

Overstating Poppy: The U.S. Counternarcotics, Counterterrorism, and Development Policy Nexus in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

Since 2005, a “chicken or egg” dilemma has dominated the discourse over the order in which United States missions in Afghanistan can succeed. Given the current U.S. foreign policy interests and strategies in Afghanistan, are the counternarcotics, counterterrorism and development missions best achieved simultaneously (the status quo) or sequentially? If sequentially, in what order should they be prioritized? To answer these questions, I first separate the tri-mission nexus (counternarcotics, counterterrorism, development) into three bi-mission nexuses (e.g., counternarcotics and development) and examine each pair by asking: 1) To what extent and in what ways do the two goals have a shared mission? 2) Is the success of one a necessary condition for the other to achieve its mission? 3) Is the success of one a sufficient condition for the other to achieve its mission? and 4) What positive or negative externalities or “crossfire” exist between goals? The first question contextualizes the bi-nexus. The second and third questions—regarding necessary and sufficient conditions—are asked in both “directions” and seek to understand the meaning of one operation’s success for the other operation. The final question exposes the positive and negative externalities of each mission’s operational strategies on the other’s success. Next, I synthesize the bi-nexus data to generate a detailed description of the counternarcotics, counterterrorism, and development tri-nexus. My analysis of this nexus holds constant U.S. interests in Afghanistan and the strategies selected to meet each mission’s goals, and generates a following three-phase recommendation.

Afghanistan is a hotbed of terrorist activity, narcotics production, and poverty. Though the U.S. has poured funds and lives into counterterrorism, counternarcotics and development, few feel confident that any or all of these missions will succeed. Since 2005, discourse over U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan has been dominated by a “chicken or egg” dilemma: *Must some missions succeed before others stand a chance?* This article addresses the question: Are the counter-narcotics, counterterrorism, and development missions best achieved simultaneously, as is the status quo, or sequentially? If sequentially, in what order

should they be prioritized?

I begin my analysis by separating this tri-mission nexus (counternarcotics, counterterrorism, and development) into three bi-mission nexuses (counternarcotics and counterterrorism, counternarcotics and development, and counterterrorism and development), and examine four aspects of each. First, to what extent and in what ways do the two missions have shared goals? Second, is the success of one mission a necessary condition for the statement to be true for the other to achieve its mission? Third, is the success of one a sufficient condition for the other to

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achieve its mission? A necessary condition is one that must be satisfied to yield a given result, though other conditions may also be necessary; a sufficient condition is the only one that must be satisfied in order to yield a given result. Both the second and third questions are asked in both “directions” in order to understand the meaning of each operation’s success for the other. Fourth, what “crossfire” or externalities exist among goals? Using these findings, I expose the problem of stabilizing Afghanistan with three simultaneous missions. Finally, I generate a set of policy recommendations, propose a three-phase strategy for its implementation, and address anticipated concerns.

I. U.S. FOREIGN POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN

The United States has declared “full devotion to the long term success of Afghanistan,”¹ and is Afghanistan’s largest provider of humanitarian and reconstruction aid, spending over one billion dollars each year in military, political, and economic support. U.S. support seeks to protect and/or secure five national interests. First, U.S. foreign policy aims to counter terrorism by supporting and training the Afghan army and police, establishing a democratic justice system, and strengthening border controls. The U.S. also intends to prevent reemergence of ungoverned territories conducive to terrorist ability to organize, such as those utilized by al Qaeda during Taliban rule. Second, the U.S. has a counternarcotics policy whereby supporting Afghan political and economic development will help farmers transition out of cultivation of illicit crops and take advantage of “alternative development” programs that facilitate moves towards licit livelihoods. Providing viable economic alternatives for the poor allows the U.S. to more accurately and aggressively target poppy farmers. Third, the U.S. strives to improve

international relations. U.S. operations in Afghanistan are largely collaborative, with strong NATO and UN leadership. Moreover, by fostering partnerships with governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, the U.S. can leverage interests in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Additionally, this demonstration of cooperation serves as a counterweight to the criticism of U.S. unilateralism in Iraq. Fourth, the U.S. seeks to maintain allies in the Muslim world. Given the rising tensions between the U.S. and Pakistan as well as the U.S. and Iran, the U.S. needs to prevent surrounding Muslim countries from being drawn into multinational, anti-American coalitions by maintaining strong, positive relationships with Muslim countries in the region.² And finally, the US promotes democracy and free trade. A U.S. withdrawal would significantly jeopardize both the nascent Afghan democratic system and economic growth. Both of these losses would be counterproductive to the U.S. goal of global capitalism. The tri-nexus examined in this article is that among counterterrorism, counter-narcotics, and development (an amalgamation of the last three interests).

Counterterrorism

The primary objective of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan is to eliminate terrorist centers of operation and capture leaders, in part by “denying terrorists the support and sanctuary of rogue states.”³ The Taliban has previously provided a safe haven to al Qaeda, and now seeks to regain power by replacing a government that the U.S. has deemed a “full partner in the War on Terror.”⁴ Thus, the second U.S. goal is to diminish the power of the Taliban.

² USAID/Afghanistan. *Strategic Plan (2005-2010)* (May 2005), 4.

³ United States National Security Council. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (September 2006).

⁴ United States National Security Council. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (September 2006), 3.

¹ Condoleezza Rice, *Remarks at the Afghanistan Compact Meeting*, London, January 31 2006. Accessed May 30, 2008. Available from <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/60098.htm>.

In the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism, the United States argues that advancing effective democracies is the long-term antidote to the ideology of terrorism. The strategy commits to preventing attacks by terrorist networks, denying weapons of mass destruction to rogue states and terrorists, eliminating the support and sanctuary of rogue states, preventing opportunities to use any nation as a base or launching pad for terror, and building the institutions and structures required to fight terror and ensure democratic governance.⁵ In Afghanistan, these commitments are manifest in a mission to destroy enemy leadership, safe havens (including geographic spaces, cyberspace, and ideological space), and the conditions exploited to advance their cause—local groups, grievances, communal conflicts, and societal structures that may provide fertile soil for extremism to flourish.⁶ The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Departments of State, Homeland Security, Treasury, and Defense have leadership roles in gathering and analyzing intelligence, shaping policy, and implementing strategies at home and abroad. Each has reorganized to address the unique facets of a new terrorist threat and heightened expectations from the White House.⁷

Counternarcotics

According to U.S. officials, the drug trade undermines Afghanistan's capacity to build political stability, promote economic growth, institute rule of law, and address internal security problems.⁸ The U.S. has put enormous pressure on the Afghan government to address poppy production by any means necessary, and

in fiscal year 2008 spent \$1.54 billion in regular and supplemental counternarcotics assistance and related defense funding in Afghanistan and surrounding countries.⁹ Unfortunately, Afghan security forces have made little progress in combating illicit poppy cultivation, as many Afghans see the problem of illicit crops as secondary to security and infrastructure issues. Additionally, allied forces in the region have engaged in limited operations aimed at eradicating poppy crops. The success of eradication efforts by Afghan and allied forces has been minimal, as demonstrated in rapid expansion of poppy production since 2001. The United Nations Office of Drug Control (UNODC) estimates that in 2007, 19,047 hectares of poppy crops were destroyed—or 10 percent of the total area used to cultivate poppies in Afghanistan.¹⁰ Given this lackluster success, the US has begun advocating aerial crop spraying in poppy-dense areas of southern Afghanistan. While there is little doubt that large-scale crop spraying will decrease poppy cultivation, the political cost is significant. Most Afghans do not look favorably on the practice, claiming it undermines their sovereignty and provides proof of Western desire to control and dominate the region.

The U.S. counternarcotics strategy focuses on helping the government of Afghanistan to dismantle its opium-based economy and strengthen the central government's control by instituting a five-pillar plan: public information, alternative development, elimination and eradication, interdiction, and law enforcement and justice reform.¹¹ According to administration officials, insecurity in key opium-poppy-producing areas, delays in building and

⁵ United States National Security Council. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. September, 2006.

⁶ Ambassador Henry A. Crumpton, Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Testimony Before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation" (Washington, DC: October 27, 2005).

⁷ United States Department of State. *US Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan* (2007).

⁸ United States Department of State. *US Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan* (2007), 1.

⁹ CRS Report for Congress "Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy." Christopher M. Blanchard. (Updated December 6, 2007), summary.

¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey 2007* (August 2001), Table 3, page 6. Accessed June 16, 2008. Available from www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf.

¹¹ United States Department of State. *US Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan* (2007), 17-19.

reforming Afghan institutions, and widespread local Afghan corruption have prevented full implementation of the five-pillar plan. In August 2007, changes were made to capitalize on achievements and improve performance in weaker areas.¹² These revisions increased alternative development assistance, coordination between counternarcotics and counter-insurgency, and measures to bolster the Afghan government’s political will for counter-narcotics.¹³ This policy change caused an increase in the nexus area of counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and development, making analysis of the effects of each one’s externalities on the others a point of increased relevance.

Development

For several years preceding the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, the U.S. had declared

Afghanistan to be in a state of complex humanitarian disaster and, in response, contributed to relief efforts. Immediately following the Taliban’s defeat, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) initiated a reconstruction effort that significantly bolstered aid to Afghanistan. USAID is responsible for humanitarian and development programs that directly support U.S. foreign policy by addressing the root causes of conflict insecurity and political instability.¹⁴

In 2005, USAID and the State Department made a joint strategic plan to continue assisting with Afghanistan’s recovery and undertook four essential tasks, including economic reconstruction, the rebuilding of a legitimate and capable state governed by rule of law, social reconstruction to promote a strong civil society,

Figure A: USAID/Afghanistan operational program for 2006

Strategic Objective	Program
Support programs	Improve quality of workforce through vocational/technical education
	Promote and support anti-corruption programs
	Develop and expand alternative development
A thriving economy led by the private sector	Expand and improve access to economic and social infrastructure
	Improve economic policy and the business environment
	Improve private sector competitiveness
	Increase agricultural sector productivity
A democratic government with broad citizen participation	Establish and ensure media freedom and freedom of information
	Strengthen civil society
	Strengthen democratic political parties
	Strengthen the justice sector
	Strengthen the legislative function and legal framework
Achieve equitable access to quality basic education	Support democratic local government and decentralization
	Achieve equitable access to quality basic education
	Improve child survival, health, and nutrition
	Improve maternal health and nutrition
A better educated and healthier population	Increase capacity of higher education to contribute to development
	Achieve equitable access to quality basic education
	Improve child survival, health, and nutrition
	Improve maternal health and nutrition
	Increase capacity of higher education to contribute to development ¹⁷

¹² Christopher M. Blanchard, “Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy” (December 6, 2007), 34.

¹³ United States Department of State, “US Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan” (2007), 2.

¹⁴ USAID/Afghanistan, “Operational Plan for 2006” (June 12, 2006), 3.

and the provision of security. USAID was assigned leadership for the first three (development-related) tasks, and other U.S. agencies share the fourth.¹⁵ The U.S. identifies the 2005-2010 USAID/Afghanistan strategic plan for recovery as the first coherent attempt since before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 to address Afghanistan's instability, pressing need for regulatory and economic reforms, and lack of capacity to manage such reforms.¹⁶

The USAID/Afghanistan strategic plan set the following achievements as benchmarks of success, to be measured in 2010: economic growth between 9 and 11% annually; increase in yearly household income from the current \$300 to \$300-\$340; accountable and independently functioning electoral administration, judiciary and parliament; rural economic growth providing alternative options to poppy cultivation in ten priority provinces; increase in available power supply from the current 200MW to 1200MW; and access to primary education and basic health care for 75% of Afghans.

The USAID/Afghanistan operational program for 2006 outlines the programs that were implemented to meet each strategic objective in 2006 and 2007 (Figure A).

The key instruments through which USAID (and the rest of the international community) delivers assistance at the provincial and district level are through hybrid civilian/military Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Designed to improve security, extend the reach of the Afghan government, and facilitate reconstruction in priority provinces, the PRTs' core objective is to implement projects that will improve stability so

that more traditional forms of development assistance can resume.¹⁷

Trends and Trajectory

Since September 11, 2001, there have been four highly relevant changes in U.S. foreign policy, including: an increased leveraging of development aid as a foreign policy tool; the advent and need to address a "new" kind of terrorism; the central role of countering "new" terrorism in creating foreign policy; and the use of counternarcotics operations to counter the financing of international terrorism. It is evident in these changes that the lines between security, development, and democracy are blurring.¹⁸ Aid is increasingly militarized, politicized, and securitized in its objectives and allocation. Wars are increasingly based on matters of ideology, and require development and democracy building. Enemy combatants are no longer hierarchically and bureaucratically organized foreign states, but are instead loosely organized transnational networks of extreme thinkers who rely on a myriad of funding sources. Finally, the potential to use counternarcotics as a strategy for countering the financing of terrorism is heavily overstated. Differentiated operations with disparate leadership, resources, strategies, and goals are pushed to become inter-agency collaborative efforts to achieve a common goal. However, as noted in the previous section, there are three distinct goals for U.S. operations in Afghanistan. Thus, the context for my tri-nexus analysis is a highly dynamic, intricately connected system in which it is very possible for counterproductive behaviors to quietly stall or prevent overall success.

¹⁵ United States Department of State and USAID. *FY 2004-2009 Department of State and USAID Strategic Plan*. August 20, 2003. Accessed June 13, 2008. Available from <http://www.state.gov/s/d/rm/rls/dosstrat/2004>.

¹⁶ USAID/Afghanistan, "Strategic Plan (2005-2010)" (May 2005), 5-6.

¹⁷ USAID/Afghanistan Website. Accessed June 17, 2008. Available from <http://afghanistan.usaid.gov/en/Program.31.aspx>.

¹⁸ Alice Hills, "Trojan Horses: USAID, Counter Terrorism, and Africa's Police" *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (2006): 629-643.

II. ANALYSIS OF BI-NEXUSES

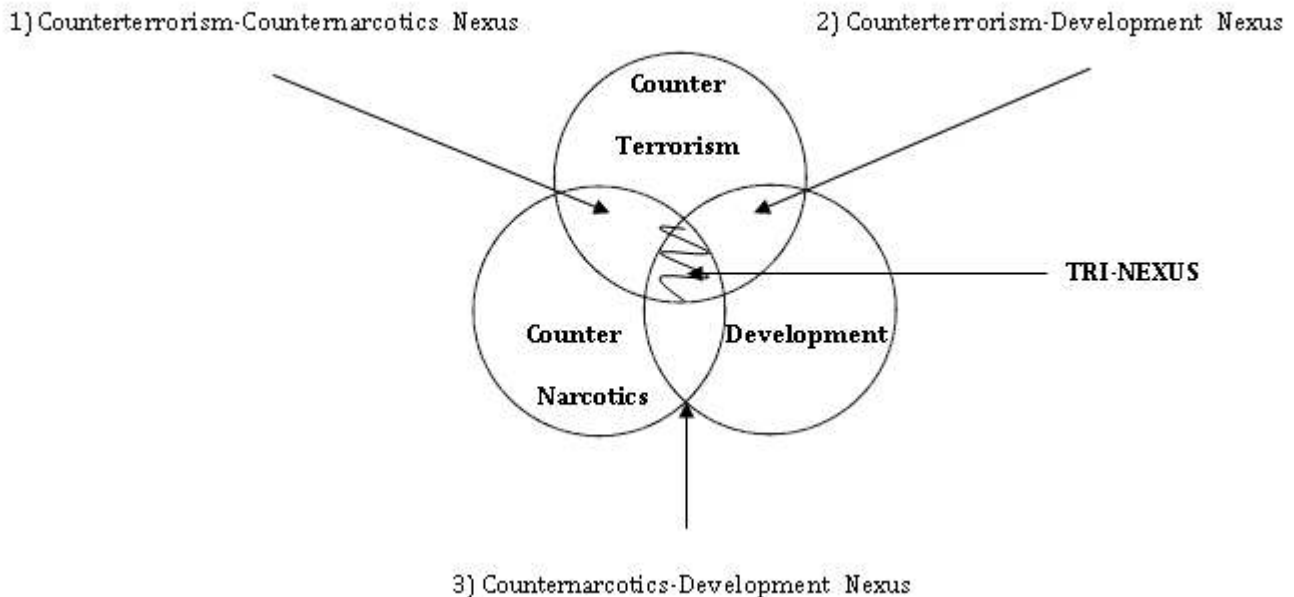
A nexus is a theoretical or physical space in which multiple potentially separate entities bond, link, communicate, or connect. The connection can be a mutual meeting or a one-sided imposition, and includes a negative or positive interaction for each entity. Think of two people standing in a room. They could walk toward each other, or one could approach the other. Regardless of their mode of meeting, their interaction could be universally positive, negative, or lopsided. The nexus of counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and development is very similar. This section analyzes the tri-nexus by examining each of the three bi-nexuses (Figure B).

The following attributes of each nexus will be analyzed. First, the extent to which their missions are shared; second, whether one is a *necessary condition* for the other to succeed, and vice versa; and third, whether the success of one is a *sufficient condition* for the success of the other, and vice versa. The term “success” in this context refers to “making progress toward stated objectives,” not necessarily achieving stated objectives, and conversely, “failure” indicates digression. Fourth are the unplanned ways in which the *strategies* of each operation affect the

other’s capacity to succeed. In the cases of counternarcotics and counterterrorism, there are negative and positive externalities that are caused by one mission’s *strategies* and impact another’s *success*. However, the development strategies have had little impact on the efficacy of counternarcotics or counterterrorism success while development as an end state has significant externalities for both of the other missions. Thus, in the sections examining development externalities, it is the successes, not the strategies, that are discussed.

There are several problems with this analysis. First, it is difficult to objectively state whether or not a mission is successfully progressing toward its stated goals. Second, creating a highly stylized dichotomy in which missions are either in a state of net success or net failure does not leave room for nuanced assessment of progress. Third, the “progress toward success” measure does not allow discourse on changing rates of progress. For example, if opium cultivation is less in years one and two than in year zero, but more is cultivated in year two than year one, is it still a success? Fourth, and most problematic, is that the three “missions” being assessed are not as disparate as this model claims. Each mission is, in fact, working toward a single, consolidated US foreign policy goal of creating an Afghanistan

Figure B: The Bi- and Tri-Nexuses



that is aligned with U.S. interests. Finally, though empirical evidence informs the argument, I have not employed quantitative measures of success, as these data are wildly unreliable. Despite these shortcomings, I believe the following assessments of each bi-nexus and subsequent tri-nexus analysis will generate an answer to the question: *Are the counternarcotics, counterterrorism, and development missions best achieved simultaneously, as is the status quo, or sequentially? If sequentially, in what order should they be prioritized? Should all of a mission's strategies be prioritized together, or can a mission's strategies be disaggregated, with some being prioritized over others?*

Counterterrorism and Counternarcotics: Shared Mission

Counterterrorism seeks to destroy enemy leadership, safe havens, and conditions conducive to the proliferation of extremism. Counter-narcotics seeks to stop farmers from planting poppies, to eradicate poppy fields, to intercept trafficking, to punish perpetrators of illicit drug laws, and to counter the financing of terrorism. Counterterrorism and counternarcotics operations share missions in two ways. First, both missions seek to stop people from profiting from the illicit drug trade. Traditionally, only counterterrorism would be concerned with the use of this earned income, but since counternarcotics is increasingly seen as a method to counter the financing of terrorism, this is increasingly a shared space.¹⁹ While the relationship between al Qaeda and the Afghan drug trade is often overstated,²⁰ other Afghan

extremist groups are thought to profit from and receive logistical assistance through the illicit drug trade.²¹ A primary concern is that opium generates financial resources, logistical support, and a power base for the Taliban,²² who are actively sympathetic to al Qaeda. Thus, both missions aim to reduce the amount of narcotics controlled by the Taliban. Second, both counterterrorism and counternarcotics seek to abolish the power systems and structures that support traffickers and insurgents, as well as to undermine official government and lawful private-sector activities. These systems include opium-based financial services, security, and alternative justice systems.

Counterterrorism and Counternarcotics: Necessary Conditionality

Oftentimes, the media conflate terrorism and narcotics, creating one aggregated "evil" that flourishes or is quelled as a single entity.²³ This infers that counterterrorism and counternarcotics success are mutually necessary conditions in which one is absolutely required for the other to succeed. However, this is in no way true. Counterterrorism can successfully disband transnational terrorist organizations, eliminate state-sponsored safe havens, and provide alternatives to extremism, even if organizations and their supporters have access to drug money. Two pieces of evidence strongly support this point. First, there are many

Biersteker, Thomas and Sue Eckert. *Countering the Financing of Terrorism*. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 58.

²¹ Such as Hizb-i Islami/Gulbuddin (HIG) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Christopher Blanchard, "Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy," (December 6, 2007), 16, Table 2.

²² Christopher Blanchard, "Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy," (December 6, 2007), 20.

²³ For example: "Terrorism and the sale of the narcotic goes hand in hand. You just can't have one without the other... So both of them need to go." Eric Sherepita, private security contractor for US Department of Defense. Laura Strickler, "A View From The Fields: One U.S. Contractor Says Eradicating Afghanistan's Opium Fields Is A Dangerous Job" *CBS News* (June 26, 2008). Accessed June 26, 2008. Available from http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/06/26/cbsnews_investigates/main4212164.shtml.

¹⁹ It is unclear whether the counter narcotics goal of countering the financing of terrorism has superseded the goal of eliminating drug flow to the US as the primary objective.

²⁰ Al Qaeda's financing comes from an extremely wide variety of sources such as solicitations of wealthy Middle Eastern benefactors, charities and charity diversion, business fronts, Osama bin Laden's personal wealth, solicitations and, since September 11th, self-financing of local cells through petty crime. Baker, Raymond W., *Capitalism's Achilles Heel: Dirty Money and How to Renew the Free-Market System*, (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), 185.

countries, such as Mexico and Colombia, in which drug money provides luxurious lifestyles for drug lords, allows the poor to make ends meet, or even fuels local organized crime and lawlessness, but does not finance a terrorist threat to American homeland security.²⁴ Second, counterterrorism successes have already been realized in a context under the heavy influence of drug trade.²⁵ Al Qaeda has been deprived of its Afghan safe haven, the current government does not sympathize with it, and many of its key members have been killed.²⁶ Thus, counterterrorism can succeed where counternarcotics is failing, and counternarcotics can succeed in an environment where terrorism exists. By increasing the level of risk associated with the drug trade, terrorists may opt to rely on alternative sources of financing, allowing terrorism to continue while narcotics involvement wanes.²⁷

**Counterterrorism and Counternarcotics:
Sufficient Conditionality**

Although neither counterterrorism nor counternarcotics is a necessary condition for the other to succeed, if one succeeds, can we expect the other to do so as well? The answer—in both directions—is no, though there is a caveat.

²⁴ There are many examples of illicit trade that does not support terrorism in the 2008 National Geographic film “Illicit: The Dark Trade.” For example, in 2005, American businessman Mark Kolowich was convicted for online sales of imitation Viagra containing only trace amounts of the active ingredient. His business funded extravagant dinners, helicopter skiing, chartered yacht trips and global travel but never terrorism.

²⁵ Note that even in a year in which little or no poppy was cultivated (i.e., 2001), the influence of the drug trade is extremely significant, or the “context” is still one laden with problems attributed to illicit drugs, such as financial bondage, vestige power structures, and stockpiles held to smooth supply levels over time.

²⁶ United States National Security Council, *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism* (September 2006), 3.

²⁷ Again, this section is an analysis of the relationship between the successes of counter terrorism and counter narcotics. It does not account for the relationship between strategies, which will be analyzed in the subsequent section. Thus, it is not (as it appears at first glance) in contradiction with the analysis provided by Vanda Felbab-Brown.

Terrorist funding is dynamic and multifaceted, and cannot be undermined by limiting one source of funds.²⁸ Therefore, eliminating opium revenue in Afghanistan will not severely hamper al Qaeda.²⁹ In the other direction, not all opium farmers are Taliban, and even if they are Taliban, not all Taliban support al Qaeda. By disbanding al Qaeda or repressing the Taliban, counterterrorism missions are not necessarily impacting the farmers or traffickers of opium. Many opium farmers claim to have no other economically viable crop choice, and some traffickers serve organized crime rings unrelated to transnational terrorism.³⁰ Therefore, successful counterterrorism will not necessarily impact all people involved in narcotics and will not necessarily inhibit involvement in drug trade. Countering terrorism is not a sufficient condition for successful counternarcotics.

It should be noted, however, that to a limited extent, counternarcotics does decrease the financial, logistical, and structural power base of the Taliban who are sympathetic to and willing to assist al Qaeda. In this way, counternarcotics may support countering terrorism.

**Counterterrorism and Counternarcotics:
Crossfire Between Operations**

Understanding that the two missions have one similar goal but two disparate missions, and that either’s success is not a necessary or sufficient condition for the other, the remaining question is: *How do one mission’s strategies impact the other mission’s capacity to succeed?* There are two externalities of counterterrorism. First, the War on Terror subordinates the War on Drugs.

²⁸ Achim Wennman, “The Political Economy of Conflict Financing: A Comprehensive Approach Beyond Natural Resources,” *Global Governance* (13:2007), 436. AND Thomas Biersteker and Sue Eckert, *Countering the Financing of Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁹ Thomas Biersteker and Sue Eckert, *Countering the Financing of Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁰ That this can be attributed to debt from previous opium-based financial services, income requirements or greed is irrelevant here.

U.S. counterterrorism operations offer impunity to drug lords in exchange for information, helping the same groups and individuals targeted by U.S. counternarcotics missions.³¹ When the two conflict, the security objectives are prioritized.³² Second, counterterrorism undermines counter-narcotics. Foreign military forces turn a blind eye to drug trafficking in exchange for intelligence and military support in operations against the Taliban and al Qaeda.³³

There are two externalities of counternarcotics. First, increased militarization of counter-narcotics undermines counterterrorism.³⁴ The illicit drug economy is a criminal-justice issue that should be addressed by an agency equipped to uncover and prosecute criminals. The use of military force undermines two goals set forth in the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism. First, it stunts the advancement of effective democratic rule, as it presents military solutions as viable options for solving governance problems. Second, the “foundations, institutions and structures” required for counterterrorism (such as national intelligence capacity) are established with less urgency, as military operations assume the primary role in carrying out economic and legal regulation.³⁵ Additionally, increasing the military elements of counternarcotics operations increases the amount of security required by opium farmers. Because the Taliban often provides security, militarization of counternarcotics strengthens

the dependence of non-Taliban Afghans on the Taliban. This heightened demand for Taliban protection against foreign military-led crop eradication increases arms trafficking and undermines demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration programs. It also increases Taliban alignment with civil society—supporting the group’s goal of attaining broad support, power, security, and control. The second externality is that counternarcotics siphon military resources from counterterrorism. Direct military involvement in counternarcotics, as is the increasing trend, “may alienate forces from the Afghan population, jeopardize ongoing counterterrorism missions that require Afghan intelligence support, and divert military resources from direct counter-insurgency and counterterrorism operations.”³⁶

Increased emphasis on the eradication pillar of the U.S. counternarcotics strategy in Afghanistan³⁷ presents additional negative externalities to stabilization, counterinsurgency, and, transitively, to counterterrorism. Eradication targets the poor, and favors warlords, drug profiteers, and loan sharks, whose sources of income are more adaptive and who have money, connections, arms or information that can be used as protection. Successful eradication of crops can cause farmers to default on loans to the Taliban, resulting in indentured servitude or flight to radical *madrasas*—further perpetuating radicalism and potential terrorist recruitment.³⁸ The strategy also harms the U.S. “hearts and minds” campaign and is a “vehicle for corruption.”³⁹ Furthermore, the strategy may not

³¹ Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Afghanistan: When Counternarcotics Undermines Counterterrorism,” *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (2005), 62.

³² Peter Andreas and Ethan Nadelmann, *Policing the Globe: Criminalization and Crime Control in International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 198.

³³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007*.

³⁴ According to former NATO Commander US General James Jones, counter narcotics should not be a military mission, as “having... troops out there burning crops, for example, is not going to significantly contribute to the war on drugs.” (Lolita Baldor, “NATO to Provide More Afghanistan Troops,” *Associated Press*, September 20, 2006.)

³⁵ United States National Security Council. *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*. September 2006.

³⁶ Christopher Blanchard, “Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy,” (December 6, 2007), 37.

³⁷ John A. Glaze, “Opium and Afghanistan: Reassessing US Counternarcotics Strategy” Strategic Studies Institute. (October, 2007), 11.

³⁸ Christopher Blanchard, “Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy,” (December 6, 2007), summary.

³⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “Afghanistan’s Drug Industry – Structure, Functioning, Dynamics, and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy” (New York: United Nations, 2006), 16. Accessed June 18, 2006. Available from

be effective, as only 0.4% of farmers who do not grow poppy in Afghanistan cite fear of eradication as their principle deterrent.⁴⁰ For these reasons, granting amnesty to local strongmen with Taliban connections who are making large profits from drugs, while eradicating the crops of those peasants who are unable to produce intelligence bargaining chips, is a setback to counterterrorism.⁴¹

Both the counterterrorism and counternarcotics missions in Afghanistan are part of a U.S. global mission to fight drugs and terrorism. Unfortunately, in both theory and practice, the successful thwarting of terrorism or halting of the drug trade in one region will result in proliferation in another—in other words, both issues demonstrate a “hydra effect” similar to squeezing air out of a partially filled balloon—the problem is not eliminated, but chased elsewhere.⁴² Successful eradication of poppy fields in Afghanistan represents a local, but not global, counternarcotics success.

Counternarcotics and Development:

Shared Mission

Alternative development seeks to halt poppy cultivation by providing financial and political incentives to reduce cultivation, promoting higher-value crops and livestock, teaching high-yield farming methods, facilitating contract farming and guaranteed pricing schemes, and supporting the Afghan National Solidarity Program’s irrigation projects. Additionally, incentives are provided for U.S. land grant universities that agree to undertake technical

agricultural research programs useful to Afghan development.⁴³ Furthermore, a portion of the counternarcotics mission overlaps with some of USAID/Afghanistan’s strategic objectives to support programs that develop and expand alternative development, improve private-sector competitiveness, and increase agricultural sector productivity.⁴⁴ In addition to the shared mission of creating licit alternative livelihoods for poppy farmers, both counter-narcotics and development strategies seek to bolster law enforcement and justice reforms. They also both stress the importance of anti-corruption in the security and justice sectors, and seek to alter the incentives and opportunities for corruption.⁴⁵

Counternarcotics and Development:

Necessary Conditionality

The goals outlined in the USAID/Afghanistan strategic plan from 2005–2010 include “rural economic growth providing options to poppy cultivation in 10 priority provinces,” but do not set benchmarks related to reduction of poppy exports or illicit economic activity as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP). Thus, for the U.S. to achieve its development goals, counternarcotics does not need to be successful—it is not a “necessary condition.” However, in the long run, the generation of “dirty money” produces a litany of harmful outcomes, including an exacerbation of poverty and inequality, a limitation of government tax revenues, a reduction in economic growth, a deterrence of foreign direct investment, and the slow creation of new enterprises.⁴⁶

Successful counternarcotics strategy depends on the availability of substitute financing schemes,

³⁹(cont.) www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/publications/afghanistan_drug_industry.pdf.

⁴⁰ United National Office on Drugs and Crime, *Afghanistan Opium Poppy Survey 2007* (August 2001). Accessed June 16, 2008. Available from www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf.

⁴¹ Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Afghanistan: When Counternarcotics Undermines Counterterrorism,” *The Washington Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (2005), 66.

⁴² Peter Andreas, Eva Bertram, Morris Bachman, and Kenneth Sharpe, *Drug War Politics: The Price of Denial* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

⁴³ United States Department of State, “US Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan” (2007), 3-5.

⁴⁴ USAID/Afghanistan, “Operational Plan (2006)” (June 12, 2006), 7-13.

⁴⁵ United States Department of State, “US Counternarcotics Strategy for Afghanistan” (2007), 68.

⁴⁶ Raymond W. Baker, *Capitalism’s Achilles Heel: Dirty Money and How to Renew the Free-Market System* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005), 50.

licit private-sector livelihood options, and strong rule of law, including appropriate legislative and judicial frameworks. While the counternarcotics strategy includes provisions to create the conditions required for counternarcotics to succeed, these specific goals fall more under the scope of USAID leadership. For example, while counternarcotics teams facilitate some licit livelihood development, creating improved economic conditions for families is one of USAID's principle goals. Therefore, the accomplishment of USAID's development goal is a necessary condition for the counternarcotics mission to succeed.

Counternarcotics and Development: *Sufficient Conditionality*

If counternarcotics operations successfully eliminate poppy production and consequently opium trafficking, economic, political, and social development will not occur. In the northern Afghan provinces, where poppies are no longer cultivated, development goals are still far from being achieved. Likewise, in 2001 when the Taliban abolished the opium industry, the country remained in an oppressive state of underdevelopment, and was declared by USAID to be in a state of humanitarian crisis. If the strategic objectives of the USAID/Afghanistan operational program are met, the counternarcotics pillars of alternative development, law enforcement, and justice reform will be in place, providing a context more conducive to successful intervention in the drug trade. While this is not to say that development is a sufficient condition for counternarcotics, development success will catalyze progress in countering narcotics.

Counternarcotics and Development: *Crossfire Between Operations*

Within strategies seeking to promote either of the two elements of the operations' missions that are explicitly shared, neither opportunity exerts negative externalities on the other. Clearly, in the realm of shared goals, successes achieved by one operation are appreciated as advancements by the other operation. However, there are other

areas in which externalities exist. First, counternarcotics provide opportunities for corruption. When U.S. eradication forces ask government officials to lead them to places where poppy is grown, officials have the option to divulge information about illicit crops or not. This provides a significant opportunity for bribery, which undermines trust in the nascent government. According to USAID, corruption poses a development challenge as it undermines good governance, suspends the rule of law, and siphons off much-needed resources.⁴⁷ Second, poorly executed eradication can result in economic damage. For example, poor pesticide targeting may destroy livestock, food, and cash crops,⁴⁸ and can be perceived as intentional punishment to the farmer regardless of the eradicator's motivation(s). A journalist describes such a scene:

When we were ready to move on, the farmer said, as if to be polite, "Thank you—but I can't really thank you, because you haven't destroyed just my poppies but my wheat, too." He pointed to where A.T.V.s had driven through a wheat patch. Wankel [the U.S. contracted eradication operative] apologized, then commented that it was only one small section. "But you have also damaged my watermelons," the farmer insisted, pointing to another part of the field. "Now I will have nothing left."⁴⁹

Third, counternarcotics operations undermine trust between Afghans and U.S. personnel.

⁴⁷ USAID Website, "Anti-Corruption" page. Accessed June 20, 2008. Available from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/technical_areas/anti-corruption/.

⁴⁸ Jorrit Kamminga, Opium Poppy Eradication in Afghanistan: An Ill-Conceived Threat to Development, in *Impact Assessment of Crop Eradication in Afghanistan and Lessons Learned from Latin America and South East Asia*, (Senlis Council: January, 2006), 26. Accessed on December 2, 2007. Available from: www.senlisCouncil.net/modules/publications/Crop_Eradication_Impact_Assessment.

⁴⁹ Anderson, Jon Lee. "Letter from Afghanistan: The Taliban's Opium War: The difficulties and dangers of the eradication program." *The New Yorker*. July 9, 2007.

Current strategies in counternarcotics give the impression that halting U.S. drug use is prioritized over assistance for the Afghan poor, an unpopular notion that can invoke anger and mistrust. The current counternarcotics strategy requires people to transition before a safety net is in place. In areas where financial services and agriculture research and development have not been developed to the extent required to fill the void of poppy farming, Americans promoting eradication are viewed as an “enemy,” inhibiting their efficacy as development workers.

There are two externalities of development. First, development provides the conditions required for counternarcotics to succeed. The election to stop cultivating poppy, engaging in the drug trade, and processing heroin will only be made if the value of alternative economic activities is increased and fear of law enforcement is widespread. These changes require a functioning democratic society with strong institutions and a robust economy—the principle mission of USAID’s development assistance. Second, development makes counternarcotics a sustainable venture. In the long run, when Afghanistan is less dependent on foreign aid, political and economic development will ensure a tax base and collection system that will sustain national counternarcotics activities.

**Counterterrorism and Development:
*Shared Mission***

Both counterterrorism and development aid explicitly serve to promote U.S. security. First, both seek to eliminate ungoverned areas and spread the rule of law. Second, they aim to establish a democratic government with broad citizen support and involvement buttressed by strong institutions and structures of national, provincial, and local government. However, the mission of USAID claims to advance U.S. foreign policy by supporting economic growth, global health, and democracy,⁵⁰ and does not share the

counterterrorism mission of altering Afghan beliefs and cultural norms.

**Counterterrorism and Development:
*Necessary Conditionality***

The question of whether or not counterterrorism must succeed in order for development goals to be achieved must be disaggregated and posed with reference to the two principal goals of counterterrorism: halting al Qaeda and preventing the Taliban from coming into power. In the case of the former, counterterrorism is not a necessary condition for development because al Qaeda is able to adapt to heightened risks and operate underground in small cells that do not inflict significant impact on the host community. In the latter, counterterrorism *is* a necessary condition as development (i.e., democracy) cannot be achieved if the Taliban is in power.

While a clear consensus on the relationship between development and terrorism does not exist, it is still possible to address the question: *Is development necessary for counterterrorism to succeed in Afghanistan?* On one hand, the type of terrorism that the United States is fighting in Afghanistan, or “new” terrorism, is highly decentralized, comprised of loosely organized transnational cells of people ideologically opposed to the West in general or the United States specifically. In combating this new form of terrorism, a nation’s general state of development or underdevelopment has little to do with the capacity of correlation with the effectiveness of its terrorist organizations. On the other hand, it is known that al Qaeda established large training camps in Afghanistan (under the Taliban regime) and U.S. security officials believe that poorly governed, semi-remote areas have the potential to provide terrorist safe havens. However, the structure of new terrorism demonstrates that development is not a panacea, as terrorists groups are highly adaptive and will seek to exploit the features of

⁵⁰ USAID Website, “About USAID” page. Accessed June 19, 2008. Available from http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/.

whatever environment surrounds them.⁵¹ Additionally, terrorists often come from countries in economic or social transition, or from middle-class sectors of poorer countries. Terrorists are not the “poorest of the poor.” The development goals furthered by USAID do not have a direct relationship on the formation of terrorists, and thus development advances are not necessary conditions for counterterrorism to succeed.

Counterterrorism and Development: *Sufficient Conditionality*

It is also important to disaggregate the counterterrorism mission in order to analyze potential sufficient conditionality. There are two groups targeted by counterterrorism operations. The first is al Qaeda, which the U.S. aims to disband. The second is the Taliban, which the U.S. aims to keep from usurping political power. Successful destruction of the al Qaeda network and its threat to U.S. national security does not provide advantages to development assistance. While successful repression of the Taliban also does not result in achievement of USAID strategic objectives, it does improve conditions for meeting them. Although this does not constitute a sufficient condition, it is an externality to be examined in the subsequent section. Likewise, the successful economic, political, and social development of Afghanistan is not a sufficient condition for successful counterterrorism. The terrorist threat can persist as al Qaeda is capable of continuing its operation in a developed region, and the Taliban may pose political threats via democratic channels of power acquisition, such as free and fair elections.

Counterterrorism and Development: *Crossfire Between Operations*

The externalities of counterterrorism are two-fold. First, counterterrorism decreases international cooperation in development. U.S.

counterterrorism politicizes development work and thus creates difficulties in coordinating with aid agencies and humanitarian organizations that are not committed to U.S. foreign policy.⁵² U.S., Afghan, and multinational or foreign groups interested in promoting U.S. development goals may be deterred by this implicit support of the War on Terror. In this case, since combating terrorism requires development-oriented strategies (such as destroying “the conditions the enemy exploits to advance their cause”), it is the counterterrorism agencies’ co-option of development that creates crossfire. Second, failed counterterrorism operations damage the “hearts and minds” campaign. Counterterrorism activity that results in Afghan civilian casualties damages the relationships that U.S. military and civil servants must build with the Afghan people in order to empower them to achieve their goals. For example, after the July 13, 2008, insurgent attack on an American-run military outpost near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, local governor Tamim Nuristani stated that some local people may have joined Taliban militants and killed U.S. soldiers as a reaction to the killing of Afghan civilians in American airstrikes in the same area less than two weeks before.⁵³

The externalities of development are also two-fold. First, development provides an alternative to involvement with the Taliban. A licit private sector, strong civil society, democratic institutions, legal framework, and education provide non-Taliban Afghans with the capacity to meet their basic needs without using parallel Taliban government structures (such as a fear-based rule of law). Second, development bolsters infrastructure used by terrorists to organize and mobilize. Advancements in transportation networks, telecommunications, access to electricity, and other development successes provide public

⁵² Audrey Gaughran, Howard Mollett, and Antonio Tujan, “Development and the ‘global war on terror’” *Race and Class* 46, no. 1 (2004): 53-74.

⁵³ Carlotta Gall and Eric Schmitt, “Deadly Afghan Attack Exploited Vulnerability of American-Run Base, Officials Say,” *New York Times*, July 15, 2008, A6.

⁵¹ Keen, David. *Endless War: Hidden Functions of the ‘War on Terror’*. London: Pluto Press, 2006.

goods that are leveraged by terrorists and insurgents, as well as U.S. and Afghan official counter-terrorism operations. Because U.S. forces and their Afghan counterparts utilize satellite communication technologies and other military-sponsored infrastructure, they rely less on public infrastructure than local Afghans, and provide more advantages for terrorists than counter-terrorism operatives.

III. ANALYSIS OF TRI-NEXUS

U.S. counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and development operations share three goals. First, they all seek to improve Afghan security and democratic rule of law. Second, they aim to stop Afghans from engaging in unregulated, untaxed, and destabilizing economic activity—specifically, the opium industry. Third, their goal is to abolish and replace power structures and governance schemes that are parallel to, and in competition with, the official government. A policy recommendation must seek to maximize the efficacy of these shared missions.

What do the bi-nexus necessary and sufficient relationships (Figure C) reveal regarding prioritization in simultaneous operations or sequencing of missions? The first nexus,

counterterrorism and counternarcotics, does not require sequencing considerations, as neither is a necessary or sufficient condition for the other. The second nexus tells us that development must precede counternarcotics until the country has developed enough that the negative externalities of counternarcotics may slow—but not reverse or stop—development. The third nexus tells us that counterterrorism must precede development until the Taliban is no longer a threat.

The externalities in the first nexus (counterterrorism and counternarcotics) are all negative in both directions, meaning that simultaneous execution of operations is counterproductive. In the second nexus (counter-narcotics and development), counternarcotics negatively impacts development, but development bolsters counternarcotics. This supports the argument that development must be established before counternarcotics strategies are implemented. The third nexus adds important information to the sequencing previously recommended. That is, if counter-terrorism supersedes development and also exerts negative externalities on development, consequently, development progress will be slow.

Figure C Summary of Bi-Nexus Relationships

NEXUS		NECESSARY CONDITIONS		SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS	
A	B	A is a necessary condition for B	B is a necessary condition for A	A is a sufficient condition for B	B is a sufficient condition for A
CT	CN	No.	No.	No.	No, although it will assist in minimizing Taliban power.
CN	D	Short run: No. Long run: Yes, a strong illicit economy stunts development.	Yes, the parallel drug economy and financing system must be replaced.	No.	No, although development will make countering narcotics more feasible.
CT	D	No, in terms of halting al Qaeda. Yes, in terms of limiting Taliban power.	No. (Development does contribute to the overall security effort critical to countering terrorism but security is not considered a development goal.)	No.	No.

Figure D: List of Crossfire Between Operations

CT - CN	Counterterrorism → Counternarcotics	
	-	<i>The War on Terror subordinates the War on Drugs.</i>
	-	<i>Counterterrorism undermines counternarcotics.</i>
	Counternarcotics → Counterterrorism	
-	<i>Increased militarization of counternarcotics undermines counterterrorism.</i>	
-	<i>Counternarcotics siphons military resources from counterterrorism.</i>	
CN - D	Counternarcotics → Development	
	-	<i>Counternarcotics provides opportunities for corruption.</i>
	-	<i>Poorly executed eradication destroys licit crops.</i>
	-	<i>Counternarcotics undermines trust between Afghans and US personnel.</i>
	Development → Counternarcotics	
	+	<i>Development provides the conditions required for counternarcotics to succeed.</i>
+	<i>Development makes counternarcotics a sustainable venture.</i>	
CT - D	Counterterrorism → Development	
	-	<i>Counterterrorism decreases international cooperation in development.</i>
	-	<i>Failed counterterrorism operations damage the "hearts and minds" campaign.</i>
	Development → Counterterrorism	
	+	<i>Development provides an alternative to involvement with the Taliban.</i>
	-	<i>Development bolsters infrastructure used by terrorists to organize and mobilize.</i>

Recommendation

The tri-nexus analysis and subsequent policy recommendations must be embedded in historical context, in accordance with the trends and trajectory of US foreign policy, and in support of U.S. interests in Afghanistan. Mindful of these considerations, U.S. counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and development operations in Afghanistan must proceed in three phases. First, counternarcotics should be halted.

Counterterrorism and development should continue, but counterterrorism goals should supersede those of development. The counterterrorism operations will have negative effects on development. In areas where the Taliban is not a threat, this phase can be eliminated and development strategies can be implemented at full force. Second, after the Taliban no longer presents a serious threat to the official government, development should become top priority. During this phase, counternarcotics should remain dormant. Third, when the development goals set forth in the 2005–2010 USAID/Afghanistan Strategic Plan for Reconstruction are met, counternarcotics

strategies can be reintroduced with the exception of eradication.⁵⁴

The argument to halt counternarcotics is contentious, and thus the following two caveats bolster the preceding argument. First, it is widely accepted that efforts to reduce illicit crop cultivation during conflict have largely failed. Examples outside of Afghanistan include Thailand in the 1960s and 1970s, Burma and Peru in the 1980s, and Colombia today. Additionally, with exception of Colombia, the belligerent groups targeted by U.S. counterinsurgency operations have been defeated or agreed to disarm without government-mandated drug eradication.⁵⁵ Second, some of the U.S. "tactical allies," or collaborators in positions of power, are Afghan officials with ties to the drug trade. The U.S. has demonstrated that it will support these allies' participation in Afghan

⁵⁴ There is a time horizon problem in that it is impossible to predict for how long the Taliban will pose a serious threat and how emerging obstacles to development could stall transition from the second to third phase. However, in areas where the Taliban are not a threat to the official government (currently, the majority of Afghan provinces), this is less of a concern.

⁵⁵ Vanda Felbab-Brown, "The Poppy Problem" *The Washington Post* (September 21, 2007).

politics regardless of this affiliation. The involvement of drug traffickers in high-level government may inhibit the ability of the central government to extend its authority and enforce its counternarcotics policies.⁵⁶ The net result could be increased corruption, reduction of confidence in the official government, and potential for media exposés on U.S. amnesty for high-ranking Afghan drug lords. Furthermore, this will undermine two of the tasks identified as integral to Afghan development, including the rebuilding of a legitimate and capable state governed by rule of law, and social reconstruction—including renewal of a strong civil society.

Conclusion

The U.S. prioritization of counterterrorism operations and increasingly strict counternarcotics policies in Afghanistan conflict with each other as well as with development goals, forcing U.S., Afghan, and coalition authorities to address difficult contradictions in policy.⁵⁷ Given the critical nature of the U.S. interests at stake, the desperate situation of Afghan nationals, and the high opportunity cost of resources, this situation calls for a systematic, methodologically sound, and analytically comprehensive analysis of U.S. counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and development missions in Afghanistan. This article answers that call. The sequencing and prioritization scheme would increase the likelihood of successfully rebuilding Afghanistan and securing U.S. interests. By overstating the impact of poppy and underestimating the damage of counternarcotics operations, which is the status quo, the U.S. is working counterproductively and seriously jeopardizing its capacity to secure its own interests. ■

⁵⁶ Christopher Blanchard, “Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy,” (December 6, 2007), 36.

⁵⁷ Christopher Blanchard, “Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy,” (December 6, 2007), 36.