

The Taliban: Islam, opium and the current conflict in Afghanistan

Understanding why the Taliban fight

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Abstract

This research is an attempt to understand the cause of the current insurgency in Afghanistan. The Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic movement, are fighting a foreign occupation on what is perceived as a war on religious grounds. However when analysing the Taliban's beliefs and actions such a notion does not hold.

Firstly the Islam versus the West paradigm that forged the theoretical underpinning of the War on terror is not as applicable to the Taliban. The idea the Taliban is an anarchistic movement that is a threat to Western civilisation is short-sighted. Understanding the group's beliefs and ideology reveals their true objective.

Secondly the Taliban are involved with the Opium economy of Afghanistan this given the Islamic ideology of the Taliban seems rather contradictory. Many theories support the idea that the cause of conflict is often motivated by economic benefit and not ideology. As well as being motivated by economic benefit, the other aspects of war given the breakdown of legitimate sources of funds is the need to fund the war. Hence insurgents resort to criminality to fund their activities.

After analysing the Taliban to find the Taliban are a hybrid unique group motivated by a combination of beliefs and self interests these cannot be categorised amongst broader Islamic movements.

Glossary of terms

Al-'Iḥwān al-Muslimūn- *The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood*

Al-Qaeda- *The base or the foundation*

Amir-*leader of an Islamic state*

Haram- *Islamic term for unlawful*

Kafir- *Islamic word for disbelievers, non-Muslims*

Madrassa- *Islamic schools found across South Asia with a focus on Islamic education*

Mujahideen- *Soldiers involved in fighting for Islam*

Pashtun- *The ethnicity of the Taliban and largest ethnic group in Afghanistan*

Pashtunwali- *The Pashtun tribal code used to govern along with Islamic law in Afghanistan*

Quran- *The Islamic text and the main source for Islamic rulings*

Shariah- *Islamic law and jurisprudence often dictated by interpretation of Islamic text*

Sunnah- *The traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used as a source for Islamic rulings*

Talib- *Student*

Taliban-*Students*

Ulema- *Islamic judiciary made up of Islamic scholars*

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1.0 Introduction

"I am considering two promises. One is the promise of Allah, the other of Bush. The promise of Allah is that my land is vast...the promise of Bush is that there is no place on Earth where I can hide that he won't find me. We shall see which promise is fulfilled" Mullah Omar -leader of the Taliban (The Guardian).

The above is a quote from Taliban leader Mullah Omar during an interview with the BBC.

The quote gives the impression that central to the conflict between the US and the Taliban is the group's Islamic beliefs. However such an assumption seems short sighted when the Islamic beliefs of the Taliban are actually analysed.

1.1 Purpose of research

Many theories support the idea that the West and Islam are going to clash in a post-Cold War world with the main one supporting this paradigm being Samuel Huntington's "Clash of civilisations" (Kepler, 2004). Given the fundamentalist Islamic nature of the Taliban such an approach may seem pertinent, however when analysing the group's actual ideology and beliefs such an approach seems superficial in explaining the nature of the conflict.

Furthermore, analysing the actions of the Taliban exposes direct contradictions between their beliefs and actions. Such actions suggest the cause of the War in Afghanistan is not solely ideologically motivated but has other economic motivations. Such a notion is also supported by theories that argue the cause of wars is driven by "greed" and not "grievance" (Collier and Hoeffler, 2000). This can be seen by the interaction of the Taliban with the opium economy. Narcotics are considered *Haram* in Islam a point even the Taliban acknowledge (Peters, 2009).

The way Islam is used by both sides to construct the narrative of the current conflict in Afghanistan is very misleading. Firstly the West has constructed the Taliban as an anarchistic group that due to their fundamental Islamic belief is a threat to western civilisation (Kepler, 2004). This idea does not hold when looking at the group's ideology and objectives. The Taliban also use their beliefs as a reason to engage in the current conflict, however their actions especially their interaction with the opium economy is directly contradictory to their Islamic beliefs (Marsden, 1998).

1.2 Objectives of research

The objective of this research is to highlight how Islam is being used by both sides to build a narrative for the cause of war. But when analysing the actual ideology of the Taliban and their actions such a notion does not hold weight. Understanding the actual nature of the Taliban by understanding both their ideology and actions will give a better understanding of the cause of War in so doing highlighting the incorrect paradigms being used to conceptualise the conflict. Essentially the research will highlight the hybrid nature of the Taliban as being a group that are not necessarily opposing the West due to their religious beliefs but still use such rhetoric as a way of imposing power.

2.0 Context of the current conflict

When analysing the current conflict a brief introduction to the Taliban and the context of the current conflict would be useful.

2.1 The Taliban

The Taliban are an Islamic fundamentalist movement that were officially created in 1994 and governed Afghanistan till the US “war on terror” and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Since 2003 the group has reformed, restructured and has since launched an insurgency in Afghanistan and has managed to regain control of large parts of the country (Qazi, 2011).

The Taliban originated from the South of Afghanistan the Pashtun stronghold of the country. The movement began in Kandahar the city of their leader Mullah Omar in 1994. The movement spread very quickly and by 1996 the group had control of 90% of the country. The group began as a reaction to the corruption and lawlessness that had enveloped the country which had essentially been divided into fiefdoms governed by corrupt War lords (Rashid, 2001). The group adopted the name Taliban as many were Talibs, meaning student having been educated and raised in Madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Marsden, 1998).

2.2 The War on terror

On September 11th terrorist flew hijacked aircraft into buildings in the United States of America. This would lead to the War on terror. The group responsible for the attacks was Al-Qaeda who had taken up refuge in Afghanistan and declared Jihad on the West especially

the US in 1998. Many of the members of Al-Qaeda had fought in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Bin-Laden the leader of Al-Qaeda was allowed to remain in the country due to the tribal code of the Pashtun (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2009). Since he had risked his life for the Pashtun they would have to respond in kind. The Pashtun culture has a large influence on the Taliban (Marsden, 1998).

The US would therefore respond by invading Afghanistan and swiftly defeat the Taliban and replace them with the current government in Afghanistan. The Taliban many of whom returned home, did not fight the initial invasion, whilst the senior members fled to neighbouring Pakistan (Rashid, 2012).

2.3 The current insurgency

In 2004 however the Taliban regrouped and launched an insurgency against the foreign occupation in Afghanistan. Mullah Omar reportedly reorganised the Taliban and launched an insurgency. Currently the Taliban controls 90% of the country operating parallel governance structures applying Shariah law and tax in those areas (Qazi, 2011).

3.0 Conceptual framework

3.1 Objectives

The main focus of the dissertation is to see how literature related to conflict is applicable to the insurgency in Afghanistan when understanding the Islamic ideology and beliefs of the Taliban. Also analysing the Taliban's actions which support or contradict their religious ideology to see how this can be related to literature on the cause of conflict.

The research can therefore be split into two distinct parts, the first part will aim to analyse the primordial approach to the cause of the conflict and challenge the West versus Islam paradigm the conflict is currently perceived in (Kepel, 2004). In order to challenge this paradigm the Taliban's ideology and beliefs will be analysed to highlight why the ideas presented in such literature is not relevant to the current conflict. There are many theories relevant to the paradigm with perhaps the most popular being Samuel Huntington's theory "*Clash of civilisations*" (1996) which argues conflict will be driven by cultural and religious differences. As well as literature relating to Islamic movements emphasising how such movements are not uniform and hence cannot be conceptualised as such (Sadowsky, 2006).

The second part will look to the economic aspect of the war and focus specifically on how the Taliban interact with the opium economy. The reason this aspect of the political economy will be focussed on is due to the inherently un-Islamic nature of narcotics (Marsden, 1998). The Taliban's actions will also highlight the contradictions between their ideology and actions. The notion conflict is motivated by greed and not grievance is emphasised by Collier and Hoefeller's paper "*Greed and grievance*" and if greed motivates the Taliban then the Taliban's ideological reasons for fighting appear disingenuous. Further

analysis of the political economy of the war will highlight other benefits and reasoning to why the Taliban are involved with the Opium economy.

Both sections aim to analyse the true nature of the motivations for the current insurgency using the existing literature and applying the validity of the theories to the ideology, beliefs and actions of the Taliban.

3.1.1 A Clash of Civilisations?

Much of the reasoning behind the invasion of Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001 presented the Taliban as an anachronistic threat to the progress of the Western world (Kepel, 2004). However when studying the group's ideals, beliefs and actions such a belief is unfounded. The theoretical underpinnings of the policy adopted by the US led War on terror were based on Huntington's "clash of civilisations" (Kepel, 2004). The war on terror was aimed at defeating Al-Qaeda and the Taliban who harboured the terrorist group and the two were therefore perceived as inseparable (Van Linschoten and Kuehn,2012).

After the terrorist attacks of September 11th the clash of civilisation theory seemed very applicable to the conflict as the theory suggests post-cold war conflict will be driven by primordial differences with the main one being religion. Furthermore the theory expands, the religion that will be the most likely to be involved in conflict in the post-Cold war era will be Islam given the intolerant and violent nature of the religion (Huntington,1996).

The ideas expressed by Huntington (1996) are supported by other literature that also suggest the West and Islam are at odds due to their primordial difference of religion and culture which will lead to a natural conflict between the two. The notion is supported by

both Western academics such as Huntington, Jurgensmeyer, Barber (Soysa, 2001) and also by Islamic academics who reject the ideals of the West like Al-Banna, Qutb and Maudadi (Kramer, 1996). However rather than accepting the idea that Islamic movements are homogenous and intrinsically antagonistic to the West, a closer look at the different types of Islamic movements and their nature and objectives highlights not all Islamic movements adopt the same approach (Sadowski, 2006).

For the purpose of this research a study of the Taliban ideology and how the Taliban ideology fits in amongst the more general Islamic movements will better reflect the validity of the clash of civilisations thesis in the context of the current conflict and highlight if the Islam versus West paradigm is applicable.

3.1.2 Economic agendas behind the War

The Taliban's ideological groundings in respect to the conflict are important to understand the conflict, however their actions may expose ulterior motives of the Taliban. One aspect of the current conflict that is in direct contradiction to the Taliban perceived ideology in the Islam versus the West paradigm is the group's involvement with the opium economy.

The main theory that supports the idea conflict is driven by greed factors rather than a grievance factor is Collier and Hoeffeler's (2000) "*greed and grievance*" theory. The paper concludes conflicts are fought for economic factors rather than grievance factors.

Accordingly this challenges the idea the Taliban would be fighting for ideological reasons.

The participation in the opium economy or any narcotics is considered haram in Islam this is a sentiment expressed by the Taliban. So their interaction with the trade is contradictory to their Islamic beliefs and also belies their ideological reasoning for fighting the occupation.

Beyond merely fighting for economic profit war leads to a breakdown of legal economic networks, hence those who participate in War often look to illicit sources of income to fund their activities (Kaldor,2010). This presents an interesting conundrum for the Taliban as they fight they require funding for their activities as well as potential economic reward.

There is ample literature surrounding economics and war that can be split into two groups. Firstly theories such as “greed and grievance” discuss the cause of war, whilst many other theories discuss the “war economy” such as Goodhand who expands to discuss how a war economy can be split into three parts namely “combat economy”, “shadow economy” and “coping economy” using such a framework a better understanding can be gained about why and how the Taliban interact with the opium economy which overlaps into all three parts (Goodhand,2004).

3.2 Outcome from research

When discussing the literature surrounding the cause of war and relating this to the nature of the war the research will present a picture of the Taliban that will go beyond the simple the West versus Islam paradigm. Thus the research will expose the hybrid nature of the group and their religious beliefs which they perpetuate to help gain power.

4.0 Literature review

The literature review will be split into sections to highlight the different aspects discussed in the conceptual framework. Firstly literature surrounding the Islam versus the West paradigm will be discussed trying to encompass the differing sides of the paradigm.

Note the term “Islam versus the West” is not a geographical observation but the difference in ideological positioning between the two, where everything secular is deemed as “western” whilst those Muslims that oppose these ideas are considered “Islam” for the purpose of this paradigm. Similar ideas are expressed by Juergensmeyer (1993) and Barber (1992) who instead labels a similar paradigm as “Mc World versus Jihad”.

4.1 Islam versus the West

“Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists”-George Bush Jr (CNN)

The belief the West is at odds with Islam is an idea that has been promoted by many writers. The most obvious piece of literature that seems appropriate when looking at this “clash” is Samuel Huntington’s *“Clash of civilisation”*. Huntington (1993 and 1996) argues conflict in a post-Cold war environment where the West has established dominance and through globalisation their culture and beliefs have been spread. Groups and individuals will resort to forming allegiances according to their “civilisation”. Once established these “civilisations” will form fault lines and conflict will occur whenever two civilisations meet along these fault lines.

A person’s civilisations is seen as being a very strong mobilising factor for conflict as culture is perceived as being fundamental to a person’s view of the world, when individuals have

differences determined by culture these differences are deemed as irreconcilable as they have been embedded within civilisations for centuries. A civilisation can be composed of a culture, traditions and according to Huntington the most significant part of a person's culture is their religion. These primordial differences are fundamentally the cause of conflict (Huntington, 1993).

Huntington thesis reserves special emphasis for Islam as he explains how the fault line separating East and West or "Western Christianity and Islam" will be especially bloody. The majority of the fault line supposedly separates Muslims from non-Muslims and is especially prone to conflict. Huntington believes this is because Islam is intolerant to other religions and inherently violent and therefore epitomises the Clash of civilisations (Huntington, 1996).

People resorting back to their tribal heritage is also an idea would be supported by political scientist Benjamin Barber. Barber (1992) argues in his article "*Mc World was Jihad*" how globalisation and fundamentalism are consequences of the same forces. As *Mc World* attempts to pull the world together through economics, Jihad – note the idea of Jihad in this article is not the Islamic interpretation but rather a term to describe the fundamental tribal elements rather than the Islamic definition of internal struggle- resists such a motion by working for more boundaries and an attachment to distinguishing traits that aim to separate the world along cultural, religious and tribal lines (Barber, 1992).

Juergensmeyer (1993) in his book "*New Cold War*" also argues that the secular West will come in to confrontation with the rise of Religious nationalism in the Middle East, South Asia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe. Juergensmeyer (1993) argues the assumption that the idea of secularism is considered Western by those that reject it. Juergensmeyer (1993)

explains how both religion and secular are “ideology of order” and highlights the difference between how secular nationalism differs from religious nationalism in attaining such order.

The most important aspect of secular nationalism is the sense of order and authority that the state holds over the society given the Weberian definition of a state as having a monopoly of legitimate use of physical force this along with Giddens who describes Nationalism as the “cultural sensibility of sovereignty” the understanding that individuals are a subject to an authority that gives nationalism its potency (Juergensmeyer, 1993).

Religion also provides this sense of control in a seemingly disordered world but not to a state instead to an idea of a higher transcendent state or a cumulative moment in time. This makes the two ideologies of order potential rivals as either can claim to promote order in society, furthermore along with this order is the right to carry the moral decision of when it is right to kill. As either secular or religious authority assumes this position in society the other is relegated to the periphery (Juergensmeyer, 1993).

