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A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN AFGHANISTAN AND COLOMBIA
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Abstract

This article examines the European Union’s foreign counter-narcotics policies pursued in developing drug-producing states. Afghanistan and Colombia serve as comparative case studies. Building on Duffield’s work regarding the merging of security and development, this paper argues that the EU favors security-measures at the expense of the development-dimension in her foreign drug-policy. Specifically, three questions are asked. Which drug policies does the Union pursue in Afghanistan and Colombia? How can potential policy-divergences between both countries be assessed? And, does the Union indeed direct more resources towards security than development in her counter-narcotic efforts in both Afghanistan and Colombia? These questions are answered via the use of academic literature, reports, policy documents, newspaper articles and interviews. At all times, the primary sources are critically reflected against the secondary literature. Regarding the comparison between Afghanistan and Colombia, two similarities in EU drug-policy surface. In both countries, the Union employs alternative development as well as peace-building strategies. EU policy diverges when it comes to economic measures. Colombia receives trade preferences from the EU, while the strategy for Afghanistan is centered on the country’s rural economy. Regarding the comparison between security and development, lastly, the EU is intervening more deeply in the Afghan society and portraying its conflict as a security threat to Europe. Thus, there indeed seems to be a shift in EU foreign drug-policies’ focus from development to security.

1. Introduction

Counter-narcotics policies are a relatively new topic in academic and policy debates. In the field of conflict and development studies, drugs mostly feature as building-blocks of a larger argument on the relationship between natural resources and armed conflict. This paper aims to elevate drugs to a valuable research-topic in its own right. The European Union’s drug-policy will serve as main theme. Its counter-narcotics policies pursued in both Afghanistan and Colombia will be examined. Building on Duffield’s work regarding the merging of security and development, this paper argues that the EU favors security-measures at the expense of the development-dimension in her foreign drug approach. This hypothesis will be analyzed through the use of academic literature, reports, various policy-documents, newspaper articles and interviews. The first part of this paper contains an exploration of the academic research, the problem-definition and the methodology. The second part features an analysis of the EU’s security-measures implemented in Afghanistan and Colombia as part of its counter-narcotics strategy, while the third part consists of the Union’s development-measures strategized for the country cases. The argument’s breakdown in these two chapters is based on both Duffield’s work and EU policy, wherein security and development serve as the two main pillars of the Union’s foreign counter-narcotics approach. A comparative overview is provided in the paper’s fourth part, followed by the conclusion.

1.1 Security and development in drug-producing contexts

Major drug-producing states are often characterized by instability and underdevelopment. Garzon and Pol describe the repression of drug-activities in such countries as leading to a literal war, with the use of armed forces, thousands of victims, and a clearly defined enemy – embodied by growers, smugglers and drug-lords (2015; 3). Drug-lords can be or become so-called ‘warlords’. Both Reno and Lezhnev define them as self-interested thugs who engage in indiscriminate violence against the population they control. Yet other studies have found warlords providing public goods – security being the most crucial. The importance of reciprocity and loyalty should, thus, not be underestimated (Marten 2006; 47). The relationship between warlords and ‘their’ population is complex. And so is the relation between drug cultivation and security. The common assumption that warlordism always provides favorable conditions for drug-production is incorrect. Goodhand
explains that mafias need states to provide a certain level of stability. The drug-business is not inherently conflictual. Moreover, the favorable conditions for narcotics production are context-specific (2008; 413-414). The localization of the world’s cocaine-production in Colombia can be explained by the concurrence of three elements. Two concern the country’s geography and economic culture. Thoumi introduces a third decisive factor: Colombia’s socio-political conditions, notably the regional strife stemming from the 1948-1958 civil war ‘La Violencia’ combined with a weak regional presence of the national government (1992; 39-40, 47, 52). Later research confirms Thoumi’s analysis. Duncan only observes warlords’ authority in Colombia’s isolated regions. In the big cities and developed areas, conversely, the state clearly has a monopoly of coercion (2014; 19). Indeed, the legitimacy of the police forces is only questioned in abandoned and conflict-ridden areas, where some communities have developed their own security mechanisms (Hill et. al. 2007; 41-42). Such mechanisms are also present in Afghanistan. Oehme describes the opium trade as the glue binding multiple non-state actors together, while Marten confirms that the trade is controlled by warlords (2008; 82 & 2006; 69). In contrast to Colombia, Afghanistan is a weak state. The absence of enforceable and consistent laws has, according to Marten, extracted terrible costs on the society. Though not only the Afghan society is affected, international security is threatened as well (2006; 44). Counter-narcotics rapidly rose on the political agenda. Goodhand views this as based on the growing conception that the opium economy was a significant driver of insecurity and bad governance (2008; 405). The international community is threatened by security-related negative consequences of drug-production. This is, however, only one side of the narcotics story in developing countries.

Insecurity is accompanied by underdevelopment. Cultivation of narcotics is embedded in impoverished societies. Specifically, rural poverty has paved the way for the large-scale production of cocaine and opium. Both represent efficient cash crops. The labor-intensive nature of harvesting and the presence of guaranteed markets provide farmers with livelihoods (Mansfield 2003; 178). According to Isralowitz and Telias, the farmers and rural laborers involved in the growing and harvesting stage know they are breaking the law, though are in need of a reliable income-base (1998; 89). Cultivation of drugs has indeed led to significant increases in rural wages. The Afghan opium economy represents the closest thing to a national market. Goodhand points to UNODC
and World Bank data, stating that the Afghan narcotics economy has had a stabilizing effect on the national currency (2008; 415). This seemingly positive narrative is contradicted by Ekici. She frames the Afghan and Colombian states as being over-dependent on the nacro-economy. Such extreme reliance on illicit drugs has turned into a ‘development curse’. Field studies indicate that rural populations have lost their trust in both national and international agencies who failed to keep their promises on providing livelihoods for farmers and rural laborers (2016; 70). One of these international agencies is the European Union (EU).

