

cosmopolitan ethics can be implemented by western states; the record of western responsiveness to human security concerns is mixed, and given that the 'unipolar moment' has come to an end, the likelihood is that the era of western interventionism is over. Arguably, the book's greatest merit, however, lies in Gilmore's insightful analysis of the disjuncture between the new expectations placed on national militaries and their organizational structure and culture. Without reform—at either the national or, more ambitiously, the international level—Gilmore notes that human rights protection will be poorly executed and authorized in an 'ad hoc and inconsistent' fashion (p. 37). Gilmore's analysis and prescriptions are, therefore, of profound importance for those concerned with realizing the human security agenda, even in an era when human security appears to have slipped down the international community's list of priorities.

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**A state built on sand: how opium undermined Afghanistan.** By David Mansfield. London: Hurst. 2016. 352pp. Pb.: £25.00. ISBN 978 1 84904 568 1.

**Middle East drugs bazaar: production, prevention and consumption.** By Philip Robins. London: Hurst. 2016. 288pp. Pb.: £20.00. ISBN 978 1 84904 281 9.

Two interesting books about the world's drug problem are published at a time when the debate on global drug policies seems to be in flux. Both the United Nations' Commission on Narcotic Drugs and its Special Session of the General Assembly earlier this year saw growing demands for a reform of the current drug control system. Nevertheless, most of the reforms actually taking place around the world are still confined to national and subnational levels of government. The debate remains roughly divided between those favouring strict controls and prohibition and those arguing for harm reduction, decriminalization or even legalization. In *A state built on sand*, David Mansfield does not choose sides, but rather takes a step back, arguing that any debate on legal terms (regulating versus prohibiting drugs) seems to be ahead of the reality of Afghanistan, where there is not enough state control to either effectively regulate or prohibit opium poppy cultivation (p. xvi).

Building on his extensive field experience, Mansfield analyses four different attempts to ban opium in Afghanistan since 2000. Steering clear of the question whether such bans are necessary, his main argument is that, given the local complexities involved, their effectiveness and sustainability will vary and, to a certain extent, can be predicted, for example by looking at whether a region has a history of direct rule by the state or limited statehood. Mansfield's call for a more 'nuanced analysis' (p. 9), as opposed to the 'broad-brush policy options' (p. xvii) regularly witnessed, has been consistent ever since I first met the author in 2002. His main vehicle for such analysis continues to be a rural livelihoods perspective (pp. 54–63), looking at the various motivations and factors involved in household and community decisions to start, continue or abandon illicit drug crop cultivation and, vice versa, the multiple roles opium plays in livelihood strategies.

However, the book interestingly shows how the author has increasingly integrated politics and power relationships into the livelihoods perspective (pp. 72–5). The core of the book (the fascinating case-studies of the opium bans) subsequently tests the value of this enhanced approach and reveals a three-dimensional chess game on four boards, representing the local, provincial, national and international levels. In this complex game, a broad variety of actors (farmers, rural communities, local elites, insurgents, provincial governors, inter-

national agencies and others) all have different perceptions and interests that sometimes align but are often at odds with each other.

The result is an 'unruly and fluid reality' (p. 301) with constantly shifting political alliances and allegiances in fragile political processes and the recurrence of shocks, both internal (e.g. the political shock of land disputes, pp. 188–91) or external (e.g. the environmental shock of droughts, p. 300). Mansfield shows that the—often temporary—outcomes of the continuous process of political bargaining can be surprisingly diverse: implementing an opium ban may give political leaders the 'moral high ground' when bargaining for international development assistance (see the Taliban regime in 2001, p. 125), but it can also pitch them against an active rebellion at local level, if the economic and political conditions are not right (e.g. in Nangarhar's Khogyani district, p. 203).

Like Mansfield, Philip Robins also chooses not to take sides in the debate on global drug policy (p. x). His *Middle East drugs bazaar* echoes Mansfield's view that the effects of illicit drugs and drug policies play out differently in different contexts. Robins's book is more digestible for general readers as it lacks the 80-odd pages Mansfield devotes to literature review and research methodology. Taking his analysis to the Middle East, the author looks at some of the region's producer countries (Lebanon, Morocco and Yemen), selected 'consumption spaces' (Egypt, Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia) and 'transit spaces' (Dubai, Iraq and Turkey).

The resulting *tour d'horizon* will captivate readers, especially because the narratives the author has selected are very diverse. The picture he paints of Yemen that, quite openly, seems to be fully at the mercy of (licit) qat (p. 64) is miles apart from the one of Saudi Arabia, a country that only recently started to admit that it has a consumption problem in the first place (p. 124). Similarly, the 'strategic existential threat' the drug problem poses to Israel in the eyes of its government (p. 103) is at stark contrast with countries where vested interests—whether political or economic—in drug production or trade actually seem to keep the country stable: for example, the political importance of the Berbers in northern Morocco (p. 26) or the alliances of farmers, traders and retailers in Yemen (p. 68).

Some common threads emerge as well: first, the importance of external factors is ubiquitous, for example in Lebanon, where the influence of Iran, Israel and Syria hampers the government's capacity to control its drug problem (p. 59), and also in Egypt, where the Arab Spring has jeopardized drug control efforts (p. 95). Second, (military) conflict often plays an important role, as in Israel and Lebanon, but also in Iraq where counter-insurgency efforts put drug policy on the back burner (p. 203). Third—and somewhat counter-intuitively—drug consumption is often related to the relatively well-off, educated youth in this region. Robins did not set out to provide a roadmap to solving the region's drug problems. He highlights some trends, but does not specify whether these go in the right direction. In fact, he mentions Afghanistan as the 'elephant in the room' when discussing drug policy in the Middle East (p. 212).

That puts hopes on Mansfield to demonstrate how to address this 'elephant' from the supply side. As local complexities rule out one size fits all solutions, Mansfield calls for analysis in which farmers and rural communities are not passive, but political agents whose motivations, interests and power are taken into account. The question remains, however, whether politicians can muster the will and perseverance needed to implement, over the long term, the extremely flexible and tailor-made policies that his 'localized analysis' dictates. It is doubtful whether drug policy, as an international political strategy, can ever take place 'one village at a time'.

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