What this essentially leads to is the idea that the two ideologies will eventually clash. The perception of the other side will determine whether this leads to another cold war or a compromise for economic and political reconciliation. Jurgensmeyer (1993) attempts to portray Islamic nationalism as an ideal that should not be vilified but instead could lend some moral ideals that are lacking from the western secularist model.

As well as Western scholars certain Islamic movements reflected the adverse relationship Islam had formed with the West. One key example was the work of Syed Qutb who in his controversial book “*Milestones*” argued the notion that Islam is at odds with both western

democracy and Capitalism. *“Milestones”* is considered the ideological foundation for the Al-‘Iḥwān al-Muslimūn, considered one of the first political Islamic parties.

Qutb presents the foundation for political Islam as a rejection of non-Islamic ideologies including Western democracy and Eastern Marxism. Qutb (1964) argues Marxism has failed as no nation in the world now exists following such a creed (ideology) and western democracy is “infertile” as it has begun adopting socialist ideals that are at odds with the capitalist economic system. Qutb argues the reason for such failings is because both systems do not attempt to address man’s needs beyond the materialistic. The approach of Qutb highlights another major belief of fundamental Islamists the idea is that Islam should not be seen as merely a religion in the sense that Western Christianity has become, but instead should provide the economic, social and political foundation for a society. Such a belief is shared by fundamental Islamists across the world with no divorce between church (faith) and state the holistic approach that governs the lives of its followers. This is a fundamental Islamic approach to government (Qutb,1964).

4.2 Understanding Islamic movements

Kramer (1996) wrote about Fundamental Islam in the Middle-East journal, Kramer entitled the piece as *“Fundamental Islam at large: the drive for power”*. The title already suggests Kramer (1996) is not convinced by the fundamental Islam approach, such a bias must be considered when reading through his work. However the beliefs of Fundamental Muslims can be studied to see if there exists this paradigm of the West versus Islam

Kramer (1996) recognises that not all Islamic fundamental movements are homogenous; with the key distinction between fundamental Muslims being those who are “revivalist” and

choose to follow their religion with added devotion and those who use their additional religious devotion for political ends. Kramer then goes on to list the first few Islamic fundamentalist groups or “fundamental front-runners”.

The three highlighted are “al-Afghani” (1838-97), Hassan Al Banna(1906-49) (leader of the Muslim brotherhood) and Nawayib Safawi (1923-56) (leader of the devotees of Islam). These three ideologies have some common features. Firstly all three are seen as reactionary forces that vehemently oppose Western imperialism spreading into Muslim lands, all three also have political aspirations to put in place authoritarian Islamic forms of government in their respective countries, none of these ideologies are opposed to resorting to violence in order to achieve their objectives and lastly they all are trans-national in their beliefs supporting Muslim causes across the world (Kramer, 1996).

Later Fundamental Islamists realised the all-powerful state and focussed on running states following the Quran and Sunnah meaning sovereignty would belong solely to God. Such views were initially expressed in Pakistan and India by Mawlana Abu'l-A`la Mawdudi (1903-79) (Jama`at-i Islami) and later completed by Syed Qutb (1906-66) (Muslim brotherhood) in his book milestones.

They focussed on an Islamic revolution that would allow them to take over their states and apply Islamic law in a dictatorship controlled by a single leader seen as the most knowledgeable and pious. Again their idea was that Islam was a way to oppose Western Imperialism, their rhetoric highlighted past confrontations with the west such as the crusades to garner support. Qutb had witnessed the materialistic west first hand and henceforth rejected the materialistic mind set of capitalism. These ideas actually lead to the first Islamic revolution in Iran but was never replicated elsewhere in the world.

The final repackaging of Islamic Fundamentalism came in the form of younger thinkers who realised complete rejection of Western ideas was counter-productive. Now students took from both Islam and the positive aspects of the West in order to implement them into Islamic states. Hasan alt-Turabi (b. 1932), Rashid al-Ghannushi (b. 1941) and Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah (b. 1936) maintained their desire for an Islamic state but wanted to incorporate western institutions into their states as well as exploit the West's technological advantages.

This form of Islamic Fundamentalism presented Islam as the solution again to the West as the failings of Communism became prevalent. This was now packaged as the main opposition to Western Capitalism and also therefore found support amongst westerners. As mentioned Kramer (1996) throughout the piece has nothing but animosity towards Islamic Fundamentalism concluding that it would fail like Marxism and be reserved purely for academic discussion. But what the piece does highlight is the evolutionary nature of Islamic fundamentalism and the 3 key ideological phases and how each perceives the west as almost always antagonistic.

A more modern incarnation of the West versus Islam is the terrorist group Al-Qaeda, this has to be the most violent and hostile group ever. A study of their ideology shows how antagonistic they are of the West. Gerges (2009) discusses "*the near enemy and far enemy: why Jihad went global*" and explains the reasoning behind Al-Qaeda switching their focus from attacking domestic governments that were stopping the progress of Islam to the "great Satan" the US who was propping up these governments who Al-Qaeda believed were proxies for Western Capitalism (Gerges, 2009).

Al-Qaeda were seen as the manifestation of Huntington's clash of civilisation and the West's policy response resembled such a belief. However, this response did not distinguish between the different types of Islamic movements. Kepel (2004) in "*the war for Muslim minds*" discusses the danger of uniformity in discussing Islamic movements. Also how by adopting the West versus Islam paradigm Al-Qaeda was very similar to the policy makers the US "neo-cons" when analysing the war on terror. The lack of pragmatism in their approach supported the paradigm and produced a counter-productive response Kepel (2004).

One of the key issues in understanding the creation of the West versus Islam paradigm is that most literature and policy towards fundamental Islam from the West fails at a very basic level, most is overarching and relies on crude generalisations (Kepel, 2004). Sadowski (2006) attempts to challenge this notion and in so doing also questions the legitimacy of the clash of civilisations thesis and the Islam vs West paradigm.

Huntington applies the premise there is a common civilisation amongst Muslims that contributes to the idea of their civilisation, but Sadowski (2006) highlights how there are many differences amongst Muslims. Furthermore, Sadowski(2006) uses studies that emphasise that the values Muslims hold as common are common for all of humanity irrespective of religion. Meaning Huntington's dichotomy of civilisations as either "Western Christianity or the Muslim world" does not exist.

Sadowski (2006) moves on to providing some useful labels for Muslim movements that allows for a more nuanced analysis of their beliefs and ideals. The three groups listed are traditionalists, fundamentalists and Islamists. Traditional groups are a combination of Islam and their own local culture, fundamentalist aim to rid Islam of these traditionalist practices

whilst establishing an Islamic state and finally the Islamists who challenge the shortcoming of fundamentalism and prefer modernity with in an Islamic state.

Sadowski (2006) in trying to understand such movements avoids polemic statements and offers a better analysis of Islamic movements. He also concludes that the Western analysis of Islam has a hostile disposition and therefore fails to provide any real understanding beyond that. Such an idea is very applicable given previous attempts at analysing Islamic movements.

4.3 Connecting the “religious war to economics”

The first part of the literature review focussed on the Islam versus West paradigm that both sides of the current conflict use to underpin their reasoning behind the current conflict.

However on closer analysis of the conflict the Taliban’s actions seem to contradict their Islamic beliefs and may expose an ulterior motive behind their involvement.

