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International Drug Trafficking and U.S. Foreign Policy

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THE "DRUG PROBLEM" in the United States has existed, in one form or another, for more than the past few decades.¹ So have the media hype and political rhetoric which are traditionally drawn to this concern. One aspect of the problem, however, which is relatively if not entirely new is the prominent attention given to the foreign sources of many of the drugs consumed here.² Within the U.S. government, increased attention and resources have been devoted to controlling international drug production and trafficking (hereafter abbreviated as IDC). These efforts, and the obstacles which confront them, are the subject of this article.

U.S. IDC policy has been primarily concerned with three drugs: heroin, cocaine, and marijuana. Although the difficulties encountered in reducing the availability of those drugs vary quite significantly, the broad objectives of the policy can be described as two-pronged: elimination of the drugs themselves before they reach the borders of the United States; and elimination of the traffickers who produce the drugs for the U.S. market. More specifically, the objectives within the first prong include reduction of opium,

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coca, and marijuana production by a combination of incentives and penalties, destruction of crops before they are harvested, capture of the drugs at different points in their refining process, and interdiction of the drugs before or as they enter the United States. The objectives within the second prong, which overlap inevitably with those of the first, include apprehension, prosecution, and imprisonment of drug traffickers, and confiscation of their assets. It aims at both reducing the incentive to engage in drug trafficking by increasing the costs associated with it, and reducing the flow of drugs to the United States by eliminating individuals from the business of trafficking and disrupting trafficking organizations and routes. Both prongs clearly aim at not only reducing the amount of drugs entering the United States but also increasing their cost to the consumer.

Despite the overlap between the two prongs, there is good reason to distinguish them. The first is that different agencies focus on one or the other. Most efforts involving the crops before they are processed are supervised by the Agency for International Development (AID), the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM), and by international agencies such as the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC). Interdiction efforts, depending upon the location and

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mode of transportation, are dominated by the Coast Guard, the military (since the congressional amendment to the Posse Comitatus Act of 1981 allowed them to assume a significantly enhanced role in enforcement of civilian laws), and the Customs agency. And efforts against international drug traffickers are dominated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which has over 200 agents and 60 offices in some four dozen countries. These efforts are supplemented domestically by the FBI, U.S. Customs, IRS, the U.S. Attorneys' offices, and the lawyers in the Justice Department. To be sure, DEA agents are also busily involved in making seizures and occasionally involved in crop eradication. Conversely, State Department officials—both in the embassies and in the Legal Adviser's Office—are often involved in arranging for legal assistance and extradition in narcotics cases, but by and large each agency's focus is distinguishable. As for the CIA, its efforts are largely restricted to information gathering, mostly although not entirely by satellite. In the past, its agents sometimes became involved in operations against drug traffickers, but for a number of reasons they have largely left such activities to the DEA in recent years.³ Criticisms in the late 1970s of the CIA's less reputable operations caused the agency to curtail the span of its operational interests. Bureaucratically, a specialty in international drug control has not been a favored field of career advancement. And realistically, CIA agents have preferred to risk the danger of being declared persona non grata by a hostile state to that posed by the more ruthless drug traffickers. Their intelligence efforts are supplemented by analysts in the DEA, Customs, and other intelligence agencies. The entire IDC effort is loosely coordinated by the

White House.

A second reason to distinguish between the two prongs is that the individuals who are apprehended with the drugs on hand, whether they be the growers or the "mules" (i.e., couriers), are of slight interest to DEA operations which target high-level traffickers and their organizations. DEA strategy is predicated on the assumption that the number of criminal organizations with the resources, sophistication, and connections necessary to refine and transport significant amounts of drugs to the United States is inherently limited, and that their destruction is the most effective way of combatting international drug trafficking.

A third reason is that foreign governments are often far more receptive to requests for cooperation against traffickers as opposed to producers, in part because they see the apprehension of traffickers as more closely tied to their own conceptions of their national interests. To begin with, apprehending traffickers is an indirect way of drying up the (traffickers') demand for farmers' illegitimate produce without directly incurring their political wrath. Secondly, although the trafficker targets may be harder to identify than the producers, they are fewer in number and often foreigners who are less significant politically. Thirdly, while production of opium, coca, and marijuana is often legal, or officially tolerated, in many countries, trafficking in those products is clearly not. Whereas farmers' sales of their produce represent an illegal extension of an otherwise legitimate or semi-legitimate activity, traffickers' purchases and sales are clothed in no such ambiguity. Thus both the government perception, and the self-perception, of the traffickers' activities are devoid of the complicating considerations of en-

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forcement efforts against producers. For all these reasons, focusing on traffickers as opposed to producers constitutes a less costly, if less effective, way of appeasing U.S. demands.

Foreign governments have an additional, and more self-interested, motive for apprehending and prosecuting traffickers that stems from their need to maintain effective control of their populations. This operates on two levels. On the broader level, governments have an interest in maintaining both the semblance and reality of a legal order presided over by the central government. On a more focused level, governments have an interest in preventing any individual or group from attaining such power that it can challenge, or even appear to challenge, governmental authority within any portion of the national territory. On occasion, such individuals or groups are politically or ideologically motivated and traffic in drugs to gain revenues with which to buy weapons and support. More often, however, their motivations are largely financial and related to political power primarily insofar as protection of their material interests and self-aggrandizement are concerned.

Nonetheless, there is a crucial caveat to the above assertion that foreign governments often prefer to punish traffickers as opposed to producers; indeed, it may represent the most fundamental obstacle to the United States' IDC efforts. It is that throughout Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia, high-level government officials, including politicians, judges, military and police figures, and even cabinet ministers—as well as their friends and relatives—are deeply involved in profiting from the traffic in drugs. Although these officials are often cooperative insofar as prosecution of traffickers who are not affiliated with

them is concerned, their own interests pose often insurmountable obstacles to U.S. efforts. Even when the involvement of such officials in drug trafficking is exposed, whether by political opponents, the media, or the DEA, their vulnerability is limited and their punishment nil. Of course, this type of corruption merely represents the pinnacle of long-standing business and political traditions throughout much of the less developed world. That it appears worse today than in the past no doubt reflects the impoverished nature of much of that world's economies, and the incredibly lucrative opportunities presented by the traffic in drugs.

One factor which complicates IDC efforts, and presents virtually insuperable obstacles to reliable evaluation of the effectiveness of those efforts, is the high degree of speculation associated with calculating the quantity of drugs being produced, imported, and consumed.⁴ The principal reason for this is the illegality of the process from the initial point of production to the final point of consumption. At the one end, CIA satellites and human intelligence cannot peek into every nook and cranny in which farmers attempt to hide their illegal produce. At the other end, Gallup polls and emergency room (DAWN) data can hardly obtain reliable evidence on Americans' purchases of illegal goods. And in between, the estimates of the drugs wasted, stockpiled, or consumed by foreign populations are even more unreliable than estimates of domestic drug consumption. In the case of heroin and cocaine, relatively easily obtained evidence on drug price and purity at the street level may provide some indication of the results of IDC efforts (although in the case of Miami's cocaine market, where the retail price of cocaine dropped by half in the

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early 1980s despite the Reagan administrations's initiatives, the nexus is highly suspect). With marijuana, however, the absence of a purity indicator and the presence of a domestic production factor render the reliability of estimates even more suspect.

Slightly greater certainty exists insofar as the identities of the producing countries are concerned. Satellite and human intelligence suggest that Bolivia and Peru dominate in the production of coca leaf, with southern Colombia and Brazil contributing a small share of the total. Northern Colombia is regarded as the principal source of marijuana imported into the United States, with estimates of its share in recent years going as high as 80 percent. Jamaica and Mexico supply most of the remainder, with some of the Central American countries, most notably Belize, adding a tiny share. The unknown variable, however, is domestic U.S. production. Current estimates place that share at 10 percent of the market, though some analysts speculate that it may be much greater. As for the heroin consumed in the United States, intelligence derived from the DEA scientists' "heroin signature analysis" suggests that roughly half originates in Southwest Asia, one-third in Mexico, and the remainder in Southeast Asia.⁵

Intelligence on the identities of traffickers, their refineries, and trafficking routes is similarly limited. It is assumed that most marijuana arrives in the United States from Colombia by sea, and that most cocaine is refined in Colombia and exported by plane (most often via the Bahamas) to this country. The heroin business is easily the most diversified, with refineries located in both producer countries and transit countries (such as France and Chile in the early 1970s and Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and perhaps Italy in

the 1980s). Likewise, the modes of transportation are incredibly varied, ranging from hidden "traps" in cars and suitcases, to food containers, to body cavities and corpses. But beyond those broad generalizations, and the extensive data banks of the DEA and INTERPOL, there is insufficient information on all the options available to traffickers. Indeed, it would be accurate to say that, with the exception of a few sub-Saharan African countries, there is hardly a single country that has not served as a transit point for drugs en route to the United States. The same can probably be said regarding the diversity of nationality of those involved in international drug trafficking.

Insofar as the first prong of the IDC strategy is concerned, most of the expenditures on crop reduction and destruction, and the diplomatic efforts which accompany them, have been met with lip service. The principal exception was Turkey, which responded to the Nixon administration's inducements and pressures first by banning opium production and then, when that proved politically unpalatable, by strictly regulating the harvest of opium to prevent its conversion into heroin.⁶ Potential violators were discouraged from reverting to poppy plant production by the promise of stiff penalties, reportedly including collective sanctions against a violator's village. The other supposed success story was Mexico, where the central government conducted an extensive chemical destruction program with the assistance of U.S. funds and equipment. Among the Mexicans' incentives to cooperate—beyond ameliorating their northern neighbor—was that the same equipment could be used to destroy marijuana, which unlike heroin was increasingly being viewed as a domestic problem.

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With respect to the second prong, there have also been a couple of successes amidst the ocean of frustrations. Perhaps the two most notable were the severance of the French Connection in the early 1970s, and the elimination of Chile as a refining and transit country following the overthrow of the Allende government by Pinochet. Smaller successes have also occurred from time to time, such as when major traffickers have been extradited, expelled, or abducted to the United States, or when governments have been persuaded to mount major crackdowns, but these have not had the effect of eliminating the host country as a source or transit country.

With most foreign governments, however, the incentives to cooperate have been substantially outweighed by a lack of power, will, and desire to eradicate drug production within their borders. More often than not, the lip service approach has served their interests in three ways. It has usually appeased the Americans, who have rarely regarded the issue as warranting sacrifices of other more security-oriented concerns. It has been adequate to avoid the opprobrium of the international community, to whose drug control conventions these governments are usually a party. And it has sufficed for purposes of domestic political control by conveying the message to the populace that the central government's authority was not overshadowed by, or subservient to, that of the most influential drug traffickers.

In many cases, the foreign government's lack of power has been indistinguishable from its lack of willingness to use that power. In the cases of Bolivia, Peru, and Jamaica, for instance, central governments have been extremely reluctant to undertake extensive eradication efforts for at least four reasons: tens of thousands

of farmers are involved in, and profit from, the sale of their crops for foreign consumption; domestic consumption of the drug is a powerful cultural tradition; powerful figures in the government—and their friends and relatives—have a significant financial stake in the drug traffic; and revenues from the sale of those crops constitute one of the primary sources of foreign exchange (if not the primary source) in countries with few other natural resources and economies in rather desperate straits. As a consequence, political leaders in these countries are fearful that a widespread eradication effort would dangerously fuel popular discontent and perhaps even stir up revolutionary feelings. They respond to U.S. pressures with small-scale eradications and slightly more vigorous efforts at apprehending large-scale traffickers.

Jamaica in particular has cracked down on traffickers who seem to be getting too powerful, or who are trading drugs for guns. In Peru, the government has been wary lest crop eradications lead to propaganda victories for the radical Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrilla movement. It has also suspected, but produced little proof of, guerrilla involvement in the cocaine traffic.⁷ Bolivia represents a case in which the government allowed the power of traffickers to grow unimpeded until they were so powerful that they actually overthrew the government in 1980. Even after domestic and international—most notably U.S.—pressures forced the “cocaine regime” out of power, the successor government has been reluctant to try to eliminate the by now well-entrenched high-level traffickers, many of whom have small private armies at their disposal and extensive connections in the government.⁸ Even the coca growers themselves have orga-

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nized, no doubt backed by funds from the traffickers, to resist U.S.-supported eradication programs.

The problems presented by opium production in Southwest and Southeast Asia are somewhat different. In Afghanistan, Iran and Laos, the United States is presented with hostile regimes whose concern is primarily with domestic consumption of opium. Unlike more capitalist governments, they view the prospect of foreign exchange earnings from opium sales with greater wariness, insofar as it undermines their efforts to maximize the control of the central government. Were it not for the great instability in those states at the present, which limit the effectiveness of their control efforts, their interests would likely coincide with the objectives of the United States more so than those of America's allies. A case in point is the Afghan rebels' role in transporting opium from the Soviet occupied country to Pakistan, where it is reportedly traded for arms and other supplies, and eventually sent in refined form to the West. If narcotics control was the primary objective of the United States, it would no doubt support Soviet efforts to restrict transit across the border.

In Pakistan, Thailand, and Burma, the problem of opium control has been closely linked to the central government's inability to assert its political authority over all its territory. In Pakistan, the central government has been engaged in a gradual effort to "settle" areas of the Northwest Frontier Province by providing inducements to tribal leaders to accept its authority. It has had some success in controlling opium production and trafficking in those areas but virtually no success in the tribal areas. Law enforcement officials sent to those areas to close down refineries or arrest traffickers have

often failed to return in one piece. The incredible resistance of the Afghan tribes to Soviet efforts to subdue them suggests that their brothers across the border would be no more amenable to another government's efforts to control their trade. Accordingly, the government has preferred to negotiate with the tribal leaders and to use carrots rather than sticks as inducements. In response to U.S. pressures, it has limited its cooperation to suppressing opium cultivation only in those areas where foreign or international development programs are in effect. Its primary objective has been to avoid pushing the tribal leaders into open resistance to its formal authority.

In the Golden Triangle, the relationships between the central governments and the insurgent armies which traffic in opium have been more openly hostile.⁹ The Shan United Army, the Lahu National Liberation Army, the 3rd and 5th Chinese Irregular Forces (which are remnants of Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang) and, to a lesser extent, the Burmese Communist Party have all proclaimed political and autonomist objectives but have been primarily, and often solely, concerned with maximizing their local power and profits. The Burmese central government has been reluctant to waste its resources against its elusive opponent and has sought primarily to contain its influence. The Royal Thai government has been similarly reluctant, in part because of those armies' assistance in suppressing anti-government insurgencies by more politically motivated groups. Both governments have responded to U.S. pressures by creating poppy-free regions and mounting occasional military operations. But their central objective has been not so much to eliminate the opium traffic as to contain the trafficking groups' power and insurgent activities.

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In the case of Thailand, rampant corruption at virtually all levels of government has also served to frustrate most U.S. efforts.

Certainly the two countries of greatest concern to U.S. officials involved in IDC are Colombia and Mexico. Until little more than a year ago, it appeared that Colombia represented one of the basket cases of international drug control and Mexico one of the relative success stories. Two murders, however, have thrown the drug situation in both countries into a state of flux the outcome of which is difficult to predict. Until recently, Colombia exemplified all the challenges which the U.S. IDC effort confronts around the world. There was the desperate need for foreign exchange, the widespread benefits of the drug business to hundreds of thousands, the independent streak of the drug producers—in Colombia's case the Guajira Indians—the pervasive corruption, and the strong tradition of trafficking in contraband of all sorts. Moreover, anti-government guerrilla organizations, such as the M-19, were known to be involved in the drug traffic. Where Colombia had come to differ, however, from other drug-producing and trafficking countries was in the extent to which drug traffickers resorted to violence against all levels of government officials. The culmination of this violence, following just a few weeks after the greatest drug bust in recorded history, was the murder of the Justice Minister, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, on April 30, 1984. Given the choice of surrendering to the authority of the traffickers or responding vigorously after years of benign tolerance, the Betancur government launched an unprecedented crackdown, arresting known drug traffickers, eradicating fields, increasing surveillance of the borders, and finally consenting to the

extradition of Colombian traffickers to the United States.¹⁰ It remains to be seen whether this turn of events will have any lasting impact.¹¹ At present, the more infamous traffickers who remain unapprehended have been forced to flee abroad or go into hiding. Increased narcotics activity has been detected in those parts of Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador, and Panama which border on Colombia, and cocaine refineries have been discovered in Florida, all of which suggest that the traffickers are looking for safer havens until the storm passes, or in case it does not.

Until approximately last year, Mexico's success story was pointed to as a potential model for Colombia. Like Colombia, Mexico possessed many of the same attributes which are common to most drug-producing countries. Mexico's nationalist sensitivities were no less delicate than Colombia's when pricked by U.S. pressures. It was not particularly upset about the foreign exchange entering the country, particularly as it filtered both down to the poorer segments of society and up to the more powerful elements. Similarly, it was concerned with domestic drug abuse problems and with domestic insurgencies which were profiting from the drug trade and using their revenues to finance anti-government activities. And as in most drug producing states, corruption permeated much of the political and law enforcement establishment. Nonetheless, with strong political support from the central government, Mexico was able to eradicate a great proportion of its drug produce in the mid-1970s by establishing a small paramilitary force which it could immunize from corrupting influences. This unit undertook extensive chemical spraying by air and search-and-destroy missions by foot. The United States contributed

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equipment, training, and information.¹²

There are, however, two caveats to the Mexican success story. The first is that Mexico's model did not prove readily applicable elsewhere.¹³ Unlike many other drug-producing countries, Mexico's government exercised a greater degree of authority over its territory, both politically and militarily, than most other governments could claim. (The same was true of Turkey, particularly when ruled by military regimes.) Secondly, revenues from drug production provided a smaller proportion of Mexican foreign exchange than in most other major drug producers. And thirdly, the central government never lost the upper hand or allowed the drug producing sector of the economy to acquire a legitimacy or authority of its own.

The second caveat is that the Mexican success has hardly been lasting. Mexican opium growers have adapted to the eradication program by reducing the average size of their opium fields to one-tenth of what they were in 1976, and by mixing their poppy plants in with other crops. This has made the poppy plants harder and more costly to find, and has required that eradication efforts destroy legitimate produce with the opium plants. (The same adaptations have characterized Jamaican, and to a lesser extent, Colombian production.) The result is that Mexico retains more than one-third of the U.S. heroin market. And while the Mexican share of the U.S. marijuana market has dropped from an estimated 70 percent in 1975 to an estimated 10 percent today, that may be as much a reflection of two byproducts of the eradication program as of the program itself: the Mexicans' use of paraquat to destroy marijuana plants prompted a de facto boycott by U.S. consumers; and the Colombian grow-

ers who cornered the market after the initial successes of the Mexican campaign secured their competitive advantage against a resurgence of Mexican production by developing a stronger strain of marijuana.

During 1984, evidence mounted that the Mexican government was beginning to lose control of its eradication program. Rumors surfaced that government helicopters were spraying fertilizer rather than herbicide on opium and marijuana crops, or were purposely spraying in the wrong places or at the wrong times. U.S. intelligence revealed unusually large marijuana fields being harvested, suggesting that officials were being bribed or threatened to look elsewhere. And known drug traffickers were becoming increasingly brazen in their activities. In March 1985, matters came to a head following the torture and murder of a DEA agent and contract pilot, reportedly at the order of two well-known traffickers. When members of the Mexican Federal Police proved uncooperative during the investigation, reflecting the fact that they were in the employ of the traffickers, strong diplomatic pressure from the United States, abetted by a border crackdown by U.S. Customs, eventually induced heightened cooperation from the Mexican government.¹⁴ Whether the developments which have followed since, including the arrest and interrogation of the traffickers and a shake-up in the Mexican Federal Police and other government agencies, will have any lasting impact remains to be seen.¹⁵

This analysis clearly suggests that many governments in drug-producing countries will tolerate extensive drug activity, even given the resources to curtail it, until they are pushed too far by the traffickers. At that point, U.S. pressures will jibe with a heightened

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sense of self-interest and self-preservation on the part of the government and lead to some degree of crackdown. Whether that crackdown will merely restore the earlier balance of power, or make a lasting dent in the production and traffic of drugs, depends on any number of factors, ranging from the state of the economy to the capabilities of the law enforcement agencies to the underlying power of the traffickers.

At the same time, it is also important to note the limitations on U.S. IDC efforts, many of which are to some extent self-imposed. One exacerbating factor is that U.S. credibility is undermined by foreign governments' perceptions that the U.S. government suffers from the same lack of will and power as they do. How else, in their view, can one explain the decriminalization of marijuana by many state governments, the failure to imprison most drug consumers and small-scale dealers, and the ban on paraquat spraying in the United States? Furthermore, they may well ask, why is it that while the United States spends billions on interdiction and domestic law enforcement efforts, the State Department's international crop reduction and substitution budget remains at a measly 50 million dollars? And finally, they are entitled to query why they should crack down on drug production—sacrificing valuable foreign exchange, farmer employment and political support—when the United States is unable or unwilling to pressure other drug producers to curtail their production.

Clearly, the willingness of the United States to apply pressure in support of its IDC policy has been tempered by the need to avoid sacrificing other objectives or interests. Only in rare cases, such as the takeover of the Bolivian government by cocaine traf-

fickers, has the United States been willing to sacrifice all other objectives to that of drug control. In some cases, the limitation has been one of not wanting to deplete limited political capital which could be necessary to the accomplishment of other objectives. In other cases, the limitation has been concern not to oblige the foreign government to deplete its own political capital when so doing would endanger other U.S. interests. Both limitations have frequently been intertwined in drug-producing countries, since most possess governments which are both essentially friendly to the United States and which view an eradication of drug production as politically and economically costly. Whether seeking oil and political support from Mexico, or attempting to bolster a pro-U.S. capitalist regime in Jamaica, or urging cooperation on strategic and refugee issues to the Pakistani government, the U.S. government has more often than not perceived other objectives as more immediate and demanding than IDC. This has particularly been the case in the White House and the State Department, which have resisted congressional proposals to cut off all U.S. aid to countries which fail to cooperate fully in controlling drug production.

Both prongs of U.S. IDC policy have devoted most of their resources to the above countries, in which producers and traffickers are often closely bound and often indistinguishable. These efforts, however, have been supplemented by extensive law enforcement efforts in other countries through which the drugs are smuggled and in which they may be refined for ultimate transit to domestic or U.S. consumers. In some cases, producing countries also serve as transit points, as in the case of South American cocaine and marijuana smuggled through

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Mexico, or of Afghani or Iranian opium smuggled through Pakistan. In most cases, however, transit countries have merely been waystops for drugs en route to the United States where direct transport by boat or plane from the producing country has been deemed inadvisable by traffickers.

Until recently, foreign law enforcement officials have had few incentives to disrupt such trafficking routes and have left most of the job to customs officials. Whether in Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, or Latin America, the problem has been viewed as incidental to local law enforcement concerns. Traffickers were often foreigners or resident aliens (not infrequently diplomatic officials) whose activities involved relatively few personnel and possessed few implications for the societal well being of the country. The drug problem in the United States was viewed as a distant and unique phenomenon, with few implications for their countries. The past decade, however, has witnessed a rather dramatic transformation in these attitudes as domestic drug abuse has soared. One significant consequence has been an exceptional increase in resources devoted to narcotics enforcement, as well as substantially enhanced cooperation with the DEA and other foreign narcotics agencies.

Indeed, the increase in drug abuse in foreign countries, including producing countries, may prove to be far more significant than diplomatic pressures in inducing cooperation with U.S. IDC efforts. The Mexican experience showed that a relatively strong central government faced with a growing domestic drug abuse problem—in this case, marijuana—would cooperate almost regardless of U.S. inducements or pressures. There is hope that other governments may follow suit. In Jamaica, the traditional toler-

ance of marijuana has waned somewhat as marijuana consumption among children has grown and as harder drugs (cocaine and heroin) have become more commonplace in Jamaican society. In Colombia, the tremendous abundance of cheap cocaine has given rise to an increasingly pervasive consumption of *bazuco* (cocaine base) cigarettes, which are more addictive than the powder "snorted" in the United States. In the Bahamas, a similar phenomenon has occurred with the large amount of cocaine skimmed off shipments transiting the islands.¹⁶ In Thailand, where opium smoking has been traditionally widespread and tolerated (as it is in Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and Egypt), surplus opium supplies have been refined into heroin as U.S.-style consumption grows among Thai youth. A similarly dramatic rise in heroin abuse has also occurred in Pakistan, where the Zia regime recently outlawed consumption of opium. The susceptibility of dislocated and alienated shantytown populations to drug addiction cannot be lost on the governments of these Third World nations. Their heightened willingness to devote greater resources to apprehension of drug traffickers, and to impose harsh penalties on them, may represent the greatest hope for the United States' IDC policy.

In Europe, the perception of the problem may be even more acute. The drug abuse problem, which until recently was largely confined to non-European residents and workers in Europe, has now increased among native youth. In some cases, the increase has been as dramatic as that which occurred in the United States in the late 1960s, albeit on a smaller scale. Although cooperation between European law enforcement officials, at times aided by resident DEA agents, has been extensive, their efforts have

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been complicated by varying drug laws and law enforcement techniques, nationalist sensitivities and essentially open borders. The heightened political pressures to do something about the growing problem have helped to overcome some of these obstacles, most notably by legislating more stringent penalties, giving law enforcement agencies greater power and attaching a higher priority to international cooperation in narcotics enforcement. One notable development has been the willingness of European governments to bilaterally aid drug eradication and enforcement efforts in producing countries.

Virtually every European country has been involved in the consumption, refining, and transit of drugs, primarily heroin from Southwest Asia and hashish from the Middle East. The number of trafficking routes has multiplied since the heroin supply was disrupted in 1972 by the Turkish government's ban on poppy plant production and the French government's severance of the Corsican-controlled French Connection. Turkey has since emerged as a major transit country, and the Sicilian mafia has taken over much of the refining and trafficking activity from the Corsican organizations. Turkish workers in Germany and Asian residents in Holland have also involved their host countries in large amounts of trafficking. More recently, large numbers of Nigerians, Sri Lankan Tamils, Pakistanis, Indians, and Lebanese have been found to be involved in drug trafficking. Many of them have been able to benefit from the growing presence of their co-nationals in Europe. Some, such as the Tamils and the Lebanese, have also been involved in smuggling arms on their return trips. The Bulgarians also seem to have become involved in the drug traffic to the West. Suspicious have arisen—although the

evidence reportedly remains inconclusive—concerning connections between Bulgarian intelligence, Turkish smugglers and various terrorist organizations such as the Grey Wolves.¹⁷ It is widely assumed that their motive for involvement in the drug traffic, as with the numerous North Korean diplomats who have been apprehended, is to obtain foreign currency to subsidize their intelligence activities. Given the tense state of relations between the United States and Bulgaria, