rural Afghanistan to elite groups in both Jalalabad and Kabul. A failure to deliver on the interests of rural constituents by either local or provincial elites can lead to the withdrawal of support, if not direct opposition from what is typically an armed rural population (and also one that has historically drawn on the support of neighbouring countries if it needs to re-arm). The precarious position of members of an elite that often stands only as "first among equals" is made all the more difficult by the presence of political and military adversaries within the elite who are adept at capitalising on the failure of their rivals to respond to the interests of the rural population. Consequently, elite

⁴⁶ Nathan Hodge, "US Finds Graft by Favoured Afghan Leader," *Wall Street Journal*, 2 November 2012.

⁴⁷ Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors and State Building*.

⁴⁸ Mukhopadhyay, *Warlords, Strongman Governors and State Building*.

groups, be they in Jalalabad or in the more peripheral districts, need to look to their various rural constituents and be perceived as serving the population's interests if they are not to find themselves outmanoeuvred by an opponent and rejected by the very people they claim to represent.

The challenges of appearing to meet the demands of rural constituents are all the more problematic for elite groups in Nangarhar where there are multiple and often conflicting interests at play, and where the resources for largesse are largely derived from external agents, in some case donors and the military as well as from the centre in Kabul. There is of course also the presence of armed AGEs that elites cannot simply reject, particularly in the border districts of Nangarhar where there is heavy support for the kind of populist messages being proffered, including the support for opium production. Instead, members of the current rural elite, although tied to the state in Jalalabad, may need to find ways to accommodate AGEs if they are to minimise the risk of violence directed at themselves, and maintain their privileged position were there to be a change in the political order.

This complex web of interrelationship and bargaining process between provincial and local elites and the rural population is highly contextualised, a function of the history and political economy of specific space and territory. The rural population in some of this space will have better resource endowments than others, be less exposed to shocks and crises, and have greater opportunities for diversification of on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm income.

It is in this highly varied environment that the opium ban imposed by the Governor since the 2007-08 growing season plays out, affecting the economic position of different sections of the rural population, as well as the life cycles of political alliances. The second part of this section offers empirical evidence of this, drawing on fieldwork in the districts of Kama, Surkhrud, Shinwar, Achin, and Khogiani. It divides these areas into the "governed people" of the valley plains and the "self-governing people" of the hills, offering a brief political history of the areas before documenting the livelihood trajectories of the population during the 2011-12 growing season.⁴⁹

The history of the valley plains

The districts of Kama and Surkhrud offer an example of the areas in Nangarhar that have traditionally had strong bonds with those holding state power in Jalalabad, Kabul, and Peshawar. Located in the irrigated plains and close to the provincial centre and the arterial road that runs from Torkham to Kabul, these are areas that have been encapsulated by the state, and belong to what Ahmed Akbar⁵⁰ referred to as the *qalang* type Pashtun areas, where agricultural surplus have both provided a tax base for the Afghan state and supported the development of landed "khans."

Positioned in the Kabul River basin, in the districts of Kama, Goshta, and Lalpura, the Mohmandi tribe in particular has been known for its "distinct hereditary leaders," who according to William Rudolph Henry Merk⁵¹ have had "intimate relations with the Kabul government." Christine Noelle⁵² suggests that by the 19th century a tribal aristocracy had become entrenched in the Mohmand tribe, shaped by court patronage and with privileged access to economic resources that the ruling elite brought to specific Mohmandi families. Successive Afghan *amirs* appear to have favoured the Mohmand elite due to the tribe's strategic location and its role as guardians of the Khyber Pass, straddling both sides of the border following the Durand agreement. Such was the importance of the Mohmand to Kabul that even Abdul Rahman Khan offered concessions to one of their most important leaders, the Khan of Lalpur, at a time when most tribes were being subjugated.⁵³

⁴⁹ Scott, *Art of Not Being Governed*.

⁵⁰ Akbar Ahmed, *Social and Economic Change in the Tribal Areas* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1977), 21.

⁵¹ William Rudolph Henry Merk, *The Mohmands* (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1984), 17.

⁵² Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth Century Afghanistan: The reign of Amir Dost Muhammed Khan, 1826-1863* (Curzon: Richmond, 1997), 224.

⁵³ Hasan Kakar, *Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Political Developments, 1880-1896* (Lahore: Punjab Educational Press, 1971).

The alignment of the interests of the Mohmand leadership and the state have been such that respective governors in Jalalabad, and on occasion the British, have also called upon the Mohmandi to punish recalcitrant tribes, like the Shinwaris when they acted against state interests.⁵⁴ The enduring and almost symbiotic nature of the relationship between the Afghan state and the Mohmandi tribal elite also led to the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in Afghanistan finding some of its first allies amongst the Mohmand tribe⁵⁵ when it began a policy of rapprochement in 1981.⁵⁶

The same social hierarchy and alliance between the landed elite and the state can also be observed in the district of Surkhrud to the southwest of the city of Jalalabad where the Jabbarkhel division of the Ahmedzai tribe dominates. The adopted home of the Arsala family, a *khan khel* (chiefly clan) with historical links to the Afghan state. Large tracts of land in the district of Surkhrud are rented out to tenant farmers and sharecroppers from other areas.⁵⁷ The Arsala family view the district as their domain, perhaps best highlighted by the fact that in both the 1994-95⁵⁸ and 2002-03⁵⁹ growing seasons, the district was one of the primary targets for the counter-narcotics efforts of Haji Qadir during his leadership of the province, initially as Chair of the Eastern Council and then as Governor in the first year of the Karzai administration.

There is evidence of the enduring bond between those with state power in Jalalabad and Kabul and the rural elite in the districts of Kama and Surkhrud. Kama, for example, continues to be a major recipient of development aid and is one of the few areas in the province where farmers will consistently report increased project activity. There has also been a burgeoning of cross-border trade in smuggled goods passing through Kama from Gandau in the neighbouring district of Goshta, which continued unabated in full sight of the authorities in Jalalabad until conflict in the Tribal areas of Pakistan limited the flow of goods along this route. Evidence of the trade in smuggled livestock can be seen in the form of holding pens near the district centre, where cattle are held after crossing over from Pakistan before being trucked to Jalalabad and then to Kabul.

In the district of Surkhrud the state appears to have either allowed land grabs by the provincial elite, or recognised that there was little it could do. For example, in 2009, Haji Jamal is alleged to have purchased land south of Kheyraabad and built a township, "Haji Qadir Mina," selling 4 *biswa* plots (the equivalent of 400 square metres) for 100,000-200,000 PR (see Figures 3, 4, and 5). To the east, it is claimed that further desert land has been taken by Haji Zahir and his cousin Sar Malim Akhtar. The brother of Haji Zaman Ghamsharik, Aman Khairi, is also alleged to have captured more than 1,000 plots of land adjacent to Chemtala camp on the Surkhrud- Khogiani

⁵⁴ According to Merk, it is a Mohmandi proverb that states "no kindness will tame a snake, scorpion, or Shinwari." See Merk, *The Mohmands*.

⁵⁵ Antonio Giustozzi lists the defection of Firdaus Khan Mohmand, an important leader in Hezb-e Islami in Nangarhar as a notable example of defections amongst the Mohmandi political elite. See Antonio Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan, 1978 - 1992* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2000), 150.

⁵⁶ Anthony Hyman, *Afghanistan under Soviet Domination, 1964-81* (New York: St Martins Press, 1982); Olivier Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge Middle East Library, 1990); Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society*.

⁵⁷ Haji Qadir's cousin, Sar Malim Akhtar is a landlord with a large amount of land in both lower and upper Surkhrud. It is also claimed that the Arsala family has given property in Surkhrud to the current Governor Gul Aga Shirzai.

⁵⁸ It is widely believed that Haji Qadir's eradication campaign in 1995 led to a significant fall in the amount of opium harvested, with UNODC reporting a fall of 50 percent between 1994 and 1995. See UNODC, "Afghanistan Annual Opium Poppy Survey" (Islamabad: UNODC, 1995), 25. The full scale of the reduction however is unknown. Methodological changes in the Survey and problems of implementation during both years mean that the 1994 and 1995 surveys are not comparable. In Surkhrud, cultivation is reported to have fallen from 3,290 ha in 1994 to 106 ha in 1995, while in Bati Kot cultivation is alleged to have fallen by over 90 percent from 5,586 ha to 529 ha over the same period. This, along with other examples, raised questions about the integrity of the 1994 data.

⁵⁹ The 2001-02 growing season was the first year in which UNODC used remote sensing to estimate the level of opium poppy cultivation across much of Afghanistan. The compensated eradication campaign in Surkhrud in 2001-02 is widely believed to have led to a dramatic fall in cultivation. UNODC report a reduction from 1,440 ha in 2001 to 141 ha in 2003. See, UNODC/CND, "Afghanistan Annual Opium Poppy Survey" (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, 2003), 87. There were, however, significant numbers of complaints from local farmers with regard to corruption associated with the compensated eradication programme with a considerable number of accusations levelled at Haji Zahir. See, UNODC/CND, "Strategic Study No. 9: Opium poppy cultivation in a changing policy environment. Farmer's Intentions for the 2002/03 growing season" (Final Report, UNODC, Kabul, February 2003), 12.

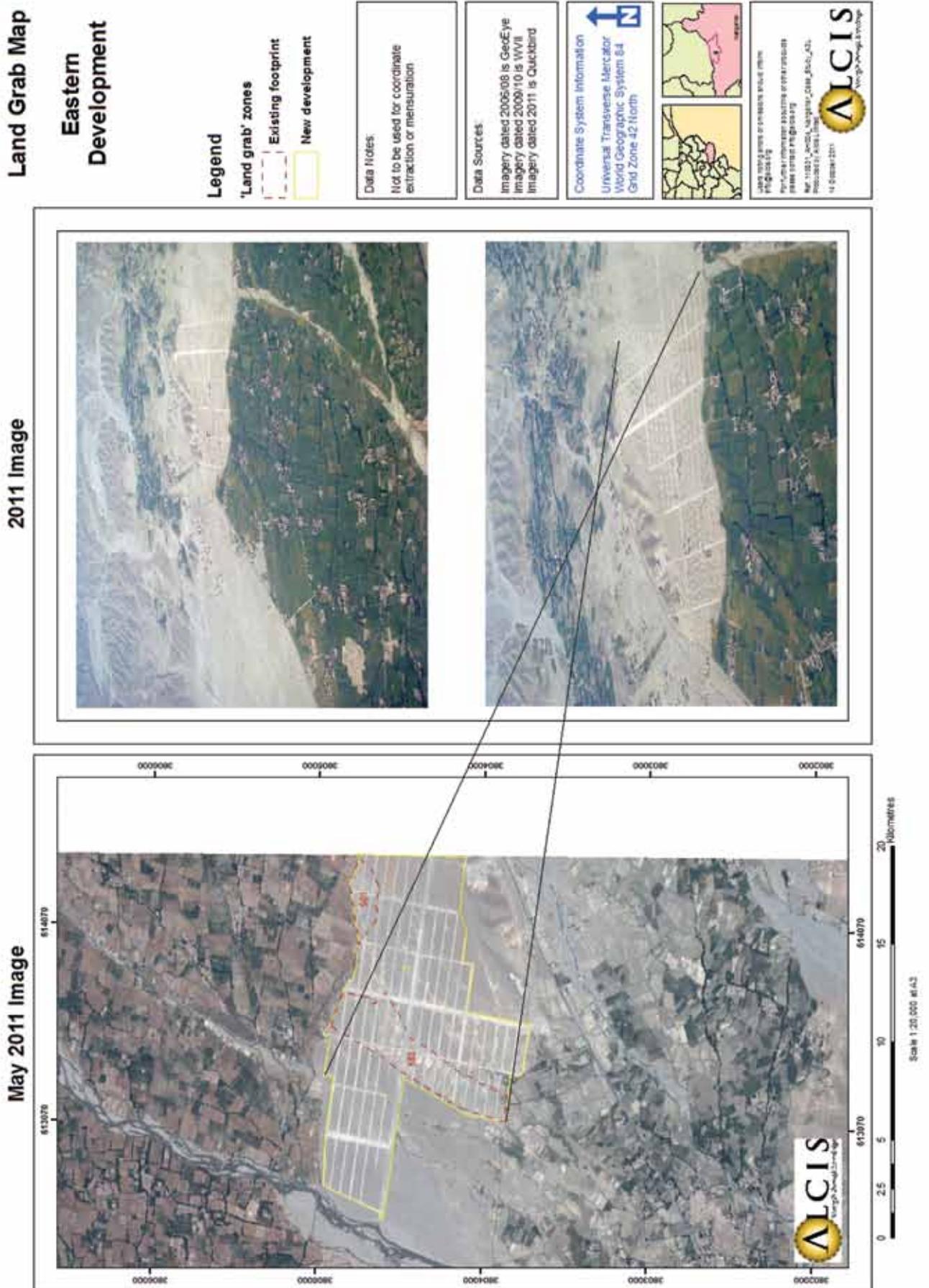
border. Gul Aga Shirzai also has a house in Surkhrud which is alleged to have been given to him by the Arsala family.

The political reality in Surkhrud and Kama is such that the interests of those in state power and the rural elite are often synonymous, so much so that the landed elite from the districts have often occupied government posts in Jalalabad. Moreover, the hierarchical social structure in these areas has led to a more compliant population, fearful of both state coercion and the potential for the landed elite to restrict their access to patronage and resources. The state's encapsulation of these areas has allowed it to subjugate the population when required, including in its efforts to ban opium poppy.

Figure 3: Haji Qadir Mina



Figure 5: Land grab in Surkhrud District, Nangarhar Province (2011)



An area of economic surplus

The Kabul River basin in Nangarhar is not just “state space” because the terrain makes it easier to dominate and because it has effective elites to facilitate the process of encapsulation, but because there is also an economic benefit from the agricultural surplus and the trade that is carried out in the area. These provide a tax base that has proven economically rewarding to the political elite in Nangarhar and Kabul. It is also clear that the economic activity in the area has led to improvements in income and well-being in these districts despite the loss of opium poppy.

Located in the Kabul River basin, much of the land in both Surkhrud and Kama is well irrigated and can obtain two to three crops per year. Over the last four years there has been a dramatic shift in cropping patterns, a move towards much greater levels of crop diversification compared to the replacement of opium poppy with single crops, such as green bean (in Kama) and onion (in Surkhrud) in the initial year of the ban on opium poppy cultivation in the province. Intercropping and off-season vegetable production have also become a more common phenomena. Local non-farm income opportunities have also increased, as have wage labour opportunities in Jalalabad.

In both districts the loss of opium poppy has not been compounded by any other covariate shocks. Improvements to prevent flooding from the river in upper Surkhrud, and work on the intake in Kama, have improved access to irrigation in areas that were previously vulnerable to drought. The security situation in both districts is also more permissive than any other districts in the province, facilitating the trade in vegetable production and the provision of development assistance to the area.⁶⁰ Of course Individual households experience idiosyncratic shocks usually due to the death of a family member or a protracted illness, the costs of which impose significant hardship on most rural households. However, the availability of on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm income opportunities in the area, and in nearby Jalalabad, make it easier for households to manage these shocks without recourse to the sale of long term productive assets or the mortgaging or sale of land.

In fact, across Kama rents have increased from around 80 to 100 seer per *jerib*,⁶¹ inflated by an increase in demand for land in the area.⁶² Locally this increase in rent is seen as a mark of growing economic opportunities in the area.⁶³ Farmers in the district increasingly refer to the income opportunities that vegetable production has brought to those living in the area.⁶⁴ Those that have migrated from other districts to Kama and Surkhrud also reflect on the increased income opportunities available to them compared to their point of origin, as well as the lower levels of violence and conflict that they are subjected to in Kama.⁶⁵

The Table 1 in the following page outlines the value of crops harvested in 2007-10 and in more recent years.

⁶⁰ The only place that appeared to have security problems was Bala Bagh in Surkhrud. Located alongside the Tor Ghar mountains, farmers reported Taliban incursions into the area.

⁶¹ The equivalent of between 2.8 and 3.5 metric tons per ha.

⁶² This is for two seasons, with 50 percent of the payment to be made in wheat and 50 percent in maize or rice.

⁶³ Locally there are complaints that there is a growing influx of farmers looking to lease land from other districts in Nangarhar and from the neighbouring province of Kunar. Around Mizakhel in Upper Kama there are also reports of an estimated 200 Gujar families having bought land in the desert, inflating the price of rented land. In Upper Kama areas such as Kama Khas, Sray, and Dogay, farmers complain that landlords will not give land to a farmer as a tenant or sharecropper without first receiving a cash payment.

⁶⁴ Farmers in Kama have very positive feedback: “My hand is open in the summer,” says an owner-cultivator, in the village of Sray in Kama, referring to the fact that he has money to spend; “I always have yoghurt and milk, I have good food, and I can buy meat and fruit for guests,” says a tenant - farmer, 7 *jeribs*, Lower Mizakhel, Kama District.

⁶⁵ In Deha Ghazi, a tenant recalled, “In Khogiani there is nothing but killing and explosions. But here I can go to the farm each day and my children can sleep safe at night. I hope that the situation improves more and I will find some land to build a house.”

Table 1: Crops harvested in the districts of Surkhrud and Kama in Nangarhar Province

Crop	Rate (Pakistani Rupees/ <i>jerib</i>)
Common crops between 2007 - 2010	
Onion	25,000 - 60,000 PR
Green bean	60,000 - 120,000 PR
Okra	60,000 - 100,000 PR
Tomato	48,000 - 90,000 PR
New crops supplementing the common ones of 2007 - 2010	
Fresh onion	65,000 -100,000 PR
<i>Torayhee</i> (Zucchini)	50,000 PR
<i>Kerala</i> (Bitter Gourd)	40,000 PR
Cucumber	80,000 PR
Garlic	750,000 PR ¹
<i>Gandana</i> (Leek)	250,000 -300,000 PR
Taro	75,000 - 100,000 PR
Sugar cane	35,000 -70,000 PR
Water melon	50,000 PR
Cabbage	90,000 - 100,000 PR
Pea	60,000 PR
Lettuce	80,000 - 100,000 PR
Cauliflower	40,000 - 100,000 PR
Radish	46,000 PR
Mint	50,000 PR

¹ In upper Kama respondents reported yields of garlic of around 300-400 seer per bag. They claimed that rather than selling their garlic locally they had transported it to Karachi where this particular variety was cooked with fish. In Karachi, they claim to have sold the garlic for 2,500 PR per bag. The transport and transaction costs of transporting the garlic from Kama to Karachi via Torkham were 60,000 PR.

A good example of crop diversification can be seen with a respondent in Surkhrud who has been involved in this study since 2005. The farmer was known for many years to repeatedly cultivate a combination of wheat and onion on his land in the fall, as well as some maize in the summer (but only during the years when there was sufficient irrigation). In the 2011-12 growing season this individual had grown fresh onion and coriander (sold for 70,000 PR/*jerib*), spinach (7,500 PR/*jerib*), wheat (not harvested), onion (not harvested), and had planted tomato and marrow at the time of interview in April 2012. Due to flood protection in the river bed in upper Surkhrud, he also anticipated cultivating paddy rice in the summer where he had not been able to do so in the past. Other such examples can be seen across both districts and further down the Kabul River valley in Jani Khel in Bati Kot and in lower Shinwar.⁶⁶

It is however notable that despite the expansion in horticultural production, wheat and maize production persists in both districts with some half of household land dedicated to wheat during the winter season and one-third of land allocated to maize during the summer. The persistence of wheat and maize cultivation can in part be explained as a consequence of the nature of rental payments in both districts and a desire to minimise the risk associated with not being able to meet these costs, as well as a minimum of household food requirements through direct entitlement. Tenant-farmers remain nervous about the impact of rising wheat prices and/or a fall in the price of vegetable crops, and about not being able to meet their rental payments if they fail to cultivate sufficient wheat during the winter months.

⁶⁶ For instance, in Jani Khel, another long term respondent who cultivated wheat and opium poppy in the winter of 2007, produced cucumber (50,000 PR), sugar cane (300,000 PR), okra (10,000 PR), squash (consumed), bean (10,000 PR), onion (60,000 PR), clover (intercropped with apricot), and wheat (140 PR/seer) in 2011. He had diversified even further in the 2011-12 growing season.

Agricultural incomes in the districts of Kama and Surkhrud are further supplemented by the sale of livestock and their by-products. Livestock sales, locally or through cross border smuggling, earned farmers between 70,000 - 100,000 PR per year. The sale of yogurt, cheese, and milk in Jalalabad City also pays dividends. Products are bought at the farm gate by traders or can be sold locally in the bazaar. In Kama, one farmer reported selling milk from his three cows in the bazaar in Sray and earning 300-400 PR every day for seven months of a year. This was in addition to producing sufficient milk for his family to consume. In Kama and Surkhrud, farmers could earn 2,000-2,500 PR a week in the spring of 2012 processing milk from the same number of cows and selling it as cheese. In both districts farmers reported that there had been assistance from NGOs to support the handling, processing, and sale of dairy products.

There are also growing local non-farm income opportunities in Kama that have mitigated the need for family members to permanently join the ANSF, as is common in the more mountainous districts of southern Nangarhar. Local development projects in particular have provided important sources of income in the District although there has also been a growth in employment in the private sector where workers are paid 300 - 400 PR per day for unskilled labour, and up to 800 PR per day for skilled work. Around Sultanpur and Zalmabad in Surkhrud, farmers report payments of 400 PR per day for the harvest of vegetable crops such as okra.

Access to the labour market in Jalalabad is also far easier from Kama and Surkhrud due to proximity, improved roads, and reduced travel times. Male family members can work in the city of Jalalabad and return to their families at night, thus conforming to cultural and personal preferences, and minimising accommodation costs.⁶⁷ Moreover, wage labour rates in Jalalabad and Kabul continued to rise between 2011 and 2012, increasing from 400 - 450 PR a day to 500 PR per day for unskilled work and from around 900 - 1,000 PR to 1,100 - 1,300 PR per day for skilled work, such as masonry.

In sum, the districts of Kama and Surkhrud are favoured. They benefit from their strategic position along the Kabul River basin and in straddling the transit route to Peshawar and Pakistan. This, combined with the economic potential of the area, and the clear benefits the rural population has derived from improved access to public goods over the last decade, has helped establish a sense of the state and the population's interest aligning. This, in effect, strengthened the government's position in the Kabul River valley.

3.3 Managing “Non-State Space” in Nangarhar

The southern districts of Nangarhar stand in stark contrast to the irrigated plains of Kama and Surkhrud in the Kabul River valley. Historically the State failed to concentrate the means of violence in the southern districts of Nangarhar, and has only been able to make its presence felt intermittently. Even when the Afghan state benefited from the military and financial backing of foreign powers, such as the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and, following the collapse of the Taliban regime, the United States, it still only succeeded in obtaining the temporary acquiescence of the population in the Spinghar Piedmont, bordering Pakistan.

This border area is dominated by the Shinwari and Khogiani tribes, each of which is divided into a number of sub-tribes known as *khels*. Loya, or Greater, Shinwar, covers the five administrative districts of Achin, Deh Bala, Dur Baba, Nazian, and Shinwar (also known as Ghani Khel).⁶⁸ With a population that spans a contiguous area from the Pakistan border in the South to the main arterial road between Torkham and Kabul in the North, the Shinwari tribe has been a dominant force in provincial politics for almost four centuries and has a long history of resisting state interference, including in leading the rebellion against Amanullah in 1928.

⁶⁷ As one labourer from Dawlat Shah in Jalalabad in Laghman Province explained, “If we had work opportunities in our own district we would never leave the area. But we have no work so this is our obligation.”

⁶⁸ In 2008 Achin was subsequently subdivided into the districts of Achin and Spinghar with both the administrative centres remaining in Kahi.

The Khogiani tribe has a traditional enmity with the Shinwaris, exacerbated by British and successive Afghan leaders drawing on tribal militias, or levies to quell rebellious rival tribes.⁶⁹ In the southwest of Nangarhar, bordering Pakistan, in the districts of Pachir Wa Agam, Sherzad, and Khogiani, the Khogiani tribe has also opposed state intrusion in their affairs. In the 20th century the Khogiani tribe produced one of the most prominent anti-Soviet leaders, Mawlawi Mohammed Younis Khaled (1919 - 2006), leader of the Khaled faction of Hezb-e Islami (HIK).⁷⁰ Following the death of his father (Younis Khaled in 2006), Anwar al Haq Mujahid, became a prominent figure in the insurgency against the Karzai government. He formed the Tora Bora Military Front from elements of HIK, and aligned its members with the Taliban insurgency.

Both the Shinwari and Khogiani tribes are what Scott refers to as “the self-governing peoples” on the periphery of the state.⁷¹ Akbar would define them as *nang* Pashtuns, those who live with honour, free from the domination of others, and contrast them with the *qalang* Pashtuns of the irrigated valleys, in areas such as Kama and Surkhrud, who have been subjugated by the state and historically been subject to taxation.⁷² The Shinwari and Khogiani tribes inhabit more hostile terrain, where arable land is scarce and agricultural surpluses are limited.⁷³ Both tribes have mounted a number of armed rebellions against state interference and have on occasions fled to even more remote territory to prevent state capture.⁷⁴

As with Pashtun groups in the lower areas, the political order amongst the Shinwari and Khogiani tribes is one of segmentary allegiance based on multiple and dynamic relational bonds.⁷⁵ However, as opposed to the Mohmandi and Ahmedzai tribes in the Kabul River basin, a permanent tribal elite has not emerged from the Shinwari and Khogiani tribes.

While there are tribal elders⁷⁶ with whom the state can engage and construct a dialogue, the highly developed sense of equality amongst the tribes in the more mountainous, remote areas means that the support that these elites receive from their rural constituents is conditional, localised, and largely derived from a capacity to extract patronage from the central authorities, whilst at the same time resisting outside interference - especially policies that do not conform with local values.⁷⁷ Intra-tribal rivalries, particularly between lineages, and a multiplicity of small landowners further constrains the development of a stable political leadership with which the state might foster more permanent bonds.⁷⁸

⁶⁹ For example, Abdul Rahman Khan promised to give the land of the Shinwaris to the Khogianis in return for their assistance in the campaign to subjugate the Shinwari tribe in the 1880s. For more, see Hasan Kakar, *A Study in Internal Political Developments*, 95; Hasan Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Andal-Rahman Khan* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 111.

⁷⁰ For background on Khaled, see Gilles Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending: Afghanistan, 1979 to the Present* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2005), 152 n23.

⁷¹ Scott, *Art of not being Governed*.

⁷² Akbar, *Social and Economic Change*, 20.

⁷³ Tom Barfield, “The Political Implications of Pashtun Tribal Organisation for War and Peace”, (Paper presented at Monterrey CA, 22 September 2000), 7.

⁷⁴ Vartan Gregorian, *The Emergence of Modern Afghanistan: Politics of Reform and Modernization, 1880-1946* (California: Stanford University Press, 1969), 132; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 48; Dorronsoro, *Revolution Unending*, 42; Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society*, 90; Hasan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet invasion and the Afghan response, 1979 -1982* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 177 - 178; Kakar, *Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Political Developments*, 96.

⁷⁵ Magnus Marsden and Benjamin Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011); Akbar, *Social and Economic Change*, 14; Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan- Afghanistan Frontier” in *International Security* 32, no 4. (Spring 2008), 41-77.

⁷⁶ Reference to fragile and consensual nature of leadership amongst Pashtun communities is made in Akbar, *Social and Economic Change*; Johnson and Mason write, “The khan of a clan, typically an old patriarch who has acquired a combination of land, wealth, battle honours, wives and offspring is only primus inter pares. Nor can a malik, who carries considerable weight in council and village affairs but is essentially a democratically selected spokesman for the clan, a position that in some cases is hereditary. Pashtun tribal society is thus inherently resistant to externally or internally imposed hierarchical order as a fundamental value.” See Johnson and Mason, “No Sign until the Burst of Fire,” 61.

⁷⁷ Barfield, “Political Implications of Pashtun Tribal Organisation”.

⁷⁸ Jonathan Goodhand and Christopher Cramer, “Try Again, Fail Again, Fail Better. War, the State and the Post Conflict Challenge in Afghanistan,” in *Development and Change* 33, no 5(2002): 885 -909; Roy, *Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan*, 59.

Given the challenges of the physical and the political terrain and the absence of any obvious resources for rent extraction, the Afghan state, in both its independent and colonial form, has seen little financial benefit in looking to conquer the areas inhabited by the Shinwari and Khogiani tribes. It has instead sought to better manage the threat that these populations might present to the interests of the State and what Scott refers to as the “state-governed peoples” in the valleys.⁷⁹

The tribal population in these mountainous border districts has often been allowed to avoid state taxes, conscription, and have succeeded in resisting the interference of the provincial authorities in Jalalabad.⁸⁰ In fact, rather than pay taxes to the central state, like those in the lower districts of Nangarhar located in Kabul River basin, the tribal elite in the southern districts of Nangarhar typically received allowances⁸¹ during much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, they were granted the authority to impose levies on those transiting through their territories.⁸²

The state has also accepted that it has not been in a position to regulate individual and economic behaviour in these areas.⁸³ The smuggling of goods has been a mainstay of the economies of these border areas.

The state has had little choice but to accept the cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis. Moreover, state access to these areas has more often than not been negotiated. When order has broken down, the state has mounted punitive raids against the population in the southern districts of Nangarhar.⁸⁴ However, once a demonstration of violence has been made, the state has usually retreated back to the valleys and rarely sought to occupy these peripheral areas.

The reign of Abdul Rahman Khan (1880-1901) is perhaps one of the only periods in Afghan history in which the state sought to govern the more remote upper valleys of Nangarhar. However, even here Abdul Rahman Khan achieved dominance across the territory only through brutal suppression of the tribes which often proved short-lived.⁸⁵ While Abdul Rahman Khan is credited with establishing the “first thoroughly centralised regime” and eliminating tribal resistance across Afghanistan by the end of his reign in 1901, the subjugation of the tribes in the southern districts of Nangarhar was hard won.⁸⁶ It was, after all, only in 1892, after a ten year campaign, that the Shinwari tribe⁸⁷ was finally subdued by Adul Rahman Khan - and even then the “Iron Amir” found his rule of the territory challenged by Mulla Haddah until 1897.⁸⁸

It is also important to differentiate between the different subdivisions within the Shinwari tribe, the geographical terrain they inhabited and the degree of autonomy they maintained during this period. For example, in his description of the campaign against the Shinwaris, Kakar differentiates between the sub-groups within the tribe: the Sangu Khel, the Ali Sher Khel, the Sipah, and the

⁷⁹ Scott, *Art of not being Governed*; Marsden and Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier*, 28.

⁸⁰ Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 172, 294; Barfield, “Political Implications of Pashtun Tribal Organisation”.

⁸¹ Kakar reports, “The Shinwaris not only received different kinds of allowances such as malikana (for each headman of the village) and tankwah-i-wilayati (for the whole tribe) amounting to 30,000 Afs a year, but they were also exempt from paying revenue. Only the Mandozai section, who were less turbulent than the others, paid revenue but, like others, they also received allowances. The Shinwaris also received allowances for keeping the roads open.” For more, see Kakar, *Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Political Developments*, 93-94.

⁸² Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 32; Noelle, *State and Tribe*, 171-174; Priestly, *Afghanistan and its Inhabitants*, 203-204; Benjamin D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 29.

⁸³ Magnus Marsden and Benjamin Hopkins, *Fragments of the Afghan Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 216.

⁸⁴ Noelle, *State and Tribe*.

⁸⁵ For the most detailed account of Abdul Rahman Khan’s brutal campaign against the Shinwaris, see Kakar, *Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Political Developments*, 93-101.

⁸⁶ Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 133-134.

⁸⁷ Refer to Kakar, *Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Political Developments*, 88-100 for a description of the campaign against the Shinwaris.

⁸⁸ David Edwards, *Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines on the Afghan Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 64; Senzil Nawid, “The State, the Clergy, and British Imperial Policy in Afghanistan during the 19th and Early 20th Centuries,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 4 (Nov 1997): 581 - 605, 592; Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan*; Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 132; Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet invasion*, xxii.

Mandozai.⁸⁹ The Sangu Khels are identified as the most resistant to any rapprochement with Abdul Rahman Khan even after the other sub-tribes capitulated to the Amir. The Sangu Khel themselves subsequently divided in 1889, where “those who lived in the lower parts of the valleys, north of the Nazian glen accepted terms, while those in the upper parts still asserted their independence.”⁹⁰ For three more years this group within the Sangu Khel mounted raids against Abdul Rahman Khan's government despite repeated attacks that forced them further into the mountains of Spin Ghar.

During the twentieth century, the Shinwari and Khogiani tribes progressively loosened their grip of Abdul Rahman Khan's successors and exposed the State's inability to impose its policies across their tribal territories. With the end of British subsidy following full independence, it became harder for the Afghan state to finance its armed forces. Subsequently, in 1928, it was the tax rises that proved calamitous for Amir Amanullah Khan, when a Shinwari rebellion over taxes, joined by the Khogianis, led to the fall of the regime.⁹¹

Since then, successive regimes have recognised the limits of their coercive power in these upper areas. According to Marsden, as early as 1981 the PDPA was seeking to engage with tribal leaders in these areas and offer them greater autonomy.⁹² Deals were reached with parts of the Shinwari tribe that served to fracture their resistance to the communist government but ultimately led to the PDPA having little control over the southern districts of Nangarhar.

As with its predecessors, even the Taliban regime, despite all claims of having centralised the means of violence, had an uneasy relationship with the population in these peripheral border districts. Visits to the area during the Taliban regime revealed that state presence was limited to a small number of militia located in the district administrator's office. The population argued that it had not been disarmed per se but had consented to refrain from carrying their weapons in public as long as order was maintained.

The Taliban prohibition on opium was illustrative of the kind of negotiated settlements that the leadership had to enter into in these areas. Earlier attempts by Mullah Omar to impose a one-third reduction in opium poppy cultivation in the 1999-2000 growing season were ignored in Nangarhar. While there was compliance with the Taliban ban in the 2000-01 growing season, there were allegations that tribal elders from the Shinwari tribe had received a direct payment of \$150,000 from the Taliban to comply with the ban. The Shinwari were also given preferential access to the Donors Assessment Mission⁹³ to make direct appeals for development assistance.⁹⁴ Even during this mission by Western donor nations to investigate the prohibition, the Taliban leadership in the east had to negotiate safe passage for the mission to visit the Mohmand and Pekhar valleys in Achin District, an area where the mix of civil disobedience in protest against the ban, the presence of traders and drug processing facilities, and reports of the inflow of weapons, raised major concerns for the Taliban given the seniority of some of the diplomats in the Donors Assessment Mission.

After the fall of the Taliban, Haji Din Mohammed failed to deliver an opium ban in the upper parts of Khogiani and Shinwar during the 2004-05 growing season. These areas increased levels of cultivation the following year when the ban continued to be effectively enforced in the lower

⁸⁹ Kakar, *Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Political Developments*, 88-100.

⁹⁰ Kakar, *Afghanistan: A Study in Internal Political Developments*, 99.

⁹¹ David Edwards, *Before the Taliban: Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Gregorian, *Emergence of Modern Afghanistan*, 31, 264; Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 87.

⁹² Peter Marsden, *Afghanistan: Aid, Armies and Empires*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 52; Edwards, *Heroes of the Ages*.

⁹³ The Donors Assessment Mission consisted of representatives from the governments of Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. This mission was facilitated by the United Nations Drug Control Programme, later to become the United Nations Office on Drug Control, and was tasked to assess the extent of the reduction in opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan in the 2000-01 growing season, the reasons for the reduction, and the likely sustainability. The author was a member of the Donors Assessment Mission, hired by the government of the United Kingdom.

⁹⁴ Donor Assessment Mission to Afghanistan, “The impact of the Taliban prohibition on opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan” (Donors Mission, April 23-May 4 2001), 6.

parts of the province of Nangarhar. In fact it was only with the increase in the presence of US military assets in the southern districts of Nangarhar in 2007, and with Governor Gul Aga Shirzai's success in conflating the counter-insurgency efforts and counter-narcotics in the minds of the population, that a ban could effectively be imposed in these areas in the 2007-08 growing season. Even then, promises of development assistance were made to communities along with threats for non-compliance.⁹⁵ Moreover, as seen in subsequent growing seasons, this ban has not endured in the southern districts in the wake of a growing insurgency and the breakdown in the political settlement between the Governor, the rural elite, and the local population.⁹⁶

Pulling back the curtain on state policies in the southern districts

Recent fieldwork highlights that elements of the Achin population are once again resisting government interference. The narrative of civilian casualties and foreign occupation form a backdrop to a resistance that is driven by the Sepai tribes' resentment over what they see as the provincial government's mishandling of a violent land dispute, and the cumulative effect of the ban on opium, imposed since the 2007-08 growing season.

Those elements within the rural elite that have acted as principal interlocutors with the state and have supported the government's imposition of the opium ban, as well as leading both the land grab in the desert north of Sra Kala and the subsequent negotiations with the government, now find their position weakened within the tribe. Rivals amongst the rural elite have taken advantage of the growing unpopularity of elders such as Malik Usman (Haiderkhel) and Malik Niaz (Rahimdakhel). Moreover, the state now finds itself dealing with its chosen interlocutors who are increasingly seen as unrepresentative and whose relationship with the state has undermined their support from the rural population. In the eyes of the population, the state's pursuit of what is seen as the foreign-led objective of eliminating opium production has served to further undermine its legitimacy, and that of the tribal elite that support it.

In Khogiani, resistance to the government is becoming more deeply entrenched, moving further north to the lower parts of the district beyond the district centre in Kargha. The enmity and subsequent death of many of the Khogiani rural elite have left the Governor and the central state with no influential actors in the area who can marshal the rural population. The eradication campaign of 2012 has been met with greater levels of violence than has been seen in Nangarhar for some years; a total of 48 dead, of which 45 were killed in the district of Khogiani alone. Indicative of the state's diminishing coercive power in Nangarhar, the 2012 eradication campaign did not attempt to destroy the opium crop in the upper valleys of Khogiani, or in Sherzad, despite increasing levels of cultivation.

As this research demonstrates, breakdown in the political settlement between the rural population, and the local and provincial elite should not be seen solely in the context of a reaction to the violent outcome of the land dispute in Achin and a growing resentment towards the state's coercive policies on opium production in the Spinghar piedmont. The return to opium poppy cultivation is not just an act of political defiance by a disgruntled population, indeed there is a significant economic component to the growing unrest in these areas.

The reality is that the majority of households in Achin and Khogiani do not have a viable alternative to opium production and have seen a steady fall in their quality of life due to the imposition of a ban. While enlistment in the ANSF has offered some respite for many families, the production of relatively high value crops such as opium poppy and cannabis can support rural households meet their basic needs and potentially accumulate assets so that they can better manage risk. The loss of income and the depletion of assets that has been associated with the cumulative impact of the opium ban have significantly undermined support for the state and those involved in the implementation of the prohibition.

⁹⁵ David Mansfield, "Resurgence and reductions: Explanations for changing levels of opium poppy cultivation in Nangarhar and Ghor in 2005-2007" (Report for AREU's Applied Thematic Research into Water Management, Livestock and the Opium Economy, May 2008).

⁹⁶ David Mansfield, "Between a rock and a hard place: Counternarcotics efforts and their effects in the 2011-12 growing season Kabul" (Kabul: AREU, 2011).

As such, the current administration, pressed by international military forces, has repeated the mistakes of so many of its predecessors. It has over-extended its reach into the political and economic domains of what are traditionally independent tribal groups that have a history of resisting encapsulation. Moreover, it has drawn on the coercive power of foreign military forces to firstly impose a ban on opium poppy, and secondly to counter an attack by tribesmen over a local land dispute. As with past encounters in these areas, the state now faces resistance and the growing threat of being pushed back into the Kabul River basin where it has a longer history of domination.

Evicting the State from Achin: The Shinwari land dispute

The land dispute between the Sepai and the Alisherkhel presents an ongoing challenge for the central and provincial governments. What initially began as a conflict between two subdivisions of the Shinwari tribe has now drawn in political figures from across the province and Kabul. It led to delegations to and from the President and culminated in a firefight with ISAF forces in October 2011 resulting in the death of a further 18 Mohmandi tribesmen⁹⁷ as well as 60 more being injured.

While foreign forces have been involved in the dispute, possibly in arming the main protagonists, the Sepai, in October 2009 and then, subsequently, during the violent clashes in October 2011, the local population typically blames the provincial government and the tribal elite for the conflict. It is interesting to note that at one level the state is seen as having failed to act as an independent arbiter in the dispute, with the Governor in particular being accused of favouring one side (the Sepai) then another (the Alisherkhel) at different stages in the conflict. Yet, paradoxically, it is also possible to hear criticisms of the provincial government for becoming too involved in a conflict which is seen as a “tribal matter.”

Consistent with both narratives is the prevailing view amongst the rural population that the provincial administration, politicians, and the rural elite have involved themselves in the dispute, even provoked it at different stages in the process, in order to serve their own individual political agendas. The Sepai in particular are under the impression that it is they who incurred the physical, economic, and political costs of the land dispute at a time when the tribal elite were seeking their own economic and political advantage through their relationship with the government. As this section will show, this position has ultimately undermined rural support for both the state and parts of the tribal elite, and along with the impact of the opium ban, provided an entry point for AGEs in what was once a bastion of support for the Karzai government in the province of Nangarhar.

The cause of the dispute

For many the Shinwari land dispute finds its roots in the arming of Sepai tribesmen in November 2009. There are various views with regard to who decided to provide weapons to the Sepai following an attack by Afridi Taliban on Malik Niaz's nephews in Achin the month before.⁹⁸ Some reports suggest it was the PRT that distributed around 400 weapons to Malik Niaz and his men. The Alisherkhel, however, blamed Governor Gul Aga Shirzai, accusing him of favouring the tribe due to his close links with the Sepai Maliks, particularly Malik Usman.

In public the Governor distanced himself from the allegations of his decision to provide weapons and the PRT's negotiation of a tribal agreement, known as “the Shinwari Pact” of February 2010. Governor Gul Aga Shirzai along with President Karzai criticised any intervention that attempted to work directly with the tribes and did not work through the central government.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ A further 12 Mohmandi are alleged to have been killed in an initial outbreak of violence in March 2010 between the Alisherkhel and the Mohmandi.

⁹⁸ “For 1000 years there has been a desert and Malik Niaz did not come and capture this land. Now that he has the guns of Gul Aga Shirzai and the US, he brings his people and takes this land,” a member of Alisherkhel tribe, April 2010.

⁹⁹ Joshua Partlow and Gred Jaffe, “US military runs into tribal politics after deal with Pashtuns,” *Washington Post Foreign Service*, 10 May 2010.

The US embassy in Kabul is also alleged to have distanced itself from the effort to engage directly with the tribe and instructed its diplomats not to meet to discuss the issue.¹⁰⁰

In mid-February, only a few weeks after signing the Shinwari Pact, Sepai tribesmen occupied the desert land located along the main road between Ghani Khel and Sra Kala and opposite what were established Alisherkhel villages. It remains unclear why the Sepai elders chose to lead a grab on the land at this juncture. At the time some Sepai farmers reflected on the potential value of the land and how relocating could offer better access to government services, such as education, health, and water.¹⁰¹ Most cited what they believed was a traditional claim on the land given its location downstream from the Mohmand valley in Achin in which the Sepai village of Syachob in Shinwar District was located.

At the time the Alisherkhel blamed the Governor for the land dispute. They claimed that the formation of an armed militia, known as an *arbaki*, under the leadership of Malik Niaz, had bolstered his income, confidence, and ambitions. They accused the Governor of providing the Sepai with the tents used to occupy the land, and alleged that the ANP had protected the Sepai while the foundation stones for houses were laid in the desert. The Alisherkhel also claimed that their attempts to meet the Governor during the early stages of the dispute and to stop the building were spurned. On 27 February 2010 the Alisherkhel attacked the Sepai tribesmen in the desert, killing fourteen and injuring a number of others.

Since these initial deaths none of the subsequent efforts to resolve the dispute between the Alisherkhel and Sepai have been successful.¹⁰² An early attempt at resolution involved the formation of a *jirga* of three hundred tribal elders from all 22 districts of Nangarhar. These three hundred elders included members from the Mohmandi, Khogiani, and Shinwari tribes. They met with both Sepai and Alisherkhel elders and 40,000,000 PR was taken from both sides as *machalga*, a deposit, to guarantee peace for a twelve month period. In subsequent discussions with the Sepai and the Alisherkhel it was agreed that a smaller *jirga* of 30 members would decide on the case and base their decision according to Shinwari traditions.

In April 2010 the *jirga* decided that the desert land to the west of the road between Ghani Khel and Kahi would be given to the Sepai, while land in the Gurukoh area near the Torkham Bazaar (where the Sepai and Alisherkhel are also in dispute) would be allocated to the Alisherkhel - provided both sides introduced thirty elders who would swear on the holy Koran (*qasam*) that the land was theirs. The Sepai accepted the *jirga's* decision but the Alisherkhel did not, believing both pieces of land belonged to their tribe. The Alisherkhel argued that the *jirga's* decision had been influenced by the Governor and subsequently mounted a delegation of 50 elders to travel to Kabul and request the President to remove Governor Gul Aga Shirzai from his post.

Since this initial *jirga* decision a number of efforts have been made to end the conflict but a resolution has still not been found.¹⁰³ Numerous provincial council members and members of Parliament from Nangarhar have also become embroiled in the dispute, including Malalai Shinwari, Haji Zahir, Babrak Shinwari, and Fraidoon Mohammad. Far from looking to resolve the conflict, most have become involved as a way of gaining support from the local population and more importantly to use the dispute as a way of highlighting either the failings of Governor Gul Aga Shirzai or to come to his support.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Randy George and Dante Paradiso, "The Case for Wartime Chief Executive Officer: Fixing the Interagency Quagmire in Afghanistan," in *Foreign Affairs*, 21 June 2011 http://www.foreignaffairs.com/fa_subcontent/67833/67834.

¹⁰¹ David Mansfield, "The ban on opium production across Nangarhar: A risk too far?," in *International Journal of Environmental Studies* 68, no. 3, (June 2011): 385-95.

¹⁰² In an interview in Sor Dag, Mohmand valley, in April 2010, one Sepai who had lost his brother in the initial fighting explained, "This is our land. [The Alisherkhel] have killed our people. No matter how many they kill we will not give them this land. It is ours."

¹⁰³ The Mandozai and Sun Khel divisions of the Shinwari tribe intervened following the end of the initial *tigha* in February 2011. This *tigha* lasted only 10 days due to a failure to obtain agreement from both sides to the conditions imposed by the *jirga*.

¹⁰⁴ In an interview with an Alisherkhel *malik* it was claimed that Fraidoon Mohmand had told the Alisherkhel that Gul Aga

By April 2011 there were reports of increasing numbers of weapons flowing into Achin and armed men were visible throughout the district of Achin and parts of Upper Shinwar. Vehicle checkpoints were established in both Alisherkhel and Sepai territory and manned by armed tribesmen. The conflict also led to the closure of Kahi Bazaar, the administrative centre of Achin, and the relocation of the Alisherkhel students to the high school in Kogha Khel in the lower part of the district.

In October 2011 the dispute took a further turn for the worse. In a show of force, Governor Gul Aga Shirzai went to Ghani Khel with the provincial security commander and demanded that the tribes disarm and leave the desert. He met with elders from both tribes and informed them that if they did not leave within 24 hours they would be forcibly disarmed and arrested. They were also instructed by the Governor to make a truce, known as *tigha*,¹⁰⁵ for three years and that a heavy fine (as much as 10 billion Afs) would be imposed on whichever side instigated any subsequent fighting.

The tribal elders accepted the Governor's terms but in the confusion of the withdrawal a firefight broke out between the ANP and armed men from the Sepai tribe. The Sepai are alleged to have fired on the ANP (and according to some ISAF personnel who were overseeing the process) using Rocket Propelled Grenades and automatic weapons killing one police officer, injuring two others, and destroying two "ranger" vehicles. In response, the authorities called in ISAF air support. However, upon being attacked an ISAF helicopter is reported to have fired on the Sepai killing 18 and injuring a further 60. A further 150 Mohmandi tribesmen were then arrested.

An unstable peace

In January 2012 a presidential delegation headed by Asadullah Wafa obtained a written commitment from elders from both the Sepai and Alisherkhel tribes that they would not take up arms against each other for three years whilst the government decided what to do with the land. However, this signed agreement belies the continuing tension between the Sepai and the Alisherkhel, the Sepai and the provincial authorities, particularly Governor Gul Aga Shirzai, as well as the deepening tension between the rural population and the rural elite in both tribes.

During fieldwork in April 2012 respondents amongst the Sepai expressed considerable anger towards particular members of the rural elite for what they see as the role that some of the government-appointed *maliks* played in the ongoing land dispute.¹⁰⁶ For example, Malik Usman was singled out for criticism for what is seen as his role in the death of Sepai tribesmen following the fight with ISAF and government forces,¹⁰⁷ his subsequent duplicitous behaviour during the immediate aftermath of the incident, and his continued close relationship with Governor Gul Aga Shirzai.¹⁰⁸

It is claimed that growing concern over Malik Usman and Niaz's dominance over the Sepai tribe and their role in the land dispute had already prompted the formation of a tribal commission of 21 elders in the summer of 2011. In December 2011 this commission is alleged to have appointed Mahmoud Khan (Babarkhel), Mahmud Hazrat (Rahimdakhel) and Malik Sadeq

Shirzai had influenced the final decision of the jirga. Interview, April 2010.

¹⁰⁵ For more on *tigha*, see Johnson and Mason, "No sign until the Burst of Fire," 61.

¹⁰⁶ An owner-cultivator and sharecropper of only 2.5 *jeribs* of land, commented, "F*** Malik Usman's wife! F*** Malik Niaz's wife! F*** Gul Aga Shirzai's wife! My nephew was killed in the desert by the national army and the American forces. He had ten children. They are all young, most of them daughters. They have a grandfather who is 80 years old. They have a small amount of land - less than half a *jerib*. What are they to do now?"

¹⁰⁷ It is Malik Usman who is accused of instructing the Mohmandi to return to the desert land, following fears that the Alisherkhel had not disarmed and retreated to their villages.

¹⁰⁸ It is also alleged that he (along with other elders) advised those who had family members killed or injured in the firefight with ISAF to decline the compensation offered by the Governor, only to attend a condolence ceremony in Jalalabad organised by the Governor. Government representatives were not informed of an earlier ceremony of condolence held in Shadal Bazaar.

(Haidarkhel) as its heads, thereby demoting Malik Niaz and Malik Usman. While the Governor continues to maintain a close relationship with Malik Usman, and recognises both men as formal Maliks, many in the tribe favours its new leadership. In a show of support for those who died in the violence in November 2011, it is alleged that Mahmoud Khan, Mahmud Hazrat, and Sadeq refused to sign a recent agreement with the Alisherkhel facilitated by Asadullah Wafa, whereas Malik Niaz and Usman were signatories.

The Alisherkhel has also seen a shift in the balance of power within the rural elite due to the land dispute. The three *maliks* who previously led the negotiation process with the government and the Sepai tribe, Akhtar Mohammed, Mullah Jan, and Haji Baktoo, stand accused of failing to return the money collected in 2010 from the Alisherkhel tribe as *machalga*. Instead the *maliks*, Said Hakim, Jawez, and Aflatoon, led the 12-person Alisherkhel delegation that met with Asadullah and signed the agreement in January 2012. Amongst the Alisherkhel, farmers continue to complain about the impact of the land dispute, citing the contributions they made to the *machalga* and the costs in terms of time and money that they incurred while the Sepai occupied the desert land.

While the elders (or most of them) of the Alisherkhel and Sepai signed an agreement, there is little sense that the current peace will endure. The Sepai claim that while they accept the authority of the government to settle the land dispute, the authorities have no jurisdiction to resolve the conflict over the 30 or more Sepai tribesmen killed since February 2010.¹⁰⁹ In fact, the Sepai hold the Alisherkhel directly responsible for these deaths, even those men killed by ISAF. Moreover, during fieldwork there were numerous remarks about avenging those who lost family members.

The fragility of the peace is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that as of April 2012 the vast majority of shops remained closed in Kahi, the administrative centre of Achin and Spinghar, and the high school remains divided, as it was in February 2010.¹¹⁰

Governor Gul Aga Shirzai also stands out as a target of the ire of the Sepai. While his failure to resolve the dispute during the initial months and his subsequent role in its escalation in late October 2011 will not be forgotten, many anticipate that he will soon move to a new position.¹¹¹ Unfortunately his departure will do little to assuage the growing opposition to the government amongst the Sepai.

Indeed, by April 2010 it was claimed that AGEs had gained a firm foothold in the Mohmand valley, to the south of Asadkhel. Locally there were reports of a recent incursion by the United States forces into the area having been repelled by armed men. It was claimed that those south of Asadkhel now “opposed the government” and identified themselves as “Taliban.” Furthermore, local researchers were warned not to travel beyond Asadkhel due to the presence of armed AGEs in the area.¹¹²

In Asadkhel itself there were reports that the Taliban were present during the night and were looking for succour from the population. It was argued that those Taliban soliciting support in the village were not “Pakistani” Taliban, who it was claimed “stayed in the mountains,” but were local villagers. There were also allegations that the rural elite had reached an accommodation with AGEs in the area¹¹³ - an irony given that it was the firm stand that these same *maliks* took against the Taliban in October 2009, and the subsequent financial and military support that they received, that appears to have served as a catalyst for the land dispute and ultimately the violent conflict with the Government and ISAF.

¹⁰⁹ Locals refer to as many as 80 killed in total.

¹¹⁰ This happened in 2010 after the initial land grab by the Mohmandi. During fieldwork, 18 Alisherkhel teachers continued to teach in the open in Kogha Khel, retreating to the mosque when it rained.

¹¹¹ A villager in Chinar Kalay commented, “Today Gul Aga Shirzai is governor, but tomorrow he will leave the area,” suggesting that the Governor would soon be moved from his post.

¹¹² This was the first time since this study began in April 2005 that researchers were unable to visit this part of Achin.

¹¹³ “Malik Usman and Niaz have two hands; one belongs to the government, the other to the Taliban,” farmer in Achin, April 2012.

What is abundantly clear from the ongoing land dispute is that not only has the state lost its capacity to coerce in the upper parts of the Mohmand valley, but the interlocutors that were instrumental in extending state power (or at least the appearance of it) into this remote terrain have also been marginalised. Those in the tribal elite that are looking to endure despite their close association with the government and its unpopular policies are now emulating the position of the rural population and are being more reticent with the government while reaching an agreement with AGEs.

Yet through these tribal interlocutors, and with the backing of US military forces, the Afghan state has established a more significant presence in these areas than it probably ever had. The Karzai administration, with international support extended to education and health services in these remote areas, established the infrastructure for a resident district administration and created an effective security presence. The presence, with the support of local elites and US operational assistance, enforced an effective opium ban in the most remote parts of Achin over three consecutive years, and even longer in some of the more accessible lower valleys.

Ultimately, it appears that this era has now come to an end in Achin. There are now a growing number of areas in the upper valleys where the state cannot go without facing unrest. There has been an increase in the number of attacks on schools and other state infrastructure. Local farmers refer to a growing number of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks on the roads. The government is also confronted with resurgent opium poppy cultivation that it is unable to counter across the district, further revealing to the population state weakness and in doing so, setting the stage for further cultivation in subsequent growing seasons.

Resisting state interference: The opium ban

As the discussion on the land dispute shows, there has been a steady increase in the rural population's antipathy towards both the state and the rural elite in Achin. However, the land dispute is only part of the picture. The opium ban imposed since the 2007-08 growing season has also served to undermine the rural population's support for the provincial government and the rural elite that played its role in the effective prohibition of the crop.

It is worth noting that the rural population's condemnation of the tribal elite for its involvement in the opium ban was not immediate. In fact, in late 2007 statements of support for the ban by the rural elite were initially seen as understandable in light of the combined coercive power of the Afghan state and the US military. Given the repeated assurances of the donors and the Afghan government, it could even be argued that engaging with the government's counter-narcotics effort offered an opportunity for the rural elite, and thereby the population, to better access development assistance and the patronage of both national and international sponsors. In fact, the potential for increased patronage was demonstrated in the numerous invitations tribal elders receive to meet with foreign dignitaries and cabinet ministers in Jalalabad and through the governor's repeated visits to the area.

Growing economic distress

Once the farming population in the mountains experienced the cumulative effect of the opium ban over a number of consecutive years and came to recognise that their economic position would continue a downward trajectory, their support for the tribal elite and the government began to shift. Initially it came in the repeated claims from farmers that some of the *maliks* had received cash payments, gifts, as well as lavish meals and favours, from the provincial authorities for their role in helping impose the ban. There were accusations that the *maliks* were serving the interests of the government and not responding to the priorities of the rural population. During previous rounds of fieldwork it was evident that an increasing number of threats were made against the *maliks*, some were even subject to verbal abuse in the bazaar.

The economic impact of the opium ban in the upper valleys of Achin cannot be ignored. Small landholdings, high population densities, and poor soil limits the agricultural potential of the area. In Achin, cultivating wheat in the winter and maize in the summer (the crops that occupy

the majority of land in the absence of opium poppy and marijuana) on such small parcels of land will not allow a household, typically consisting of a minimum of 10 family members, to meet its basic food requirements. Those households that experience sickness, injury, or death find it difficult to meet the costs of health care without borrowing money, and will often delay treatment even for serious conditions.

Even movement into higher value crops such as onion, bean, and garlic, for those with better irrigation and access to local markets, offers little respite given the small landholdings and large number of dependents in each household. Livestock holdings are also small and any sizeable income generated from sales tends to be due to distress sales and therefore not sustainable. Faced with an effective ban on illicit drug crop production in the area, non-farm income has become an increasingly important part of local livelihood strategies for those with a sufficient number of active male family members. In the upper part of the Mohmand valley a marble mine has provided daily wage opportunities with many earning around 500 PR per day. However, the work is arduous and many respondents report that it is difficult to work for longer than six months of the year under such trying conditions. (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Marble Mine in Upper Mohmand Valley in Achin District, Nangarhar Province



In the absence of suitable local employment opportunities, households have been compelled to send an increasing number of young men to enlist in the ANA and ANP. In fact many of those interviewed in Achin had sons in the ANSF, serving in areas such as Kabul, Kunar, Khost, Uruzgan, Nimroz, and Wardak, and earning between 21,700 and 24,400 PR per month. Some had more than one household members serving in the ANSF. Without this source of income, households typically earn a gross income of much less than \$1 per person per day (see Annex 1: Table A1).

However, as Table A1 shows, even a relatively generous salary from the ANSF is spread rather thin when seen in the context of the average size of households, the large number of dependents that each contains, and the limited on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm income opportunities available in Achin. Perhaps it is of no surprise that given the prevailing socioeconomic and political situation in the Mohmandi valley, the majority of those Mohmandi households with members in ANSF were also cultivating opium poppy in the 2011-12 growing season.