Firstly a connection can be made to supposed ideological wars and those fought for economic benefit. Ideological reasoning behind wars such as religion could be manipulated by “political entrepreneurs” to mobilise individuals to go to war. This is discussed by Hasenclever and Rittberger (2009) in their article *“Does religion make a difference? Theoretical approaches to the impact of faith on political conflict”*. The article is focussed on three different theoretical approaches to the impact religion and politics have on conflict; “primordialism”, “instrumentalism” and “constructivism”. Primordialism places the entirety of blame for conflict on religion, instrumentalism suggest conflicts are politically motivated and religion is used by “political entrepreneurs” to mobilise people to engage in conflict lastly constructivism argues along the same lines as instrumentalism but also highlights how religion can be used for the opposite effect to prevent people in engaging in conflict.

Another piece of literature that helps link the ideological to the economical part of the insurgency in Afghanistan is Kaldor’s (2007) thesis on *“New Wars”* is also useful for understanding the current conflict in Afghanistan as many of the characteristics described in the thesis are applicable to the current situation. Kaldor (2007) describes the characteristics of “New Wars” the main ones as taking place in the context of disintegration of states, networks of state and non-state actors fight the war, violence is directed against civilians and as taxation falls war is financed through illicit trading. The two main ideas that are

consistent with the war in Afghanistan are the idea of the war taking place in failed states and the illicit opium drug trade.

4.4 Economic reasoning behind war

Literature on conflict has had an overriding focus on war economies; whether these are focussed on the cost-benefit analysis that results in war rather than peace or the shadow economies that give rise to income for entrepreneurs of war the focus is always portrayed as war being related to some form of economic benefit for the participants. The Afghanistan war economy is entrenched with such connections between war economies and entrepreneurs of war (Bardal and Malone,2000). A review of certain authors and theories that are relevant to the conflict will be highlighted.

The most conclusive piece on the cause of war being economically driven is Collier and Hoeffler (2000) World Bank article "*Greed and Grievance*". Collier and Hoeffler (2000) forms models based on the cause of war as being either motivated by greed or grievance.

Presenting the causes concludes civil wars are overwhelming motivated by greed factors.

The economic benefit of engaging in civil war out-weighs the cost as individuals have more to gain than to lose. To highlight the main greed factors behind civil war Collier and Hoeffler use the proxies of income from primary commodities and diaspora funding. The more reliant a countries economy is on a primary commodity the increase likelihood said commodity will be a source to fund and sustain civil war. Also populations with large diaspora communities provide a source of income for supporting conflict.

As notable as Collier's greed and grievance literature is to understanding the cause of civil war in his piece entitled "*doing well out of conflict: an economic perspective*" he discusses

how although rebel leaders may use grievance rhetoric to justify conflict they are unlikely to admit to hidden greed motivated as such a narrative will not garner support from others, furthermore the spoils from the conflict are not likely to be shared amongst a large support group as this diminishes the returns of the leadership. Collier again concludes greed based factors are more important for explaining conflict than grievance factors (Collier,2000)

Collier then expands to why grievance based conflict is less desirable providing theoretical reasoning to the empirical evidence he collected. The main issues are caused by “collective action problem” which essentially involves three facets “free-riding”, “coordination” and “time consistency problems”. Free riding is seen as the outcome of a successful grievance rebellion benefitting everyone with no need for individuals to get involved themselves. Coordination adds to the free-riding problem as grievance rebellions begin small and to achieve victory need more members, as their grievance can only be overturned through military victory. Members are unlikely to join as the chance of a small rebellion winning is slim. Lastly the time-consistency problem involves the rebel leadership maintaining the same injustices as those the rebels fought against (Collier,2000).

Greed rebellions do not face the same issues as only those that participate are able to gain the benefits from the rebellion, the rebellion does not need to be large enough for a complete military victory but just to acquire rent from looting. Furthermore, rebels could be paid during the conflict rather than gaining benefit from winning. For these reasons Collier feels Greed based rebellions are more likely and appealing (Collier,2000).

Goodhand (2004) discusses extensively the political economies that form during civil wars; his work discusses in depth the formation of three often overlapping but definable economies; the war economy, the shadow economy and the coping economy. Firstly the

term “war economy” this is any activity that is carried out during conflict. Combat economy refers to economic activity aimed at sustaining a conflict or economic strategies that target group’s to prevent their war effort, shadow economy are activities considered illegal under the institutions and regulations of the state and lastly the coping economy this refers to economic activity that allows the population to survive on their very limited assets. Thus breaking down the political economy of conflicts further and enabling a better understanding of actors, motivations and economic activities when analysing the political economy. The case of Afghanistan is specifically looked at Goodhand in his book “*War economies.....*” and his article “*frontiers and wars: the opium economy of Afghanistan*” which would be expanded on later.

William Reno (2000) in his piece “*Shadow states and the political economy of civil war*” addresses how state economic resources are diverted through patronage networks that lead to an increased chance of civil war. As political elites used resources from outside elements their requirement for public support was not required so they could undermine bureaucratic institutions and maintain power through repression and external military and financial support. However when their monopoly over wealth accumulation and distribution disappear other individuals no longer rely on their patronage and therefore an increase in civil war results.

Reno (2000) focusses on the formation of shadow states which are brought about by the breakdown of the public/private dichotomy. As political elites no longer require public support they withdraw the supplying of public goods such as security and economic stability. This withdraws the possibility of challengers and maintains control through

patronage relationships. However with the end of the cold war such external support dwindled and therefore the likelihood of civil war increased.

Understanding conflicts is also discussed by Carter (2003) who discusses the “political economy” describing “transformation” a theory that goes beyond labelling conflicts as either caused by political or economic causes but analysing the “political economy” of conflicts. Encompassing the overlap between the two and also acknowledging how conflicts evolve along different trajectories. Leading to the conclusion that the economic factors of the war were in fact a consequence of the conflict and not the other way around. The exploitation of resources was used to fuel the war. The analysis adopted is not static for a conflict but rather evolving as the conflict changes through time, capturing the dynamics of a conflict (Carter,2003).

5.0 Literature on the Taliban

5.1 Ideology

Having gone through the literature that is applicable to understanding the conflict a look at the Taliban's ideology and the group's links to the opium economy are required to analyse firstly how they fit into the "Islam versus the West paradigm" and secondly to understand the true nature of their involvement in the conflict.

To study this ideology one author is at the forefront of the Western impression of the Taliban. Ahmed Rashid's (2010) book "*Taliban: Militant Islam, oil and fundamentalism in central Asia*" seems to be accepted by most Westerners as the accepted guide to the Taliban. In the preface the author describes how the book is now part of a NATO soldiers reading list prior to entering into Afghanistan as well as essential reading in certain university courses in America. The book provides a section entitled "Islam and the Taliban" in attempting to understand the ideology of the Taliban this is a good starting point.

Furthermore the religious network between Pakistan and the Taliban is very important to understanding some of the influence on the group these networks were discussed by Zahab and Roy (2004) in their book "*Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan connection*". The link allowed for recruitment for the Taliban from mainly madrassas between Ghazni and Kandahar, a network that was built up during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Madrassas formed a major link between Pakistan and Afghanistan as the two countries exchanged students and volunteers for Jihad.

Marsden (1998) describes "the Afghan Islamic tradition" in a chapter in his book entitled "*The Taliban*". This gives a breakdown of the actual Taliban approach to government.

Marsden (1998) emphasises the Deobandi roots of the Taliban but also the influence of the Maududi and also a Saudi Wahabi influence. Maudadi rejected western ideals and felt the West should accommodate and respect the beliefs of Muslims. Maududi had an ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam that allowed for them to interpret Islamic text for themselves.

The Taliban can be considered an Islamic social movement Bayat's (2005) work on Islamic social movements "*Islamism and social movements*" discusses their characteristics. One of the key points highlighted by Bayat (2005) with social movements is that they are presented as homogenous and harmonious entities with their ideology embodied by their leadership. Mullah Omar the leader of the Taliban and his motivations for starting the movement are therefore very pertinent.

Gannon (2005), a journalist who spent many years inside Afghanistan explains through eye witness accounts how the Taliban regime operated and thought. Gannon (2005) account of Mullah Omar the Taliban leader is of a man who was locally orientated with little ambition beyond getting rid of corrupt war lords from around his immediate locality. The initial movement is described simply as around a group of 60 men wanting law and order around their villages. However the outsider support and then influence that came after the success of the original movement was to transform the ideology. The most obvious influence came from Pakistan with the influx of students from the madrassas who joined the movement they brought with them their extreme interpretation of Deobandi Islam.

Gannon (2005) is insightful in highlighting Taliban ideology as personal accounts of Mullah Omar revealing how the isolation of the Taliban from both the international community. Also a contrast can be sought from the intention of the original Taliban to what the

movement eventually became. Many other accounts of the Taliban do not have the same personal accounts and therefore avoid exposing some of the ideological intentions of the Taliban; the key point of the ideology is the focus on the local level to the transformation mainly due to foreign influence that changed this initial ideology.

5.2 The Taliban and the opium economy

This part of literature review discusses the Taliban's contradictory actions whilst being involved with the opium economy of Afghanistan many reports and authors discuss the link which will be useful when seeing where the contradictions exist.

Reports linking the Taliban and the drug trade in Afghanistan are available. One such report that links the Taliban and terrorist groups to the drug trade was by Congressional Research Service (2001). The report describes how the Taliban are responsible for the largest drug hoard in the world. Links between the Taliban and opium include a tax on opium between 10-20% and opium is mostly coming out of Taliban areas. The report also highlights the Taliban was using drug revenues to buy weapons for operations in Afghanistan and neighbouring states. This report is from October 2001 and could be considered as support and justification for an attack on the Taliban immediately after September 11th. The report also emphasises the benefits the drug trade would indirectly benefit Bin-Laden (Perl, 2001).

A more comprehensive report was produced in 2009 by the United States institute of Peace entitled "How opium profits the Taliban". The report discusses how the insurgency and more specifically the Taliban are involved with the drug trade in Afghanistan , the report also links the complex network of drug trafficking to government officials as well as Afghan national army and police showing the level of corruption. Interestingly the report highlights

the Taliban's main objective is to drive foreign forces out of Afghanistan but rather than acting like Mujahideen they are more like a mafia profiting of the opium trade in Afghanistan (Gretchen, 2009).

As mentioned Goodhand (2009) describes the different components that comprise the resultant economy resulting from war. Goodhand's (2009) book "War economies" describes the combat, shadow and coping economies of Afghanistan. The opium economy actually overlaps into all three of the economies showing the differing motivations of the people who interact with the illicit trade. There is also a definite action of external regional and international factors contributing to the combat economy of Afghanistan however for the analysis a focus will be placed on the illicit opium economy.

The combat economy has certain linkages to the opium economy as the Taliban established firm ties with drug dealers often using tribal loyalty to form connections. Furthermore, they would apply a tax on opium as either Ushr (10% on farm products) or Zakat (20% levied on traders). Being an illicit trade opium cultivation forms a large part of the "the shadow economy", Goodhand (2004) describes how although the Taliban may have links with certain transport merchants their interest often conflicted and hence criminals often undermined the people they supposedly had a working relationship with. Lastly the "coping economy" this highlights the true nature of the opium economy in Afghanistan as the majority involved do so out of necessity and not greed which suggests abundance and not subsistence.

Rashid (2010) discusses the explicit link between the Taliban and the opium economy whilst the Taliban were in charge of Afghanistan, the chapter also discusses the reasoning of the Taliban to get involved with the opium economy even though there is a direct contradiction

with drugs and Islam. Rashid describes the Taliban dilemma of using drugs as both revenue and a bargaining chip by the Taliban to gain recognition from the international community. However as Kaldor (2007) discussed “New Wars” usually involve criminality and occasionally collusion by both sides of a conflict. This is reflected in Afghanistan as described in a New York Times article reflects another point of view on the drug trade in Afghanistan, Thomas Schweich really opposes much of the traditional arguments surrounding the opium trade in Afghanistan. The article firstly argues the Karzai government is not concerned with promoting anti-narcotic strategies since many of his supporters benefit from the trade, secondly the idea opium farming is a source of income for only poor farmers is challenged as opium farms are abundant in rich areas, thirdly the article highlights the opium economy of Afghanistan although fuelling insecurity and hence undermining the government is being manipulated by both sides with many involved switching allegiances depending on their current interests(Schweich, 2008). The article presents another approach to the Afghan drug trade presenting it as one motivated by greed and not really concerned with the ideological reasoning between the Taliban and those fighting the insurgency. Furthermore, US policy that ignores the drug trade in Afghanistan that is providing funds for the Taliban is ignoring a key aspect of the conflict and falling short in defeating the Taliban. This report sheds a different perspective on the conflict (Schweich, 2008).

6.0 Methodology

“Until lions have their own historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter”-

African proverb

Researching a conflict situation is always difficult however trying to understand the ideological groundings of a group that consider anyone from a foreign nationality hostile proved extremely difficult. The British foreign and commonwealth office advised British nationals should avoid travelling to Afghanistan with only parts of the country available for all but essential travel. Having the reassurance and resources of an Afghan friend I still visited the country (FCO website).

Unfortunately this did not prove useful as many of the insurgency experts vehemently opposed the Taliban. Trying to extract their views on the Taliban’s beliefs were either too one sided against the insurgency or the details that were not, were consequentially considered too sensitive to be allowed to share in the report. The upmost effort was made to reassure participants in the research their information would be kept confidential however given my ethnic background this was still deemed too risky as I would have to collate the data.

Historically research involving conflicts has to deal with bias; the Palestinian Israeli conflict obviously has such a research bias. Those on the Israeli side are vehemently supportive of the Zionist entity and report that way whilst Palestinian sympathisers had the exact opposite stance. Researching that conflict also posed similar security issues of checkpoints and trust issues as I faced in Afghanistan (Hermann, 2001).

There is currently a lot of intelligence work being conducted by many states in Afghanistan one of the leaders in this regard happens to be Pakistan. Pakistan has always been the Taliban's greatest ally given my Pakistani ethnicity this greatly hindered my research when talking with people who were at risk from the Taliban. Many individuals working for international organisations are targeted by the Taliban and did not want to divulge much information (Rashid, 2012).

Unfortunately my positionality and my probing questions about conflict in a security sensitive environment were not a good combination for research. Much of what was said that could have been useful was deemed as "off-record" and hence unethical to include as part of my research.

The data was also of a very bias nature, given the hostility between both sides the Taliban and the ethical issues facing my research I have decided not to include the primary data I have collected. Admittedly the content of the primary research was also sparse again given the security circumstances interviewing military personnel proved difficult.

Therefore the data I will use is all secondary data having an ample amount of resources on literature around the cause of conflict such as primordial and economic reasoning behind war. This formed the bulk of the literature review to see how applicable the concepts of the west versus Islam are applicable to the current conflict and also to analyse the economic factors surrounding the war.

However relating this to the Taliban is more difficult. There are obviously not many ethnographical approaches to studies involving the Taliban so people who write books discussing them are often doing so from a journalist perspective and not from an academic

view point. This often leads to sensationalised discussions surrounding the group.

Furthermore discussion on Islam also tend to automatically perceive Islam as the great global enemy post-Cold war entrenched in rhetoric of crusades, martyrdom and oppression of women (Marsden, 1998). Other sources of information that may have inherent bias are government reports especially those representing certain departments, budgets are often dictated on needs and a military with a threat from militant Islam will receive more money than when no threat is present (Thompson, 2010).