1.2 European Union foreign (drug) policy

The European Union is known for her ‘balanced approach’ to the drug-problem, involving a mix of human rights protection measures on the one hand, and law enforcement initiatives on the other (Edward & Galla 2014; 945). On an international stage, this principle translates into an approach that reconciles security and development as two main pillars. This specific foreign policy resonates with Duffield’s book ‘Global governance and the new wars’. Herein, he observes the emergence of a new framework inherently connecting development and security. Both are mutually sustainable, meaning that one cannot be achieved without securing the other (2001; 15-16). Stambols research on EU drug-policy pursued in Colombia confirms this trend. She states that “the relation between security and development is axiomatic and needs to be tackled simultaneously in EU foreign and security policy action” (2016; 9). Moreover, she views a bifurcation between a ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ end of drug control. Bifurcation refers to the division between development on one side, and security-focused efforts on the other. The ‘soft’ end translates into an integration of the issue of drug crop production into the Union’s general development agenda, while the ‘hard’ end integrates drug trafficking in the parameters of her Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (2016; 10). The establishment of drug trafficking as a security issue is also observed by Joyce (1997; 27). This trend is relevant since the European Union’s foreign policy is gaining in importance. Compared to the 1970s, her CFSP today involves an elaborate institutional structure and produces a greater variety of complex actions (Smith 2004; 209). Indeed, the EU’s role on the world stage has developed to the point where the Union is now recognized as the second global actor (Telo 2006;53). The EU has also developed into an important international actor in Colombia. This can be explained by the
doubling of the European cocaine market, which went hand in hand with a drop in the US market. According to Stambol, this significantly changed the role of Europe in the Colombian context (2016; 1-2). Afghanistan has witnessed an increase of EU presence as well. Since 2007, the EU has been expanding its involvement in the country’s conflict. Larivé explains that the mission should serve “the credibility of the EU as a global actor in Common Security and Defense Policy [...]” (2012; 185-186). In sum, the European Union wants to portray itself as major international actor on the stage of foreign policy. This trend is visible in her general foreign counter-narcotic efforts, and specifically in Afghanistan and Colombia.

1.3 Problem definition

The literature-review brought forward several interesting themes, notably the settlement of drug-production in conflict-ridden and underdeveloped contexts, international policy responses merging the domains of security and development, and the European Union’s foreign narcotics policy. This paper intertwines all these elements. The main focus is the EU’s foreign drug-policy, wherein Afghanistan and Colombia will serve as comparative case-studies. Specifically, it is hypothesized that, in her foreign counter-narcotics efforts, the European Union favors security-measures at the expense of development policy. This problem-definition is based on academic literature, and can be translated into three research questions. Which drug policies does the EU pursue in Afghanistan and Colombia? How can potential policy-divergences between both countries be assessed? And, does the Union indeed direct more resources towards security than development in her counter-narcotics efforts in both Afghanistan and Colombia?

The asking and answering of such questions can be thoroughly justified. Firstly, the main theme of drugs is a relatively new and rising research-subject. The drug phenomenon is no longer regarded as purely a health or law enforcement problem. It now encompasses many other issues, such as economic development and stability (Stares 1995; 4). Drug policy is only part of a more comprehensive public policy including sectors such as health, justice and security (Bruun et. al. 1975; 42). Indeed, at the international level, drugs pose a threat to both security and development (McAllister 2000; 246). Within the European Union, the evaluation of policies in the area of drugs has also been gaining importance (Moreira et. al. 2007; 14). This paper is an addition to the existing literature on counter-narcotic strategies. The EU has, secondly, labeled drugs as a rising political
priority across the areas of health, security and external relations (MacGregor & Whiting; 70). The
Union aims to promote its approach to drug-problems throughout the world in order to “expand
its political influence in the international arena [...]” (Chatwin 2013; 254). Thus, the fact that the
European Union deems counter-narcotics a priority and aims to become a global leader in the field,
necessitates research on the specifics of the Union’s drug policies. This paper can, thirdly, be a
relevant contribution to the academic field of conflict and development. Cornell points to the
relationship between illicit drugs and conflict as a blank in the literature. According to her, drugs
have only featured in the academic debate as part of a broader discussion on the relationship
between natural resources and armed conflict (2007; 207-208). It has, thus, mostly been included
in subcategories without becoming the main focal point of academic research. In this paper, drugs
are at the center of Duffield’s merged development-security terrain. This terrain “remains under-
researched” (2001; 9). The fourth and last reason the European Union’s foreign drug-policy makes
a valid research-subject, can be found in Afghanistan and Colombia. Nearly all literature examining
international interventions in both countries, solely focuses on the United States. The EU is also
involved in these drug-producing states, though its policies have barely received any academic
attention.

In sum, it is interesting to analyze the position of the EU in the counter-narcotic policy field,
and specifically its position in two infamous drug-producing countries. This paper will supplement
existing literature on drug-policy, while also filling in the blanks in the academic debate on drugs
in conflict-ridden contexts. Drug-research is able to operationalize the overarching themes security
and development.

1.4 Sources and methodology
Multiple sources were consulted in order to formulate an answer to the research-questions. These
can be divided in three categories: officially published data, newspaper articles and interviews.
The first source-type, official publications, involves reports and policy-documents published online
by the relevant EU institutions. The most important actor is undoubtedly the Commission, which
introduces new legislation and undertakes international negotiations on behalf of the EU. Much of
the implementation is undertaken by specialized EU agencies, in particular Eurojust, Europol and
the European Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA). The Council of the EU is another influential institution, especially in the field of foreign policy. Its functions include policy coordination, adoption of legislation, devising the Union’s CFSP, and signing agreements with third countries. The European Parliament (EP), lastly, discusses policies and adopts legislation (in co-decision with the Council) (EMCDDA/Europol 2016; 156). The main policy instruments are the Drug Strategies, drafted every eight years by both the member-states and the Commission. These are underpinned by the four-yearly Action Plans, usually drafted by the Commission (Edwards & Galla 2014; 943). The European Union’s external relations, then, are embodied by both the Council and Commission, and diplomatic body EU External Action Service (EEAS). EEAS is headed by the High Representative (HR), Federica Mogherini. Thus, all drug-related available documents drafted by these institutions were evaluated. Such documents are often written in a technical language. It is, however, possible to make sense of them through the usage of academic literature as guideline. Moreover, the EU jargon is not characteristic for all types of publications. Written questions and country reports, for instance, are more straightforward.

Newspaper articles are the second source-category. These were found through a search on both Google and the Universities’ database. Such articles can frame the European Union’s policy documents and supplement the academic literature with more recent and practical information. Characteristically for both source-types, official publications and newspaper articles, is that the data have already been analyzed by another person. Such sources can be distinguished by the distance between the investigator and investigated object, which magnifies the risk of distortion. That risk can be reduced through the utilization of a third source-type: interviews.

Interviews qualify as data “generated by the researcher [...] who is responsible for the design of the study, and the collection, analysis and reporting of the data” (Blakie 2009; 160). Qualitative interviews were conducted with spokespersons from relevant organizations. The main European Union institutions involved in drug-policy (EMCDDA, EEAS, Council, Europol and Eurojust) were contacted. However, most of them responded with a policy of solely conducting interviews with journalists, while others did not answer at all. Only the EMCDDA responded positively and an interview was conducted with Danilo Ballotta, coordinator for institutional affairs. The EMCDDA is the Commission’s agency mandated with researching counter-narcotic policies. Its work is “now
recognized as representing a gold standard in terms of information on the global drug situation” (Chatwin 2016; 3). The General Secretariat of the Council also replied to some questions via mail. Such meager results from the EU prompted a different strategy. Another type of relevant source was found in drug-policy advocacy groups connected to the European Union. The choice for citizen organizations as an interesting source can be thoroughly justified. In the first place, it makes this research-project more feasible. Few EU institutions responded positively on a student’s interview invitation, while data ‘from the field’ still seemed necessary to complete the research. This gap was filled by information retrieved from drug-policy organizations. Secondly, the choice is based on EU policy. For the last thirty years, the Commission has been encouraging cooperation between civil society organizations in the field of drugs (Edwards & Galla 2014; 943-944). Moreover, the Council is involved in civil society by setting up dialog structures. The European Union believes strategies and policies to combat drugs will not be effective unless citizens’ associations are directly involved in their design and implementation (Kingham 1995; 312). This philosophy has led to the increasing importance of advocacy organizations in the field. The Union defines advocacy as “activities and actions intended to influence decision-makers and with the aim of developing, establishing or changing policies and practices” (EMCDDA 2013; 2). In sum, such organizations are active in the drugs field while at the same time not being an integral part of the EU, therefore they possibly view the Union’s policies more critically. Advocacy groups, in other words, merge the insider- and outsider-perspective. Fourteen lobby-groups working to influence drug-policy at an international level were identified in the EMCDDA paper ‘Drug policy organizations in Europe’. The positions of these organizations reflect the current discourses on drug control at international levels (EMCDDA 2013; 13, 16). Three of them responded positively to an interview request. Both World Federation Against Drugs (WFAD) and European Cities Against Drugs (ECAD) advocate for control reinforcement. Interviews were conducted with their Secretary-Generals, respectively Linda Nilsson and Erik Leijonmarck. Transform Drug Policy Foundation, conversely, fights for control reduction. An interview was given by Peter Muyschondt – the group’s Belgian contact and Antwerp chief police commissioner. The three drug-policy advocates and three EU-related drug-policy coordinators are all perceived as representatives (Blakie 2009; 160).
An analysis of EU foreign counter-narcotic policies pursued in Afghanistan and Colombia will mainly be based on the first source-type: official documents drafted by its relevant institutions. Newspaper articles frame these documents, while also supplying more recent information. Some field-data will be obtained from the interviews. Information retrieved from these three sources will be held against the critical light of academic literature. The analysis is divided in three main parts. First, the security-dimension of the Union’s foreign drug-policy will be highlighted. In the second part, the development-dimension will be assessed. The third part features a comparative analysis of these two dimensions and the two country cases.

2. The ‘securitization’ of drug-policy

2.1 The general security predicament

The introduction showed the mutual sustainability of security- and development-measures within international public policies. The European Union is no exception, and is financially and politically invested in drug-cultivating countries. Her Drug Strategy 2013-2020 aims such investment at issues related to public health, security and stability. It refers to the catastrophic consequences of the narcotics-production for the internal stability and security of source countries (2013; 8). In 2007 and 2014, the Council explicitly recognized the significant and detrimental impact that production and trafficking of drugs are having upon the stability of security in Afghanistan (6374/1/07 & 14902/4). Such references correspond with Duffield’s observation that “in most policy statements, there is a notable convergence between the notions of development and security” (2001; 33). Recent EU-Afghanistan relations are based in the 2017 Cooperation Agreement on Partnership and Development, which provides the basis for their relationship in areas such as the rule of law and rural development (Relief Web; 2017). Cooperative partnership agreements are characteristic for a new meaning of development, according to Duffield (2001; 42). Telo confirms the Union embracing this new dimension of international relations. He explains that “interregionalism has seen the emergence of new structures of partnership and cooperation”. Hereby, partnership means the opposite of one-way, colonial style, relations (2006; 55). The European Parliament expressed its concern on the Afghan security situation as well. It pleads for the involvement of Afghanistan in regional stability programs (P8_TA0121; 25). The emphasis on regionalism corresponds with
Telo’s assessment on the Union’s global governance. Notably, the EU sees regional cooperation among neighboring countries as a bottom-up process able to secure peace and democracy (2006; 55). In sum, the European Union is very much invested in Afghanistan’s security setting. The same cannot be said for Colombia. The EU’s interest in the country’s problems with violence only came about fairly recently. In 2014, the EU extended its support for the peace talks between the Armed Forces Colombia (FARC) and the Government. The group promised to end its connection to illicit drugs and help in the dismantling of the drug economy. The EU encouraged this promise by stating that it “will benefit the entire region and enable Colombia to reap the full advantages of peace and security” (Colombia Reports; 2014). Two years later, the FARC signed the peace deal with the Colombian Government, which prompted the EU to remove the rebel organization from her terror list (Colombia Reports; 2016). Here again, the EU’s international relations with drug-producing states are framed in terms of security. The EU’s disinterest in Colombia is explained by Stambol. According to her, Latin America has indeed not been a pivotal region to the Union in terms of security. Europe has always been more interested in geographically closer and strategic nations. Hence, the Union has been more concerned with the heroin trade from Asia than with cocaine trafficking from Latin America. This is due to the harms stemming from heroin use in Europe, the geographical proximity of Asia, and the control of the heroin trade by terrorist groups which are viewed to pose a greater threat compared to Colombian groups (2016; 14). The Afghan peace-process is encouraged as well. On multiple occasions, the Council stressed its full support in promoting an “Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process that includes all Afghan citizens” (11245/16). Here, the important concepts are ‘Afghan-led’ and ‘Afghan-owned’. Goodhand and Sedra observe that international intervening actors “search for more ‘local’, ‘hybrid’ and ‘Afghan-led’ approaches to stabilization”. Yet, such approaches do not necessarily reflect the Afghan population’s expectation of the state. The authors label this Western peace-builders’ notion as an ideology or legitimizing narrative rather than a template for state-building (2000; 243-244). The European Union thus seems to be an external actor employing the new narratives on intervention and state-building. Her direct involvement in security-related areas is not as subtle when it comes to terrorism.
The 2016 EMCDDA/Europol report on drug markets claims to have evidence of ties between drug trafficking and terrorist groups. In general, these are largely functional in nature, with terrorists using involvement in the drug trade to fund their activities (2016; 5). The literature confirms the existence of said ties. Both Ekici and Duncan state that drug-trafficking has played a significant role in the financing of Colombian terror networks (2016; 63 & 2014; 35). The literature also indicates the relationship between narcotics and terrorism may be more complicated than it appears. Duffield, moreover, claims that increasingly drawn links between international crime and terrorism reflect a new security framework wherein the modalities of underdevelopment have become dangerous (2001; 16). The EU sources reveal that terrorist groups in both Afghanistan and Colombia have been the subject of debate. It is stated that the FARC guerrillas as well as the paramilitaries imposed taxes on all actors involved in the cocaine chain (EMCDDA/Europol 2016; 14, 33).¹ This being the only traceable source on Colombian terrorist organizations, the Union is far more concerned with terrorism in the Afghan context. In 2017, most recently, the EU stressed the need for Afghan regional cooperation in confronting both drug production and terrorism. Here too, regionalism is featured as the Union’s flagship. This emphasis is consistent with most authors’ suggestions on how to approach the Afghan conflict. Larivé, for instance, labels regional instability as one of the main security challenges (2012; 194). The importance of counter-terrorism was previously touched upon in July 2016 by the European Parliament, and in January 2017 by the Council (P8_TA(2016)0121; 25 & 15587/16; 8). The dichotomy between EU counter-terrorism sources directed to Colombia on the one hand and Afghanistan on the other, is not surprising. Colombian terrorist groups do not pose a direct threat to Europe. Latin America has, indeed, never been an important region to the EU in terms of security (Stambol 2016; 14). The same cannot be said for Afghanistan. There, Pryce and Oehme observe the Taliban being aided by Al-Qaeda operatives, powerful warlords and drug-trafficking organizations (2012; 110 & 2008; 81). Cornell, too, points to “the involvement of major armed factions in the drug industry in direct capacity” (2007; 218). In sum, the Euro-Atlantic community considers the Afghan conflict a serious threat for global security.

¹ As of the November 2016 peace deal between the Colombian Government and the FARC, the latter has been demobilizing and transitioning into a political party.
The European Union addresses this threat mainly through law enforcement and general state-building measures.

2.2 Warlords, insurgencies and state-building

Both Afghanistan and Colombia are demonstrative examples of the nexus between drug-trafficking and warlordism. Narcotics are instrumental in enabling a group to threaten the state’s foundation: the monopoly of the use of force and control over territory (Cornell 2007; 212). The literature and United Nations sources both demonstrate strong evidence for a link between insurgent groups and drug-production. The UN Development Program (UNDP) illustrates that organized crime has the potential to endanger the integrity of the state (2015; 7). Indeed, Colombia’s sovereignty is being challenged by guerrilla groups and drug cartels (Pryce 2016; 107). The state’s structural crisis seems clear from diverse terrorist actions perpetrated by the mafias, such as the taking of villages (Duncan 2014; 39). According to Cornell, the country provides a clear example of the way wherein non-state violent actors have exploited the drug-industry in order to extend their capacities and the territories under their control. These rural territories, their populations and their resources form the base of the guerrillas’ power. Moreover, they serve as production centers for Colombian cocaine (2007; 219). Afghanistan, too, has a century-old tradition of regional warlordism. Oehme points out that the country’s fragmented and unstable environment was a fertile ground for closer working relations between different non-state actors. Warlords, anti-government militias and drug traffickers became intertwined (2008; 84). Cornell summarizes the current situation as the different civil war factions all being involved in the drug trade (2007; 218). An EU report frames the interdependency between civil war and narcotics as “many of the countries that at one point in time became major producers of drug plants had internal conflicts or were at war” (EMCDDA/Europol 2016; 16). This line of thought came forward during the interview with Erik Leijonmarck as well. He explains that, due to the international drug-control system prohibiting certain narcotics, producers and sellers of those narcotics tend to seek out weak states. Existing problems in such countries are made worse due to the drug trade. Both statements, by the EU and Leijonmarck, are confirmed in the literature. Goodhand, for instance, states that the Afghan conflict created fertile conditions for opium production, but opium also helped to create a self-sustaining war economy.
wherein there were limited incentives for rebuilding the state (2005; 195). Consequently, state-building measures should be at the heart of counter-narcotic efforts in developing countries.

The European Union indeed employs multiple state-building measures in both Afghanistan and Colombia, though Afghanistan clearly is the main subject. In July 2016, the Council concluded that its “overarching strategic goal should remain the development of Afghan institutions”. Its key objectives are security, human development, rule of law, peace, and the fight against the narcotics industry (11245/16). Counter-narcotics is addressed through “a comprehensive approach focusing support on capacity-building for law enforcement and the judiciary; [...] and alternative livelihoods” (Council; 10997/16; 8-11). EU drug-related state-building is focused on three main issues, namely law enforcement, democracy and human rights. First, law enforcement in Colombia is only tackled via the Union’s encouragement to limit the role of armed forces in favor of an expansion of civilian law enforcement (EP; B8-0042/2016; 3). Larivé explains that in the case of police reform, experts claim that a division between police and military is necessary (2012; 188). This civilian dimension also features in EU policies pursued in Afghanistan. HR Mogherini labeled security a key factor, and describes it as a matter of politics and capabilities. Concerning the latter, the Union will “keep supporting the training of Afghan security forces” (EEAS PR; 2016). This training is celebrated by the UN Security Council (UNSC). In 2017, the UNSC pushed for further police sector reform “building on the achievements of the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL-A)” (Relief Web; 2017). Hill et. al. frame said reform as an attempt to develop ‘professional’ police officers who are not tempted to become tools of local warlords. The authors criticize the programs as going under the assumption that professionalism can be learned through training, and that legitimacy of the police force will follow – “a questionable assumption” (2007; 48). Larivé is not impressed with the mission either. She states that EUPOL-A suffers from weak leadership, a limited mandate, excessive security restrictions and a lack of strategy (2012; 186). EUPOL-A was launched in 2007 and indeed aims at the “developing of an accountable civilian police service” (Council; 15234/14; 4). The literature’s labeling of the operation as failed, does not correspond with the Union’s rhetoric. Her commitment to the mission’s success has been confirmed several times, most recently in July 2016 and January 2017 (Council; 11245/16; 6 & 15587/16; 2). Larivé clarifies that EUPOL-A has been identified as a “must-win mission for the EU in order to confirm its aspirations
to become a relevant international actor” (2012; 186). A remarkable detail in the operation’s policy-statement is its gender perspective, since the EU supports the “sustainable recruitment, retention and integration of female police officers” (Council; 15234/14; 4). This detail did not go unnoticed by Goodhand and Sedra either. They confirm European police reform programs in Afghanistan as being “centered on concerns over the status of women and human rights norms”, and criticize them for being orientalistic (2013; 249). Summarizing, the EU first and foremost addresses Afghan state-building through the reform of law enforcement.