It is also important to note that enlistment in the ANSF has not been without risk and there are regular reminders of the dangers. For example, a few days prior to fieldwork in Maidanak the body of a young man who had been serving in the ANA in Helmand was brought back for burial.¹¹⁴ In May 2012 the bodies of four men serving in the ANSF arrived in Marko Bazaar before being returned to their villages. Key informants report that a common response to this tragedy amongst men in the tea houses and bazaar at the time was that these young men would not have been in the ANSF and subsequently killed were it not for the opium ban. In the minds of many farmers in the southern districts of Nangarhar, a successful return to opium poppy cultivation offers some households the economic means with which to leave the ANSF and reside with their family on a more permanent basis.

Resurgent opium poppy cultivation in 2011-12

Poppy cultivation returned in force to the upper parts of the Mohmand Valley during the 2010-11 growing season.¹¹⁵ However, farmers were typically cautious and cultivation was limited to the area of Batan and the valley further south. Apart from the upper reaches of the Mohmand Valley where opium poppy was more densely cultivated, fields were often small and cultivation was at a distance from the main road.¹¹⁶

However, in the 2011-12 growing season levels of cultivation doubled in the Mohmand valley.¹¹⁷ Not only have those that cultivated opium poppy the previous year increased the amount of land they allocated to opium poppy in 2011-12 but there are also new entrants, including those with land near the main road and those lower down the valley beyond Sra Kala. For example, a number of farmers cultivated opium poppy in Maidanak in lower Achin where it had not been visible in the 2010-11 growing season. There are even traces of cultivation in upper and lower parts of Shinwar District, where it has not been seen since 2007.

The government responded to the expansion of opium poppy cultivation in the area by mounting a limited eradication campaign in April 2012. Consequently, many of those interviewed in Maidanak and in the northern parts of Batan had lost their crop only a few days earlier or actually on the day that fieldwork was conducted. Respondents reported that they had spent 20,000 - 50,000 PR¹¹⁸ on agricultural inputs, primarily fertiliser, for their crop in the 2011-12 growing season and that this money was now lost.¹¹⁹

In the *manteqa* (area) of Batan,¹²⁰ local elders had instructed the population not to cooperate with the eradication campaign.¹²¹ Many farmers were found in their compounds in protest but there were no reports of violence. There were signs of some damage to other licit crops in the area in reaction to eradication (see Figure 7). One respondent complained that the campaign had not only destroyed his opium crop but had also irreparably damaged the pomegranate saplings in which he had intercropped opium poppy. In Maidanak, respondents referred to the exaggerated claims that the government was making on the radio with regard to the extent of eradication that had taken place at that time.

¹¹⁴ This particular individual was alleged to have been responsible for the attack on British soldiers at the gates of the PRT in Lashkar Gah in March 2012. Villagers claim that in January 2012 the man's uncle was killed in a raid in Maidanak by US forces. They claim that in the same incident the man's cousin was arrested and taken to Baghram where he remains in captivity. Villagers allege that the attack on British forces in Helmand was an act of vengeance by the man for the death of the uncle he was very close to.

¹¹⁵ Mansfield, "Between a Rock and Hard Place."

¹¹⁶ Data from fieldwork suggests that farmers rarely cultivated more than 0.5 *jeribs* of opium poppy in 2010-11.

¹¹⁷ During fieldwork, opium poppy was visible in the valleys of Mohmand and Pekhar. It could not be seen in Pekhar Khwar or around the district centre in Kahi.

¹¹⁸ Sharecropper cultivating 1 *jerib* of opium poppy on 2 *jeribs* of land to 3 *jeribs* of opium poppy on 6 *jeribs* of land.

¹¹⁹ They did not attribute a cash value to the labour that they had expended on their crop. However, they did complain about the amount of time they had spent on their crop.

¹²⁰ Batan is made up of a number of villages.

¹²¹ Interviews in the main square in Jalalabad revealed that labourers were being offered 1,000 Afs per day to eradicate the crop during the 2012 spring campaign.

Figure 7: Crop damage due to eradication in Achin District, Nangarhar Province



There were also reports of a more limited eradication campaign during the winter months. These claims were supported by the presence of residual opium plants within the fields of other crops (see Figure 8). Farmers reported that the earlier eradication campaign had only destroyed small plots in more accessible places. Some farmers in Maidanak reported replanting opium poppy in January 2012 following the destruction of the crop they had planted in the fall. One respondent claimed that he was arrested for replanting opium but a relative who was friends with the security commander in Achin got him released.¹²²

Respondents in Batan claimed that following this earlier eradication effort, Malik Usman, a prominent tribal leader of the Sepai, who is also from the area, had collected 5,000 PR from each household in Batan to “protect” their crops against a potential spring campaign. Others referred to Malik Usman’s attempts to deter the district authorities from eradicating the crop through the offer of a meal and slaughtering a sheep in his honour. The anger felt towards Malik Usman for failing to prevent eradication was exacerbated by accusations that members of his own family had not had their crops destroyed during the winter and spring eradication campaigns. In Batan a number of farmers planted marijuana immediately following the loss of their opium crop.

In the areas south of Batan much of the land was used to cultivate poppy. Near the road in Asadkhel, where the land was more vulnerable to the threat of eradication, about 30 percent of the land was growing poppy, while across the river it was nearer to 60 percent of the land. The crops of those respondents with land on the far side of the river remained unscathed at the time of fieldwork while small amounts of the crop had been destroyed near the road.

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¹²² This individual with 3 *jeribs* of land also had some of his crop destroyed during the spring eradication campaign. However, the eradication team only destroyed “one plot” of opium leaving him with most of the 0.5 *jeribs* of opium poppy that he had grown.

Figure 8: Poppy, cannabis, and wheat in Achin District, Nangarhar Province (April 2012)



South of Asadkhel, there were reports of extensive opium poppy and farmers commented that there was very little wheat to be seen in these higher valleys.¹²³ As the previous section has highlighted, there were also reports of anti-government activity and the local population warned researchers not to go to the area even during the day time. At the time of fieldwork, the government eradication campaign had not attempted to enter the area and there was little expectation that a robust campaign would be conducted.

For many that had recently experienced the loss of their crop there is a difference between their own priorities and those articulated by the government and the tribal elite. The act of crop destruction is often compared with what is seen as a lack of development activity in the area over the previous two years,¹²⁴ and the perception that the government does not have sufficient coercive power to either prevent the incursion of AGEs or to conduct an eradication campaign south of Asadkhel in the upper part of the Mohmand valley.

The rural population appears to be drawing on the lessons to be learned from the absence of an eradication campaign in the upper reaches of the valley where AGEs have established stronger support in the 2011-12 growing season - not just in Achin but across the Spinghar piedmont. They reason that an effective insurgent presence will deter future eradication efforts and protect their own economic position.¹²⁵ They also recognise the role that elements of the tribal elite played in the deterioration in their welfare through their support for the opium ban and the land grab, and have looked to reconfigure the political leadership towards one that is less amenable to the central government and less in favour of a prohibition on opium and marijuana production.

There are now fewer signs of the tribal elite willing to align with the government's policy and press for an opium ban, a significant departure from the years in which the opium ban was effectively enforced between 2008 and 2010. The question remains as to how far down the valleys these lessons are applied in the coming seasons and whether widespread opium poppy cultivation will remain

¹²³ This is confirmed by aerial photography taken by Alcis Ltd at the time.

¹²⁴ "The government only has power to destroy the poppy field," farmer in the village of Trelay, in Achin, Spinghar.

¹²⁵ "If the government continues [eradication] then the Taliban may get more influence in the area," farmer in Batan, in Achin, Spinghar.

contained within the upper reaches of Loya Shinwar in Achin, Nazian, Deh Bala, and Dur Baba in the 2012-13 growing season, or whether it will begin to reappear in the more accessible parts, such as the district of Shinwar itself.

Khogiani: Insurgency and opium poppy

The district of Khogiani has been beset by insecurity throughout the Karzai administration. The insecurity stems partly from the enmity between competing mujahidin commanders that predates the Taliban's capture of Nangarhar in August 1996.¹²⁶ The causes of these disputes are typically attributed to segmentary lineage and a perceived culture of revenge within the Khogiani tribe. However, as is so often the case, it is difficult to identify whether the cause of conflict lies in personal, tribal, or ideological differences.¹²⁷

There is certainly little evidence of a cohesive leadership amongst the Khogiani. Four of the most prominent commanders from Khogiani during the time of the Eastern Shura and the mujahidin government are now dead: Engineer Mahmood, a commander in Hezb-e Islami - Younis Khales (HIK) from Hakimabad, was killed in 1996 during the Taliban's capture of Jalalabad; Haji Khair Mohammed, a leading elder from Zawa and commander for Hezb-e Islami - Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (HIG) died in 2004; Mawlawi Younis Khales died an octogenarian in 2006 after siding with the Taliban in 2003; and, Haji Zaman Ghamsharik, nephew and rival of Khair Mohammed, as well as opponent of Haji Zahir and the Arsala family, was blown up in a suicide attack in Khogiani in February 2010, only months after his reconciliation with the Karzai administration.¹²⁸

None of these commanders, other than Mawlawi Younis Khales, have been followed by a successor that could draw on wide military support. Haji Khair Mohammed's son, Omar, was the security commander in Khogiani in 2006, and then the *woleswal*,¹²⁹ before being arrested by US forces. Haji Zaman's other son, Nyamat became a *malik* in Zawa. After his release from prison in 2009 Haji Zaman Ghamsharik's brother Aman Khairi failed to win a seat in the parliamentary elections in 2009. He has since become an ally of Gul Aga Shirzai, leading the Nangarhar Tribal Unity Council. Haji Zaman's son, Jawed Zaman,¹³⁰ became a member of the provincial council and is another staunch ally of the Governor given their joint interest in countering the political aspirations of Haji Zahir and the Arsala family in Nangarhar.

Following the death of his father, Mawlawi Younis Khales in 2006, Anwar Al Haq Mujahid split from HIK (and Haji Din Mohammed). He formed the Tora Bora Military Front in 2007. Mujahid aligned the movement with the Taliban, concentrating their efforts against US and Afghan government forces in the upper valleys of the Khogiani districts of Pachir wa Agam, Sherzad, parts of Chapahar, and Khogiani itself.

Since 2009 AGEs have progressively moved down the valleys toward Kargha, the district centre of Khogiani. In the Khogiani districts, Mujahid has successfully built on the growing opposition to civilian casualties and the divisions within the rural elite - which have often manifested in revenge killings and accusations of collaboration with the insurgency.¹³¹ However, within the Khogiani tribe the eradication

¹²⁶ In 1993 Commander Shomali, who was the governor of Nangarhar at the time, was killed with forty of his men. The attack was initially blamed on Abdul Qadir, one of Yunous Khales' commanders; although many believe it was Hazrat Ali who organised the attack. In August 1996 Commander Shomali's brother, Haji Munji, is said to have killed 72 men linked to the eastern *shura* in revenge for the death of his brother, including Engineer Mahmood, and Saifullah (Pirakhel) during the Taliban's capture of Jalalabad. Haji Munji is now alleged to live in Attock, Pakistan.

¹²⁷ Mike Martin, "A Socio Political History of Helmand," (Unpublished paper, 2011), 42.

¹²⁸ Locally many blame the death of Haji Zaman Ghamsharik on Haji Zahir. Haji Zaman went into exile in Pakistan after being accused of making an attempt on the life of Field Marshal Mohammed Qasim Fahim in March 2002 as well as being involved in the murder of Haji Zahir's father, Haji Abdul Qadir, Governor of Nangarhar in July of the same year. Haji Zaman's brother Aman Khairi was subsequently arrested in October 2007 on suspicion of being involved in the murder of Haji Qadir. He was released in 2009 prior to the parliamentary elections.

¹²⁹ *Woleswal* refers to the District Governor.

¹³⁰ Haji Zaman's other son, Farid was murdered in July 2001. At that time Farid, along with Aman Khairi, had joined the Taliban.

¹³¹ See Rory Brown's detailed account of the history of the eastern provinces (forthcoming) for a full account of the rivalries between rival commanders in the Waziri sub-division of the Khogiani tribe and the subsequent violence that ensued in 2002 and 2003.

campaign in the district of Sherzad in April 2010 is seen as a catalyst for the uptake in the influence of AGEs in the area over the last two years. In particular, Governor Gul Aga Shirzai's antagonistic position to the tribal elders during this campaign is alleged to have provoked the population and led to AGEs being invited into the area to support an attack on the ANP which left a number of ANP and locals dead.¹³²

By April 2011 the upper valleys in the south of Khogiani already had a significant Taliban presence. The valleys of Zawah and Pirakhel in particular had become a challenging environment for the government to operate in. AGEs were known to patrol these valleys after dark and it was alleged that government access had to be negotiated through local elders and insurgents.¹³³ Opium poppy cultivation was estimated to occupy as much as 70 percent of the land in parts of the Pirakhel Valley in the 2010-11 growing season and the government was not in the position to mount an eradication campaign.

In April 2012, local farmers and key informants reported that the valleys of Pirakhel and Zawah were now firmly under the control of AGEs. It was reported that Taliban fighters openly patrolled these valleys during the day and night, and local farmers advised those not from the area against travelling south of Ahmedkhel. Typically the Taliban in these areas are local villagers and whilst it is claimed that a small number of Waziris from Pakistan are present in Pirakhel, these groups are constantly on the move, fearing detection by US forces.

In Ahmedkhel itself there were also reports of a growing Taliban influence in the area. Locals allege that the Taliban regularly patrol the area at night and are present during the day but are far more circumspect. It is claimed that these Taliban are local and do not "push the people" or "demand money." Farmers do, however, report that organisations that had been providing development assistance were warned to leave the area, and that there have been announcements in the mosque that "people should not send their sons and brothers to join the ANA and ANP."¹³⁴ There is also genuine fear about going out after dusk, even when it is a household's turn to irrigate, for fear of being stopped by either Taliban or US military patrols.¹³⁵

Even in lower Khogiani, in the area of Khelago, farmers report the Taliban has gained greater influence in the area over the last twelve months. One respondent reported that there were a lot more Taliban in the area and blamed it on the establishment of a government checkpoint and security base in the area.¹³⁶

An expansion in poppy cultivation in the 2011-12 growing season

In tandem with the deterioration in security, there has been an increase in opium production. In fact opium poppy cultivation was a lot more apparent in Khogiani in April 2012 than it had been during the 2010-11 growing season. Respondents in Ahmedkhel, Hakimabad, and Khelago cultivated opium poppy in the 2011-12 growing season, whereas they had not grown it the previous year. Few cultivated more than one *jerib* of land with opium poppy. In many areas opium poppy could be seen only 200 to 300 metres from the roadside even in areas where the government maintained some semblance of control. Key informants claim up to 95 percent of the land in the Pirakhel valley was dedicated to opium poppy in the 2011-12 growing season.

¹³² At the time, the provincial authorities reported that three ANP and six "attackers" were killed. See Abdul Moed Hashimi, "10 dead as poppy growers, security personnel clash" in *Pajhwok*, 27 April 2010.

¹³³ Mansfield, "Between a Rock and Hard Place."

¹³⁴ According to the words of one project beneficiary, Development Alternatives Inc. was threatened away from the area. "The Taliban came and asked DAI 'What are you doing here?' Now DAI doesn't come any more. I respect DAI people, they are not political people, and they assist us. My life is better because of DAI people. They introduced a good method for cultivating vegetables in this area," farmer in Ahmedkhel, Khogiani; There are a growing number of rumours reflecting local anxiety of having family members enlisted in the ANSF. For example, there are reports of the disappearance of a mullah near Kargha who gave funeral rites to a soldier killed while serving in the ANA. It is also alleged that there is a notable difference in the number of attendees at the funerals of those allegedly killed by US forces compared to those killed whilst serving in the ANSF, with far more people attending the funeral of civilian casualties.

¹³⁵ For example, one respondent in Ahmedkhel reported that his son was approached by the Taliban in March 2012 whilst irrigating his land. The Taliban arrested him and accused him of having a telephone and contacting the US military. When they realised he did not have a phone he was immediately released.

¹³⁶ This interlocutor observed, "The Government has checkpoints and has a presence in the area, but it has no influence. The Taliban has no permanent presence in the area but has influence."

The eradication campaign of the provincial authorities had not fully started at the time of fieldwork in Khogiani. In Hakimabad, Ahmedkhel, and Khelago, respondents referred to the ongoing eradication campaign in the districts of Pachir wa Agam and Chapahar, but were less sure if the government would attempt to destroy the crop in their area. Some farmers referred to the financial outlay and the labour they had invested in their crop,¹³⁷ as well as the difficult economic circumstances that they faced due to their exposure to shocks, such as sickness or death in the family.¹³⁸

As in the district of Achin, the rural population in Khogiani typically finds its economic prospects constrained by small landholdings, high dependency ratios, and limited non-farm income opportunities. While there are increasing signs of agricultural diversification compared to the mono-cropping of wheat that accompanied the ban on opium production a few years ago, landholdings are rarely greater than six *jeribs*, presenting a major challenge to a household of ten people that needs to meet its food requirements through a combination of wheat production and the sale of cash crops. For example, around Wazir there are a growing number of farmers cultivating cabbage and cauliflower, earning a gross income of some 90,000 PR per *jerib* and 70,000 PR per *jerib* respectively, but with such small landholdings gross income rarely exceeds \$1 per person per day for those households entirely dependent on agricultural production.

Those who sharecrop land and/or do not have access to non-farm income find themselves particularly vulnerable. The situation is more acute in the lower drier areas where yields are considerably lower than in the upper valleys and where there is a persistence of a low yielding maize and groundnut during the summer months.¹³⁹ The sale of cattle and dairy cows were more evident amongst those in Khogiani as were the incidence of loans.

Given these economic and political conditions, the government's decision to launch an eradication campaign can only be seen as destabilising. Initial forays by the authorities into Khogiani during the course of fieldwork were met with resistance. For example, an attempt at eradication in Memla in lower Khogiani on 4 April 2012 led to a protracted gun battle and the death of one member of the ANP and a local farmer. As the season progressed, levels of violence in the district increased so much so that on one single day - 17 April 2012 - 11 people were killed. By the end of the eradication season UNODC and the MCN reported a total of 45 dead (10 ANP and 35 "others") and 36 injured (17 ANP and 19 "others") in the district of Khogiani alone.

It is also important to note that most of these incidents occurred in lower Khogiani, concentrated around Memla (see Figure 9). It is likely that were the government to have mounted a robust eradication campaign in the upper valleys of Khogiani such as in Wazir, Zawah, or Pirakhel, there would have been significantly more casualties. It is also of significance that as opposed to April 2010, there were no reports of eradication in the district of Sherzad,¹⁴⁰ despite reports of increasing levels of cultivation in the 2011-12 growing season.

In conclusion it would seem that the eradication campaign in Nangarhar in 2012 is evidence of the Afghan government's retreat from the upper districts back to its historical position in the lower valleys; a process that is likely to continue in the run up to transition. In these areas the opium ban has exacted a toll. It has entailed brokerage between the Governor and elements of fractured rural elite whose authority over the rural population is constantly challenged, particularly when it fails to deliver patronage. To achieve his aims the Governor has had to make promises of development assistance to the wider population and threaten force. This has often implied the involvement of foreign military power, which has done little to aid state legitimacy.

¹³⁷ "I pray to Allah that the government does not come and destroy my crop. I spent a lot of time and money on fertiliser and I hope I will get a good income from opium poppy," Mullah Noor, near Zawah, Khogiani.

¹³⁸ One respondent in Khwajar Kalay cited funeral costs of 200,000 PR following the death of his mother.

¹³⁹ In 2011, groundnut yields in lower Khogiani were only 10-40 seer per *jerib* compared to 60-75 seer per *jerib* in the better-irrigated upper areas.

¹⁴⁰ UNODC/MCN reported that one ha of opium was eradicated in Sherzad and 1,510 ha was harvested. According to UNODC/MCN this was the largest amount of opium poppy cultivated in the district since the 2002-03 growing season. See UNODC/MCN, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011," 113, 109.

The cumulative effect of the ban has led to deterioration in the economic welfare of large sections of the population in these areas and the adoption of coping strategies that have placed family members at risk, such as by joining the ANSF. With such a delicate hold on power in the southern districts, and no history of state encapsulation, it seems inevitable that a policy that expended so much political capital would ultimately unravel. In the advent of other crises and shocks, such as the land dispute in Achin and the subsequent violence that followed, as well as the intra-tribal enmities in Khogiani, the ban on opium poppy has presented a further opportunity for AGEs to exploit. This year's eradication campaign, limited in scope, but still resulting in high levels of violence, is likely to lead to further resistance to state intervention in the southern districts in the run up to the next planting season, which is likely to culminate in marked increases in opium poppy cultivation in the 2012-13 growing season.

3.4 Conclusion

A detailed analysis of some of the elements of Nangarhar Province - the political elite in the centre, the different rural populations in the districts, as well as their rural elites - and an examination of how these cohorts interact, reveal both centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in the run up to transition. These forces are in line with the historical precedent of Afghanistan where the state has subjugated the populations of the lower valleys but had to grant a high level of autonomy to those living in the upper areas.

In the lower valleys where favourable resource endowments have supported the development of hierarchical political structures, there is continued affinity with the state-building efforts of the central and provincial government. In part this is due to the prominence of the local elite in provincial and national politics and the way that the goals of the state and the private interests of this group have become so closely entwined.

However, the rural population in this area has also experienced welfare benefits during the Karzai administration; a function of the perennially irrigated areas that they occupy as well as the preferential access to public and private investment that the local elite has helped deliver. Located along the Kabul-Jalalabad-Torkham highway and in close proximity to the city of Jalalabad, many households in these districts have experienced a pronounced increase in income-earning opportunities despite the loss of opium production. In these areas, farmers have accumulated capital, are invested in education and state institutions, and therefore have much to lose from a renewed conflict. In these areas the state can maintain order by its linkages with the local elite and through the delivery of services to the rural population despite the ban on opium.

The same is not true in the more mountainous and peripheral rural areas in the southern districts of Nangarhar bordering Pakistan. In these areas there has been little scope for the state to establish more resilient economic and political bonds. Small landholdings, egalitarian tribal structures and limited economic potential of these remote areas have prevented the emergence of more permanent political elite with whom the state could engage. The circumstance of the area has also limited market linkages to the centre to that of labour and intensive opium production.

These are the areas where atomised rural communities traditionally unite to limit state intrusion and the infusion of policies that are seen as contrary to local interests. Development investments in these areas under the Karzai administration have been limited, and largely restricted to building roads - an intervention that is increasingly seen as the means by which Afghan and international military forces can subjugate the local population.

These are also the areas where the rural population has the most to lose from the state's imposition of a ban on opium production and is increasingly resistant to the decision by local elites to facilitate the implementation of the government's counter-narcotics policies.

In the southern districts of Nangarhar, centrifugal forces are at work and there is currently resistance against the state's intrusion into the economic and political lives of the population. This has led to an increasingly tense relationship between the rural population and members of the tribal leadership that are seen to have supported the implementation of unpopular government policies. For example, in Achin the state's handling of the ongoing land dispute between the Alisherkhel and the Sepai, as well as the cumulative impact of an opium ban, is providing the catalyst for what is likely to become an increasingly violent confrontation between parts of the rural population and the provincial authorities.

Furthermore, in the upper areas of the Mohmand valley the tribal elite that played a critical role in imposing the government ban on opium across the entire province between 2008 and 2010 now finds itself marginalised by the insurgent groups that they signed a pact to exclude in February 2010. In Khogiani the tribal divisions that have beset the district continue to provide an entry point for AGEs. In April 2012 the eradication campaign provided a further impetus for resistance with levels of violence reaching an unprecedented level during the spring eradication campaign. In both districts the state avoided further and more protracted conflict by limiting its eradication efforts to more accessible areas where insurgent groups have not yet established a firm foothold.

As such, contrary to the assertion that attempts to reduce opium poppy has extended the writ of the state to some of the peripheral areas of Nangarhar, it has in fact helped evict the provincial authorities and its supporters in the rural elite from large parts of the districts of Khogiani and Achin. The welfare losses that the rural population has endured in the absence of opium poppy has made them more vulnerable to AGEs amidst a backdrop of civilian casualties, land disputes, and a growing dissonance with the political elite.

The growing rift within the political elite at the provincial centre is doing little to counter the centrifugal forces that are at work within the southern districts. Those in Achin and Khogiani see a political class in Jalalabad that is self-serving, that has failed to deliver welfare outcomes beyond the lower valleys, and that continues to expose the rural population to greater shocks. The current Governor is seen as a spent force that has compromised his standing because of his close association with foreign military forces and what is seen as his role in the NATO attack on Sepai tribesmen in November 2011. In Achin the rural elite is seen as culpable for its role in the land dispute and the ban on opium poppy.

By September 2012 there were a growing number of reports suggesting that armed AGEs were establishing a firmer foothold in the lower valleys of Khogiani and Achin, and becoming more active in Upper Shinwar and Bati Kot. The incidence of insurgent attacks in these lower districts had increased and there were reports of armed men being seen in villages during daylight hours. There are claims that night letters threatening those in the ANSF with arrest if they do not leave the security forces have been posted in the mosques of the upper valleys and parts of Shinwar. This is seen as a shift in the tone by the local population compared to the way previous "invitations" to leave the ANSF were worded. There are already anecdotal reports that those in the ANSF from the southern districts, where enlistment in the ANA has been highest, are fearful of returning to their villages. Given these developments it seems likely that contemporary history will show Gul Aga Shirzai's term as Governor as the high watermark for what some might see as state power in Nangarhar. Those studying history, however, may also wonder why more effort was not invested in learning from the Afghan state's previous attempts to exert control over these areas in an attempt to avoid a province-wide approach to engagement, including in counter-narcotics policies.

4. Central Helmand: The Diffusion of State Space

At first appearance the central districts of Helmand do not offer the kind of divergent geographic and political terrain discussed in the previous section on Nangarhar. In fact, all five of the central districts - Lashkar Gah, Nahre Seraj, Nad-e Ali, Marjah, and Nawa Barakzai would typically be considered well-irrigated, productive state space. Indeed, the bulk of the land in the districts of Marjah and Nad-e Ali would not be under agricultural production at all were it not for a government-led process of land settlement that began in the 1950s. Earlier infrastructural works financed by the state and international donors also brought more land under agriculture in the districts of Nahre Seraj, Nawa Barakzai, and Lashkar Gah.

The “self governing” people of Helmand Province, akin to the populations of Achin and Khogiani in Nangarhar, were historically found in the more mountainous districts in the north of the province, in Baghran, and parts of Nawzad, Musa Qala, and Kajaki, as well as the desert area of the south in Dishu and Khanishin. These are areas where the rural population is more tribally homogenous and where there is greater resistance to state interference.

However, in central Helmand tribal groups and space are not as clearly delineated as they are in Nangarhar, and they have become much more diffused over time. The land settlement programmes in Marjah and Nad-e Ali relocated an array of different tribal groups from across the country and settled them into former desert land in central Helmand between the 1950s and 1970s. Since then there have been further informal settlements or land grabs, many led by local *jihadi* commanders from tribes considered indigenous to Helmand. The same tribes that have further changed the ethnic composition of the central districts, particularly in Nad-e Ali and Marjah and led to a rapid expansion in the amount of land under agriculture. This process has continued over the last ten years with encroachment into the desert north of the Boghra Canal and the settlement of around 40,000 hectares of land largely by those belonging to the tribes of the Ishaqzai, Noorzai, Alizai, Alikozai, Barakzai, and Kakar.

The reconfiguration of central Helmand during the war, and subsequently after the fall of the Taliban, has resulted in a rural elite that is fragmented and competitive, and has influence over only a limited geographic area. Such are the structural divisions in the canal command area that disputes over land and resources can lead to communities, and even sub-groups within them, constantly shifting their political and military alliances in an attempt to gain sufficient patronage and favour to protect themselves against their local adversaries. Within this setting the Afghan government, Taliban, and International Military Forces have looked to broker deals with political and military actors to gain territorial influence. These pacts have been short-lived and ultimately proven divisive; supporting one local group or community has only succeeded in driving others to the opposing force as they look to maintain or regain control over territory.

Opium production and counter-narcotics policy form an important part of local patronage in this environment. As a relatively high value commodity, opium represents a resource to rural elites that can perform a number of different functions in the pursuit of local power, financing the acquisition of land, the purchase of weapons, and the means with which to bribe local officials. Counter-narcotics policies can also offer patronage, gaining support from Western nations as well as presenting the chance to punish, or gain the favour of local elites and communities. For AGEs violent opposition to the state’s counter-narcotics efforts, particularly crop destruction, can be a populist strategy designed to gain succour from the rural population, and in some cases protect revenue flows for the insurgency. Consequently, in such a divided and competitive environment as central Helmand, opium production represents an important means of protection against contending rural elites and a way of gaining popular support amongst the rural population; denying cultivation is seen to undermine efforts to achieve these aims and weaken group survival. It is for these very reasons that parts of the population in central Helmand increasingly refer to their support for the state being contingent on whether the governor allows them to cultivate opium poppy or not.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ For example, a tenant-farmer in Shna Jama who arrived in the Dasht in 2010, with 7 *jeribs* of land, commented, “If the Government allows poppy in the lower part I will return there.”

This section of the report examines the socioeconomic and political terrain in which opium poppy has been effectively prohibited in central Helmand over the last few years and ultimately asks what the implications for political order in the run up to transition are. Initially this section offers a history of central Helmand and the establishment of the canal system, before moving onto the process of land grabs (in the 1980s, 1990s, and during the Karzai government) that have reshaped the politics of the area. This section then goes on to examine developments in the 2011-12 growing season and how the ban on opium production has affected the welfare of different sub-sections of the rural population and their perception of the rural elite, the Afghan state, and the foreign military powers that are seen to be backing the implementation of the ban. This section concludes that the political structure within the canal command area, and the economic impact of the ban has facilitated a further shift on the political geography of the area, as increasing numbers of the population from the indigenous tribes of central Helmand move north of the Boghra Canal in pursuit of the physical and political territory in which they can grow opium poppy, while many in the Boghra Canal grow increasingly hostile to state coercion.

4.1 The Changing Face of Central Helmand

There have been significant changes in the political, ethnic, tribal and ecological make-up of Helmand over the last forty years. The initial settlement of former desert land by the government in the 1950s has been followed by series of land grabs over the last 30 years, and subsequently by the commoditisation and sale of former desert land both within the canal command area and north of the Boghra Canal. This process of settlement has changed the ethnic and tribal composition of the area. It has brought “the self-governing people” who have traditionally contested the authority of the state into the lower valleys into what should be “state space.”

The sheer number of tribal groups within central Helmand, and the factionalism both within and between these groups have prevented state encapsulation. The multiple and competing interests of so many independent and powerful actors in the rural areas has left the state with a shortage of partners who have control over any marked geographic space or population. The scale of penetration by the indigenous tribes from the northern and southern parts of the province, typically under the leadership of powerful military actors from the anti-Soviet resistance, has further weakened the state’s control of the area.

Introducing new blood: the naqel and the canal

A crude typology of the geographic distribution of the indigenous tribes of Helmand would suggest that in the north it is: the Alizai that dominate the districts of Baghran Musa Qala and Kajaki; the Noorzai who rule in Nawzad and Washir; and, the Alikozai and Ishaqzai tribes that contest control over the Sangin in upper Nahre Seraj. To the south of the province in Dishu and Reg, the Baluch are the dominant tribal group, while the Noorzai preside in Garmsir. Reflecting their preferred status, the Barakzai, are to be found across the better-irrigated plains of central Helmand, including in Gereshk in lower Nahre Seraj, along the Helmand River in the district of Lashkar Gah and in the district of Nawa Barakzai.¹⁴²

The districts of Marjah and Nad-e Ali, however, were settled in the 1950s and initially comprised primarily of Kuchi¹⁴³ herders and farmers from outside of Helmand, including the provinces of Nangarhar, Laghman, Wardak, Ghazni, and Farah. The land that they were given was former desert land irrigated by the newly built Boghra Canal. In Nad-e Ali groups of 50 - 100 households were typically settled in communities with a common tribal identity or in mixed villages, all were some distance from their respective agricultural land.¹⁴⁴ By the end of the settlement process in the early 1970s as many as 3,000 households had been given between 10 - 30 *jeribs* of land in the district of Nad-e Ali.¹⁴⁵ In Marjah, villages were smaller (20-40 households) than in Nad-e Ali, located closer to

¹⁴² Martin, “A Socio-Political History of Helmand,” 12 - 14.

¹⁴³ Nomadic people group.

¹⁴⁴ Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1997), 499 - 507; Richard Scott, “Tribal and Ethnic Groups in the Helmand valley” (The Asia Society, Occasional Paper No. 21. 1980), 7; Martin, “A Socio-Political History of Helmand” 27.

¹⁴⁵ Scott estimated 2,500 households alongside a further “500 Baluch families of poachers living on the fringes” in Marjah.

their land, and consisted of communities of a common tribal group. Scott¹⁴⁶ cites as many as nineteen different tribal groups in Marjah amongst the estimated 2,500 households settled in the area.¹⁴⁷

Some of the initial soil surveys conducted in the 1950s classified a majority of the land under the canal command areas in these two districts to be of “marginal and restricted suitability, requiring careful management for even fair to good yields of adapted crops,” much of the remaining land was considered “of limited use for common tilled crops.”¹⁴⁸

During the early period of the settlement of Nad-e Ali and Marjah, the combination of salinisation, poor soil, and high ground water led to an overall drop in wheat yields.¹⁴⁹ While yields recovered in the 1960s and 1970s with the introduction of fertiliser and improved seed,¹⁵⁰ the land brought under cultivation by the Helmand Valley Project remained plagued by environmental problems. These only increased with the onset of the war in 1979 and the subsequent loss of the necessary investment and institutional capacity needed to tackle them.¹⁵¹

Even before the war in 1979, farmers in Nad-e Ali and Marjah used tractors and fertiliser to improve the productivity of their land. Surveys in the 1970s revealed that a large proportion of farmers in Nad-e Ali used tractors since the hard clay soils in the area made it difficult to till the land with oxen.¹⁵² During the same period, rates of fertiliser use in the district were among the highest in the country.¹⁵³ In fact, the costs of farming in the area were so high that net incomes of farmers were similar to those in the drier parts of upper Helmand,¹⁵⁴ and lower than those farming under the Shamalan and Darwishan canals.¹⁵⁵

The settler communities, known locally as *naqel* - or “chosen” - still talk of the reluctance of the indigenous tribal groups in the north and south of the province to take land in the former desert areas of Nad-e Ali and Marjah when they were first offered. The initial years of settlement were difficult and led to high rates of attrition in Nad-e Ali, many settlers even left the area.¹⁵⁶ The position of the settlers was further challenged by their low socioeconomic status within the province which led to problems accessing services and support from the provincial authorities compared to the indigenous Helmandis.¹⁵⁷

*...an ethnically homogenous area of long standing is able to present a unified position to proposed developments defined as disadvantageous by the farmers. In the same manner, such a group can petition government offices more effectively to receive early project benefits and services. The antithesis of this is the political impotence of a recently settled community of mixed tribal and ethnic origins.*¹⁵⁸

Locally, people differentiate between those settlers from tribes that are indigenous to Helmand, such as the Noorzai, or Ishaqzai, but who are not from the province itself and those that are from the eastern, central, or northern region and who have no traditional links to the area at all. The former view the latter as subordinates who have no rightful claim to the land and even subject them to jokes and derision, despite their having lived in the area for more than four generations.

See, Scott, “Tribal and Ethnic Groups.”

¹⁴⁶ Scott, “Tribal and ethnic groups,” 9.

¹⁴⁷ Dupree, *Afghanistan*, 504-505

¹⁴⁸ Aloys Arthur Michel, “The Kabul, Kunduz and Helmand River Valleys: A study of the Regional Resources and the Comparative Advantages of Development” (Office of Naval Research, Arlington, VA), 170-173.

¹⁴⁹ Nick Cullather, “Damming Afghanistan: Modernization in a Buffer State,” in *The Journal of American History*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 33; Scott, “Tribal and Ethnic Groups,” 7.

¹⁵⁰ Gerald P. Owens, “1970 Farm Economic Survey: Helmand and Arghandab Valleys of Afghanistan” (Kabul: USAID, 1971), 4.

¹⁵¹ Cullather, “Damming Afghanistan.”

¹⁵² Scott, “Tribal and Ethnic Groups,” 8.

¹⁵³ Shairzai et al., “Farm Economics Survey,” 75.

¹⁵⁴ Scott, “Tribal and Ethnic Groups,” 8.

¹⁵⁵ Owens, “1970 Farm Economic Survey,” 59; C. Clapp-Wincek and E. Baldwin, “The Helmand Valley Project in Afghanistan” (USAID Evaluation Special Study No. 18 Washington, DC: USAID, 1983), 14.

¹⁵⁶ Scott, “Tribal and Ethnic Groups,” 7

¹⁵⁷ “...in general the khan tends to minimise the importance of the *nakils* probably because they speak of them as poor people without any prestige.” See, *Médecins Sans Frontières*, “Exploratory Mission in Helmand” (February 1989), 16.

¹⁵⁸ Scott, “Tribal and Ethnic Groups,” 1.

When settling tribal groups from outside the province in central Helmand, the canal project was initially seen as an opportunity to weaken the indigenous tribes of Helmand. It was anticipated that by establishing an area in central Helmand with such ethnic and tribal heterogeneity, the influence of the Ishaqzai, Alizai, and Noorzai would dissipate. In reality, the *naqel* were never in a position to challenge the dominant position of indigenous Helmandi tribal groups. Indeed, over time these groups increased their numbers in the canal command area and subsequently undermined the government's influence over central Helmand.

Penetration of state space by the Jihadi commanders

The balance of power in central Helmand changed briefly following the coup by the PDPA in April 1978. The reforms brought in by the Party sought to erode the power base of the indigenous landed elite, particularly amongst the Barakzai, targeting landholdings of more than 30 *jeribs* for redistribution.¹⁵⁹ The *naqel*, who had received a maximum of 30 *jeribs* of land - and many significantly less - during the settlement of Marjah and Nad-e Ali, were not the target of these land reforms. In fact, Giustozzi¹⁶⁰ notes that the PDPA found considerable support within the Helmand canal command area, with wide-scale party membership amongst the settler community.

The local *khans* fought against the PDPA's efforts to redistribute their land by establishing armed resistance groups. The fighting that ensued in the late 1970s led to the death and imprisonment of many of the landed elite.¹⁶¹ In their place rose, what Giustozzi has referred to as, "tribal entrepreneurs" - individuals who obtained tribal leadership not through lineage (although some were tribal *khans*) but through their role as effective *jihadi* commanders and their capacity for violence.

Three prominent *jihadi* leaders were from the Alizai tribe in northern Helmand: Mullah Mohammed Nasim Akhundzada, of Harakat-e-Inqilab-e-Islami, the leading political party in Helmand; Abdul Rahman Khan, from a prominent landowning family from Kajaki and member of Hezb-e Islami (Hekmatayar); and, Rais Baghrani Abdul Wahid, who later became a tribal commander in the Helmand district of Baghran. Commander Dad Mohammed Khan, known as "Amir Dado" and an Alikozai, commanded the area around Sangin. Muallem Mir Wali, a Barakzai, who initially aligned with Hezb-e Islami, was a jihadi leader in Malgir near the city of Gereshk. Of these jihadi commanders it was Mullah Nasim Akhundzada that rose to the fore, attacking Abdul Rahman Khan deep in his territory in Kajaki and absorbing much of the central and southern districts of the province by the 1980s.¹⁶²

By 1981 there was little evidence of the government having any control outside the urban centres of Lashkar Gah and Gereshk.¹⁶³ The Soviet invasion did little to change this, opting for a strategy in Helmand that kept the main highway from Kandahar to Herat open, maintaining a battalion in Gereshk to do so, along with further military presence in Lashkar Gah, Kajaki, and Chanjir to maintain supply routes. According to Martin¹⁶⁴ these Soviet military units were then backed up by Afghan army units under Soviet command and subsequently by militias.

In the countryside there was significant fighting between the different *jihadi* leaders as they fought for supremacy, control over territory and important trade routes, as well as opportunities for rent extraction, including over the increasingly dominant drugs trade. Political parties meant little to these men, with some *jihadi* commanders, such as Rais Baghrani Abdul Wahid, shifting from Hezb-e Islami, to Jamiat,

¹⁵⁹ Martin "A Socio-Political History of Helmand," 37

¹⁶⁰ Giustozzi, *War, Politics and Society in Afghanistan*, 255,289.

¹⁶¹ Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, "'Tribes' and warlords in southern Afghanistan, 1980 -2005," in Working papers Series no. 2 (London: Crisis States Research Centre September 2006), 10.

¹⁶² There is considerable speculation about Mullah Nasim's role in opium production including the claim that he compelled farmers in the canal command area to cultivate opium, imposing quotas on them and threatening those that did not comply with torture or even death. These are the same claims made of the Taliban in the 1990s and turn of the century. It is hard to see why a farmer would need to be compelled, under threat of torture and death, to grow a crop that fits well into the cropping patterns and ecological conditions in central Helmand, provides preferential access to credit, offers increased wage labour opportunities, and obtains a relatively good price from traders that will travel to the farm gate to purchase. For more, see Giustozzi, "Tribes and warlords in southern Afghanistan," 12.

¹⁶³ Martin "A Socio-Political History of Helmand," 42.

¹⁶⁴ Martin "A Socio-Political History of Helmand," 43.

and ultimately to the Taliban in the 1990s before finally siding with the Karzai administration in 2005.¹⁶⁵ Over the period of more than a decade, numerous commanders were killed in Helmand, Peshawar, and Quetta in the intra- and inter-tribal battles that took place. By 1990 the rivalry between these *jihadi* commanders led to the assassination of Mullah Nasim Akhundzada in Quetta, with speculation that he had been killed by Hezb-e Islami for his decision to ban opium poppy in the areas that he controlled.¹⁶⁶

Given more pressing priorities in Afghanistan, as well as the factionalism and fighting between the jihadi commanders, the Soviets saw little point in taking the fight to the countryside. They did however look to garner some support in the central districts of Helmand and established militias that could help in the defence of Gereshk and Lashkar Gah. This initiative also led to the rise of charismatic armed leaders, such as Khan Mohammed, nicknamed Khano, originally from Farah province. Recognised as a good fighter, Khano recruited from amongst the youth and paid generously.¹⁶⁷ A further prominent militia leader was Allah Noor, a Barakzai from Nawa Barakzai who, according to Giustozzi and Noor Ullah,¹⁶⁸ began his career as a driver for the provincial governor before rising to head a militia and holding Lashkar Gah during the reign of President Najibullah. When the government of Najibullah fell in 1992 Allah Noor and Khano looked for allies to prevent the Akhundzadas sweeping through Lashkar Gah. They found support in a local Barakzai commander from Jamiat Islami, and managed to hold the city until 1993 when they fell to an attack led by Ismail Khan from Herat, who helped Ghulam Rasoul Akhundzada (elder brother of Nasim) rise as governor of Helmand.

During this prolonged period of fighting, central Helmand went through significant change. For one, the population in the districts of Marjah and Nad-e Ali came under considerable stress due to damage to the irrigation systems and the lack of maintenance. Secondly, the Soviets alleged to have drained some of the canals as a way of punishing the rural population which culminated in a large number of farmers leaving the area altogether. Finally, the rise of armed “tribal entrepreneurs” led to both abandoned land, and former desert land within central Helmand, being settled by indigenous tribal groups.¹⁶⁹

In Marjah, for example, much of the land to the west and north of areas originally settled by the *naqel* was taken by Ishaqzai and Noorzai commanders in the 1990s. In Nad-e Ali a local Ishaqzai commander, Haji Rakhmattiar from Hezb-e Islami captured forest land between Shin Kalay and Khoshal Kalay and distributed it to his men. This land was cleared and turned into agricultural land and in some cases this land is now going through a second generation of sales. Just south of the Boghra Canal, between Gereshk and Naqilabad, a number of former commanders and men of influence from the Barakzai, Alikozai, and Noorzai tribes absorbed land that had not been brought under cultivation during the initial settlement process. Former desert areas in Nawa Barakzai, such as Dasht-e Shesherak and Dasht-e Aynak went through similar processes in the early 1990s with land initially being captured by local commanders and their supporters before being sold to other farmers.

These land grabs have been such that the area under cultivation in central Helmand increased from an estimated 57,452 ha to 91,663 ha between 1975 and 1990 (see Figure 10).¹⁷⁰ In Marjah and Nad-e Ali, around 3,546 ha of forest land was lost and used for agriculture over the same period (see Figure 11).

¹⁶⁵ Giustozzi, “Tribes and warlords in southern Afghanistan.”

¹⁶⁶ The claim that Nasim Akhundzada was killed by Hezb-e Islami is based on the assessment that the ban that he imposed in Helmand adversely affected the party’s heroin refining interests. It is unclear whether there is evidence to support this claim or whether it is *chai khanna* chatter, tea house talk. The same claims were made following the death of Haji Qadir, former Governor of Nangarhar and at the time Minister of Interior, after his involvement in the compensated eradication campaign in Nangarhar in the spring of 2002. Given the particular career paths both men had followed it is clear that they would have had numerous enemies.

¹⁶⁷ Giustozzi, “Tribes and warlords in southern Afghanistan,” 15, fn183.

¹⁶⁸ Giustozzi and Ullah report Khano began his career as a driver, See “Tribes and warlords in southern Afghanistan,” 15. However, in recent discussions with Mike Martin, Khano claims he began his career as a militia leader. Mike Martin, pers. comm., Nov 2012.

¹⁶⁹ Martin, “A Socio-Political History of Helmand,” 43.

¹⁷⁰ These figures were derived from Landsat 5 and measure the amount of land under agriculture on a given day in April 1975, April 1990, and April 2010. As a result, these figures do not estimate the total amount of land in agricultural production in central Helmand over the winter season as some land may not have shown active agriculture on that day, as the crop may be too small or the land left fallow until later in the season. These figures should be considered a lower estimate of the total amount of land under agriculture during both years compared to the estimates produced by the Crime and Narcotics Centre of the United States Government, which estimate the total potential agriculture and may include land prepared but not actually cultivated that season.

Figure 10: Agricultural (light green) and Forest land (dark green) in Central Helmand (1975)

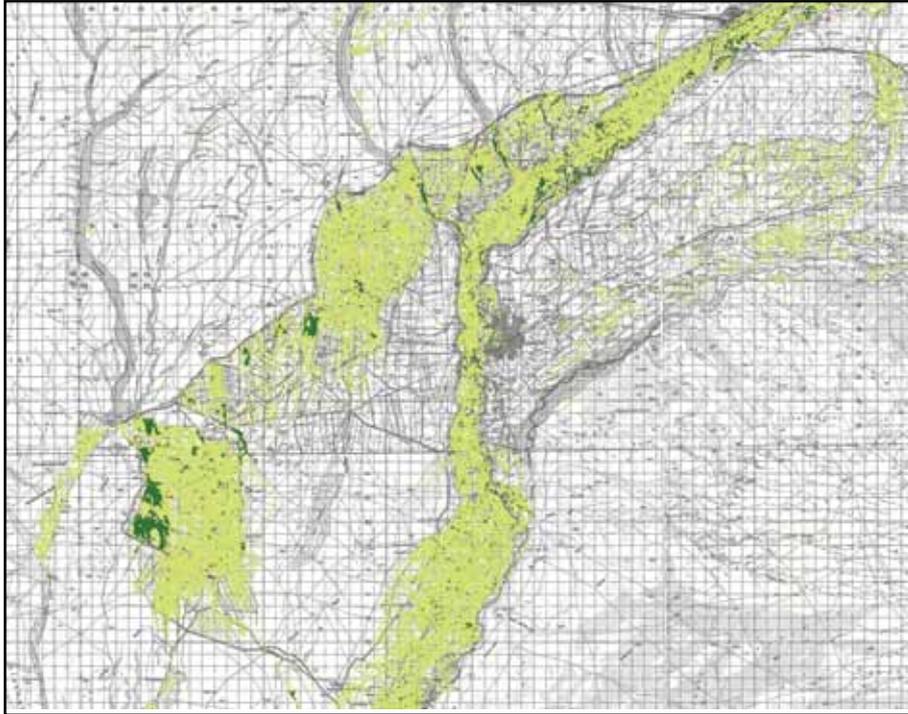
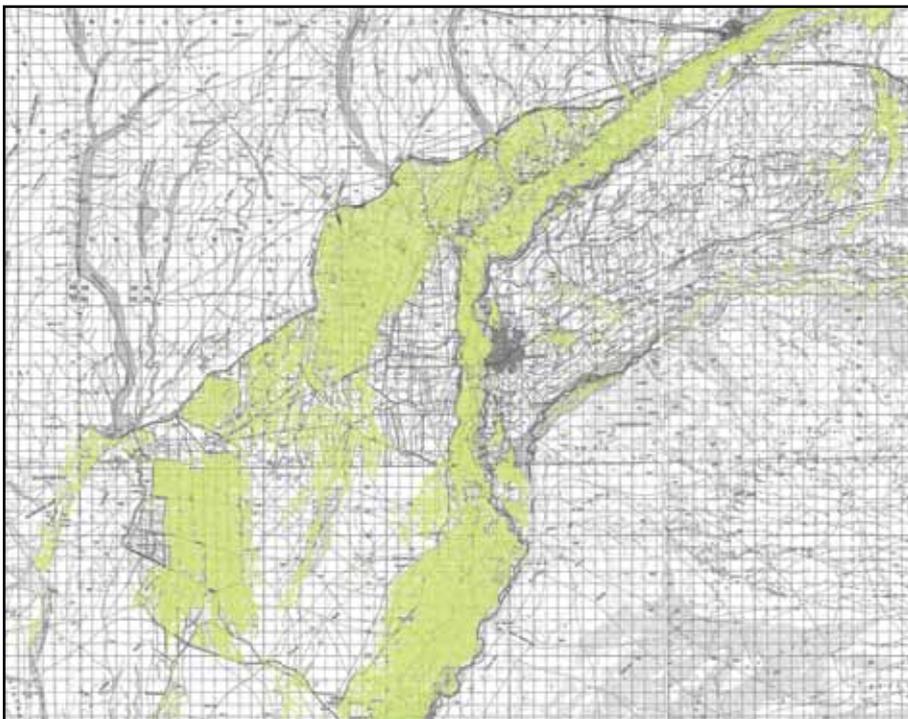


Figure 11: Agricultural land (light green) in Central Helmand (1990)



Consolidating power in central Helmand

Ultimately, the incursions by mujahidin commanders from the more influential and cohesive tribes in northern Helmand, particularly the Noorzai, Ishaqzai, Alikozai, and Alizai as well as land grabs by the Barakzai, who traditionally dominated the prime irrigated land in the Helmand River valley, have changed the political geography of the canal command area and weakened government control. The scale of incursions into central Helmand were such that by 2010 there was a 125 percent increase in the amount of land under agriculture compared to 1975 when the Afghan state had some semblance of control over central Helmand.¹⁷¹

In central Helmand, land grabs appear to be a manifestation of how weak the government is in relation to the powerful individuals and families, most of whom are former *jihadi* commanders, who are now part of the state infrastructure, or who the state does not wish to confront. In the late 1990s the Taliban limited the scale of the incursions into the desert land, which was considered “government land.” There were a few sites north of the Boghra Canal cultivated by water pumps during the Taliban regime as elsewhere, but the number of land grabs were largely contained. Moreover, many of the *jihadi* commanders from Helmand went into exile in Baluchistan. Some, such as Abdul Ghaffar Akhundzada, who took over governorship from his brother Ghulam Rasoul, following his death in December 1994, were murdered by the Taliban.

Land incursions did, however, increase following the fall of the Taliban, particularly with the settlement of land in the former desert area north of the Boghra Canal. Many of these incursions have been supported by powerful individuals within the provincial government or those associated with it, and reflect the return to power of the *jihadi* commanders. Most of these land grabs have involved the indigenous tribes of Helmand and not the settler communities from the eastern, central, and northern regions who came to central Helmand in 1950s and 1960s. In fact, it is claimed that it is difficult for the *naqel* to obtain land north of the Boghra Canal on a permanent basis even in those areas where settlement has been more opportunistic and not involved an initial land grab by commanders.¹⁷²

With the collapse of the Taliban, many of the *jihadi* commanders, or their descendants, from the 1980s and 1990s returned to Afghanistan and reclaimed the power that they had lost. For example, the governor between 2002 and 2005 was Sher Mohammed Akhundzada, nephew of Mullah Nasim Akhundzada. His brother became the District Governor of Musa Qala; Dad Mohammed Khan became Helmand Chief of Intelligence, his brother Juma Gul the District Governor of Sangin; Abdul Rahman Jan,¹⁷³ a Noorzai, was appointed provincial Chief of Police; and, Muallem Wali was made commander of the 93rd Division in Gereshk after the fall of the Taliban.

These individuals are alleged to have “ran their departments as self interested patronage networks, siphoning off government and increasingly PRT funding.”¹⁷⁴ They used their positions to pursue adversaries and settle old scores,¹⁷⁵ particularly amongst the Ishaqzai in Sangin who were accused of siding with the Taliban. It is alleged that the predatory behaviour of these commanders and their involvement in the drugs trade alienated the rural population further fuelling support for a growing insurgency.

¹⁷¹ Martin, “A Socio-Political History of Helmand,” 43.

¹⁷² This kind of land grab can be seen in Dasht Shin Kalay and Dasht Koshal Kalay.

¹⁷³ Abdul Rahman Jan is alleged to have grabbed large amounts of land in Marjah and believed to be a significant opium trader in the province, as well as responsible for a number of violent attacks against rival traffickers during his time in office - some of which have been blamed on the Taliban. See Joel Hafvenstein, *Opium Season: A Year on the Afghan Frontier* (Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2007), 244; Tom Coghlan, “The Taliban in Helmand: An Oral History,” in *Decoding the new Taliban: Insights from the Afghan field*, ed. Antonio. Giustozzi (London: Hurst & Co, 2009), 119. In 2009, Abdul Rahman Jan is believed to have sought protection for his opium crop in Marjah from the Taliban following attempts by the government to destroy it.

¹⁷⁴ Stuart Gordon, “Winning hearts and minds? Examining the relationship between aid and security in Afghanistan’s Helmand Province” (Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, 2011).

¹⁷⁵ Martin, “A Socio-Political History of Helmand,” 61.

At the insistence of the British, and after being found with nine metric tonnes of opium in his residence,¹⁷⁶ Sher Mohammed Akhundzada and his allies were removed from office in 2005. With their loss of *de jure* power,¹⁷⁷ many of these individuals maintained their links to Helmand and strengthened their ties with Kabul. For example, Sher Mohammed Akhundzada was made senator in the Afghan parliament; his brother Amir Mohammed Akhundzada was made deputy governor and charged with protecting family interests in the province; Dad Mohammed Khan became a MP (before being killed in March 2009¹⁷⁸); and, Muallem Wali, a rival of Sher Mohammed Akhundzada was disarmed in 2004 by the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration process and then successfully ran for the first parliamentary elections.

Abdul Rahman Jan also left office as provincial chief of police in 2005. He did not take up an official position in Kabul, although he did make a number of attempts to become district governor in Marjah following military operations in the area in February 2010.¹⁷⁹ His son, MP Wali Jan, and Sher Mohammed Akhundzada are reported to have campaigned for President Karzai with him in Helmand during his bid for re-election in 2009. Moallem Wali remains a major powerbroker in Helmand's Gereshk district, with links to Gul Aga Shirzai. Furthermore, like many power brokers in the province, he is thought to have influence over an illegal armed group involved in the narcotics business.

Since the departure of Sher Mohammed Akhundzada and his allies, Helmand had three further governors; (Mohammed Daud (2006-2007), Asadullah Wafa (2007-2008) and Gulab Mangal (2008-2012), until the appointment of Naeem Baluch, a Helmandi, in September 2012. None of these governors succeeded in countering the influence of the *jihadi* commanders who came to prominence in the 1980s and took office during the Karzai administration. Each governor has been challenged by the continuing influence of Sher Mohammed Akhundzada and his allies over local politics and posts within the administration, as well as the President's desire for Akhundzada to be reinstated as governor.¹⁸⁰ Government land has continued to be taken by the powerful amongst the indigenous tribes, gifted to others as part of a patronage system, or sold on as a commodity. Indeed, corruption in the distribution of development aid is rife and appears to have become part of the provincial administration's political bargain with the local elite, fearful that without largesse these elite groups might support the Taliban.

The most recent governor to be removed, Gulab Mangal, is of particular interest given the duration of his governorship from 2008 until 2012. During his tenure, the Governor was lauded for his drug control efforts and awarded development assistance under the Good Performance Fund for reducing levels of opium poppy cultivation. The support that Gulab Mangal received from the international community, in part for his commitment to reducing opium production, undoubtedly prevented President Karzai from reinstating Sher Mohammed Akhundzada as governor, as sought.¹⁸¹ In particular, Governor Mangal succeeded in projecting the appearance of state power existing in Helmand. Drawing on the coercive power of foreign military forces, and a growing ANSF presence it was possible to improve physical security in central Helmand, as well as make substantial reductions in the level of opium poppy cultivation.

Despite these achievements the government still appears to be without a sufficient number of credible and stable interlocutors that it needs to establish resilient relationships with the rural population. Amongst the powerful, many of whom are from the northern part of the province, personal and family interests and the thirst for local power appear to be the primary factors

¹⁷⁶ Anand Gopal, "The Battle for Marjah" (Documentary film, Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010).

¹⁷⁷ Refers to power that exists more in law than it does in practice.

¹⁷⁸ Coghlan, "The Taliban in Helmand," 119; Hafvenstein, *Opium Season*, 130-131, 313.

¹⁷⁹ Rajiv Chandresekaran, *Little America: The War within the War for Afghanistan* (New York: Alferd A. Knopf, 2012), 81, 143

¹⁸⁰ Guardian, "US embassy cables: Karzai's attempt to appoint 'known warlord and criminal,'" in *Guardian*, 2 December 2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/us-embassy-cables-documents/214273>; Jonathan Goodhand and David Mansfield, "Drugs and (Dis)order: A study of the opium, political settlements and State-making in Afghanistan," (London: London School of Economics Crisis States Research Center, 2010), 22; Chandresekaran, *Little America*, 140.

¹⁸¹ See Chandresekaran, *Little America*, 79.

driving choices over their political and military affiliations. Tribes can contain groups that will be within the government and its patronage system, as well as those that oppose it and have links with the Taliban.¹⁸² A group that feels slighted because its rivals are gaining more favour, or believes its longer term interests are better served by switching its loyalty to the government rather than the Taliban (and vice versa), will do so. The result is a highly fluid environment in which the state has multiple and competing actors to deal with - each with limited influence in terms of geographic space - and there are limited prospects of long term allies. As such, the political terrain is far more akin to the southern districts of Nangarhar than that of the lower areas in the Kabul River valley.

The rift between the rural elite and the population is also not being filled. In much of the canal command area farmers still talk of the local elite, known as *maliks* or *wakils*, as being unrepresentative and absent from the village, often living in Lashkar Gah. There are repeated references to the role that they play in corruption; of colluding with district officials to share the bulk of the development assistance amongst themselves, or distributing it through their own patronage networks. They are accused of writing fictitious village lists for the distribution of aid, hiring men (at 1,000 PR a day) with false identity cards to collect it, and then selling the agricultural inputs on the open market. The rural elite are largely seen as partial, greedy, and unwilling to share the benefits of development assistance outside their own clique.¹⁸³

The socioeconomic and political landscape of central Helmand has changed dramatically since the constructions of the canal system in the late 1950s. The growth in the amount of agricultural land in central Helmand is such that there were 129,581 ha of land under cultivation in 2010 compared to only 57,452 ha in 1975.¹⁸⁴ This is a project that should have strengthened state control over the area given the social structure it imposed on both settler communities and indigenous tribes, and given the land and public services it was designed to deliver to farming communities. However, ultimately, the picture is one in which government control has been weakened by atomised communities, and the incursions that the indigenous tribes of Helmand and the *jihadi* commanders have made into the canal command area since the 1980s. The return of many of these commanders since the fall of the Taliban, their absorption of state power, the predatory nature of their *de jure* rule, and the patronages systems they developed, has further fractured the social fabric within the canal command area, fuelling resentment directed at the Karzai administration and providing multiple entry points for armed AGEs.

More recently the number of armed local actors has increased with the “surge” and by attempts to decentralise security to the local population in central Helmand. The establishment of the ALP, known locally as *arbaki* or *chawarki*, has been one such initiative, providing weapons, training, and salaries to members of local communities to secure their area. It is claimed that most of the forces that have been established in Marjah and Nad-e Ali comprise of *naqel*. In contrast to what Scott referred to as their “impotence” in the 1950s and 1960s, and the local perception that the settler communities from the eastern and northern provinces have been marginalised by the mujahidin in the 1980s and 1990s, and then by both the Taliban and the Karzai government, disparate groups of *naqel* now find themselves armed and being given a significant security role in the run up to transition. Locally the ALP is seen as “an opportunity for the *naqel*” in the face of a provincial government and the Taliban that have been dominated by indigenous tribes and has viewed settler communities who came from other regions as outsiders.

It remains to be seen how the introduction of further groups of armed actors will impact local bargains in central Helmand in the run up to and post-transition. Contemporary history suggests

¹⁸² Gordon, *Winning hearts and minds?*, 25.

¹⁸³ Mansfield et al., “Managing Concurrent and Repeated Risks.”

¹⁸⁴ These figures were derived from Landsat 5 and measure the amount of land under agriculture on a given day in April 1975, April 1990, and April 2010. As a result, these figures do not estimate the total amount of land in agricultural production in central Helmand over the winter season as some land may not have shown active agriculture on that day, as the crop may be too small or the land left fallow until later in the season. These figures should be considered a lower estimate of the total amount of land under agriculture during both years compared to the estimates produced by the Crime and Narcotics Centre of the United States Government, which estimate the total potential agriculture and may include land prepared but not actually cultivated that season.

that given the way that the indigenous tribes and their *jihadi* leaders have imposed themselves in the canal command area, resentment and outbreaks of violence may be as much about concerns over the empowerment of settler communities, than about the role the ALP is intended to play *vis-à-vis* the Afghan state.

4.2 Different Livelihood Trajectories in the Canal Command Area

...it is easy to generalise, in ignorance, about the advantages of the 'Helmand farmers' as if they are some homogenous mass. There are many indigenous farmers of central Helmand who are well off thanks to the development activities of recent times. There are also indigenous farmers who are poorer now than a decade ago thanks to the changes in the water tables, e.g. drying up in the foothill regions and water logging in some areas near the main canals. The same kind of contrasts can be made of settlers, new and old. The variables are many...The total farm-economic picture should be studied carefully. For example, the high rates of tractor use, high yielding varieties of wheat and fertiliser use found in Nad e Ali appear advantageous until it is realised that given the hard and poor clay soils of the area, those agricultural innovations are necessary to produce a crop that will result in net household income no better than in water-short Nawzad or Musa Qala, where fields are ploughed with oxen and the use of fertilisers and high yielding varieties are not common. Helmand province is full of such contradictions and requires more serious study. To generalise is to be wrong and regional development programs, like academic stereotypes of 'Helmand farmers' are normally based on such generalisations.¹⁸⁵

As the previous section shows, central Helmand is a dynamic environment and the political economy of the area has altered considerably over the last thirty years. Significant changes can also be seen in the 2011-12 growing season with physical security improved across much of the canal command area and increased coverage of development assistance. Taliban intimidation of the rural population has waned as they have found it harder to operate within the canal command area. AGEs have not been in the position to impose taxes on land, opium, or other crops on farmers across much of Nad-e Ali and Marjah as they had done in previous seasons.

The 2011-12 growing season has also seen a continued focus on counter-narcotics with Governor Mangal proving particularly keen to be seen extending the writ of the state. At the beginning of the 2011-12 growing season Governor Mangal pressed for further reductions in the level of opium poppy cultivation, including expanding the target area for eradication into the desert area, known as the Dasht, situated north of the Boghra Canal. In the spring an eradication campaign was launched focusing primarily on the more fertile and well-irrigated areas of central Helmand in what has become known as “the Food Zone.” By the end of the season an estimated 3,637 ha of opium poppy had been destroyed. The campaign also resulted in the death of 29 people (13 ANP and 16 “others” were killed) and 48 people sustained injuries.¹⁸⁶ The number of attacks on the eradication team increased and culminated in the destruction of 24 tractors in April 2012.

However, in the end it was crop failure, during the late spring, that had a much greater impact on opium production, and thereby the economic position of farmers, than did the Governor’s eradication campaign. Farmers refer to the cause as *maraz* (disease) and report that it occurred at the onset of the harvest.¹⁸⁷ While rumours circulate claiming that the low yields were due to the distribution of contaminated fertiliser¹⁸⁸ and the dissemination of

¹⁸⁵ Scott, “Tribal and Ethnic Groups,” 34.

¹⁸⁶ UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan: Poppy Eradication and Verification” (Final Report, UNODC/MCN, Kabul, September 2011), 8, 23-24.

¹⁸⁷ Itinerant harvesters will typically inspect an opium poppy field before finally agreeing to harvest it. The fact that farmers made these arrangements in 2012, particularly when they offered to pay in cash rather than in-kind, highlights how they were unaware of any problems with their crop until the harvest began.

¹⁸⁸ One rumour circulating claims that the fertiliser distributed by the government as part of the Food Zone project was

Table 2: Gross income on crops sales reported in select research sites in Central Helmand (April - May 2012)

	Qala Bost		Bolan		Mohejerin		Malgir		Sra Kala		Chanjir		Aqajan Kalay	
	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)
Maize	10,000	30,000	10,000	27,720	8,000	17,750	9,000	17,734	5,000	18,334	8,334	11,000	7,600	24,025
Mung bean	-	-	-	-	-	16,000	8,400	24,167	6,300	17,067	7,600	15,300	9,600	18,000
Cotton	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Alfalfa	0	-	-	-	-	-	0	13,334	0	20,000	-	-	0	-
Melon	-	30,000	-	-	37,500	56,000	25,000	45,000	24,000	57,000	3,000	71,667	20,000	50,000
Watermelon	23,750	40,000	36,000	54,000	36,125	45,500	30,000	48,000	24,000	42,000	47,000	48,000	45,000	60,000
Okra	25,000	60,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gandana (Leek)	44,000	70,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tomato	36,000	66,000	22,000	49,000	35,000	38,000	-	30,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Egg plant	34,000	66,000	-	-	27,000	42,000	-	25,000	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cucumber	50,000	76,000	40,000	83,334	-	45,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marrow	-	40,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Apricot/Almond	Not Mature	30,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Not Mature	Not Mature	Not Mature	Not Mature
Grapes	Not Mature	Not Mature	Not Mature	48,334	-	-	-	-	Not Mature	Not Mature				
Onion	-	-	39,000	49,000	22,000	45,000	17,500	54,000	30,000	37,334	20,000	36,000	-	-
Potato	-	-	0	54,000	25,000	40,000	21,000	36,000	35,000	42,000	28,000	32,667	-	-
Marijuana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Garlic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40,000	-	35,000	-	-	-	-

diseased seed,¹⁸⁹ it is widely recognised that the cause is the unusually cold temperatures in late March, during the *changak* (hook stage) of the crops development. Attempts to recover the harvest (using fertiliser, irrigation, and, in some cases, herbicides) in an effort to aid plant recovery failed, and there were widespread reports of yields of less than one *man* per *jerib*.

Given Scott's analysis that Helmand farmers are not a "homogenous mass" and that there is considerable socioeconomic, political, and environmental diversity in central Helmand,¹⁹⁰ all of these events - crop failure, eradication, improving physical security, and the distribution of development assistance - will have a varying impact on the different population groups that coalesce in central Helmand. This section charts the different livelihood trajectories that are becoming apparent in central Helmand in the 2011-12 growing season, building upon a body of work dating back five years. It does this by dividing the rural population into three distinct groups:

1. Those in the canal command area that have proven increasingly resilient to the opium ban and have experienced an increase in economic opportunities;
2. Those in the canal command area that have experienced improvements in their physical security but have seen a dramatic downturn in their economic position due to the prohibition of opium and the monopolisation of development assistance by the rural elite; and
3. The burgeoning population north of the Boghra Canal that has been disadvantaged by the ban on opium and that is increasingly settling in this former desert land controlled by the Taliban and intensifying opium production.

An Expanding Zone of Resilience

In the 2011-12 growing season there is an expansion in the geographic area in which farmers are responding to the ban on opium poppy, improvements in security, and the provision of development assistance by diversifying their on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm income. This area is no longer limited to the environs of urban centres such as Lashkar Gah and Gereshk, as had been in the past,¹⁹¹ but has extended northwards from Bolan into Chanjir, Loy Bagh to the East, and even into parts of Aqajan Kalay on the Boghra Canal.

The most notable change in cropping patterns is the investment in crops with longer maturation periods, with a growing number of farmers reporting that they have established vineyards and orchards in the last twelve months. This shift has been supported by NGOs who have offered inputs, such as trellising, agricultural advice, and in some cases salaries of around 10,000 Afs per month for the establishment of nurseries. Typically farmers have established orchards of apricots and almonds or planted grapes on two to four *jeribs* of land. A vast majority of these farmers have not obtained an income from these crops and are subsidising these longer term investments in their land with off-farm and non-farm income opportunities. A number of respondents were nostalgic commenting how it has been, "more than twenty years since [they] had gardens on [their] land."

There is also evidence of an expansion in the area cultivating high-value annual horticultural crops. In areas such as Zarghun Kalay, Loy Bagh, and Chanjir there has been a growth in the amount of land dedicated to crops such as onions and potatoes, where in the past there was

contaminated and subsequently reduced the opium yield. The credence given to this argument perhaps highlights the degree to which some of the fertiliser distributed by the government has been used on opium poppy.

¹⁸⁹ A further rumour claims that the US disseminated "diseased" seed by plane. The purported evidence for such a claim is the presence of isolated opium poppy plants in areas where opium poppy has not been cultivated for a number of consecutive years, such as in parts of Bolan near the city of Lashkar Gah, and amidst other crops. Rather than seeing these as volunteers crops, sprung from seeds that have lay dormant from previous years and subsequently germinated, these plants are cited as evidence of an attempt to spread "disease" by the foreigners.

¹⁹⁰ Scott, "Tribal and ethnic groups", 34

¹⁹¹ Mansfield et al., "Managing Concurrent and Repeated Risks."

little evidence of these crops being grown for sale. In areas such as Bolan, Qala Bost, and Mohejerin in the district of Lashkar Gah, Malgir, and Sra Kala around the city of Gereshk there is an even wider variety of crops being planted in the fall and spring (see Table 2). In these areas maize, mung bean, and cotton now occupy only a small fraction of household land in comparison to those areas that have largely replaced opium poppy with wheat.

Traders of agricultural crops in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk also report improving economic opportunities over the previous twelve months, claiming an increase in sales of agricultural commodities. In particular, they report increasing demand for wheat flour, vegetables, and fruit from a growing urban population in central Helmand and the northern parts of the province where opium production continues. One trader in Lashkar Gah reflected on the growing consumer demand, "I remember the time when people would come to the bazaar only once a week to buy tomatoes, but now each day every family buys vegetables." In particular the sale of wheat grain continues to increase unabated with reports of a growing number of sales to provinces such as Bamyan, Ghazni, and Kandahar. In particular there is a growing demand for the local variety of wheat known as *hazaradana* which sells a premium, fetching 10-15 PR per *man* more than other local varieties. They report far fewer security problems transporting goods in central Helmand and along the main highway to Kandahar than in 2008-2009 when security along the road was at its worst.

An increase in on-farm income opportunities in these areas was bolstered by an expansion in off-farm and non-farm income opportunities. Of greatest note is the growing number of farmers interviewed in this area that reported that a member of their family had enlisted in the ANSF in the last twelve months. Previous rounds of fieldwork had not uncovered such a large number of respondents having enlisted in the ANSF (or been willing to admit to it). A monthly income of 22,000 PR per month, often accompanied by an additional non-farm income from trading or employment in the public sector, was seen as a welcome addition to the household economy in the absence of opium poppy, and while waiting for the maturing of crops such as grapes, apricots, and almonds.

Daily wage labour opportunities in the cities of Lashkar Gah and Gereshk were also on the rise in 2012. Part of this was due to the labour shortages created by the onset of the opium harvest season during the fieldwork. For example, unskilled labourers in Lashkar Gah report that prior to the opium harvest in early May 2012 wage labour rates were around 500 PR/day (up from 400-450 PR/day in May 2011) and they could find three to four days of work per week. Once the opium harvest season began, a large number of labourers were found to leave Lashkar Gah and travelled to the desert area to look for work in the Dasht. For those who stayed behind it was possible to find as many as six days work per week in Lashkar Gah and wage labour rates for unskilled work increased to 1,000 PR per day. In Gereshk, wage labour rates increased from 250-300 Afs per day prior to the opium harvest to 450-500 Afs/day during the harvest. Given the low opium yields, and corresponding low wage labour rates received by those harvesting the opium crop, the decision to remain in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk proved to be wise.

While the opium harvest provided a temporary boom to the local labour market, the number of labourers travelling from areas as far flung as Kunduz and Kunar, staying for a period of three to four months per year, reflect the improving economic situation in the cities of Gereshk and Lashkar Gah. According to respondents, one of the primary reasons for the growth in economic opportunities in central Helmand has been the improving security situation and investment by the Afghan government and Western donors. Farmers report that physical security has improved across the area over the last twelve months, but particularly in the district of Nad-e Ali. The kind of firefights between ANSF, ISAF, and Taliban fighters that farmers and researchers had become all too familiar with in 2009 and 2010 have largely subsided and been replaced by a campaign of roadside IEDs.

In fact, as of May 2012, Taliban incursions into the research sites within the canal command area were limited to Doh Bandi, where research had to be brought to a halt due to an attack on a checkpoint. Despite this, Taliban intimidation of civilians was considered minimal. These were not the reports of the threats of violence or punishment for accepting development assistance

Box 1: Views of the state in the zone of resilience

I support the government. I always persuade my sons to help and support the government.

– Qala Bost, 7 *jeribs*, Sharecropper (1/5 of the final crop), Noorzai

We are the partner of the government and want to support them.

– Qala Bost, 6 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai

The government is good, but the opposition does not allow them to work for the people.”

– Qala Bost, 7 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai

We are in government, we support the government; we defend the government by my head and by my wealth.

– Qala Bost, 6 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai

I support the government. Because of this I send my son to [join] the Police.”

– Qala Bost, 7 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Tokhi

The government tries hard to work for the people but the people in the government in Lashkar Gah are thieves and take everything for themselves.

– Qala Bost, 10 *jeribs*, rented, Noorzai

I am most opposite to fighting and war. I wish to have a peaceful life and because of this I support the government.

– Bolan, 5 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai

I am happy with the government because for the last three or four years there have been a lot of changes in Lashkar Gah and a lot of development projects.”

– Bolan, 15 *jeribs*, rented, Noorzai

Because of this government business has improved. Because of development assistance there is more money in Helmand and people spend it in my shop.

– Bolan, 6 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai

I am not opposed to the government as the government has control here. But we are poor and the government does nothing; all of the assistance is for those with land, not for the sharecropper.

– Bolan, 6 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/5 of the final crop), Barakzai

We thank the government; they provide work opportunities for my family.

– Mohejerin, 5 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Kharoti

A government is good but there is a lot of corruption in this government.”

– Mohejerin, 7 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/5 of the final), Kharoti

We are happy with government. A nation without a government is like a sheep without a shepherd. As long as I am alive I will support this government.”

– Mohejerin, 5 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai

Because of this government we have a good life. The Taliban is gone. The fighting is finished and we are happy now.

– Aqajan Kalay, 4 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai

Now I am happy about the government. They provide a job for my son. I am thinking our security forces have brought security here. We are happy with them.”

– Aqajan Kalay, 5 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Akarkhel

My life is good, I can buy meat, my children go to school. I am happy with the government as they provide a lot of development assistance and bring security to the area. We don't want to destroy our government again.

– Chanjir, 8 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Alkozai

that had been heard in the past.¹⁹² Evidence of the improved security could be seen in the number of farmers in areas such as Chanjir and Aqajan Kalay reporting that family members had enlisted in the ANSF. There were also doubts at the time of fieldwork over whether the Taliban would be in a position to impose the tax on land¹⁹³ and opium¹⁹⁴ that they had collected in previous years. Indeed, follow-up enquiries with key informants in July revealed that the Taliban did not impose a tax on land or opium in the canal command area in 2012 but that the ALP, known in the area as the *arbaki*, absorbed the tax of 2 *khord* of opium per *jerib* (approximately 0.225 kg of opium for every 2000 square meters cultivated) of opium cultivated in those areas in Nad-e Ali where opium persisted in 2012.

In this central area around Lashkar Gah, going north through Chanjir and Aqajan Kalay there is also an increasing number of households that claim to be recipients of a range of different interventions including investments in health and education, distribution of agricultural inputs, and public sector wages. There are also signs of support for the government's efforts to stabilise the security situation and promote economic development across this area and around Gereshk. Respondents referred to the increased development efforts of the government and frustration that the Taliban looked to thwart these achievements (see Box 1).

Despite progress in the area around Lashkar Gah and up along the fertile river valley to Gereshk there are concerns over whether the current trajectory of increased economic opportunities and a reduction in opium poppy can be sustained. There remain structural challenges to continued economic growth. For example, despite the increase in wheat production, traders also report an increase in the amount of wheat flour imported from Pakistan, along with vegetables and fruit from Pakistan and Iran, during the winter months. Traders and farmers alike complained of the dramatic drop in prices during the harvest season in Helmand, comparing local prices at this time with the high prices that Pakistani imports earned during the winter months.¹⁹⁵ The sale of Helmandi crops to other provinces remains limited. Traders in horticultural crops report that their most significant export to other provinces continues to be melon and watermelon due to the fact that the season for both these crops is earlier than in other provinces of Afghanistan. Other horticultural crops are only traded locally and it is unclear whether there would be a downturn in investments in the local economy or if the current demand would be sustained were a more widespread ban on opium to be enforced, after all some of the demand for these goods comes from those north of the canal and in other parts of the province who still produce opium.

Deteriorating welfare within the canal command area

Although there are signs of diversification in on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm income over a growing area in central Helmand, there is evidence that there are still large parts of Nad-e Ali, Marjah, and Nawa Barakzai where agricultural diversification is limited and where opium poppy has typically been replaced by a low-risk low-return cropping system, largely consisting of: wheat in the winter; small amounts of cotton, melon and watermelon in the spring; and, maize and mung bean in the summer. In contrast to those areas in the previous section, there is also little evidence of cropping patterns that consists of multiple short season "green" horticultural production, or extensive off-farm or non-farm income in these areas, and on the whole farmers report a dramatic shortfall in income since the opium ban was imposed (see Table 3).

Examples of this kind of response to the opium ban can be seen spread across a relatively large geographic terrain in central Helmand, including Khwaja Baidar, Dasht Basharan, Luy Bagh, Shin

¹⁹² Mansfield et al., "Managing Concurrent and Repeated Risks," 61-67

¹⁹³ In 2011, the Taliban were reported to have set the tax on land at around 3,000-5000 Afs/*forma*, - a *forma* is the amount of land that was given to farmers during the settlement of the area. The term "forma" is allegedly derived from the "form" on which the land deed was written.

¹⁹⁴ In 2011 the Taliban were reported to have demanded a payment of 2 *khord* of opium per *jerib* of opium cultivated.

¹⁹⁵ Farmers complained about the difference in the price of agricultural crops during the winter, when fruit and vegetables were imported from Pakistan and Iran, and the prices that producers received in the spring/summer season when local crops were traded. Examples given included cucumbers from Pakistan which cost 40-50 Afs/kg during the 2011-12 winter seasons and the local crop which obtained only 10 Afs/kg at harvest time. During the same winter, okra cost as much as 120-150 Afs/kg whilst those selling the crop during the recent harvest in Helmand received only 15 Afs/kg.

Table 3: Gross Income on crops sales reported in select research sites in central Helmand (April-May 2012)

	Marjah D5 F4		Marjah 2A		Shin Kalay		Koshal Kalay		Khwaja Baidar		Dasht-e Aynak		Loy Bagh	
	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)	Low (PR)	High (PR)
Maize	4,400	26,125	14,280	18,900	13,300	21,250	14,250	20,000	3,900	14,400	5,250	17,500	14,166	16,600
Mung bean	7,100	25,500	6,200	15,531	5,600	32,550	8,140	10,730	15,000	30,900	4,375	20,125	3,000	5,170
Cotton	19,733	66,000	46,375	67,667	34,285	78,750	48,050	72,000	-	-	25,500	46,750	37,500	66,000
Alfalfa	0	35,000	0	-	0	15,000	0	-	0	110,000	0	-	0	-
Melon	-	50,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	0	-	-	-
Watermelon	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20,000	30,300	-	-
Okra	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Gandana (Leek)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tomato	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Egg plant	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cucumber	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marrow	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Apricot/Almond	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grapes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Onion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Potato	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marijuana	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Garlic	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4: Gross Income from wheat sales after household consumption (2011-12 growing season)

Agricultural Land ¹ (jeribs)	Yield (man)	10 Household Members					15 Household Members					20 Household Members					
		Surplus ² for sale (man)	Gross Income (\$)	Gross Income/Day (\$)	Gross Income/Person/Day (\$)	Surplus for sale (man)	Gross Income (\$)	Gross Income/Day (\$)	Gross Income/person/Day (\$)	Surplus for sale (man)	Gross Income (\$)	Gross Income/Day (\$)	Gross Income/Person/Day (\$)	Surplus for sale (man)	Gross Income (\$)	Gross Income/Day (\$)	Gross Income/Person/Day (\$)
10	110	474.4	729.9	2.00	0.20	271.7	417.9	1.15	0.08	68.9	106.0	0.29	0.01				
	180	1034.4	1591.5	4.36	0.44	831.7	1279.5	3.51	0.23	628.9	967.5	2.65	0.13				
	220	1234.4	1899.1	5.20	0.52	1031.7	1587.2	4.35	0.29	828.9	1275.2	3.49	0.17				
15	110	914.4	1406.8	3.85	0.39	711.7	1094.9	3.00	0.20	508.9	782.9	2.14	0.11				
	180	1754.4	2699.1	7.39	0.74	1551.7	2387.2	6.54	0.44	1348.9	2075.2	5.69	0.28				
	220	2054.4	3160.7	8.66	0.87	1851.7	2848.7	7.80	0.52	1648.9	2536.8	6.95	0.35				
20	110	1354.4	2083.8	5.71	0.57	1151.7	1771.8	4.85	0.32	948.9	1459.8	4.00	0.20				
	180	2474.4	3806.8	10.43	1.04	2271.7	3494.9	9.57	0.64	2068.9	3182.9	8.72	0.44				
	220	2874.4	4422.2	12.12	1.21	2671.7	4110.3	11.26	0.75	2468.9	3798.3	10.41	0.52				

¹ For these purposes it is assumed that 80 percent of the land cultivated in the winter season is allocated to wheat.

² In accordance with the results of fieldwork, consumption rates are estimated at 0.5 kg per person per day. Pre and post harvest losses are not included in this calculation.

Kalay, Khoshal Kalay, Doh Bandi in Nad-e Ali, and blocks 2A and F4-D5 in Marjah, as well as Dasht Aynak, Dasht Shersherak, and Khwaja Babar in Nawa Barakzai. These are not areas with a common tribal affiliation - farmers from a wide array of tribal, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups can be found in these location - but are places where the state and its representatives, backed by foreign military forces, have the capacity to coerce farmers not to plant opium poppy, or where eradication can be enforced later in the season. However, these areas are also where local markets are thin, and where cash crop production for more distant markets in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk are deterred by low consumer demand and high transportation and transaction costs.

In the areas where crop diversification has been so limited, wheat typically occupies between 70 - 80 percent of the land cultivated in the winter months, and over half the land cultivated in the summer is dedicated to maize, the rest is typically mung bean. While land holdings typically range between 10 - 20 *jeribs*, households will rarely contain less than 10 people and many will have up to 15 occupants; larger households have more than 20 family members. It is rare for households to have more than three people generating on-farm, off-farm, or non-farm income, most will have two working on the farm, and children will make up at least 50 per cent of household members. While typically obtaining relatively good wheat yields (of between 180 - 220 *man/jerib*)¹⁹⁶ in the canal irrigated areas the combination of extensive wheat, maize, and mung bean cultivation, as well as high dependency ratios has led to a significant loss in welfare since the imposition of the opium ban.

A review of the data suggests that a cropping system based on such extensive wheat production cannot generate sufficient income to meet the basic needs of the typical land-owning family in the canal command area. The prevailing price of wheat grain in Helmand (between 120 to 160 PR/*man* in 2011-12), and the size of household wheat surpluses given the number of family members and rates of consumption,¹⁹⁷ limits most landowning households to gross earnings of less than \$0.50 per person per day from wheat sales (see Table 4). Only those households that own on average 2 *jeribs* of land per household member and who obtain wheat yields greater than 180 *man* per *jerib* can generate a gross income of \$1 per person per day from wheat sales, but the combination of these conditions is rare. With only a fifth of the share of the final crop, those sharecropping land are in an untenable economic position with such a high proportion of land dedicated to wheat.

Given the proportion of land dedicated to wheat there is little space for what are considered more remunerative, but also more input-intensive, cash crops. The amount of household land dedicated to crops such as cotton, melon, and water melon rarely exceeds five *jeribs* during either the first or second growing season, even on the largest farms. Yields, and therefore gross income from these cash crops, is highly variable within specific locations, as well as across the canal command area, with the lowest yields obtained in the drier areas where input costs are high due to the dependency on tubewells and water pumps (See Table 3).

The commercial cultivation of high value “green” horticultural crops are particularly rare in these areas, primarily due to the challenges of getting the crop to the market on time, and at a price that is competitive with areas closer to consumer markets in Gereshk and Lashkar Gah. Consumer demand is also low, given the size of the urban population in Helmand and the challenges of getting fresh produce to the regional hub in Kandahar and to markets beyond. Moreover, most of these markets can be catered for from areas adjacent to the cities, such as Bolan, Qala Bost, Mohejerin, Sra Kala, and Malgir, where transport and transaction costs are considerably lower.

The result is a cropping system across much of the Food Zone that generates insufficient income for households to maintain an acceptable standard of living and results in the need to generate off-farm and non-farm income. However, here again households across much of the Food Zone

¹⁹⁶ This is in the well-irrigated areas in the canal command area and not the former desert lands south of the canal that are irrigated by tubewell or by water pump such as Dash-e Anya and Dash-e Shersherak, that are increasingly part of the Food Zone.

¹⁹⁷ The typical rate of consumption is 0.5 kg per household member per day but this can increase when disposable income falls and bread will make up an even more significant part of the diet.

are constrained, not only by the small number of males of working age and the high dependency ratios within the household, but also by the shortage of work opportunities within their locality.

Those with sufficient land, who in the past accumulated capital whilst cultivating opium poppy and then invested it wisely, typically earn income from trade and the transport sector. Typical income sources include shop keeping (5,000 to 10,000 PR/month), and the renting out tractors (7,000 to 15,000 PR per month) or motor vehicles (6,000 to 10,000 PR per month), mobile flour mills (8,000 PR per month), or transport goods using a *zaranj*¹⁹⁸ (500 to 600 PR per day). These are the occupations that are preferred. They represent a source of income, as well as capital that can be sold if required, and allow those that are working to reside with their family.

Earning a gross income of more than \$1 per person per day is a challenge in much of central Helmand without recourse to opium poppy cultivation. Further away from Lashkar Gah, Gereshk, and the district centres the amount of households with access to income from trade and transport is low and restricted to those with larger landholdings. For the land-poor wage labour, 300-500 PR per day¹⁹⁹ is the typical supplement to on-farm income, but this too requires a sufficient number of working males in the household, including those that are willing and able to reside in Lashkar Gah or Gereshk if the journey time and costs do not allow them to travel back to their village each night.

A household that can earn 10,000 PR each month through non-farm income, via wage labour or through the trade and transport sectors, will generate an additional \$0.33 per person per day gross income for a family of ten and \$0.22 for a family of fifteen. When supplemented with their earnings from a cropping system primarily based on wheat and maize, most farmers in the canal command area will earn little more than US\$1 gross income per person per day, and those sharecropping land will earn less than \$0.30 cents per person per day. For the vast majority of households,²⁰⁰ particularly for those who do not have adequate off-farm or non-farm income, a shift from opium poppy to a cropping system that consists largely of wheat and maize has led to a deterioration in welfare with reductions in expenditure on food, increasing numbers of unpaid cash debts, the delay of health care expenditure (even for serious health conditions), the sale of assets (including opium), and a failure to meet social obligations, such as marriage costs.

In fact, except for those with access to non-farm income, those that have retained opium stocks, or those who succeeded in harvesting an opium crop in 2011 and/or 2012, many farmers in places like Marjah and western Nad-e Ali report that meat and fruit consumption has become infrequent. For example, the loss of dried meat, known as *landi*, is a common complaint across much of the canal command area but there are also a growing number of farmers who report eating little more than bread and yoghurt for weeks on end, and relying on the charity of others for their meat consumption.²⁰¹ With the price of lamb in Helmand as high as \$5.88 per kilogram, the price of beef \$3.92 per kilogram and a live chicken costing \$2.35 per kilogram, meat would appear to be beyond the purchasing power of many farming households in central Helmand.

In response to the ban there is also evidence of a growing number of livestock sales amongst households in the Food Zone, including the sale of dairy cattle.²⁰² Dairy produce represents an important source of nutrition for the family and the sale of the dairy cow is seen as a common sign of economic distress in rural Afghanistan.²⁰³ The economic situation is of course all the more acute for those that sharecrop the land and who typically receive only one-fifth of the final yield of the wheat crop and one-quarter of other crops.

¹⁹⁸ A three wheel scooter taxi.

¹⁹⁹ The lower wage rate of 300 PR per day is for local employment. Daily wage labour rates in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk are typically between 400-500 PR for unskilled work.

²⁰⁰ "When we had poppy our food was good. We could always buy meat. Now my pocket is empty and I can't afford anything," Khwaja Baidar, 12 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai,

²⁰¹ "Our life is run by *shomrey* [yoghurt] and *dodi* [break]; we are poor people and do not have money for anything else," sharecropper, Khoshal Kalay, 20 *jeribs*, Mullarkhel.

²⁰² The sale of dairy cattle can raise from 50,000-120,000 PR.

²⁰³ "We are poor people, when we have a milking cow we think we have a good life," sharecropper (1/5) 7 *jeribs*, Kakar, Sra Kala.

Figure 12: The reduction of land under crops following a ban on opium poppy in Dasht-e Aynak, Helmand Province (2008-2011)



The economic losses associated with the ban on opium poppy have been even more acute in those former desert areas south of the canal that had been brought under agricultural production using tubewells and water pumps, such as Dasht Aynak, Dasht Shersherak, and Dasht Basharan. In these areas, yields are low; for example a farmer can expect only 110 to 150 *man* of wheat grain per *jerib*. Without opium production and the means to finance the recurrent costs of irrigation, these areas have seen a reduction in the amount of land under agriculture.²⁰⁴

For instance, in Dasht Aynak, while levels of opium poppy cultivation have fallen from 142 ha to 4.2 ha between 2008 and 2011, the total amount of land under agricultural production during the winter months has dropped from 404 ha to 167 ha (see Figure 12). More significant reductions were reported during the drier summer months when farmers typically cultivated less than half of their land with crops and some abandoned it altogether due to the cost of irrigation. Farmers in other former desert areas settled in the 1990s, such as Dasht Shersherak, also report significant losses of agricultural land since the imposition of the opium ban in the Food Zone resulting in growing hostility to the government and central administration.

A state that takes

It is fair to say that amongst those farmers that experienced a significant loss of welfare, the opium ban is perceived as a further act of predation by an administration that lacks legitimacy and honour. Contrary to those that argue that the imposition of the ban is an extension of the writ of the state - including the former Governor himself - amongst those without viable alternatives, the ban on opium production is seen as further evidence of state failure. In fact, many farmers in the canal command area contextualise the ban within a wider narrative that refers to the state's inability to deliver improvements in the lives of the rural population and its lack of legitimacy on account of the prevailing levels of corruption and the loss of sovereign power due to the presence of foreign military forces.²⁰⁵ The conflation of these issues suggests a wider malaise, which despite improvements in the physical security in the canal command area over the previous twelve months, is seriously undermining support for the Governor and the provincial administration in the run up to transition.

In particular, corruption associated with the delivery of development assistance is causing high levels of resentment amongst the rural population. It is a common complaint that assistance is monopolised by government officials and the rural elite,²⁰⁶ and there is little sense that there is much development available for the common farmer once those who are part of this patronage system have taken their share.

As an example of the endemic corruption in Helmand and the challenges of distributing assistance through the rural elite, locals reported the arrest of two *wakils* in Nad-e Ali, as well as the head of the Agricultural Extension Department in the district, during the time of the fieldwork. It was claimed that Haji Barakzai, Head of the Nad-e Ali Shura was arrested and found with wheat seed and 90 water pumps. Haji Qadratullah, another *wakil* from Nad-e Ali, was found with 700 bags of wheat in his compound and 190 water pumps and was also arrested. Despite the support for anti-corruption measures, locally these arrests were seen as a distraction and many farmers claimed that the corruption went directly to the top of the provincial administration.

For example, a number of farmers alleged that the arrest of Haji Barakzai was primarily due to his complaints about the quality of the water pumps that were being distributed by the provincial authorities, and the allegations of corruption he had levelled at the administration and the Governor himself. Typically farmers who had received these water pumps were part of the patronage networks of the local *wakil*. However, it is also alleged that many of the beneficiaries listed by the *wakils* did not exist or were not told to go and collect the water pumps in person, allowing the district officials and *wakils* to distribute a large number of residual water pumps amongst themselves. Some *wakils*

²⁰⁴ Mansfield et al., "Managing Concurrent and Repeated Risks," 35

²⁰⁵ "The government changed my crop for soil. They have just this plan and didn't do any more," Loy Bagh, 10 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Alikhel.

²⁰⁶ "Development assistance is good business for *wakils* and people in government, but not for farmers," Loy Bagh, owner-cultivator, 12 *jeribs*, Wardaki.

allegedly hired labourers to collect water pumps using fake identity cards. Each of the beneficiaries that did receive a water pump reported paying a contribution of 10,000 PR to the distributor. Most then sold the pumps in the bazaar to traders for 20,000 - 22,000 PR each. It was claimed that these pumps were then subsequently purchased by the original distributor for 25,000 - 28,000 PR, billed to the authorities at 50,000 PR as a new water pump, and then resold to a new farmer for 10,000 PR - at which point the whole process begins again.

These accusations mark a significant change in tone amongst the rural population. In the past, allegations of corruption were often made against the provincial administration, but they were typically caveated with expressions of support for the governor himself, and efforts to differentiate between “Wali Sahib,” who was often referred to as an “honest” or “good” man, and local officials who were viewed as endemically corrupt. In April and May 2012, Governor Mangal was described in some of the harshest terms and was seen to have little interest in the lives of the rural population.²⁰⁷ Public demonstrations called for his dismissal.²⁰⁸ There was also a growing perception that Gulab Mangal was profiting from the distribution of development assistance in the province, including in the water pumps project, and that the Governor’s own future political interests lay more in responding to the priorities of foreign military forces than to the population of Helmand, or even President Karzai.²⁰⁹

The Governor’s support for the ban on opium is seen in just such terms. As a consequence of the economic losses that the ban has imposed across much of the canal command area, it is generally seen as a hostile act and equated with “taking the food from the table” of the rural population or “destroying” their household economy. These feelings are all the more pronounced amongst those sharecropping land in the canal command area or located in the former desert areas that have relied on tubewells for irrigation.

Farmers make frequent references to the need to offer an alternative source of livelihood to the rural population before imposing a ban. In Marjah, farmers refer to the economic losses they have incurred since the government regained control over the area in 2010 and banned opium poppy, lamenting the departure of the Taliban, and expressing hope that they will once again become the dominant force in the area.²¹⁰

There were already growing signs of resistance to the ban on opium in the canal command area in the 2011-12 growing season with higher levels of cultivation than in 2010-11. For example, there was evidence of cultivation in blocks F4-D5 and 2A in Marjah, Dasht Basharan, Dasht Chanjir, Aqajan Kalay, Zarghun Kalay, Khoshal Kalay, Luy Bagh in Nad-e Ali, and Malgir in Nahre Seraj. In Doh Bandi, poppy cultivation was far more extensive than in the 2010-11 growing season.

The act of eradication, in particular, is seen as a provocative act in this area, and the individual farmers who have experienced the loss of their crop express considerable anger towards those involved in the campaign.²¹¹ There were voices of support for the campaign of violence mounted by the Taliban and local farmers against those involved in the eradication in the spring of 2012. In total there were 29 people killed during the eradication campaign (13 “police” and

²⁰⁷ “Because the government banned poppy I will f*** their mothers. If I had power I will kill these pimps. They don’t build a school here for our children, they just ban poppy. I have not had a good day since Gulab Mangal *kharkus* came to Helmand,” Khwaja Baidar, 8 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai.

²⁰⁸ Ghanizada, “Anti-corruption protests erupt in Helmand and Takhar,” in *Khaama Press*, 13 May 2012.

²⁰⁹ “The government destroyed my crop - they destroyed my house. If they were a man they would go to the Dasht and destroy the crop there. But they don’t have power to go there to destroy the crop. They receive money from the Americans. If they don’t destroy the crop how do they answer to their fathers [the Americans]?” Khoshal Kalay, 10 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Kharoti.

²¹⁰ “For the last three years we have had the government in Marjah but we did not see anything from them to improve our lives. There is just one thing to improve our lives here and that is poppy,” Marjah F4-D5, 17 *jeribs*, rented, Noorzai.

²¹¹ “Life is not good because I was a sharecropper in the canal area. For the last three years my crop was destroyed. Each year I lost everything and now I am very poor. Last year when my crop was destroyed I worked in the Dasht during harvest for fifteen days and I got 1000 PR a day. I also worked for several months in Lashkar Gah working for a daily wage of 500 PR. Always I pray to Allah no one is sick in my family because I don’t have money for medicine. The government? I cannot say anything. You know my situation - they destroyed my life,” Shna Jama, 10 *jeribs*, 1/3 sharecropper, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2011.

16 “others”) and 46 separate security incidents (see Figure 13).²¹² Opposition may have been more pronounced due to the fact that the eradication in the canal command area in the 2011-12 growing season was seen as particularly thorough compared to previous years. UNODC estimate that 3,637 ha of opium poppy were destroyed in Helmand Province in 2012, an increase from 1,940 ha in 2011.²¹³ Of the total amount of crop eradicated in the spring of 2012, three quarters were destroyed in the districts of Lashkar Gah (1,182 ha), Nad-e Ali/Marjah²¹⁴ (926 ha), Nahre Seraj (311 ha), and Nawa Barakzai (321 ha), where the government now has the coercive power to impose its will.²¹⁵

In contrast to the initial years of the Food Zone Programme where eradication was limited and where allegations of corruption were rife, farmers in the canal command area typically reported that there was little that could be done to deter the eradication team once they arrived in a village. At the farm level there were claims that where the eradication team had demanded bribes in the 2010-11 growing season they refused offers of payment in 2012. Those whose crop remained unscathed were located some distance from the centre of the village, far from the road, or cultivated their opium poppy within the garden of their household compound, known as *mamatah*.²¹⁶

Corruption in the actual villages chosen for eradication seems to have been more apparent. For example, Martin,²¹⁷ in his research in Helmand during the eradication season in 2012, heard and witnessed numerous claims of village elders in Nad-e Ali and Nahr-e Seraj paying the police so as to redirect the eradication campaign away from their community. In one case, payments were made to have the opium crop of a neighbouring village, with whom they were feuding, destroyed.

Once the eradication campaign had moved on farmers did report that they had been approached to pay the *chawarki* when their crop had prevailed and not been destroyed. In some cases it was officers from the ALP and ANP manning nearby checkpoints who were accused of requesting 1,000 PR for those whose crop had avoided eradication. In others such as in Kopak, Loy Manda, and Loy Chak it was alleged that payments were demanded by the *wakil*, and in some cases farmers reported paying between 14,000 - 30,000 PR to the *woliswal* of Nad-e Ali. Further allegations were made against the ANP and ALP during the harvest, when it was claimed that they arrested itinerant labourers from provinces such as Ghor, Ghazni, Kandahar, and Farah, demanding from 500 - 1,000 PR for their release.

It is in the wider context of corruption and the state’s failure to deliver livelihood outcomes that the ban on opium is judged by farmers. It would therefore be wrong just to see local opposition to the ban purely from the context of the act of crop destruction itself and the reports of corruption that often surround the campaign. A far more pressing issue for the rural population is the economic effect of the enforcement of the ban regardless of whether it is achieved through crop destruction in the spring or by coercing farmers not to plant at the beginning of the growing season.

Moreover, the ban has not just directly affected the lives of those that cultivate opium poppy on their own land. It has also impacted those that work during the harvest season, some of whom report having received 24,000 PR for 15 days work in the 2011 growing season. With the loss of opium across much of the canal command area, farmers now have to travel further afield to find employment in the opium harvest (with all the challenges that this entails for households with insufficient males of working age), and are exposed to increased risks by travelling into the Dasht, where the territory is increasingly subject to military raids by ISAF and ANSF.

The failure of the opium crop production in 2012 has further affected this population, deflating wage labour rates to almost one-third of what they were twelve months prior. It has also led to further economic losses to those farmers in the canal command area who have family members north of the Boghra cultivating opium on a seasonal or permanent basis. Those trading in consumer items,

²¹² UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan: Poppy Eradication and Verification,” 24

²¹³ UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan: Poppy Eradication and Verification,” 8.

²¹⁴ UNODC/MCN does not report figures for Marjah and Nad-e Ali combined.

²¹⁵ UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan: Poppy Eradication and Verification,” 29.

²¹⁶ “My life is good. I have a tractor and my [opium] crop is safe. This year the eradication team came and destroyed some of the crop but they did not reach my land before they left,” Doh Dandi, 12 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Alizai.

²¹⁷ Mike Martin, pers. comm. November 2012.

including motorbikes and vehicles also allege a shortfall in sales this year caused by a fall in disposable income due to the ban and low yields in 2012. The significant number of international and national security forces in the canal command area is also blamed for a decrease in the price of opium in the Food Zone, relative to the price received in the Dasht.²¹⁸

Given the economic impact of the opium ban it is perhaps understandable that many farmers in the canal command area do not perceive the Governor's counter-narcotics efforts as the act of legitimate leadership or as an attempt to extend the writ of the state. A government, and a client rural elite, that is perceived as profiteering from development assistance and a foreign military presence, whilst at the same time adopting a position on opium that exposes the population to risk and leads farmers to adopting strategies that undermine their future earning capacity, is unlikely to gain favour with the rural population.

Indeed, in the absence of viable alternatives, the provincial administration's current counter-narcotics efforts, combined with widespread frustration at the prevailing levels of corruption, have led to farmers expressing intense hostility - often manifesting in extreme profanity and threats of violence - towards the governor, those in government, and to a lesser extent, the foreign forces (See Box 2). The cumulative economic effect of the ban, combined with the growing perception of a malevolent administration and rural elite, and the growing economic disparity between those within "state space" and those north of the Boghra Canal residing in territory dominated by the Taliban is likely to be a major theme in the run up to transition in December 2014.

Shifting sands: Physical and economic transformations in the Dasht

The former desert area north of the Boghra Canal, known locally as the Dasht, has changed dramatically since 1999. During the Taliban regime only a small amount of land was under agricultural production in this area, largely occupied by those escaping the drought in Washir and Nowzad. Since the collapse of the Taliban there has been a significant increase in the amount of land brought under agricultural production in the area north of the Boghra Canal, driven by land grabs by local commanders linked to the provincial administration of the former Governor Sher Mohammed Akhundzada (2002-2005). After an initial distribution of parcels of land based on kinship, amity, and *andiwāl* (camaraderie) during the civil war the desert land is being sold on in increasing amounts to farmers from the canal command area.

The amount of land brought under agricultural production in this area has increased significantly since the 1990s and shows no signs of abating. In 1999, only 834 ha of land was under agricultural production in the area north of the Boghra Canal and south of Highway One. In 2008, the year that Governor Mangal began the Food Zone programme this had increased to 15,777 ha. By 2011 there were 33,500 ha of land under agriculture in this same area. It is anticipated that over 40,000 ha of land will be under agriculture in this area in 2012, much of it poppy.

The expansion in agricultural land is such that the physical landscape and the political economy of the area are both changing rapidly. In Shen Ghazi the influx of new migrants has meant that the weekly market has been relocated from the area that it had been for the last three years as the land it had been on was put under crops in 2012. In Shurawak the expansion of agricultural land is such that crops can be found in land that had been used for desert roads only six months prior. The physical terrain is further changing with growing evidence of monocropping opium poppy, the sinking of *barma* (deep wells) and the abandonment of the *bawre* (shallow wells) and the water reservoirs that often accompany them.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ For example, it is claimed that prior to the influx of ISAF and ANSF in 2010, the price difference between these areas was nearer to 3,000-4,000 PR per *man*. Now farmers report that a *man* of opium in the canal command will receive 10,000-15,000 PR per *man* less than were that same *man* to be sold in the Dasht due to the challenges of trading opium in an area with such a large number of military personnel.

²¹⁹ Where there is not a steady supply of water a *bawre* will often have a reservoir. This reservoir is first filled and then used to irrigate the land. Because of the steady source of water, water is pumped with a deep well directly onto the fields as required.

Box 2: Attitudes to the state where viable alternatives do not exist

I can't grow poppy. The pimps and the kafir have destroyed the crop. I want to join the Taliban and fight against the government.

– Marjah F4D-5, 3 jeribs, owner-cultivator, Noorzai

Now that poppy is banned the people are unhappy with the government. They are not a government but it is our obligation to call them government.

– Marjah F4D5, 16 jeribs, rented, Noorzai

*This year and last year my crop was destroyed. We are able to buy bread, but it is difficult to buy meat or other food as we have no money. I f*** the wife of such a government.*

– Marjah F4D5, 15 jeribs, owner cultivator, Niazai

The last two years I have had no poppy, no landi and no money to buy meat. Brothers, what do you think about this government as all of them are kafir and even the kharaji is better than them.

– Marjah F4D5, 12 jeribs, sharecropper (1/5), Noorzai

I don't have any food I just have dry bread and shomrey. If Allah accepts my prayer, I want Allah to destroy this government. No one likes them, they are not good people.

– Marjah F4D5, 10 jeribs, sharecropper (1/5), Alizai

The government has taken the income of the people [by banning poppy] and this is the main reason why the people are unhappy with the government.

– Marjah 2A, 15 jeribs, rented, Alizai

How is it possible by daily wage and the cultivation of wheat to provide good food and medicine for my family? I don't like this government. They are corrupt people.

– Marjah 2A, 16 jeribs, sharecropper (1/5), Kakar

Last year my crop was not destroyed and it improved my life. This year I was afraid from the eradication campaign and reduced my crop. Last year I gave them money and my crop was safe. My food is good but it will get worse as my crop was destroyed this year. Allah will destroy this government.

– Marjah 2A, 5 jeribs, owner-cultivator, Noorzai

This is just a government of pimps. They just play with the people and collect all the benefits for themselves.

– Marjah 2A, 10 jeribs, owner-cultivator, Barakzai

We are all unhappy with the government as always they threaten the farmer not to grow poppy. We pray for the Taliban to come back as we will be able to cultivate poppy without any problem.

– Marjah 2A, 8 jeribs, owner-cultivator, Niazai

All the Government are murdagow and if I had power I would kill them all in one day.

– Khoshal Kalay, 10 jeribs, 1/4 sharecropper, Noorzai

I hope next year we don't have the government here and I will cultivate poppy.

– Khoshal Kalay, 8 jeribs, owner-cultivator, Kharoti

The government announced the ban; last year we paid them some money and they did not destroy my crop. This year they would not accept it. I don't think about the government. When I face the government people my heart tells me to hang them from a tree and cut them with a knife.

– Khoshal Kalay, 6 jeribs, owner-cultivator, Kharoti

I am most unhappy with the government, they are corrupt and cruel. If they carry on the same way all the people will join the Taliban and fight the government.

– Chanjir, 11 *jeribs*, rented, Kharoti

The government only has interest in a small number of people. These people support the government and get benefit from the government. These people tell us not to grow poppy and that it is illegal but these people grow it in the Dasht. I now sit here with an empty hand. It is impossible for me to provide my children with food. They destroyed my crop. I have now banned my children from school.

– Chanjir, 12 *jeribs*, rented, Kharoti

My life is worse, my food is worse. My son is still sick and I don't have money to treat him. My poverty is because of this government. Because I can't grow poppy we face a lot of problems.

– Aqajan Kalay, 9 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/5), Noorzai

*F*** the mother of this government. It is not a government. And also the people who work in the government are not the sons of humans.*

– Zarghun Kalay, 6 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Daftani

Please listen! The government is in the hands of the donkey. What is the job of the donkey? It is to kick people.

– Khwaja Babar, 10 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/5), Noorzai

We hope that the government will change. This is not a proper government, they do not provide a service to the people. The people are poor and the government cannot help them.

– Khwaja Babar, 10 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai

The government is cruel. Even the dogs in this area don't like this government.

– Khwaja Babar, 16 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/4), Popalzai

I pray to Allah that he will bury the Governor in a deep hole because he banned poppy here.

– Loy Bagh, 7 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Mullarkhel

*The people who do not care about my children (the government)? I will f*** their wife!*

– Loy Bagh, 16 *jeribs*, sharecropper, Kakar

My interest in the government finished when they banned poppy. There is no income for farmers and the price of everything is so high.

– Shin Kalay, 8 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Alikhel

The government is bala [a large snake that eats everything]. It has been sent by Allah to punish us."

– Shin Kalay, 7 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Mullarkhel

We spent a lot of money, we did a lot of work but in the end the kafir destroyed [our poppy crop]. They just destroy the crop and escape. They don't ask about our economic situation.

– Doh Bandi, 10 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai

The stomach of the Governor and other government people are filled with dollars and they don't know about the stomachs of the poor people.

– Koshal Kalay, 20 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/5), Mullarkhel

This is a temporary government. They will move from this area. Now they are here only by the force of foreigners.

– Koshal Kalay, 8 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Kharoti

It is now estimated that possibly as many as 200,000 people live in the area north of the Boghra Canal,²²⁰ with further increases in the population during the opium poppy harvest in the month of May each year. The prevailing levels of opium poppy cultivation in the former desert land, combined with particularly high opium prices since 2010 have allowed some farmers to accumulate capital, whilst for others it has offered a viable livelihood and a reprieve from the loss of land, income, and welfare they have experienced since the imposition of the opium ban in the canal command area. The area north of the Boghra also appears to offer an alternative political order to the region south of the canal currently dominated by the government, foreign military forces, and what are seen as corrupt rural elites.

The institutions of governance in non-state space

Community structures north of the Boghra largely reflect the more atomised and tribally mixed villages that can be found across large parts of the canal command area. A major difference is the absence of tribal groups that would not be considered locally as “indigenous” to Helmand, and are referred to locally as the *naqel*. Evidence suggests that the *naqel* appear to be few in number north of the Boghra Canal and are typically not welcome in the desert land by the Ishaqzai, Noorzai, Barakzai, Alkozai, Alizai, Baluch, and formerly nomadic, Kakar, who have claimed the land as their own (see Table 5).²²¹ Some *naqel* have rented land but ownership appears to be frowned upon given their status as “outsiders” in central Helmand. This is an issue that is leading to growing resentment amongst the *naqel* in the canal command area given the successful counter-narcotics campaign in the Food Zone and the increasing concentration of opium production north of the Boghra canal.²²²

With the commoditisation of land and the influx of new migrants into the area, the patronage networks that shaped the initial settlement of the land north of the Boghra are being dissipated, particularly in the more recently settled areas some distance from the canal.²²³ Most farmers that migrate north of the Boghra now do so with the invitation of a family member or friend that already resides in a particular area; they are not given land by those commanders that initially requisitioned the land in the early years of the Karzai administration. As more land is improved and sold, with some of it passing on to a second or third generation of owners, the links to these original commanders are becoming increasingly diluted, although there remains a core group of tribal affiliates and clients that remain eternally grateful to the likes of Haji Qadoos (Barakzai), Abdul Tahir (Noorzai), Abdul Khaliq (Alkozai) and Abdul Haq (Barakzai) for giving them the opportunity to own land, in many cases for the first time.

Kinship and amity now appear to be shaping many of the new communities that form north of the Boghra. These links are important as in the initial year a new migrant will need support in establishing their farm and home. The degree of support needed from fellow villagers will depend on the type of land acquired. If it is the cheapest desert land, which has not been cleared and does not have a tubewell, a new migrant will need help with building a house and with irrigation during the initial months of their stay. Those buying, renting, or sharecropping land that has already been improved will need much less support but will still typically go to an area where they already have an established contact.

²²⁰ Current data suggests a population density of 1.2 people per *jerib* of land under agricultural production (the equivalent of 6 people per ha).

²²¹ It is alleged that some *naqelin* have purchased land north of the Boghra but lie about their tribal affiliation as they know this would lead to conflict with those from tribes that consider themselves indigenous to Helmand.

²²² The *naqel* are some of the first to call for a comprehensive ban on opium across Helmand arguing that if opium poppy is banned in the canal command area it should also be eradicated in the area north of the Boghra Canal.

²²³ For a comprehensive review of the process of land settlement, see Mansfield, “Between a Rock and A hard Place.”

Table 5: Tribal groups amongst respondents in various research sites in Central Helmand (April - May 2012)

	Research Site	Tribes
Former Desert Land North of the Boghra	Dasht e Ab Pashak	Barakzai, Noorzai, Alkozai, Ishaqzai
	Shen Ghazai	Barakzai, Ishaqzai, Noorzai, Alkozai,
	Dasht e Loy Manda	Barakzai, Noorzai, Alkozai, Ishaqzai
	Shna Jama	Noorzai, Barakzai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai
	Nawabad Shawal	Noorzai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai
	Shurawak	Noorzai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai, Baluch, Barakzai, Alizai
	Dasht e Shin Kalay	Ishaqzai, Noorzai, Alkozai, Kakar, Baluch
	Dasht e Khoshal Kalay	Noorzai, Baluch, Ishaqzai, Kakar, Barakzai, Alizai
Former Desert Land south of the Boghra canal	Dasht e Shersherak	Barakzai, Ishaqzai, Noorzai, Kakar, Kharoti, Alizai
	Dasht e Aynak	Kakar, Barakzai, Noorzai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai, Popalzai, Alizai
	Dasht e Basharan	Noorzai, Kakar, Alizai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai, Andar, Popalzai
	Mohejerin	Totakhel, Kakar, Barakzai, Alizai, Noorzai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai, Dawlatzai, Achekzai, Kharoti
	Dasht Chanjir	Alizai, Barakzai, Kharoti, Noorzai, Baluch, Suleimankhel, Achekzai, Omarzai, Kakar, Alikozai
Canal Area	Khwaja Baidar	Noorzai, Barakzai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai
	Khwaja Babar	Popalzai, Noorzai, Alkozai, Barakzai, Alizai, Ishaqzai, Kakar
	Luy Bagh	Noorzai, Mullarkhel, Tajik, Uzbek, Taimani, Barakzai, Ishaqzai, Kakar, Alikhel
	Shin Kalay	Kharoti, Taimani, Alkozai, Noorzai, Barakzai, Alikhel, Mullarkhel, Alizai, Kakar, Ishaqzai, Daftani
	Khoshal Kalay	Kharoti, Suleimankhel, Daftani, Alizai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai, Noorzai, Mullarkhel, Alizai
	Marjah D5-F4	Kakar, Noorzai, Niazai, Daftani, Wardaki, Alizai, Barakzai,
	Marjah 2A	Wardaki, Noorzai, Kakar, Alizai, Taimani, Niazai
	Sra Kala	Barakzai, Alizai, Ishaqzai, Kakar, Achekzai
	Malgir	Barakzai, Alizai, Noorzai, Ishaqzai, Alkozai, Kakar, Achekzai, Sandorzai,
	Aynak	Barakzai, Kakar, Kharoti, Noorzai
	Loy Bagh	Popalzai, Noorzai, Saidan, Barakzai, Kakar, Wardaki, Ishaqzai, Niazai, Alizai, Shahikhel,
	Aqajan Kalay	Kakar, Noorzai, Popalzai, Barakzai, Alizai, Kharoti, Akarkhel,
	Zarghun Kalay	Baluch, Andar, Wardaki, Noorzai, Barakzai, Kakar, Alizai, Niazai, Daftani, Suleimankhel, Torkhai, Chekzai
	Bolan	Ishaqzai, Achekzai, Alizai, Barakzai, Wardaki
	Qala Bost	Alizai, Barakzai, Ishaqzai, Noorzai, Baluch, Kakar, Totakhel, Nasar,
Doh Bandi	Noorzai, Kakar, Alizai, Barakzai	

North of the Boghra, communities are typically structured around a common mosque frequented by around 15-20 households. As in the canal command area, the mosque and the *mullah* who runs it has become a focal point of the community. The *mullah* is paid for his services to the community in an *ushr* (agricultural tithe). In contrast to the canal command area, the prevalence of opium poppy north of the Boghra Canal means the *mullah* receives only one twentieth of the total yield of the land compared to one tenth in the area south of the canal.

Village elders exist in these communities, but none are recognised as *mailks* or *wakils* by the local community, as there is no government to mediate with. There also does not appear to be any large landowning *khans*, or *khan-khels* dominating the political landscape. Disputes between villagers are initially referred to the *mullah* and *spinghiri* (elders, or “white beards”) in the community to resolve. If the dispute cannot be resolved locally it is referred to the Taliban.

The Taliban are present throughout the area although they are becoming increasingly circumspect and do not carry weapons openly. Across the area north of the canal the Taliban receive two *khord* of opium for each *jerib* of opium cultivated,²²⁴ and in some locations 200 PR for each *jerib* of wheat grown. Some farmers also report paying further amounts, “*khud ay was*” - meaning, “as much as I am able to” - to the Taliban in either cash or in kind. There is little sense that the Taliban need to coerce support from the rural population; farmers refer to the provision of “charity” or “help.” In fact, the Taliban appear to be viewed favourably within the area, primarily because they are not the government but also because they allow opium poppy to be cultivated in the area (see Box 3). Those north of the canal largely view their lives as having improved due to the Taliban’s control of the area and due to the Taliban’s efforts to exclude government forces from the area, particularly the eradication campaign that has increased its coverage in the canal command area. Expressions of thanks are offered along with references to the Taliban as *mujahidin* and *ghazi* (one who dies in killing a *kafir*).

The Taliban have also proven politically adept, they have focused on the concerns of the rural population (of security and economic wellbeing) and have not sought to target those (surviving) local commanders who were behind the initial grabs in the area, many of whom have direct links with the Karzai administration. Despite residing in Lashkar Ghar, and having family members in position in authority and ANSF, some of these individuals still have land in what is now Taliban held territory from which they earn an income through either its sale or rent, or through the production of opium by sharecroppers.²²⁵ Local explanations for such reticence by local Taliban commanders refer to the patronage networks that these “government” commanders established during their requisition and distribution of the land north of the Boghra Canal and amongst the Taliban’s current leadership in the areas, as well as in the Taliban’s unwillingness to risk alienating the rural population that currently resides there or the rural elite that might prove useful in the future.

In reality there appears little for the Taliban to need to do to win the support of the population; they only need the central government and provincial administration to continue what they have been doing. Evidence shows that the vast majority of those north of the Boghra have lived in government-controlled territory at some stage and have nothing but contempt for the provincial and local authorities. Those that have left the canal command area and are now located north of the Boghra Canal largely perceive the government as weak, cowardly, and *bei ghairat* (without honor). In part this was due to the increase in civilian casualties at the time of fieldwork, particularly the deaths of 16 civilians at the hands of a US soldier in Panjwai, Kandahar in March 2012, and what was seen locally as an ineffective response by the government in Kabul.²²⁶ There are repeated references to the government as being the “slave

²²⁴ This finding is also in line with the work of the Etihad project. See also Donald Bray, “The opium trade in Nahre Seraj,” in *Network Report* (unpublished report by Etihad, 8 November 2011).

²²⁵ An example would be Abdul Khaliq (Alkozai), a Hezb-e Islami commander linked to Muallem Mir Wali of Gereshk. Abdul Khaliq made the initial land grab in Shen Ghazai and now lives in Lashkar Gah. It is claimed that his brother and son still have large plots of land in the Dasht.

²²⁶ “In the past we didn’t like the government but now the Americans have killed people in Kandahar, I am more against it. [The government] are sons of the Americans, when the Americans kill people in Kandahar they didn’t take any action,” Shen Ghazai, 10 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Alkozai, arrived in the Dasht in 2006.

Box 3: Anger in the Dasht

I don't like government and if the government comes here the fighting will start and the poppy will be banned.

- Dasht Shin Kalay, 13 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/4), Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2010

Don't ask about the government, don't talk about the government when you come to the Dasht, ask about the Taliban. There is no government. The Taliban should always be here.

- Shen Ghazi, 16 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/4), Alkozai, arrived in the Dasht in 2009

I just looked to where I can get a good benefit. This area is better as it is safe from eradication. I had no problems on arrival. I have no plan to go back. If poppy is banned here I will go somewhere else where it is possible to grow poppy. The government is happy that we are poor. For this reason we don't like them. As long as the ghazi and mujahidin are still here we will grow poppy.

- Shen Ghazai, 12 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/4), Alkozai, arrived in the Dasht in 2009

I thank Allah my life is good, my food is good, everything I want to get I have the money to buy. It is thanks to poppy that I have reached the stage in my life where I have everything. These pimps always announce the ban of poppy. I don't have interest in these people in the government. If the Mujahidin is still here [next year] we will again grow poppy.

- Shen Ghazai, 18 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/3), Alkozai, arrived in the Dasht 2010

Life improved with poppy. Because of the presence of Taliban we have poppy and because we have poppy we have a good life.

- Shen Ghazai, 13 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht 2003

Life has improved because of poppy; but also because of the Taliban. Due to the presence of the Taliban we have poppy and all the desert area is developed. We always we pray to Allah to destroy this government as they are the labourers of the foreigners.

- Shurawak, 12 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht 2007

I don't like this government. They are children of the Americans, they are not able to come here and we will continue to grow poppy here next year.

- Shurawak, 10 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht 2007

I prefer a donkey to these people who are working in this government because the donkey knows his owners but these people in government don't know their people.

- Shurawak, 15 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht 2008

Here is the Government of Taliban, we don't think about other governments.

- Shurawak, 12 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai, arrived in the Dasht 2006

*Until the wakils and maliks are killed how are we to get [development] assistance? This year [the government's] mother was f***ed by the Taliban as all their tractors were burned by them. I am a Talib, I f*** the wife of the government.*

- Shurawak, 14 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Alizai, arrived in the Dasht in 2001

Because of poppy my life is very good.

- Shurawak, 11 *jerib*, owner-cultivator, Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2002

I don't have interest in the government, we are poor. We need to have poppy but the government does not allow us to grow poppy.

- Nawabad Shawal, 8 *jerib*, sharecropper (1/3), Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2010

The price of poppy has increased, this is why my life has improved. We pray to Allah to keep the Taliban strong as they help the local people. When this government comes we don't see any benefits from them, we just see losses.

- Dasht Loy Manda, 13 *jerib*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2002

I don't like the government because the government and foreigners do not allow people to have a life.

- Dasht Loy Manda, 7 *jerib*, sharecropper (1/5), Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2008

If there are no Talibs here, then the government will come here and destroy the poppy here too.

- Dasht Loy Manda, 15 *jerib*, sharecropper (1/5), Barakzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2009

The price of poppy has increased, this is why my life has improved. We pray to Allah to keep the Taliban strong as they help the local people. When this government comes we don't see any benefits from them, we just see losses.

- Dasht Loy Manda, 13 *jerib*, owner-cultivator, Barakzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2002

I have no interest in the government as government people eat the meat of the kafir.

- Shna Jama, 8 *jerib*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2007

The government is not good. We can't live with them in the areas where they control. We have the Taliban here.

- Shna Jama, 5 *jerib*, sharecropper (1/4), Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2009

In this area no one knows the government, who are they? And no one has relationship with them. Here there is the Taliban and we support the Taliban.

- Shna Jama, 12 *jerib*, sharecropper (1/3), Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2009

It is because of the Taliban that life is good. I appreciate them and they should always be here.

- Shen Ghazi, 12 *jerib*, sharecropper (1/5), Alkozai, arrived in the Dasht in 2009

The government; all of them are pimps and cruel. Allah will keep everyone safe from them.

- Shen Ghazi, 7 *jerib*, owner-cultivator, Sulani Alkozai, arrived in the Dasht in 2007

of the foreigner”²²⁷ and continued allusions to the un-Islamic behaviour and beliefs of those employed in the central and provincial administration.²²⁸

Governor Mangal in particular is the target of increasing anger amongst the population north of the canal, especially those who have migrated from the canal command area in the last three years. He is largely criticised as being responsive to the interests of the military of the United Kingdom and the United States, and viewed as acting independently of the Afghan government in Kabul. There are those that refer to him as “the son of the British” and there are even allegations that the Governor himself has claimed that he was appointed by the British and answers to the British Prime Minister, and not to President Karzai.²²⁹ The perception that the Governor is quick to react to foreign interests and neglects the concerns of rural Afghans, is captured in the repeated use of the term *murdagow* and *dowus* by respondents to describe Gulab Mangal.²³⁰ More profane terms were also used as were the threats of violence, some of a sexual nature, made against the Governor and anyone working in the government.²³¹

In particular the Governor’s counter-narcotics campaign appears to have won the Taliban considerable support amongst the population north of the Boghra Canal. Many recent migrants to the area have direct experience of losing their crop during previous eradication campaigns in the canal command area, or have been coerced not to plant opium in the past. In the case of the land-poor, the opium ban and the subsequent uptake in wheat cultivation, has resulted in falling demand for agricultural labour and the loss of sharecropping opportunities in the canal command area. As such, this group has had little choice but to relocate to the area north of the canal where opium production is concentrated and where there continues to be a high demand for agricultural labour - in their eyes they have left “state space” in search of viable livelihood.²³² Ultimately farmers in the Dasht fail to comprehend the provincial administration’s inability to understand the impact of such a ban on the economic position of the poor and can only believe that it does not care about their welfare.²³³

Efforts by Governor Mangal to direct the eradication force into the area north of the Boghra in 2012 appear to have made matters worse and have given the Taliban opportunity to present themselves as one interested in protecting rural Afghans from the predatory behaviour of the Afghan state and its foreign backers.²³⁴ For example, in the area just north of the Boghra canal in Dasht-e Ab Pashak, Dasht-e Loy Manda, and Nawabad Shawal, the state managed to

²²⁷ “I don’t have interest with this government. They have no shame because the US burns the Koran and they don’t do anything. The US kills people and they don’t take any actions. I don’t like such weak people,” Shen Ghazai, 16 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Alkozai, arrived in the Dasht in 2002.

²²⁸ “I don’t have any interest in the government as the government people eat the meat of the pig with the *kafir*,” Shna Jama, 10 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2010.

²²⁹ It is claimed that the tendency of successive British prime ministers to fly into Lashkar Gah and visit the governor before travelling to Kabul to meet with President Karzai have reinforced the impression amongst locals that the Governor of Helmand is more accountable to the British government than the President.

²³⁰ A *murdagow* is a pimp, a man who sells women for sex, and a *dowus* is someone who allows the women of his household to behave without honour or shame; “Don’t ask about the government because people who work in government are pimps and they sold the country to foreigners,” Nawabad Shawal, 10 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/5), Ishaqzai, arrived 2009; “Now we have life and we know the meaning of life because we have money. The government is the slave of the foreigners. We cannot accept that. Next year if the mujahidin is still here we will again grow poppy,” Shna Jama, 13 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2004.

²³¹ “I will f*** the mother of those people who work for the government,” Dasht-e Loy Manda, 10 *jeribs*, sharecropper, Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2010; “In this government, all the way up to Karzai, I will f*** their wives by donkey,” Shen Ghazi, 9 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/3), Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2010; “Here is the Islami Emirate and these people f*** the wife of this government,” Shna Jama, 12 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2003.

²³² “F*** the government people, they destroyed my crop [in the canal command area] but they didn’t give me anything. This year I am very poor. This year if [the government] destroys my crop I will do a suicide attack against them,” Dasht-e Loy Manda, 16 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/4), Barakzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2011.

²³³ “No one counts the sharecropper as a human. One day I went [into Nad-e Ali] for seed and fertilizer. All the rich people received it but no one gave me anything,” Dash-e Shin Kalay, 8 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/2), Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht 2010.

²³⁴ “In the planting season, [government] soldiers came and destroyed some ‘machines’ [water pumps]. This year the Taliban f***** their mothers and burned 45 of their tractors,” Dasht-e Khoshal Kalay, sharecropper (1/3), 12 *jeribs*, arrived in the Dasht in 2009.

eradicate some of the opium crop²³⁵ near the canal causing considerable anger amongst the local population.²³⁶ Some of those who lost their crop in 2012 claimed to have only moved to the area in late 2011 after having experienced the eradication campaign in the canal command area previously. Others report making payments to the eradication force to avoid crop destruction. Consequently, the subsequent destruction of an estimated 21 tractors on 19 April 2012 near Nawabad Shawal was well-received by the population north of the canal.²³⁷ Allegations of corruption, reports of the district governor's relief at the curtailment of the eradication campaign, and the act of sabotage itself simply reinforced existing perceptions of the nature of the Afghan state. Furthermore, it appears to have increased local support for the Taliban both north and south of the Boghra Canal.²³⁸

Locally, incursions by the eradication force into the area north of the canal are seen as part of a wider effort by the state and its representatives to predate the rural population. Farmers report of an increasing number of forays across the canal by the ANSF in the last year, particularly by the ALP. There are also a growing number of reports of helicopter missions, especially during the night, which is contributing to the sense of insecurity amongst the population. Many of the commanders of the ALP are seen as malign actors whose only interest is to intimidate the population and loot their houses. For example, in Shna Jama, farmers complain that an ANP commander Mohammed Wali, known locally as *Braitoo* (moustache) and located in Loy Manda, has mounted an increasing numbers of attacks on the population in the area "when he needs money." During the planting season, farmers in Dasht-e Shin Klay and Dasht e Koshal Kalay also accused ALP commanders from the canal command area of mounting raids across the Boghra Canal, and destroying tubewells unless a payment was made.

Ultimately, for those currently residing north of the canal, the government is seen as an increasing threat to both their economic and physical security.²³⁹ They have experienced life in "state space" and wish little to return to the canal command area as long as the current government is in Lashkar Gah and the ban on opium continues. The majority of farmers that have now acquired land in the area north of the Boghra and who have no land or insufficient land in the canal command area do not anticipate leaving the former desert. They are invested in the range of institutions that exist in the area north of the Boghra, including the Taliban. They have little love for the government and the rural elite in the canal command areas that act as intermediaries between the population and the provincial administration.

The majority of farmers to the north of the Boghra have now built their homes, established farms and in some cases have accumulated capital. The low opium yield that subsequently transpired in May 2012 is unlikely to change their commitment to the area. While referred to as *maraz* (a disease), the prevailing narrative is of unusually cold weather in the spring causing the fall in opium yields in 2012 with the prospect of a better crop in the 2012-13 growing season.²⁴⁰ With few other alternatives to

²³⁵ Tractors conducting the eradication in Helmand are fitted with a GPS. These emit a signal every ten minutes so that it is possible to identify where a specific tractor has been, it does not indicate what has been done in that area whilst the tractor was there. An initial review of the GPS points north of the Boghra in Nawabad Shawal indicate that some tractors have covered significant distance over a short period of time raising questions over how much crop destruction occurred. A more thorough review of remote sensing imagery, the coverage of GPS points and the verification process is required to establish a more informed picture of the extent of eradication north of the Boghra Canal.

²³⁶ "I have lost everything. F*** those people who have destroyed my crop. I f*** the wives of the Americans and the government," Dasht-e Ab Pashak, 12 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2003 and whose crop in the Dasht was eradicated in 2011-12.

²³⁷ "This year [the Government's] mother was f***** by the Taliban as all their tractors were burned," owner-cultivator, 14 *jeribs*, arrived in the Dasht in 2001, Shurawak; "The government announced poppy is *haram* and not to cultivate it but what can they do? The eradication team came but they left like a dog," Nawabad Shawal, 15 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/4), Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2010.

²³⁸ There are a number of stories circulating about the destruction of the tractors in Nawabad Shawal. One rumour suggests that the tractors were not destroyed by the Taliban but by local community members. This version of events claims that the eradication team received payment in return for leaving the tractors inadequately protected. A further rumour attributes the destruction to the Taliban, reporting the use of Rocket Propelled Grenades and small arms fire in the attack. Finally there is the report of the district governor of Nad-e Ali's relief upon hearing news that the tractors had been destroyed and that he would no longer need to continue to direct the eradication effort into the difficult terrain north of the canal. He reportedly cried, "This way we finish the job in one night!"

²³⁹ "I don't like the government and if they come here the fighting will start and the poppy will be banned," Dasht-e Shin Kalay, 13 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/4), Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2010.

²⁴⁰ Those that do believe that the crop is genuinely diseased also refer to samples having been taken by traders in the

opium poppy in the land north of the Boghra and a decline in opportunities for the land poor in the canal command area, it is likely that farmers will continue to flee state space and move north of the Boghra Canal whilst land is still available for cultivation and for as long as the poppy ban continues.

Improvements in welfare since 2010

Evidence suggests that the rapid increase in settlement north of the Boghra Canal is partly driven by those in the canal command area that are most disadvantaged by counter-narcotics efforts and neglected by development assistance relocating to the Dasht to cultivate opium poppy. This group consists of both the landed and the landless. While the economic situation is less acute for those who own some land, many of those with insufficient land, large numbers of family members and high dependency ratios have experienced significant reductions in their level of income and are looking to find ways to maintain a reasonable standard of living. Where possible these households have sent members to work in the area north of the Boghra (or in Bakwah and Gulistan in Farah) whilst maintaining their farms in the canal command area.

The landless continue to be the most disadvantaged by the reductions in opium cultivation in the canal command area. They find it harder to find land in the canal command area as they shift to less labour intensive crops, such as wheat - this means that many landowners can cultivate their own land with family labour and do not need to hire additional labour. Furthermore, those that do find employment in the canal command area under a sharecropping arrangement can find themselves restricted to growing crops of lower value and receiving a smaller share of the final yield due to the reduced labour input of alternatives such as wheat.²⁴¹

Those who do not own land are further disadvantaged by the fact that they are the least likely to have received any development assistance that might have been distributed in the area. Local practices determine that a farmer without land is not entitled to wheat seed, fertiliser or other agricultural inputs that have been provided, such as poly-tunnels or water pumps. Nor will they receive any cash for work unless a landowner elects to put their name on the lists of beneficiaries drawn up by local officials in conjunction with the village representatives. It is claimed that the manner in which these village lists have been constructed, typically resulting in the families of officials and the rural elite obtaining the bulk of the resources available, limits this assistance to wealthier members of the community who are the most likely to have alternatives to opium production.²⁴²

The combination of diminished prospects of finding land under a sharecropping arrangement, much lower returns on the crops currently being grown in the canal command area, and the absence of targeted development assistance, have all led to significant reduction in income for this group of farmers. Consequently, the typical response to the enforcement of the opium ban in the canal command area has been to relocate to the area north of the Boghra Canal to cultivate opium there. In fact, almost 60 percent of those interviewed in the eight research sites north of the Boghra in the 2011-12 growing season²⁴³ had settled in the area since the 2008-09 planting season, complaining of significant deterioration in their quality of life following the ban on opium production in the canal command area. A number of farmers had moved into the Dasht and accepted particularly unfavourable sharecropping arrangements, receiving only one-seventh to one-quarter of the final opium crop, rather than staying in the canal command area.²⁴⁴

area and a “medicine” that will be developed to combat the cause.

²⁴¹ For instance, a sharecropper cultivating wheat is only entitled to one-fifth of the final wheat crop compared to one-third for opium poppy.

²⁴² “No one counts sharecroppers as human. One day I went for seed and fertiliser [in Nad-e Ali]. All the rich people received it but no one gave anything to me.” (Dasht-e Shin Kalay, 8 *jerib*, sharecropper (1/2), Noorzai, arrived 2010).

²⁴³ These figures are from fieldwork conducted in November-December 2011: 64 of 98 respondents reported that they had moved from the canal command area to the Dasht since the 2008-09 growing season, and in April-May 2012, 56 of the 110 respondents claimed the same.

²⁴⁴ In the canal command area, sharecroppers would typically receive one-third of the final opium crop with no inputs costs other than their own labour. In the Dasht, sharecroppers typically receive one-fifth or one-quarter of the final opium crop.

After an initial year to two years of hardship, during which land is cleared and prepared for cultivation, a tubewell sunk, and a house built, the vast majority of migrants report improvements to their quality of life following their move from the canal command area.²⁴⁵ Given their former status as land poor or landless, and with the effective prohibition of opium poppy in many parts of the canal command, an increase in income was almost inevitable. Since 2010 there has been an even more marked improvement in the economic position of the population north of the Boghra thanks to significant rises in the opium price. In fact, between April and May 2012, farmers reported selling opium at the farm gate or in the *melas*, weekly markets, in the Dasht for 80,000 - 115,000 PR per *man*. The improved economic position of the population was largely attributed to the Taliban's presence in the area and the protection they were seen to offer the population against the government counter-narcotics policies, which were seen to primarily target the rural population.

The increase in disposable income has brought improvements in welfare, including in the quantity and quality of food eaten and better access to healthcare. For example, farmers north of the Boghra Canal will typically claim to eat meat and fruit two to three times a week or "every time I go to the *mela* (market)." *Landi* is also consumed by the majority of respondents during the winter months, even those sharecropping land.²⁴⁶ Rather than using government clinics and hospitals, farmers north of the Boghra report that they source better quality healthcare from private clinics in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk for minor ailments, and Kandahar, Quetta, and even New Delhi for more serious conditions.²⁴⁷

North of the canal there were a number of reports of the purchase of consumer items, such as: motorbikes (at 50,000-60,000 PR); cars (at 600,000 PR); and, in a few isolated cases, tractors (at 400,000 PR).²⁴⁸ There were also a greater number of farmers reporting that they had married a member of their household over the preceding twelve months, whereas in much of the canal command area there were complaints that households were not able to meet these important social and cultural obligations. A number of farmers also reported having purchased more land or invested in the necessary land clearing, irrigation, and labour to bring more land under cultivation (See Figure 14).

Along with improvements in household income and welfare for the population of migrants to the Dasht, there has also been evidence of a multiplier effect on the economy, which is effecting both those north and south of the Boghra canal. For example, improvements in irrigation techniques which have led to *bawre* being replaced with *barmas*²⁴⁹ is supporting a growing local business in the sale and leasing of the percussion drilling machines, as well as wage labour opportunities.²⁵⁰ These *barmas* offer a more consistent water supply to farmers than the *bawres*. In the past, both the percussion drilling machines required and the skilled personnel needed to sink a *barma* were hired from Qalat in Zabul. Now there is a vibrant local industry in Helmand that provides the drilling machines and the know-how required at a cost of 1,200 PR per meter.²⁵¹

²⁴⁵ "The first year there was nothing. All the area was desert; there was no water, no house. Now we have a tubewell, a house, and we will not go back to the lower part," Shawal Nawabad, 15 *jeribs*, owner-cultivator, Noorzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2002.

²⁴⁶ "Life is good. During the winter we killed two sheep for *landi*, we also have money for medicine and other things," Dasht Shin Kalay, 12 *jeribs*, sharecropper (1/4), Ishaqzai, arrived in the Dasht in 2010.

²⁴⁷ For example, one respondent who had purchased 8 *jeribs* of land in Dasht Ab Pashak in 2006 for a total of 40,000 PR reported that he had sent a family member to the Apollo hospital in Delhi. This cost him between 200,000 - 300,000 PR, in addition to the round-trip air fare. He claimed that this was becoming an increasingly popular destination for those who were seriously ill, given the growing difficulties in getting a visa for Pakistan, so much so that "if you got to India, you will think it is Lashkar Gah."

²⁴⁸ This was the price for a second hand tractor.

²⁴⁹ During the Taliban regime there was some land under agricultural production north of the Boghra but it was irrigated using pumped water from the canal, as the Taliban banned the use of tubewells. See Richard Scott, "Consultant's Final report" (Drainage Rehabilitation Project Helmand Valley Afghanistan, Contract period 11 October 2002 - 20, DAI Afghanistan, January 2003, 12 May 2003), 22.

²⁵⁰ A respondent from the Taimani tribe, originally from Ghor working in Shin Kalay as a labourer operating the *barma* reported he was paid 15,000 PR per month.

²⁵¹ The cost of the percussion drilling machine can be as much as 1,300,000 PR for a machine with a 12-inch drill and only 200,000 for a 6-inch drill.

Figure 14: Land prepared for cultivation, north of the Boghra, Helmand Province



There are further service industries catering to the area north of the Boghra, many of them located in the canal command area, including the provision of diesel, water pumps (20,000 PR),²⁵² and maintenance. Diesel, for instance, in 2012 would typically be purchased in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk in barrels (locally known as “bailers”) of 180-220 litres at a cost of 22,000 each. It is claimed that diesel can be ordered by telephone, purchased on loan, and delivered to the farm gate. Due to the sandy soil north of the Boghra the opium crop may be irrigated as many as 16 times. Estimates of the costs for irrigating one *jerib* of opium poppy varied from 50-100 litres depending on soil conditions, finances, and how farmers responded to the initial signs of crop failure this year.²⁵³ There are also further technological improvements to the production of opium in the Dasht with isolated reports of the use of agro-chemicals²⁵⁴ and the cultivation of opium in rows, rather than the typical method of broadcasting.²⁵⁵

There is also an increasing number of *melas* being held in the Dasht in response to the increasing population, their disposable income, and the current challenges for those from the north of the Boghra to cross into the canal command area.²⁵⁶ Typically these are not bazaars with permanent fixtures but temporary markets in the Dasht where goods are bought and sold. Many of the traders

²⁵² This is for a Chinese made water pump.

²⁵³ Upon realising the crop was failing, some farmers stopped the harvest, irrigated their crop, and applied fertilizer.

²⁵⁴ There were only a few reports of farmers using agro-chemicals for controlling the weeds in opium fields. It was reported that pesticides were typically used when there is a shortage of family labour and farmers did not want to hire labour for the task. The application of pesticides requires the young opium plants be covered with straw or a plastic cup and then sprayed. The names of the actual pesticide used is not known but it is thought to be the same as those applied in the control of weeds in wheat fields but subsequently relabeled as *Tariyak Dawaa*, poppy medicine, and sold in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk.

²⁵⁵ In Afghanistan, like other source countries, opium poppy is typically sown by broadcasting, where the seed is scattered at the time of planting. The plant is subsequently thinned (and weeded) from late winter-early spring. Cultivating in rows places the plant at a preferred distance that aids growth and reduces the need for thinning later in the season, thereby reducing labour inputs.

²⁵⁶ Many farmers from the Dasht complain of intimidation when they travel in the canal command area and say they are accused of being Taliban. They report that they can be stopped, searched, and sometimes given retina scans by foreign soldiers in the area. They particularly fear being arrested and sent to Lashkar Gah due to the belief that the justice system is opaque and significant amounts of money would need to be paid to corrupt government officials to secure their release.

Table 6a: Actual costs of agricultural production in the area north of the Boghra Canal (2011-12 growing season)

	Description	Units	Price (PR)	Total (PR)	(PR)	Notes
1. Land Purchase						
a. Land		18	10,000	180,000		Purchased in 2007. Tenant initial plan to cultivate 12 <i>jeribs</i> increased to 18 <i>jeribs</i>
b. Bribes	Initial land acquisition			10,000		Payable in area between Naqilabad and Marjah. Irregular payments of between 5,000 PR to 25,000 PR
Sub Total					190,000	Costs to Landowner
2. Tubewell						
a. Generator		1	50,000	50,000		
b. Dynamo		1	55,000	55,000		
c. Water pump	Mahey	1	80,000	80,000		80 metre deep need 6 inch pump
d. Miscellaneous	Labour, mechanic, pipes etc			55,000		
Sub total					240,000	Costs to Tenant
3. Annual Inputs						
a. Tractor	Hour	12	2,000	24,000		
b. Urea	50 Kg bag	24	2,200	52,800		
c. DAP (diammonium phosphate)	50 Kg bag	24	5,000	120,000		Was 5,000 PR but fell to 3,500 PR during wheat seed/fertiliser distribution program
d. Manure	Trailer	12	3,500	42,000		
e. Diesel	Bailer (200 litres)	10	22,000	220,000		3 bailer required for first two irrigations. 10-12 irrigations required but dynamo reduces the need for running the generator and therefore saves on fuel costs
Sub total					458,800	Costs to Tenant
4. Labour						
a. Sharecropper		1/4 of final crop				See Returns
b. Harvesters		1/4 of final crop				See Returns
Sub total					0	Costs to Tenant
5. Total costs to Tenant (2+3+4)					698,800	

Table 6b: Actual returns to different stakeholders involved in opium production North of the Boghra Canal (2011-12 growing season)

Stakeholder		Share	Amount (man)	Total Amount (man)	Price (PR)	Returns (PR)	Notes
1. Mullah	<i>Ushr</i>	0.05	12	0.6	55,000	33,000	1/20 of final yield of all crops. Sale price at harvest time May 2012
2. Taliban	Payment on opium	18	0.05	0.9	55,000	49,500	Payment of 2 <i>khord</i> per <i>jerib</i> of opium. One equals 1/40 man equals 112.5 grams. Sale price at harvest time, May 2012
Sub total				1.5			
3. Sharecropper	1/4 of yield	0.25	10.5	2.625	55,000	144,375	After <i>ushr</i> and payment on opium is paid. Sharecropper does not pay any costs for agricultural production. Sale price at harvest time, May 2012
4. Landowner	Tubewell					240,000	The agreement is landowner will get to keep tubewell if the harvest is not eradicated; if not the tenant keeps the tubewell.
5. Harvesters	1/4 of yield	0.25	10.5	2.625	55,000	144,375	Pay in share of crop rather than in cash. Sale price at harvest time May 2012
6. Tenant	1/2 of yield	0.50	10.5	5.25	55,000	288,750	After <i>ushr</i> and payment on opium to Taliban
	Net loss to Tenant					(410,050)	Gross returns minus Table 1a: 5. Net loss divided 50:50 between tenant and business partner.
	Net loss per <i>jerib</i>					(22,781)	Net returns divided by 18 <i>jeribs</i>

with stalls in these *melas* are alleged to have shops in the canal command area and travel into the Dasht on market day to sell goods to the population there.²⁵⁷ Locally farmers distinguish between the *chawarki mela* and the *Taliban mela* - markets that are held in government territory on the canal as opposed to those deep in the desert respectively. Now that it is increasingly difficult to sell opium openly in the *chawarki mela* along the canal, the population in the canal command area also travel to the Dasht to sell their opium, further highlighting the interdependence between the rural populations on both sides of the Boghra Canal.²⁵⁸

In recent years the economic growth in the Dasht in the 2010-11 and 2011-12 growing seasons, and the deteriorating economic conditions in much of the canal command area appears to have brought a new influx of farmers primarily working as sharecroppers. Many of these farmers are initially monocropping opium on sharecropped land so that they can subsequently purchase land and settle permanently in the Dasht after a number of growing seasons. Monocropping, combined with the adoption of improved agricultural techniques, such as the sinking of deep wells, as well as reports of farmers using agro-chemicals and cultivating opium poppy in rows all highlight the intensification of opium poppy cultivation in the area north of the Boghra and a growing dependency on the crop.

Exposure to shock in 2012

As the full implications of the poor harvest in May 2012 had not been completely realised at the time of the research in the Dasht, there was still considerable optimism about the economic situation north of the Boghra Canal. None of those interviewed had dedicated less than 60 percent of their agricultural land to opium poppy and over two-thirds of them had monocropped opium. Prices were still high, at between 50,000-60,000 PR per *man*, compared to 60,000-80,000 PR in May 2011 and only 18,000-22,000 PR in May 2009.

However, when the research drew to a close in the area north of the Boghra Canal as the initial signs of low yields were becoming evident, and by the time fieldwork had been completed in the canal command area, including discussions with labourers who had worked in the Dasht during the harvest, the full implications of crop failure had been realised. Typically, opium yields were one *man* per *jerib*, or less with some reporting yields of only a quarter of what they expected.²⁵⁹ Farmers reported lancing the crop a maximum of three to four times with the latter attempts proving unproductive. Farmers complained that they had only earned enough to meet the recurrent costs of production. Those that had incurred the costs of installing a deep well in the 2011-12 growing season had made significant losses (See Table 6a and 6b). The economic impact was such that in some cases farmers were reported to be absconding in the night so as to avoid paying itinerant harvesters what had been agreed, and of the Taliban being asked to mediate in disputes regarding pay between landowners and itinerant harvesters.²⁶⁰

Reports of low yields from farmers were corroborated by those working as labourers during the harvest. Despite negotiating payments of between one-fifth to one-quarter of the final crop those harvesting the crop reported that once they had been given their final share of the crop, they received less than the equivalent of 500 PR per day, one-third of the wage labour rate in 2011.²⁶¹ One

²⁵⁷ It is claimed that in the *chawarki mela* in Shen Ghazi, taxes are imposed on shopkeepers and traders by the government and collected by a private individuals, known as a *commissionkar* who gets a share of the final profits. Last year the person responsible for collecting the taxes at the *chawarki mela* was seen at the *Taliban mela* the next day. It is alleged that one of the shopkeepers that the *commissionkar* had collected taxes from the day prior reported him to the Taliban in the area. The *commissinkar* was captured and killed.

²⁵⁸ In Shen Ghazi it is claimed that the ANA, who staff the checkpoint over the Boghra Canal, allow farmers to travel to the Dasht and transport a maximum of 3 *man* of opium to sell in the *Taliban mela*.

²⁵⁹ Those farmers who were less affected by low yields are reported to have obtained an earlier crop, some because they cultivated an earlier maturing variety known locally as *chabak sabay* (early apple).

²⁶⁰ In one example in the Dasht, the landowner had agreed to pay labourers a fixed sum of 35,000 PR for the harvest of his land. When the harvest was finished and the landowner fully realized how low the yield was he offered a payment of only 17,000 PR. The labourers refused the payment and referred the case to the Taliban. The Taliban ruled in the labourers favour arguing that had the landowner received a particularly good yield he would not have shared his extra profits with the labourers, so why should the labourers incur the loss now that the yield was low.

²⁶¹ In 2011 wage labour rates during the poppy harvest was the equivalent of 1500 PR/day.

respondent reported receiving as little as 6 *khord* (675g) of opium with a value at harvest of only 7,500 PR for sixteen days work, the equivalent of 468 PR per day.

Given that many of these labourers were from the canal command area, the economic impact of crop failure is being felt more widely than within the Dasht. For example, each hectare of opium requires the equivalent of 200 labour days during the harvest period, of which a proportion will be provided by the household depending on the number of male family members. The residual labour will be hired, preferably paid as a share of the final yield or in cash payments. Were the area under agricultural production in the area north of the Boghra as high as 40,000 hectares in 2012, and were 80 percent (the equivalent of 32,000 ha) to be under poppy cultivation, a total of 6.4 million labour days would be required for the opium harvest. The loss of these wage earning opportunities are in addition to the losses incurred as a result of the cumulative impact of the prohibition of opium production within the Food Zone since the 2008-09 growing season.

Faced with such losses there is little prospect of falling levels of cultivation in the Dasht in the 2012-13 growing season. While some of those more opportunist farmers that leased land north of the Boghra in 2011-12 may be reluctant to invest in land north of the Boghra in the 2012-13 growing season, the majority of farmers who own or sharecrop land north of the canal have few other options but to continue to cultivate opium poppy. In fact there is every possibility that most will look to recoup their losses in the upcoming season. While it is difficult for farmers to increase the proportion of land allocated to opium poppy when there has already been such a high degree of monocropping in the 2011-12 growing season, there is every prospect of further desert land being brought under cultivation north of the Boghra by those already residing there looking to regain the capital they lost in 2012-12, as well as by new entrants looking for a viable alternative to the absence of opium poppy in the canal command area.

4.3 Helmand: Conclusion

As in Nangarhar, there are multiple rural realities in central Helmand. The livelihood trajectories of the different population groups that reside there vary by location and by the history, resource endowments, the shocks that the rural population experience.

In the fertile river plain of the Helmand River where there is a history of state encapsulation and where the population is benefiting from diverse income opportunities and the provision of public services, there are signs of improving quality of life and broad support for the government's efforts to extend its writ despite the ban on opium poppy. Movement into high value horticulture, particularly perennials reflect both growing consumer demand and increased confidence in medium- to long-term investments in this area. The increased number of households with members enlisted in the ANSF, and acknowledging that their family members have joined, highlights the changes in the security environment in the canal command area over the last twelve months.

Further afield the livelihood trajectory is not as favourable, nor are attitudes to the Afghan state and those who occupy office within the provincial administration positive. In much of the district of Marjah, as well as in the western parts of Nad-e Ali, farmers have experienced an improvement in physical security over the last twelve months but also a significant deterioration in their overall economic position which they blame on the opium ban. In these areas opium poppy has been largely replaced by low-risk, low-return crops resulting in: a significant fall in disposable income for the population; and with it, a reduction in the consumption of meat and fruit; delay of health care expenditure; sale of assets; and, the failure to meet social obligations, such as marriage costs. Those sharecropping land have found themselves even more disadvantaged in the absence of opium production and have typically had to leave the area and search for cultivable land elsewhere.

The shifting political geography of areas such as Nad-e Ali and Marjah has further weakened state power in light of the government's decision to implement an opium ban. These are areas that were initially made up of settler communities, largely consisting of Kuchi herders, and multiple tribal groups from across the country that were all given former desert land under the Boghra Canal after its construction in the late 1950s. Since then this area of atomised communities, has been

further penetrated by local Helmandi tribal groups, resentful of the fact that the state gifted land to “outsiders.”

The degree of social fragmentation that has occurred in central Helmand, over the last four decades, combined with the intrusion of armed *jihadist* commanders and their clients during the 1980s and 1990s, has imposed significant constraints on state power in the canal command area. Similar to those in government posts in Jalalabad engaging with the tribal groups of southern Nangarhar, officials in Lashkar Gah are faced with multiple and competing tribal elites who only have fragile hold over a limited geographic space. These are not areas dominated by landed elites (as in the districts of Surkhrud or Kama in central Nangarhar that preside over large tracts of land), and who have a symbiotic interest with the Afghan state.

Instead, the state in central Helmand is confronted with divided tribal groups, often containing sub-tribes in direct conflict with each other, as well as intense competition between the different tribes located in the canal command area as they contest control over natural resources, such as land and water, and for patronage from those wielding state power, or indeed those aligned with AGEs. In this highly fragile and dynamic environment, favouring one group only serves to alienate another as each looks at how they might best protect their interests and the geographic territory that they currently control.

The presence of foreign military forces in this terrain and a robust counter-narcotics policy has also played its role in reconfiguring the political and economic geography in the province. The projection of state power through the imposition of an opium ban has alienated the population in those areas where viable alternatives are not in place. It has increasingly led to the relocation of farmers to the desert area north of the Boghra Canal where the Taliban dominate. Combined with the perception of widespread corruption in the delivery of development assistance, the ban has been seen an act of predation by those in the rural population who do not have other income streams that they can draw upon in the absence of opium poppy cultivation.

Resistance to the state and its policies can already be seen within the canal command area of Helmand. In the 2011-12 growing season farmers made greater efforts to plant opium than in the previous year. For instance, very little opium poppy was found in Marjah in 2011, particularly compared to the year prior when as much as 56 percent of the total agricultural land in the district was allocated to opium poppy. In the 2011-12 growing season there were far more instances of farmers attempting to cultivate opium poppy in the canal command area than the previous season, which in part explains the increased levels of eradication in the spring of 2012.

The increasing rate of migration to the area north of the Boghra is also an act of defiance and should not simply be dismissed as economic opportunism. Many of those that have relocated have been disadvantaged by the opium ban and can no longer obtain land or meet their basic needs in the canal command area without recourse to opium poppy cultivation. They depart the canal command area hostile to the government in Lashkar Gah and a rural elite that they believe has colluded with provincial and district officials to divert development assistance to the most powerful and the least needy.

There are also growing signs of support for the Taliban amongst those who have settled in the desert land north of the Boghra to cultivate opium poppy, but also those left behind in the canal command area experiencing deterioration in their quality of life in the absence of opium poppy. The dramatic shift in the population’s perception of the now former Governor Mangal,²⁶² and the profanity directed towards him and the provincial administration, despite improvements in physical security, highlight the cumulative impact the opium ban has had on efforts to win “hearts and minds” in this fragile economic and political environment.

There are further fractures developing in the political geography of central Helmand in the wake of the opium ban and foreign military intervention. The first is a function of local restriction on who can purchase land in the Dasht and thereby derive benefits from opium poppy cultivation. It is the Noorzai,

²⁶² Governor Mangal was governor from July 2008 to September 2012.

Barakzai, Ishaqzai, Alizai, Alkozai, Kakar, and Baluch that dominate the landscape in this area where opium poppy is becoming increasingly concentrated. Those who are not from these tribes, but were settled in Marjah and Nad-e Ali from other provinces, known as the *naqel*, are not entitled to buy land in the Dasht and their exclusion causes increasing resentment and complaints about those growing poppy in the Dasht. Some of the most vocal critics of the increase in cultivation to the north of the Boghra Canal comes from the settler communities in Nad-e Ali and Marjah in areas like Khoshal Kalay, Shin Kalay, and Marjan Block F4-D5 who resent the unequal way in which the law is being enforced and more importantly, the concentration of economic power in the hands of the indigenous population.

The second fracture line appears to be consequential of the ALP. In Marjah and Nad-e Ali, locals claim that there is a disproportionate number of *naqel* that are being armed and given responsibilities for securing rural communities. Earlier in the 2011-12 growing season there were complaints from those north of the Boghra Canal that members of the ALP from the canal command area were over-extending their mandate under the guise of law enforcement activities and crossing into the Dasht to extract rent from those cultivating opium poppy. During the eradication season in the spring of 2012, there were also reports of elements of the ALP absorbing the Taliban tax on opium, extracting bribes from those whose crops had escaped destruction, and cultivating opium poppy on their own land. Were the indigenous population of Helmand to see the ALP in Marjah and Nad-e Ali as a vehicle for asserting the economic and political interests of the settler community there would be a high probability for renewed violence following the withdrawal of foreign troops.

Making predictions in such a complex and fluid environment as central Helmand is of course vulnerable to error. However, it seems highly likely that opium production will become a more important facet of the political economy of Helmand in the run up to transition, as well as once the combat mission of foreign military forces has ended in December 2014.

While a ban could be sustained in the environs of Lashkar Gah and Gereshk where households have viable alternatives, the divisions within and between tribal groups and communities in central Helmand make it doubtful that an opium ban will be sustained across the Food Zone even in the 2012-13 growing season. In particular, it seems unlikely that local elites will look to impose a ban and risk alienating the rural population, and thereby undermine their rural support and limit their opportunities for rent extraction, particularly in light of fears that donor money will wane. There are already claims that elements of the ALP in Nad-e Ali and Marjah have let it be known that they will not be attempting to ban opium poppy in the 2012-13 growing season and will let farmers cultivate opium poppy.

It is evident that the cumulative effect of the opium ban is taking its toll on those without sufficient non-farm and off-farm income. Low yields in 2012 have imposed further costs on this population, reducing the subsidy that households in the canal command area have received from those family members that had relocated to the Dasht to work on the opium crop on a seasonal or more permanent basis. The impact is most acute in those areas in the canal command area of central Helmand where farmers have replaced opium poppy with a low-risk, low-return cropping system such as wheat, cotton, mung bean, and maize. The risk of a return to opium poppy would therefore appear to be at its most acute in Marjah, western Nad-e Ali, and in the areas south of the Boghra Canal irrigated by tubewells.

It also seems particularly unlikely that the area north of the Boghra Canal will revert back to desert any time soon. The dramatic fall in opium yields experienced by those north of the Boghra Canal in 2012 may deter further cultivation in the 2012-13 growing season amongst those with capital who purchased land, installed tubewells, and hired labour to cultivate opium poppy in the 2011-12 growing season. However, ultimately, there are no alternatives to opium poppy north of the Boghra Canal due to the high costs of agricultural production.

It is likely that most farmers in this area will continue to cultivate opium poppy, and, given their losses this season, may even expand the amount of land under cultivation. Furthermore, there are no signs of a shortage of land to bring under agricultural production in the area north of the Boghra. There is still plenty of potential for increasing rates of migration, especially if the government were to try and persist with its opium ban in the canal command area of central Helmand and refrained from

taking remedial action to meet the needs of the land-poor who are most disadvantaged by current counter-narcotics policies. It also seems unlikely that the central government in Kabul will look to pursue counter-narcotics efforts in Helmand after transition. The appointment of Naeem Baluch as governor, a local man who it is assumed is acceptable to the former governor, Sher Mohammed Akhundzada, suggests that there will be an attempt to broker a deal that garners support for the current administration. Many anticipate that such a deal is unlikely to prioritise counter-narcotics unless it is part of a strategy to weaken rival tribal groups by targeting them for eradication and law enforcement.

Given these economic and political realities, as well as the rate of land settlement within the province over the last decade, the scenario seems set to be one in which Helmand will have substantially more opium production post-2014 than it has since 2001, or before the collapse of the Taliban regime.

5. Conclusion

Barfield²⁶³ points to the difficulties successive Afghan leaders have experienced in establishing control over territory in Afghanistan:

*Those Afghan leaders who would best succeed during the [twentieth century] employed a 'Wizard of Oz' strategy. They declared their governments all-powerful but rarely risked testing their claim by implementing controversial policies. The leaders most prone to failure and state collapse were those who assumed that they possessed the power to do as they pleased, and then provoked opposition that their regimes proved incapable of suppressing.*²⁶⁴

Barfield refers to the tendency for Afghanistan to revert to “a political ecology” that is “characterised by a centre dominating distinct regions, each of which had their own political elites”.²⁶⁵ Within this ecology, Barfield argues that those in political power in the centre have had to counter their ambitions to dominate the regions if they wished to retain political power in the centre.

The same is clearly true within the regions where historically, provincial governors have had to cede significant autonomy to areas where the terrain, limited resource endowments, and social structure had not lent themselves to state encapsulation. In these areas the state has looked to manage dissent. To this aim, the state has reached bargains with different tribal groups as a way of maintaining a semblance of order and to minimise the risk that those in more remote territory might mount raids and create disorder in the low lying valleys. The threat of state violence has been instrumental in these bargains, and when combined with allowances to the rural elite, and the offer of concessions to the wider population, the state has managed significant parts of the Afghan territory, not through a concentration of the means of violence, but through judicious shows of strength and careful deal-making.

As the 2011-12 growing season shows, imposing an opium ban in this kind of terrain has proven destabilising and has undermined more recent efforts at state formation in both the provinces of Helmand and Nangarhar. In Nangarhar there have been further increases in opium poppy cultivation in the upper districts bordering Pakistan where state power is increasingly contested and where access to viable alternatives are limited. Hostility to the government was pronounced in these southern districts during the 2011-12 growing season, and there is growing evidence of insurgent presence in the lower districts of Shinwar and Bati Kot in the run up to the 2012-13 planting season.

The ongoing land dispute in Achin combined with the cumulative effect of the opium ban has led to the rural population resisting government incursions. AGEs have now established a firm footing in the upper Mohmand valley and there are increasing reports of the insurgency moving into the lower areas in an attempt to solicit support from the rural population. The tribal elite in upper Achin that was so instrumental in supporting the government in its imposition of an opium ban between 2008 and 2010, and which formally agreed to limit the movement of insurgent groups through the signing of the “Shinwari Pact” in February 2009, is now increasingly reticent in its engagement with the government, and, some say, has reached an accommodation with local opponents to the provincial administration.

In the district of Khogiani, the insurgency has moved further down the valleys and is not just concentrated in the upper valleys of Pirakhel and Zawah bordering Sherzad. History of resistance to the Afghan state and deep divisions within the rural elite in Khogiani undermines attempts by the Afghan government to establish a meaningful relationship with the rural population that reside beyond the district centre. The violent reaction to the government’s attempts at crop destruction in 2012, even in more accessible locations such as Mimla, highlights how well embedded AGEs are within the district. The return of opium poppy cultivation to the lower parts of the district in areas

²⁶³ Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 60 - 61.

²⁶⁴ Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 164.

²⁶⁵ Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 162 - 163.

such as Khelago, as well as in close proximity to the district centre, reflect the growing sense amongst the rural population that the state is weak.

The return of opium poppy in these areas is a visible sign of the retreat of the state in Nangarhar. Governor Gul Aga Shirzai is increasingly isolated, unable to travel to many of the districts which he visited to announce the prohibition of opium during the 2007-08 and 2008-09 growing seasons. He finds himself with few political allies in the province following a breakdown in his relationship with the provincial political elite and with Kabul following the presidential, parliamentary, and provincial elections in 2009 and 2010. The business interests that the current governor has built within the province, with no obvious way to transfer his capital were he to move, has made his departure all the more attractive to former *jihadi* commanders and their political heirs as they too prepare for a post-2014 Afghanistan.

The rural population in the southern districts is also looking to recoup its losses and in the 2011-12 growing season opium poppy was grown not only in greater amounts in districts such as Sherzad, Hesarak, Chapahar, Khogiani, Pachir wa Agam, Deh Bala, Nazian, and Achin, and for the first time since 2007 could be found in the lower valleys in more accessible areas. Isolated crops could even be seen in the Kabul River basin in the lower parts of districts, such as in the sub-canal, or *wialas*, in Shinwar. While a government-led eradication campaign destroyed some of the crop in the more accessible parts of these districts, it also prompted a level of violence that has not been associated with crop destruction in Nangarhar for some years. This violence has to be seen within the context of a campaign that did not venture into some of the upper parts of many of these districts, particularly in Sherzad, Khogiani, and Achin, where the presence of AGEs is more entrenched.

Similar social processes can be seen at work in central Helmand. The well-irrigated canal command area of central Helmand does not contain the more hierarchical and unitary tribal structure and senior aristocratic elites that can be found in the settled state space in the lower districts of Nangarhar. Instead much of the canal command area of Helmand contains multiple tribal groups with their respective rural elites, all in intense competition for both resources and influence. Whilst the mix of tribal groups, both settler and indigenous, in the canal command area in theory should have made it easier for the state to coerce the rural population, the effect of the protracted armed conflict in southern Afghanistan has undermined the state's capacity to concentrate the means of violence.

The penetration of the canal command area by those leading the Soviet resistance in the province, most of whom are from influential tribes from the northern parts of Helmand, through land grabs in the 1980s and 1990s, and their appointment to government office in the initial years of the Karzai administration, has changed the political geography of the province. As in the southern districts of Nangarhar, the government in Helmand is confronted with a myriad of competing interlocutors each with limited control over geographic space. If need be, these interlocutors will look to patronage from the central and provincial administration, foreign civilian and military forces, and the insurgency, to gain the upper hand over their rivals within their own village or with the village next door. The most adept rural leadership maintains a relationship with all three groups thereby ensuring that they have a powerful patron regardless of who gains the upper hand in the area.

Pursuing an opium ban in this kind of political and economic space undermines the fragile bargains between those in state power, the rural elite, and the rural population. In the absence of viable alternatives a ban on opium production is seen by the rural population as an act of predation and a failure by the rural elite to protect community interests. It imposes significant welfare losses on those without sufficient resource endowments and compels farmers to pursue coping strategies that will both impact their future earning capacity and expose them to physical hazards. The concentration of development assistance in the hands of the rural elite further undercuts the state's efforts to develop more resilient bonds with the population and subsequently leads to shifts in local leadership.

Faced with overwhelming force, typically manifested by the threat of foreign military power, the rural population in these areas has shown that it will abandon opium poppy cultivation in the short term. However, there is also growing evidence that farmers and competing rural elites will invest in

other potential configurations of power that might offer the opportunity for a return to cultivation once the balance of power has changed and current state actors and their foreign supporters no longer have a concentration of the means of violence. In central Helmand responses to the ban have been fairly immediate and have included increasing numbers of farmers relocating to the desert land north of the Boghra Canal where the Taliban dominate. In the southern districts of Nangarhar an initial reluctance to engage with insurgent groups has dissipated following the cumulative effect of the opium ban and the impact of other concurrent shocks on the rural population.

Ultimately the conditions that have led to lower levels of opium poppy cultivation in both Nangarhar and Helmand no longer hold. In particular, there will be a fundamental shift with the withdrawal of the Western military from the rural areas of Afghanistan. While the Afghan government can prevail in those lower fertile valleys where there is a long history of state dominance and where the population has seen improvements in its welfare over the last decade, low levels of opium poppy cultivation will not be maintained in areas where state power is increasingly contested. In these areas, state actors, including Afghan security personnel, are more likely to reach an accommodation with local farmers and the rural elite on opium poppy cultivation; by recognising the role that opium production can play as a source of rent in the advent of dwindling Western monies and that imposing a continued ban would risk alienating the rural population and give succour to the insurgency.

The probability of significant rises in the level of opium poppy cultivation in the 2012-13 growing season is high, particularly following the cessation of foreign combat missions in December 2014 in both Nangarhar and Helmand. What remains unclear is how both Kabul and the international community will respond. In particular, it is increasingly uncertain where the international community currently sits on the issue of counter-narcotics. It is clear that the pursuit of a separate strand of counter-narcotics activities and objectives has proven unhelpful. The focus on fluctuations in annual metrics, such as the amount of cultivation, eradication, and the number of “poppy free” provinces has been an abstraction and has often prevented the development of a more informed and longer term approach that addresses the various causes of cultivation within the wider state building effort in Afghanistan. Moreover, as this report has shown, the failure to consider the multiple rural realities in Afghanistan and the diverse histories of state engagement across different geographical and political terrain has, in some areas, proven detrimental to the achievement of more enduring reductions in cultivation as well as the realisation of stabilisation objectives.

However, there now appears to be an increasing amount of hand wringing amongst policy makers in capitals, and a sense that a growing number of political and development actors believe that they can maintain their programmes of activity in Afghanistan without even considering the drugs economy. It seems unlikely that a programme that, for example, significantly increases the amount of irrigated land in the Helmand River basin would actually achieve its development objectives within the region or strengthen the social compact with the Afghan state were the bulk of the newly settled land to be cultivated with opium poppy destined for the illicit drugs trade.

Similarly, a political strategy that ignores the presence of a lootable good currently valued at 15 percent of gross domestic product nationally,²⁶⁶ and considerably more in provinces where opium production is concentrated, and is destined to rise when military and development aid diminishes, would be shortsighted given the potential for drug money to influence upcoming election campaigns and shape future political settlements in the regions. It also remains to be seen what kind of domestic support Western governments will be able to generate in the future for investing in Afghanistan were opium poppy to occupy a greater amount of agricultural land than ever before and were labels such as “narco state” to be increasingly bandied around in the media. Evidence has shown that to place counter-narcotics, and in particular the pursuit of opium bans, front and centre in Afghanistan, has proven a mistake. However, to ignore the drugs issue completely because it is complex, dynamic and presentationally difficult, would be equally as myopic and potentially just as counterproductive.

²⁶⁶ UNODC/MCN, “Afghanistan Annual Opium Poppy Survey” (Kabul: UNODC/MCN, December 2011), 3.

Annex
Table 1: Household profiles for selected number of respondent
in Achin District, Nangarhar (2011-2012)

Members (No)	Land (jeribs)	Crops	Area (jeribs)	Sale/Consume	Crops	Area (jeribs)	Sale/Consume	Live-stock	Sale	Non-Farm (Wage)	Total Gross Income (PR)	Gross Income/day (PR)	Gross Income/person day (PR)
		Winter			Summer								
HH 1 2 Adults 6 Children 1 Full time worker	0.5	Wheat	0.5	Consume	Maize	0.5	Consume	1 Cow		Mining (540 PR/month)	112,320	307	38.47
		Wheat	0.5	In field				1 Cattle 2 Goat		Daily Wage (450 PR/day)			
HH 2 6 Adults 6 Children 2 Full time workers	2.5	Wheat	2.5	Consume	Maize	2	Consume						
		Wheat	1	In field	Marijuana	0.5	18,000	1 Cow		ANP (22,000 PR/month)	399,400	1,094.25	91.19
		Poppy	1.5	In field				1 Cattle 1 Goat 1 Donkey		Mining (6 months) (900 PR/day)			
HH 3 5 Adults 6 Children 3 Full time workers	4	Wheat	3	Consume	Maize	2	Consume	1 Cow		ANP (22,000PR/month)	574,400	1,573.7	143.06
		Clover	0.5	Consume	Marijuana	1	60,000	1 Cattle 3 Sheep		Mining (6 months) (900PR/day)			
		Poppy	0.5	110,000									
		Wheat	2.5	In field									
		Clover	1	In field									
		Poppy	0.5	In field									
HH 4 8 Adults 7 Children 3 Full time workers	4	Onion	0.5	35,000	Maize	1	Consume	1 Cow		ANA (Kunar) (24,400 PR/month)	635,600	1,741.37	116.09
		Bean	0.5	15,000				1 Cattle		ANA (Wardaki) (24,400 PR/month)			

	Members (No)	Land (jeribs)	Crops	Area (jeribs)	Sale/Consume	Crops	Area (jeribs)	Sale/Consume	Live-stock	Sale	Non-Farm (Wage)	Total Gross Income (PR)	Gross Income/day (PR)	Gross Income/day/person (PR)
			Winter			Summer								
		Share-crop 0.5	Poppy (1)	0.5	Eradicated (Jan)									
		2011/12	Onion (2)	0.5	In field									
			Poppy	0.5	In field									
HH 5	14 Adults 8 Children 4 Full time workers	3	Wheat	2	Consume	Maize	2.5	Consume	2 Cow	45,000	Trade (rice) (400PR/day)	340,400	932.6	42.39
			Onion (sapling)	0.5	30,000	Okra	1	20,000	2 Cattle	17,000	Cook (300 PR/day)			
			Garlic	0.5	10,000				2 Sheep					
			Wheat	2	In field									
		2011/12	Onion (sapling)	0.4	In field									
			Garlic	0.1	In field									
			Poppy (1)	0.5	Eradicated (Dec)									
			Poppy (2)	0.5	Eradicated (Jan)									
HH 6	12 Adults 8 Children 6 Full time workers	8	Wheat	7.5	Consume	Fallow	8		3 Cow		Construction (22,750 PR/month)	871,000	2,386.3	119.31
			Clover	0.5	Consume				3 Cattle		Construction (22,750 PR/month)			
									2 Sheep		Construction (22,750 PR/day)			
			Wheat	7.5	Consume						Daily wage (500PR/day)			
		2011/12	Clover	7.5	Consume									
HH 7	5 Adults 7 Children 3 Full time workers	5	Wheat	3.5	Consume	Fallow	5		1 Cow		ANA (Uruzgan) (25,500 PR/month)	676,000	1,852.05	154.34
			Clover	0.5	Consume				2 Cattle					
			Poppy	1	370,000				2 Goat					

	Members (No)	Land (jeribs)	Crops	Area (jeribs)	Sale/ Consume	Crops	Area (jeribs)	Sale/ Consume	Crops	Area (jeribs)	Sale/ Consume	Live-stock	Sale	Non-Farm (Wage)	Total Gross Income (PR)	Gross Income/ day (PR)	Gross Income/ day/ person(PR)
HH 10	5 Adults 5 Children 3 Full time workers	8	2010/11 Wheat Onion	4 4	Consume 260,000	Maize Fallow	2 6	Consume	2 Cow 2 Cattle 3 Goat					ANA (Nimroz) (23,500 PR/ month)	542,000	1,484.93	148.49
			2011/12 Wheat Onion Clover	4 2 2	In field In field In field												
			Poppy (1) Wheat (2)	0.5 0.5	Eradicated (April) In field												

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