Another key issue that has to be noted was that touched upon by Collier (2000), rhetoric surrounding conflict is often portrayed as being grievance driven by those involved. The true nature and motive is often hidden to garner support for the cause. Collier and Hoeffeler for their World Bank report greed and grievance used proxies to represent each category. Such an approach in Afghanistan would really uncover the true nature of the conflict but a proxy for religious ideology is almost impossible to find. This also leads on to another point the data in the World Bank report was qualitative given the number of civil wars that were included. This research with the focus on ideology will be qualitative to get a more in depth insight into the rhetoric.

7.0 Analysis chapter

7.1 Challenging the Islam versus the West paradigm

The validity of the Islam versus the West paradigm that is purported by Huntington's clash of civilisations, when analysing the current conflict in Afghanistan is not applicable. Islam is definitely a part of the reason why the Taliban fight however to understand that as meaning the Taliban are a force that would be at constant odds with the West is incorrect.

The Sunni beliefs of the Taliban are definitely incorporated into why the group are currently part of an insurgency in Afghanistan. Jones (2008) highlights this as being a major cause of the conflict along with the failure of governance. The emphasis of the group is to establish Islamic law within the country by overthrowing the current regime (Jones, 2008). Along with other Sunni groups including Al-Qaeda and Hizb-i-Islami the three fight for their belief that Afghanistan should be run as an Islamic state under Shariah law (Jones, 2008).

The main reasons why this does not fit within the paradigm of the West versus Islam or a "clash of civilisations" is due to the following reasons

- The Taliban's Islamist approach
- There is a separation between Al-Qaeda and the Taliban
- The Taliban's actions

7.1.1 The Taliban's Islamist approach

Firstly the type of movement the Taliban is differentiates them from many other movements within the Islamic world. The Iranian revolution for instance was an Islamic movement that was seen not as revolutionary by the majority of Sunni Muslims, whilst

Ayatollah Khomeini presented the revolution as the same revolution that the Muslim brotherhood or jamaat-e-islami had described (Van Linschoten and Kuehn, 2012). The main difference was Sunni Islamic movements at the time were not revolutionary but focussed less on politics and more on religious ritual attempting to make the system more Islamic rather than completely overthrow the system as in Iran. The idea that removal of the Shah was a rejection of western ideal in place of an Islamic government may not be as applicable to the Taliban (Van Linschoten and Kuehn, 2012).

However there have also been many Sunni Islamic movements that historically were of a similar vain to the Iranian revolution (Kramer,1996) they are not applicable to the Taliban. But when comparing these to the Taliban there exist some major differences, the main distinction between the two is the difference in religious beliefs. These religious differences were highlighted during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The “Afghan Arabs” (foreign fighters) deemed the locals had a very rudimentary understanding of Islam that was watered down by cultural influences unlike the Islam practised by themselves (Gereges, 2009).

Such differences were highlighted by Sadowski (2006) as the difference between “traditionalists” and “fundamentalists”. Using Sadowski’s (2006) definitions fundamentalist would reject the ideas expressed by the Taliban especially if they involved cultural influences, many analysts of the Taliban highlight the cultural influence of Pashtunwali that the Taliban used to rule (Rashid, 2010).

Immediately we see that the differences occurring within Islamic movements suggest dealing with them as a homogenous group with the belief they are all focussed on the

destruction of the west is incorrect (Sadowski, 2006). The Taliban are unfortunately analysed under the same lens.

The main influence on the Taliban is the Deobandi sect of Islam (Marsden, 1998). The Deobandi sect originates from India at the time of the British colonial rule was established in Deoband in British India near New Delhi. The start of the movement began with the anti-British mutiny in 1857 which was defeated but led to many philosophical and religious trends to attempt to revive the standings of Muslims in India, the Deobandi movement as one that was not reactionary but rather a forward looking movement. One such example was the way they based their education system on the British (Rashid, 2010). The main objective was to educate Muslims to revive Islamic values and education.

However although this was the ideological core of the Taliban there were other influences on the Taliban. The other influences as mentioned the Pashtun tribal code called “pashtunwali” and also the strict Saudi interpretation of Islam known as Wahabiism. This meant that unlike the Deobandi movement the Taliban were not reformists but rather preferred a strict fundamental application of Islam (Marsden, 1998). Furthermore the core Deobandi focus was not political but was to promote religious teaching (Rashid, 2010). Essentially the Taliban are a hybrid group of religion, culture and foreign influence thus being a unique entity that does not fit comfortably amongst the broader Islamic movements (Roy, 1998).

The Taliban do not have an extensive political framework as many of the Islamists do instead they have a very limited system of governance that does not rely on a state to enforce their laws. Instead the Taliban rely on a flexible system to enforce Islamic law using the already existing tribal structure. The imposition of Shariah in an Islamist’s state on the

other hand relies on a strong central state with institutions applying the law, the only official institution the Taliban recognised is the selection of Mullah Omar as Amir (Roy, 1998).

This is what is discussed by Jurgensmeyer as those expressed by Islamist parties where sovereignty belongs to God. There is an Amir but the main authority is the Ulema that is autonomous from the Amir and can override the Amir's authority and govern according to Shariah (Marsden, 1998). But in the case of the Taliban this is carried out but not in the same centralised state style that an Islamist party purport.

The other major difference in beliefs held by the Taliban and those held by other Islamists was another one of their major influences; notably Maudadi (Marsden, 1998). Maudadi was the founder of an Islamic religious movement Jamat-e Ulema-i Islam who are not anti-western or "extremists". The Jamat-e Ulema-I Islam actually opposed the Islamists agendas in Pakistan they opposed General Zia who had an Islamist agenda and also sided with Benazir Bhutto over the more conservative Muslim league (Roy,1998).

7.1.2 There is a separation between Al-Qaeda and the Taliban

There is an obvious relationship between Al-Qaeda and the Taliban this was founded when Bin Laden sought asylum in Afghanistan and formed a relationship with Mullah Omar (Van Linschoten and Kuehn, 2012). However this does not mean the two are inseparable the American invasion of Afghanistan could have been avoided according to certain sources who argued the US was intent on invading Afghanistan irrespective of whether the Taliban wanted to be associated with Bin Laden or not. The Taliban are thought to have offered Bin Laden to the US for a trial on numerous occasions (Mashal, 2011 and Monbiot 2003). These offers were ignored and the invasion continued.

As Kepel (2004) argued applying the clash of civilisation thesis uniformly across all Islamic movements was very short sighted. Part of the reason Al-Qaeda and the Taliban are considered inseparable is due to the former being given refuge in Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda is a terrorist organisation who believe in attacking an enemy on the other side of the world (Gerges, 2009) whereas the Taliban is a nationalist movement looking to repel a foreign invasion of their country (Jones,2008) .

The other aspect of the Taliban is the idea they are a national movement with an almost non-existent foreign policy with the sole exception being a strategic alliance with their neighbours Pakistan. Their objective being a fundamentalist's movement is to apply Shariah law to the country and maintain Afghanistan's feudal society with the superiority of their own Pashtun ethnic group (Roy, 1998).

7.1.3 Taliban's actions

Once the invasion commenced the Taliban did not form an insurgency instead returned to their homes and even gave their support to the Karzai government as early as 2002. There were numerous attempts by the group to form peace deals with the government (Rashid, 2012). However these were rejected by the US which pressurised the Karzai government in to not accepting. The insurgency did not commence until 2003 even though the US invasion began in 2001 (Rashid, 2012).

These two incidents showed that the Taliban did not operate on the same ideological level of Al-Qaeda. The insurgency did not come about until 2003 and Mullah Omar justified this as a war against an "imperialist invader" the rhetoric he used likened the current occupation

of Afghanistan to the British invasion. The current insurgency according to this rhetoric was to repel what the Taliban perceived as an occupation (Van Linschoten and Kuehn, 2012).

A BBC documentary entitled “the graveyard of empires” by Rory Stewart makes a comparison between the current occupation of Afghanistan to the two previous attempts by equally dominant empires. The similarities are very clear, the other two empires also saw Afghanistan as an easy target to appease and bring the population into line with their beliefs. This is where both previous invasions failed miserably. Trying to enforce a culture on to the Afghanistan population was rejected and fought until they were removed from Afghanistan. This could be likened to the current Taliban insurgencies who perceive the current occupation as hostile to their own culture and way of life.

The emphasis of the documentary was the cultural disposition of the Afghan people that made them reject other ideals when they were forced upon them. This occurred on both occasions first the British Empire who began to take control setting up forts with in Kabul and the communist Russians who began attempting to apply their atheistic beliefs on the Afghan people.

The documentary and Mullah Omar’s rhetoric are not focussed on attacking the US or Western civilisation as Al-Qaeda did on 9/11 or as described by Gerges (2009) but instead was an attempt to resist a foreign occupation that attempted to apply their beliefs and ideals on the Afghan people. Much of the literature which discussed the role of religion as part of the state structure (Jurgensmeyer, 1993) agrees with this. The Taliban like the majority of Afghans prefer religion to dictate their lives as opposed to a secular state (Marsden, 1998)

The Taliban also struck deals with a US oil company UNOCAL to build pipelines from Turkmenistan to Pakistan, this search for foreign direct investment is also contradictory to the notion the Taliban were vehemently anti-Western (Roy, 1998). The UNOCAL deal also swayed the US opinion of the Taliban. When the group came into power the US actually thought a deal could be made with a now recognisable Afghan government describing the Taliban as “anti-modern” but “not anti-western” and saw “nothing objectionable” to their rise to power (Rashid, 2010).

Later they retracted such statements as the rhetoric gave the impression the US supported the Taliban along with Pakistan that upset many people in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as Iran and Russia. Later UNOCAL faced pressure from feminist groups for trying to work with the Taliban due to their poor record on women’s rights; later still the deal became unimaginable as the Taliban harboured Bin-Laden who attacked US interests around the world (Rashid, 2010).

The US is willing to deal with Islamic regimes for economic gain the most obvious deal the US has made for oil is with Saudi Arabia, the Armaco alliance in the twenties between the US and the Saudi monarchy who themselves follow a very strict version of Islam known as Wahabism which is essentially a fundamentalist literal interpretation of Islam (Rashid, 2010).

7.1.4 How the Taliban actually fit in the Islam versus West paradigm

The Taliban’s beliefs cannot therefore be considered as those shared by many other Islamists who feel Islam should be the key ideology that dictates the globe. Whereas Islamists like Qutb felt the requirement for the Quran and Sunnah should dictate a person’s life the

Taliban have their own approach to Shariah that involved culture and adapted Islam to suit this culture. Furthermore, whilst Islamists like Qutb present their world view as a rejection of non Islamic ideologies the Taliban are merely content with governing their own nation how they deem appropriate (Roy,1998).

There should be a note that the Taliban reject secular ideals in favour of religious ideals but to present this in a global context like Jurgensmeyer (1993) does is inaccurate. The Taliban running their nation with a quasi-religious system does not present the ground for a “new cold war”. Such a thesis like the clash of civilisations are perhaps more applicable to the terrorist group Al-Qaeda who have a trans-national manifesto (Gerges, 2009) but not to the Taliban who at worst are fighting a foreign occupation within their own nation.

However their preference for their tribal system does lend support to Barber’s idea of “Mc World vs Jihad” as the group seek their tribal culture to reject globalisation preferring to be anti-modernity. This is also in line historically with all the empires that try to invade the country and impose their own culture on to Afghanistan (BBC documentary). But rejecting foreign ideals on the basis of religion and culture can also contribute to the “clash of civilisations” thesis but the inherently violent response is why the thesis is flawed. If the Taliban were left to their own devices they would not be a threat to the West, this threat originated from Al-Qaeda and Bin-Laden a group that the Taliban was willing to divorce from prior to the invasion of Afghanistan (Al Jazeera/BBC)

However as the Taliban showed and the US acknowledged the Taliban are anti-modern not anti-western (Rashid, 2010). This view point that they are anti-western actually formulated by the group’s association with Al-Qaeda even though, as discussed, the two are ideologically different (Hasenclever and Rittberger, 2009).

7.2 The Taliban and Afghanistan's opium economy

Immediately there is a contradiction between the Taliban purporting a religious ideology that banned forms of western entertainment, alcohol and cannabis, yet maintained a close link to the opium economy of Afghanistan (Peters, 2009). This section of the analysis will highlight the group's link to the drug trade in Afghanistan and see how the Taliban placated their religion.

Three key periods of the group's involvement with the trade can help highlight what the true nature of the group is like when it comes to the drug trade in Afghanistan. Also at each stage different motivations are seen as the reason behind the group's involvement.

- Prior to invasion
- Opium cultivation ban in 2000
- Current insurgency

7.2.1 Prior to invasion

The Taliban have long been linked to the Opium economy of Afghanistan even during their rise to power. Within the country poppy was a key political tool as the Taliban made agreements where certain areas would be allowed to grow the drug in return for Taliban control of the area. This suited many areas as the Taliban ensured security and an end to banditry (Peters, 2009).

Many poppy farmers at the time were extremely happy with the Taliban and their rise to power. As the trade flourished as the Taliban made deals with warlords that gained their allegiance in exchange for them being allowed to keep the profits from opium cultivation

(Goodhand, 2005). The Taliban also provided much better security for trade routes that also significantly helping with distribution and production increased (Rashid, 2010).

The Taliban's approach to poppy growth was seen as a combination of religion, ambiguity and expediency (Goodhand, 2005). The first signs of Taliban hypocrisy towards opium can be seen with their approach to other narcotics within the country. As the Taliban's capacity grew the Taliban were able to impose a strict ban on hashish growth and even provided rehabilitation for addicts. This involved physical beatings and ice cold baths to addicts that would make them forget about their cravings (Rashid, 2010).

The Taliban acknowledge the growth of drugs was Haram but allowed the growth of the drug under the justification that the drug would be consumed by Kafirs unlike the growth of hashish which was completely banned as this was used by Afghans. Here we see an example of the Taliban using Islamic justification for their actions when the two seem contradictory (Rashid, 2010).

Furthermore the Taliban benefitted from a 20% levy on opium traders justified as Zakat. Again we see an Islamic element to the Taliban as Zakat is an Islamic idea that an individual must off set 2.5% of their wealth to be given to charity as a compulsory act and forms one of the fundamentals of Islam. But using the Zakat to justify a 20% tax on opium traders is unheard of (Peters, 2009).

The Taliban's revenue besides opium came from customs revenues on illegal trade routes between Afghanistan and their neighbouring states as well as other revenue from mining and official zakat. However this revenue was managed in Kabul and there existed a separate

War budget which was managed by Mullah Omar in Kandahar and was made up of income from drugs and donations from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan (Rashid, 2010).

As the heroin industry began to flourish the international community including the US and the UNDCP attempted to engage the Taliban in an attempt to curtail Opium growth.

However, there was not a solid commitment from the international community when it came to implementing UNDCP programmes in Afghanistan and eventually any potential projects fell apart (Rashid, 2010).

7.2.2 The Opium ban

However later Mullah Omar decreed the growth of poppy as Haram on two occasions firstly on August 1999 and then on the 27th July 2000, on the first occasion opium cultivation dropped by a third the second decree was enforced more rigidly and led to an almost complete stop of cultivation as it shifted to non-Taliban areas (Peters, 2009).

There are many reports around why this move was carried out by the Taliban some outright dismiss the religious justification and describe the move as an “insider trading” manoeuvre. Having built up stockpiles in previous years the ban would not affect the Taliban’s income as there was still a sufficient amount to supply meet demand. Furthermore, the move was seen as a way to gain international recognition for the regime as well as getting aid for the Taliban (Goodhand,2005). However some support the idea the move did have religious groundings as the support the decree received from Mullahs who were seen as essential in promoting the decree and ensuring its implementation.

7.2.3 The insurgency

Given the extensive links the Taliban formed when in power with those involved in the opium trade and even assuming positions within the trade itself the networks between the two were extensive. The links between dealers and distributors within the trade were often on tribal lines so the Taliban remained entrenched with the opium trade even after the ban (Goodhand, 2004).

Once the insurgency reformed in 2003 the Taliban found the opium to once again be a key fund raiser. In Taliban controlled areas a tax was implemented on all industries including opium cultivation (Peters,2009). Also a key link was formed between the Taliban and drug traffickers with tactics shifting to help drug traffickers including attacking security checkpoints to allow for the movement of drug traffickers (Goodhand, 2004). As well as tax the Taliban also offered protection for drug traffickers as a source of income and ran heroin labs along the border with Pakistan. Again such activity highlight the Mafiosi tactics the Taliban began to adopt. The report goes on to conclude that as the counter insurgency is cut off from outside funding there becomes a growing reliance on revenues associated with drugs (Peters, 2009).

7.2.4 Linking the Taliban relationship to opium to theory

Given the Taliban's actions since the insurgency started their increased participation in criminal activity and directly being involved in the opium trade whether through taxation or heroine labs and direct contradictions between their Islamic ideology Collier and Hoeffler's greed and grievance seems very apt in describing their participation in the war (Peters, 2009).

Further analysis also highlights the Taliban's needs with engaging with the opium economy, using Goodhand's (2004) idea of war economies being split into three the combat economy is seen as any activity that go towards funding fighting. This participation seems obvious for the Taliban as finances are required to fight the salaries have been paid using opium money (Peters, 2009). The coping economy provides an opportunity for the Taliban as with their previous reign offering people security to grow opium for their own income garners support for the Taliban (Rashid, 2010) this coupled with the shadow economy vastly undermines the government who are seen as unable to enforce law and order into the country.

Using Goodhand's definitions we see that although Opium is contradictory to the beliefs of the Taliban participating in the opium trade in Afghanistan is highly beneficial to the Taliban. This goes beyond merely gaining from the industry financially but also hindering the current government (Qazi, 2011). This is also the reason many counter insurgency reports argue the current policy will fail if the opium trade is not considered (Schweich (2008) and Peters 2009). Whether explicitly or not the Taliban supporting the opium trade actually maintains the insurgency and undermines the government (Qazi, 2011)

The Taliban governed Afghanistan from 1996-2001 during this time they managed to control the opium economy and although the industry is contradictory to their beliefs the Taliban taxed the industry using Islamic justification in the form of Zakat (Rashid, 2010). During this time the Taliban delivered basic public goods such as security to the farmers in the industry. However also during the same time the Taliban received income from foreign sources mainly the Gulf States and Pakistan (Marsden, 1998).

These two elements can be related to Reno's theory that patronage could be driving the war once external funding is removed from the Taliban they seek the shadow economy of opium

to gain access to resources. Although the theory is not fully applicable as the Taliban did provide public goods such as security during their government but the new government is obviously failing as the Taliban has made the country very insecure (Qazi, 2011). Hence the Taliban's engagement is a way to interrupt the government's patronage networks and continue the drive for civil war by war lords in the country.

The connection between the political aspects of the Taliban movement which encompass their religious beliefs and the economic aspects of the war also shows how the current conflict is dynamic. Firstly the Taliban may have banned the growth of opium in 2000 but now given they are required to fund a war and no longer have any legitimate means of funding they are heavily involved with the opium in Afghanistan as was discussed as transformation by Carter (2004). Furthermore the opium economy can be seen as a result of the conflict rather than as the cause as the Taliban had almost put an end to it in the year 2000 (Peters, 2009).

However the strategic element to the Taliban's involvement still does not detract from the criminality they are partaking. Also the government has shown a level of involvement in the opium industry which represents an aspect of Kaldor's thesis that new wars have elements of criminality linked to both sides where the objective is linked to economic benefit (Kaldor, 2007). There is no evidence of direct collusion but by supporting the Opium economy the government is hindering their efforts to defeat the Taliban (Schweich, 2008).

In conclusion on the Taliban's involvement, the link between the two is clear and although contradictory to their religious beliefs is providing the group with funds to fuel the insurgency whilst also undermining the current government by both offering security when the government cannot and increasing stability (Goodhand, 2005). However their

involvement does not necessarily mean they are fighting for purely economic gains as Collier and Hoeffeler suggest as the Opium economy is a consequence of the current insurgency and not the reason for it as Cater (2003) suggests (Peters, 2009).

8.0 Conclusion

The literature discussed around the “Islam versus the West “paradigm showed how both western and Islamic academics have contributed to the idea that these two ideals would be inherently at odds with one another (Soysa, 2001). But also literature distinguishing the different types of beliefs expressed by Islamic groups highlighted how the Islam versus paradigm may not always be applicable to all Islamic groups (Sadowsky, 2006).

Applying the paradigm to the Taliban in the described manner was inaccurate as analysing the group’s beliefs and actions does not support the idea the group is a threat to the West (Roy, 1998). The Taliban unlike other Islamists are not concerned with the larger global picture instead their movement is localised to their own country (Roy, 1998). Al-Qaeda who sought harbour in Afghanistan with the Taliban and what many believed were the realisation of Huntington’s clash of civilisation theory have differing objectives to the Taliban as was highlighted by the analysis (Gerges, 2009).

Also the Taliban’s actions emphasised the differences in their motives when prior to the invasion of Afghanistan offered Bin-Laden for trial for the actions of September 11th (Guardian and Al Jazeera). The Taliban did not immediately engage the US when the country was invaded choosing instead to lend their support to the Karzai government (Rashid, 2012).

Furthermore, the Taliban on, numerous occasions sought international recognition as the official government of Afghanistan whether through anti-narcotics measures or potential dealings with the US oil company UNOCAL emphasising their desire to be accepted by the West instead of adopting an antagonistic ideological stance towards the West (Rashid, 2010).

However the Taliban were definitely motivated by maintaining their own culture and sovereignty over their own country. Historically Afghans have always rejected foreign occupations and the projection of ideas and cultures they feel do not match with their own. This was highlighted on the two previous occasions their nation was invaded by the British and Soviet empires (BBC documentary).

As well as the “Islam versus the west” paradigm the economic aspects of the current war highlighted how the Taliban were willing to contradict their Islamic beliefs to further their own interests in the war by both benefitting economically and hindering the legitimacy of the government.

There were clear contradictions as the Taliban even used Islamic terminology such as zakat to benefit from taxing the opium although they acknowledged narcotics were haram. The Taliban also banned the use of opium on religious grounds but again this was perceived as economically motivated to control supply and raise prices rather than the Islamic justification the group presented.

What the research presented was a picture of the Taliban that went beyond the “Islam versus West” paradigm and sought a more holistic picture of the Taliban presenting contradictions and attempts at engagement with the West on numerous occasions. Thus leading to the conclusion that the insurgency in Afghanistan is driven by a combination of ideology and self interests these cannot be confined to a single religious or cultural movement given the unique nature of the Taliban.

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