Democracy is the second area the EU tackles. The Colombian democracy is not addressed, although the democratic system is corrupted by the criminal class. Goodhand defines corruption as “the misuse of public office for private, group or sectional gain” (2008; 406). Uprimny and Guzman observe a deep problem of violence and weaknesses in the Colombian political system. The country’s narcotics industry has only deepened its institutional problems (2016; 99). Duncan does not seem to agree and labels Colombia “a relatively strong state supported by a vigorous capitalist class” (2014; 39). His article tackles the general claim that Colombia is a failing state by pointing out that the state’s hegemony has never been threatened in its main centers of power (2014; 39). European Union’s policies pursued in Colombia seem to be in line with Duncan’s assessment. Afghanistan, on the contrary, can be seen as one of the poorest nations in the world, with an extremely unstable government (Trautmann et. al. 2007; 202). Not surprisingly, then, the EU incorporates the reinforcement of democracy as objective in her Strategy for Afghanistan (Council; 10997/16; 15). This strategy is confirmed by HR Mogherini via labeling electoral reform a key priority. Further, she states that “political stability and legitimacy are a pre-condition to implement the ambitious reform program including fundamental changes to the public service, to subnational governance and economic governance” (EEAS PR; 2016). Marten illustrates the need for electoral reform by claiming that approximately 80% of the Members of Parliament have links to illegal armed groups. She, however, nuances this trend by stating that Afghan local governments have always mattered more than the central government (2006; 56, 69). Cornell finds the criminal involvement of government officials a major impediment to the building of the Afghan state (2007; 222). Thus, the drug economy has enabled military and political entrepreneurs to ‘capture’ parts of the state. Goodhand nuances his assessment through claiming that narcotics are indeed a factor
in political decision-making, though “the narco-state discourse exaggerates their role by raising them to a position of primacy” (2008; 413). In another article, he and Sedra point out that state-building is seen as the antidote to internal conflict, which led to the convergence of state- and peace-building. This convergence is operationalized through a range of interconnected initiatives, such as good governance and law enforcement – thus the same initiatives the European Union undertakes (2013; 240). Hereby, the Union embodies the notion of liberal peace. According to Duffield, employment of liberal peace results in the emphasis on strengthening representative and civil institutions, promoting the rule of law and reforming the security sector (2001; 11).

Next to law enforcement and democracy, human rights are the third focus of the EU’s pursued state-building drug policies in Afghanistan and Colombia. Her Drug Strategy is indeed partly based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The document further labels the protection of human rights as one of the priorities in the area of international cooperation in the field of drugs (2013; 1, 9). Indeed, the Council wants to ensure that its aid towards Colombia “contributes to respect for and promotion of human rights” (14127/00; 3). Zwartjes et. al. frame the Union’s focus on human rights as one of the fundamental elements of the European identity. Her soft power is based on common values like these (2012; 400). Moreover, this value has been gaining importance in international counter-narcotics debates. This is due to the growing body of evidence that traditional prohibitionist drug-policy in developing states has had negative effects on human rights (Uprimny & Guzman 2016; 87). According to Goodhand, this marks the so-called third generation of aid strategies which increasingly emphasizes human rights and peace-building. It can be seen as the re-politicization of international aid reflecting the emergence of new Western concerns and interests (2002; 845).

Western values such as democracy, rule of law and human rights resonate in the European Union’s drug policies pursued in Afghanistan and Colombia. These policies are drawn-up within the general international trend to frame development-issues in security terms. The EU indeed sees the drug-related problems in developing contexts as a security predicament. In conclusion, security is the first pillar on which the Union’s foreign drug-policy is built. Development is the second one.
3. Economical and rural development

An important step in the achievement of sustainable development is to face the literal root of Afghanistan’s and Colombia’s drug problems, which can be found in the opium and coca plants themselves. The cultivation of the world’s heroin and cocaine is situated in the most insecure provinces, wherein state institutions are absent and armed groups control the territory (Council 14902/14 & EMCDDA/Europol 2016; 15). Such areas are not only unsafe, they are underdeveloped as well. The Council confirms the connection between opium cultivation and a low level of development (14902/14). So far, the Afghan Government has been unable to secure favorable conditions for farmers to guarantee a market for their produce. This is where opium-production enters the stage. Cultivating this crop is extremely profitable for farmers, whereas it is almost impossible to identify other crops that could be competitive to the opium production in the short run (Official Journal 2004/C88). Grisaffi and Ledebur confirm illicit drugs presenting a solution to the farmers’ subsistence needs, which cannot be easily replaced (2016; 14). Mansfield labels both the opium poppy and coca bush “efficient cash crops that are well suited to the harsh conditions of source areas” (2003; 178). Further, he points out that their production is a function of marginal socio-economic and ecological conditions. In this context, drug cultivation can be seen as part of a wider survival strategy (2008; 181). This is confirmed in Reuter’s research. He also states that “both in the Andes and in Afghanistan, the growers are small producers and there is no suggestion that they have any collective power in bargaining” (2007; 79). Opium cultivation became part of the livelihoods of rural households (UNODC 2003; 11). This trend was confirmed in the interview with Peter Muyshondt. He stated that, in Afghanistan, opium is dirt-cheap and of great quality. It can be found in nearly every household, where it is used for different purposes. It is clear that opium cultivation, trade and use is deeply embedded in the Afghan society. The mere destruction of drug crops would be an insufficient and short-sighted counter-narcotics strategy. Nonetheless is it the same strategy the Colombian Government employed for decades, although its drug-producing context is very similar to Afghanistan. Coca is mainly produced by poor small-scale farmers living in the rural frontier. Many of them are involved in the illicit drug-cultivation because frontier areas lack the infrastructure needed for other, licit, crops to be profitable. This leads the EMCDDA to support the contention that “eradication measures alone are unlikely to be effective if they are not
accompanied by other measures to address the broader causes of the problem” (EMCDDA/Europol; 13-15). Yet, Colombia indeed has a long tradition of using aerial spraying of herbicides to suppress drug crops. This method has been promoted and supported by the United States since the early 1980s (EMCDDA/Europol). Throughout the years, the failure of this strategy became clear and the Colombian Government suspended spraying entirely in 2015. They opted for a more humane strategy: alternative development (The Economist; 2017).

3.1 Alternative development

Alternative development or crop substitution programs can be defined as the creation of a socio-economic environment wherein households can attain an acceptable standard of living, without the need for drug crop cultivation (Mansfield 2003; 179). The idea roots in the 1960s, when a UN General Assembly (UNGA) Resolution recommended that governments seek assistance from international sources to “develop alternative economic programs and activities [...] as one of the most constructive ways of ending the illegal or uncontrolled cultivation of narcotic raw materials” (UNGA Res. 2434 [XXIII]). Various international organizations and donor countries have implemented such programs in drug-producing countries (Ekici 2016; 70). One of these international organizations is the EU. Alternative development can be seen as the Union’s flagship in its developmental approach in Afghanistan and Colombia. It is mentioned as counter-narcotics measure in nearly all policy documents, where it is defined as rural development intended to support farmers’ shift away from illicit crops. Eradication measures need to go hand with such crop substitution (Council; 5908/07; 2). The prominent role of alternative development is visible in the Action Plan, wherein the tenth objective is the integration of “the Drugs Strategy within the EU overall foreign policy framework”. This strategy, then, promotes the “EU approach to alternative development [...] in cooperation with third countries“ (2013; 12). The approach needs to be “unconditional, non-discriminatory [...] and realistic” (2013 ; 9). This drug-policy also needs to create a platform for the local communities’ input. The Union’s focus on alternative development needs to be framed within her overarching drug-policy principle of an “integrated and balanced approach” (Stambol 2016; 8). On the world stage, this translates into Europe representing a moderate force in global counter-narcotic policies. The EU is perceived as a counterpoint to the more draconian policies of much of Asia, Russia and
the US (Standring 2012; 17). Alternative development, as part of this balanced approach, is also translated in the Afghan and Colombian contexts.

In Afghanistan, most of the Union’s support is mainstreamed within the development strategy as a means of ensuring that alternatives for farmers exist (Council; 5908/07; 4). The EU has been encouraging crop substitution in Colombia as well. There, the Union has partnered with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in supporting alternative development since 1988 (EU & UNODC 2015; 23). This strategy is, according to the organizations involved, an appropriate and balanced approach. The earliest trace of the program in EU policy sources can be found in 2001. Then, the Council clarified that the EU has made the Colombian Government aware of “the danger of a negative impact of the aerial spraying on past and future EU cooperation projects. The EU […] expressed its conviction that crop substitution is the most effective means to combat illicit crop production” (6114/1; 2). In the years following, the Union expressed its support of alternative development on multiple occasions, as well as its rejection of aerial spraying. This position was defended by the Council, Commission and EP (Council; 8841/15; 44 & Official Journal; C88/E175 & EP; B8-0062; 5). Despite this political support, the reality may not be that rosy. The faith of alternative counter-narcotic policies remains unclear. Colombian cocaine output is at an all-time high. Surprisingly, one reason for the rise is the peace deal between the Government and FARC guerrillas, which was signed in November 2016. The deal was years in the making, and many of its provisions were clear from the start – including that there would be payments for coca-farmers who shifted to different crops. Unintentionally, the state created an incentive to plant more. In addition, coca-growers doubt the Government’s promises. The suspicion is born out of generations of Colombian famers subscribing to alternative development programs, only for the funding to dry up (The Economist; 2017). Such programs may not be that successful in the Colombian context, according to the country’s former UNODC representative. He claims that Colombia’s problematic concentration of land makes alternative development initiatives both more difficult to implement and less productive (EMCDDA/Europol; 15). Thus, alternative development enjoys broad political support, while this case example reveals its weaknesses. The program is criticized in the literature as well. Only Mansfield claims that it “has disproved the myth that coca bush and opium poppy crops offer the highest returns to small farmers” (2003; 182). He labels the strategy a success,
though points out that alternative development needs to be viewed within the context of what it can realistically hope to achieve. Budget constraints, the wider macroeconomic framework and the flexibility of traffickers have all undermined such interventions (2003; 191). Indeed, the program faces some major difficulties. Ekici points to the fact that large parts of drug-producing states are under control of non-state forces. The influence of drug lords reaches into state institutions, where it manifests itself as corruption, political patronage and favoritism. Multiple anti-corruption schemes have been set-up, though all failed to curtail this phenomenon. Local institutions are also too weak to address this problem. Furthermore, the source of the drug problem is not situated in drug-producing nations, but rather in consumption areas. Western drug programs too often disregard the demand side of the global drugs market. However, demand constitutes the origin of the problem (2016; 67-69, 74, 80). Bruun et. al. agree by stating that “crop substitution is linked to the belief [...] that the answer of the drug problem lies in the limitation of drug production at the source, that is, at the level of cultivation” (1975; 205). However, the Union propagates a ‘balanced approach’, referring to an equal concentration on demand and supply reduction measures. The principle of ‘shared responsibility’, moreover, acknowledges Western responsibility with respect to demand (Stambol 2016; 4, 8). In spite of this rhetoric, the sources reveal the EU indeed seems to emphasize supply reduction. The principle of shared responsibility is hardly ever mentioned. In the report on cocaine as a global problem, the Union even emphasized the need to target supply reduction efforts, while demand reduction was not addressed (EMCDDA/Europol; 35). The ‘shared responsibility’ principle is mainly brought up by the Afghan and CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) governments. In 2014, Afghan president Ashraf Ghani appealed on the principle to express his high expectations regarding the fight against drug demand in Western countries (Council; 14902/14; 5). A year later, the CELAC delegation committed to countering the world drug-problem by “taking into account [...] the principle of common and shared responsibility” (Council; 8841/15; 15). The Colombian president Juan Santos brought this principle to life through his so-called “diplomatic offensive” which aimed to convince other countries to contribute to the peace-building process in his nation. Hereby, he appealed on shared responsibility of the world drug problem (Colombia Reports; 2015). Leijonmarck agrees the EU should do more to address the demand-side of the problem, and thinks its drug-policy is not as
balanced as it appears. He states that “if we ignore our problems here, we are facilitating a large-scale production that needs to be consumed somewhere”. Nilsson made a similar remark through pointing out that by purchasing illicit drugs in Europe, “we are putting money into organized crime”. Back to alternative development, then, Bruun et. al. claim the programs have never risen to the level such an exercise demands (1975; 204). Pryce criticizes them as “often ill-thought out, top-down inappropriate projects which fail to engage local farmers and local communities” (2012; 52). Luckily, the EU and the Government of Colombia have both started to realize the need for bottom-up engagement. This is emphasized in the 2013 Drug Strategy and the 2016 EMCDDA/ Europol report (2013; 9 & 2016; 164). Linda Nilsson applauds this trend. In the interview, she stated that you cannot simply remove the drug from farmers. The key to success is the local community having some way to develop itself. Muyshondt partly agrees with Nilsson’s assessment by confirming that the Afghan farmers want and need state support in the transition from illicit to licit crops. He also proposes the legalization of these crops as a way wherein the farmers could legally cultivate and sell their produce – a strategy with which Leijonmarck strongly disagrees. The latter claims that legalization is not the silver bullet that would solve all problems. Regardless, there is a consensus on the need for bottom-up engagement. The FARC successfully pressed the Colombian Government in “the active involvement of local communities in the planning and execution of the crop restitution program”, while furthermore stressing “the importance of a long-term policy” (Colombia Reports 2016 & 2013). In conclusion, alternative development is no silver bullet. It is an imperfect program that needs to be criticized in order to reveal its shortcomings. Still, it can count on broad European and international support.

3.2 Public health

Drugs are, of course, not only security and economic issues. Health is an important pillar as well. According to EEAS, the Union’s new Action Plan would provide a strengthened response to new drug-related health challenges (EEAS PR; 2017). EU health policy in this field is mostly aimed at reducing the number of drug-addicts. In particular, the European Union advised the Afghan state to educate its population “to make them aware that opium-poppy production is illegal and that
Opium consumption has very negative health and social consequences” (Official Journal 2004 C88; 632). Alongside this fairly patronizing advise, the EU supports the launch of a comprehensive Afghan health policy (Council; 14902/14;12). The Commission, for instance, is funding the delivery of health services to Afghan farming population (Official Journal; 2004/C88; 633). In the Colombian context, the EU cooperates with CELAC in order to promote equal access to public health services, which aims to reduce the negative health and social effects of drug abuse (Council; 8841/15; 43). Thereby, the Union employs a different approach to coca production in the Andes than the United States. Rather than treating drugs as a national security issue, the EU strategy is centered on rural and economic development, data generation and regional cooperation. Stambol points out that the US defined the cocaine problem as a “national security threat”, whereas the EU defined it as a “societal security threat”. This regards a threat in health, crime and moral issues (2016; 1-2, 4, 6). Dorn et. al. explain this discrepancy through stating that, unlike the US, the EU has few strategic security concerns in South America. Other dimensions of policy, such as trade and development, provide the context for the Union’s line on drugs in this region (1996; 259). Though this observation is mostly true, it should be taken with a grain of salt. Stambol indicates that though coca production is still largely defined by the EU as a societal security threat, cocaine trafficking has undergone quite a change in recent years. The Union began to establish itself as a security community, and thereby explicitly defined trafficking in narcotics as a major threat to European internal security. It is no longer merely a threat to the social fabric, moral values and well-being, but also to the stability of the EU (2016; 6-7). This changed conceptualization resonates with Duffield’s these on liberal peace, since its ultimate goal is stability. Consequently, the lines between security and development become blurred (2001; 15, 34). Stambol confirms Duffield’s these for the EU’s drug policies in Latin America. She observes that “the emphasis of policies and projects is shifting toward tackling cocaine trafficking and organized crime through actions which clearly fall within the domain of security policy” (2016; 8). Thus far, the development dimension seems to be losing out to security concerns. Economic measures, then, remain a major part of the EU’s development-related drug policies.
3.3 Economics and trade

Since the European Union started out as an economic project, it is not surprising that economic measures qualify as the third pillar in EU development-related foreign drug policies. Moreover, the Union views underdevelopment largely as an economic process – according to Duffield (2001; 38). Three areas can be distinguished: the illicit, rural and national economy. The illicit economy incorporates drug production and trafficking as primary elements. Drug control efforts have fueled an immense black market for illicit drugs. The money generated by these activities creates imbalances in commercial competition, spreads corruption, fuels criminal organizations, and decreases the state’s capacity to raise taxes (UNDP 2015; 4). The Council points out that while this illicit market may generate growth, economic inclusion and employment, it also poses a threat to long-term development and weakens state institutions (14902/14; 11).

Goodhand frames the emergence of the Afghan opium industry as the development of “know-how, expertise and market connections to build upon the comparative advantages in order to survive, accumulate, or wage war”. Consequently, real power is closely linked to the capacity to generate money and patronage through the drug economy (2008; 409-411). In this regard, the EU aims to strengthen the national economies of Afghanistan and Colombia. The economic strategies in question reveal considerable differences. The European Union’s priority for the Afghan context is the improvement of its rural economy. EEAS argues that agriculture is a source of income for more than half of the population of Afghanistan, while it only generates a quarter of its GDP, which can be partly explained by the large illicit economy (EEAS Factsheet; 2017). Indeed, no less than 18% of the Afghan working population is involved in the manufacture or trafficking of narcotics (Council; 14902/14; 3). The improvement of the rural economy should, thus, “generate jobs and reduce dependence on poppy” (Council; 10997/16; 17). This should, then, reduce rural poverty, which is considered the primary reason for drug crop cultivation. This policy is in line with Afghan national strategies, with its main objectives being the improvement of food security, promotion of sustainable agriculture, and reduction of households’ dependency on poppy cultivation (EEAS Factsheet; 2017 & Official Journal 2004/C88; 633). In addition to rural development as key goal, the EU states the need to create jobs to avoid a new generation of underemployed and alienated youth, which could otherwise end up exacerbating the illicit economy (Council; 10997/16; 16).
creation featured in Goodhand’s fieldwork experience as well. Herein, an Afghan farmer remarked the need for the state to provide jobs for young people (2005; 202). Lastly, the EU advises the creation of a transparent economic framework able to encourage investments, and increased regional cooperation in order to stimulate trade (Council; 5427/14; 2).

Contrary to Afghanistan, trade is arguably the European Union’s economic priority for Colombia. This can be deduced from the General System of Preferences (GSP), as well as the more recent Trade Agreement. First, GSP is a preferential treatment encouraging the economic development of beneficiary countries through the enhancements of their exports to the EU. It incorporates a ‘drugs regime’. According to the Commission, this is “almost the best possible treatment that can be granted to a developing country” (Official Journal C88; 34). Dorn et. al. confirm the aim of GSP being the support of economic alternatives to coca. However, the benefits of the trade concessions may be insufficiently focused on peasant coca growers. When it comes to export markets, peasants are uncompetitive with larger production units, who mainly enjoy the advantages of the GSP (1996; 260-261). According to Stambol, the GSP Drugs Scheme should be seen as accompanying alternative development projects. Its objective is for Colombia “to diversify its production and export base away from illicit drugs through providing alternative livelihoods and other sources of income than drug cultivation and trafficking” (2016; 6). The 2013 Trade Agreement, secondly, entails a mutual opening of markets between the European Union and both Colombia and Peru. It should help Colombia diversify its trade structure and make it easier for small and medium-sized enterprises to export to the Union. Such agreement is, of course, mutually beneficial. Colombia is the EU’s fourth most important economic partner in the region, while the EU is Colombia’s second biggest trading partner (EEAS Factsheet; 2016). In sum, the Union drafts economic plans suitable to each national context. While the Afghan government needs to focus on the improvement of its rural economy, the Colombian administration mainly must address its national economy via trade. The opening of its economy to the European Union is, of course, also beneficial for the latter.

Now, the most striking differences and similarities in the EU’s policies pursued in Afghanistan and Colombia will be outlined. Thereafter, the Union’s focus on either development- or security-related measures will be assessed.
4. Comparative analysis

4.1 Afghanistan and Colombia

When comparing the European Union’s counter-narcotic efforts in Afghanistan and Colombia, two overarching similarities can be deducted: alternative development and peace-building. First, alternative development is the most pronounced measure the EU implements in drug-producing states. This program can be perceived as the cornerstone of the development-dimension of the Union’s counter-narcotic efforts. On a global stage, it features as integral part of the EU’s outspoken drug strategy, next to abolition of the death penalty, harm reduction and a balanced approach (Chatwin 2016; 3). Secondly, the EU has integrated peace-building into its foreign drug policies. Looking at the sources, the European Union repeatedly expresses its support to peace-building efforts in both Afghanistan and Colombia. Hereby, the narcotics problem is framed as a security-issue. Looking at the literature, then, this emphasis on peace and the portrayal of intrastate conflict as a threat to Europe’s stability, resonates with Duffield’s and Goodhand’s work. Both criticize Western peace-building efforts. Goodhand refers to foreign strategies incorporating peace-building as the “re-politicization of aid reflecting the emergence of new Western concerns and interests” (2002; 845). He and Sedra perceive of this phenomenon as a legitimizing narrative to intervene (2013; 244). The Western notion of peace-building is labeled “liberal peace” by Duffield. This reportedly reflects a radical development agenda, and is closely associated with the re-problematization of security (2001; 11). The Council’s spokesperson confirmed via mail that the EU “addresses drugs in the framework of the general strategy to promote peace and development in both Afghanistan and Colombia”. Thus, the focus on peace-building and alternative development are consistent features throughout all European Union foreign drug-policy documents.

There is one main divergence in the counter-narcotic policies the EU pursues in Afghanistan and Colombia: the economic strategy. The Union’s priority for Afghanistan is the improvement of its rural economy, while her economic plan for Colombia is mostly focused on trade. This can be explained through the nations’ diverse economic statuses. Afghanistan is a low-income county in which agriculture is the main source of income for more than half of its population (EEAS Factsheet 2017). Colombia, on the contrary, can be labeled a middle-income country enjoying more political
stability. Though both states still suffer from an overdependence on the nacro-economy (Ekici 2016; 70). The EU addresses this overdependence in a manner which is suitable for each country’s economic situation.

4.2 The development- and security-dimension

The European Union seems to put greater emphasis on the security-dimension of her foreign drug policies, which goes at the expense of the development-dimension. This claim is based on sources as well as literature. For one, there are much more references to security and stability in the policy-documents than references to development issues. Stambol observes a shift in EU-Colombia drug-policy relations. Specifically, a bifurcation has developed between the development- and security-side. The Union is establishing itself as a security community, and thereby explicitly defines cocaine trafficking as a major threat facing European internal security (2016; 6-7, 10). Such rhetoric indeed is commonplace in the policy-documents. The perception of the drug problem as threatening to European stability, is also illustrated by the growing cooperation between Europol and Colombian national police forces. This is a fairly recent evolution, since Latin America has not been a pivotal region to the EU in terms of security. Europe has always been more interested in Afghanistan, a geographically closer nation which has more strategic importance. This interest has only increased. For the last ten years, the European Union has been expanding its involvement in the Afghan intra-state conflict. This trend is mainly visible in the EUPOL-A mission, branded as a “must-win” in order to serve “the credibility of the EU as a global actor in Common Security and Defense Policy […]” (Larivé 2012; 185-186). In sum, the EU has been expanding its law enforcement missions in both Afghanistan and Colombia. Thereby, drugs are framed as a security threat. This can be illustrated by Europol reports indicating ties between drug trafficking and terrorist groups (2016; 5). Duffield perceives the drawing of such connections as the reflection of a new security framework wherein the modalities of underdevelopment have become dangerous (2001; 16).

This growing focus on security within drug-policy can be understood through the changing role of the European Union on the world stage. The EU portrays itself as a credible international security force, and is now indeed recognized as the second global actor (Telo 2006; 53). The crucial
role of security-measures in her counter-narcotic policy is most visible in Afghanistan. This drug-producing country is confronted with a greater EU presence and intervention than its Colombian counterpart. It is hypothesized that this phenomenon cannot be solely explained by the different national contexts. Geopolitical considerations also need to be taken into account. Both Goodhand and Cottey understand European intervention in Afghanistan within the frame of Western-Russo relations. Western aid programs have become entangled with post-Cold War agendas (2002; 842 & 2012; 387). The sources can support this hypothesis as well. In 2016, the European Parliament explicitly stated the need for “more EU political visibility in [...] Central-Asia”, while pointing to both Russia and China having close ties with the region. According to the EP, there would still be plenty of possibilities for the Union to increase its influence in Central-Asian countries (P8_TA(2016)012). This explicit statement supports the contention that the prominent role of security in the Union’s drug-policy in Afghanistan needs to be understood in both national and geopolitical terms.

5. Conclusion

This article examined the European Union’s foreign counter-narcotic efforts in Afghanistan and Colombia. EU drug-policy is founded on two pillars, notably security and development. Building on Duffield’s work, this paper hypothesized the EU increasingly focusing on security-measures at the expense of the development-dimension. This hypothesis can be confirmed. Narcotic problems in Afghanistan and Colombia are increasingly framed as threatening (inter)national stability. This new narrative translates into the expansion of law enforcement projects in both countries. The other pillar of the Union’s drug policy – development – regulates economic measures, health policy and alternative development programs. EU policy divergences between these drug-producing states can be understood in national and geopolitical terms. Hereby, Colombia is the more developed and geographically distant nation, while the Afghan state is poorer and more unstable. Moreover, its geographical closeness needs to be viewed within the broad frame of Western-Russo relations. It is argued that the European Union is more invested in Afghanistan because it aims to increase its influence in the region as opposed to both Russia and China.
Here, the perception of EU foreign drug policies as mediated by geopolitical considerations is only offered as side-hypothesis. The literature and sources do seem to support this contention, though are too limited for a definite confirmation. Although it would be interesting to explore the Union’s foreign policy towards Colombia and Afghanistan within the geopolitical frame, with Colombia and Latin America arguably belonging to America’s ‘backyard’, and Afghanistan and Central-Asia being part of the Russian influence-sphere. Further research could also be conducted in the drugs field. Whatever the ambitions of the EU are, they need to be in tune with the position of its member-states. Indeed, security and defense policy are intergovernmental competences (Zwartjes et. al. 2012; 397). Thus, how the member-states’ positions translate into European Union foreign drug-policy would be another valuable research-topic.
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