The Illegal Drug Trade

By Jill Castellano
What is Drug Trafficking?

- cultivation, manufacture and exchange of illegal controlled substances
- distinction between drug trafficking and drug possession: the intent to distribute, as opposed to personal consumption
- Because of the high profits generated by the trafficking of controlled substances, trafficking is global in nature with many participants
- illegal drug trade estimated as slightly less than 1% (0.893%) of total global commerce (with a world GDP of $36 trillion USD)
- in the year 2000, the value of the illegal drug trade plus legal drug trade at the same time totals to an amount higher than the amount of money spent for food in the same period of time
ORIGIN, TRANSIT, FINAL DESTINATION

INTERNATIONAL DRUG TRAFFIC

- Major drug-source countries
- Major drug-cultivating areas
- Major routes: cocaine, heroin, marijuana, hashish

The diagram illustrates the global drug traffic routes, highlighting key origin, transit, and destination points across various continents.
- **Major Origin Countries:** Afghanistan, Peru, Thailand, The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, China, Colombia, Dominican Republic, India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Venezuela, and Vietnam
- **Major Transit Countries:** Laos, Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti
- **Major Destination Countries:** US, France, England, other Western European nations
March 2010 Afghanistan became the greatest illicit opium producer in the entire world, ahead of Burma and the "Golden Triangle" (92% of world’s opiates)

export value of about $4 billion, with a quarter being earned by opium farmers and the rest going to district officials, insurgents, warlords, drug traffickers

Europe’s main heroin supplier for more than 10 years: the long-standing ‘Balkan route’ through Turkey; the ‘northern route’, which leaves northern Afghanistan through Central Asia and on to Russia

opium economy has created a “new rich” in which young men have control

Opium production in Afghanistan has been on the rise since U.S. occupation started in 2001
Origin Country: Afghanistan

- high rate of opium addiction among refugees returning from Iran and Pakistan
- Several factors encourage opium production, the greatest being economic: the high rate of return on investment from opium poppy cultivation → agricultural shift in Afghanistan from growing traditional crops to growing opium poppy
- as the demand for opium has elevated, women have more opportunity to work in the same setting as their male counterpart
- Drug traffickers have a relationship with insurgents and terrorist groups such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda: instability makes opium cultivation possible, opium buys protection and pays for weapons and foot soldiers → creates an environment in which drug lords, insurgents and terrorists can operate with punishment or fear of it
Penalties in Afghanistan

- The Taliban demonstrated an ability to strictly enforce a suspension on opium production in 2000 (violence used, i.e. beheading)
- Since their 2001 overthrow no replacement policies have been as effective
- Farmers and drug traffickers routinely bribe police and counternarcotics eradication personnel to turn a blind eye—government officials are now believed to be involved in at least 70 percent of opium trafficking
- Working with the UK and the Afghan government, the US has developed its own strategy to counter the opium problem in Afghanistan
  - which has the following five pillars: alternative livelihoods, elimination and eradication, Interdiction, law enforcement and justice reform, public information
  - surrounding countries
Transit Country: Mexico

- Drug Cartel: criminal organizations developed with the primary purpose of promoting and controlling drug trafficking operations
- Estimate of 28,000 killings in the past 4 years due to drug-related violence in Mexico
- National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) says Mexican cartels are the predominant smugglers and wholesale distributors of South American cocaine
- Cartels now dominate the wholesale illicit drug market in the United States—mainly Cannabis and Methamphetamine
- Birth of all Mexican drug cartels are traced to former Mexican Judicial Federal Police agent Miguel Ángel Félix Gallardo ('The Godfather'), who in the 1980s controlled all illegal drug trade in Mexico and the corridors across the Mexico-USA border
- It is believed that the loss of the drug trafficking industry in Mexico would cause the country’s economy to shrink by over 63%
Mexican Drug War

- ongoing armed conflict taking place among rival drug cartels, who fight each other for regional control, and Mexican government forces who seek to combat drug trafficking.

- December 11, 2006: newly elected President Felipe Calderón sent 6,500 Mexican Army soldiers to the state of Michoacán to end drug violence there → regarded as first major retaliation made against the cartel violence, generally viewed as the starting point of the Mexican Drug War.

- Arrests of key cartel leaders, particularly in the Tijuana and Gulf cartels, have led to increasing drug violence.

- Most recent event: July 14 - Mexican Army discovered largest marijuana plantation ever found in the country, 200 mi south of San Diego, CA., consisting of 300 acres that would have yielded about 120 tons, and was worth about $160 million USD.
Penalties in Mexico

- Mexican governments have been criticized for their unwillingness or slow response to confront the various cartels' financial operations, including money laundering.
- Starting in 2009, Mexico has been quietly eliminating jail time for possession of small amounts of marijuana, cocaine, heroin and other drugs—freeing up law-enforcement resources, shifting attention away from minor consumers to big-time dealers and drug lords.
- The Merida Initiative, a multiyear security cooperation program, is designed to enhance U.S., Mexican, and Central American enforcement capabilities while also expanding regional cooperation.
Destination Country: USA

- single-largest marketplace for illegal drugs—the overall market has decreased since the mid-1980s but the drug trade within the country exceeded $60 billion a year as of 2010
- during the Vietnam War, drug lords such as Ike Atkinson used to smuggle hundreds of kilos of heroin to the U.S. in coffins of dead American soldiers (now heroin present mainly in NE)
- Illicit drug use is associated with several leading causes of death in the United States, including: suicide, homicide, motor-vehicle injury, HIV infection, pneumonia, violence, mental illness, and hepatitis
- Iran-Contra scandal: USA used the drug trade as a secret source of funding for the USA's support of the Contras (Nicaraguan rebel groups)
Penalties in USA: Controlled Substance Act

- Created 1970, last amended in 2000
- Penalties based on a ranking of the severity of the substance (schedule) then potentially doubled based on quantity
- Any drug on the “Schedule I or II” list (which includes heroin, cocaine, LSD and PCP among others) will mandate a minimum of five years incarceration and substantial fines for small amounts
- Prison sentences double for a second offense, with life imprisonment possible for large-quantity violations
- Individual states also enforce drug laws—most states have followed the Controlled Substances Act as an enforcement model, though there are state-to-state differences
- Institutions: National Drug Intelligence Center, US Office of National Drug Control Policy
Other Concerns

- Drug trafficking is often linked to human trafficking, sex trafficking and smuggling of firearms along with drugs.
- Russia’s drug control regime continues to ban the use of methadone, despite estimates by UNAIDS that one in 100 Russian adults are now infected with HIV largely because of a heroin use epidemic.
- Central and west Asia are experiencing an increasing presence of insurgents and terrorists funded mainly by the drug trade.
- West Africa: drug money is funding political campaigns and affecting political relations in several West African countries → could end up like Mexico.
- Widespread use of compulsory treatment (often enforced detoxification and forced labor rather than recognized treatment) threatens the health and lives of drug users across the world.
- Drug tourism: travel for the purpose of obtaining or using drugs for personal use that are unavailable or illegal in one's home jurisdiction.
The Grasshopper: cannabis coffee shop in the city center of Amsterdam, Netherlands
In 1987 the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime was established to assist in global rule of law programs to control drugs and the international crime the trade has spawned.

Three primary functions: research, guidance and support to governments in the adoption/implementation of various conventions, treaties and protocols, technical/financial assistance to said governments.

U.N. estimates suggest that international drug prohibition efforts intercept approximately 13 percent of heroin shipments and between 28 and 40 percent of cocaine shipments.

The UNODC reported that in 2008 opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan was reduced 19 percent, while global poppy cultivation was reduced 16 percent.

The UNODC also noted that coca cultivation in Colombia was reduced 18 percent in this same period.
International Narcotics Control Board

- regulates opium supply throughout the world
- enforces the 1961 “Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs Law”: provides that countries can only demand the raw poppy materials corresponding to the use of opium-based medicines over the last two years → limits countries who have low levels of prescription in terms of the amounts they can demand
- Result: 77% of the world's opium supplies are being used by only six countries, leaving the rest of the world lacking in essential medicines such as morphine and codeine
MDGs

- 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- 4: Reduce child mortality rates
- 5: Improve maternal health
- 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases
- 8: Develop a global partnership for development
A Solution?

- Many approaches, each having limits in their effectiveness.
- If various policies are implemented together or simultaneously in an effective manner by national governments, perhaps we have the greatest chance of eradicating the drug trade altogether.
- It is important to remember that different policies should be instituted in the different types of country affected → one plan cannot encompass all and will definitely not be effective.
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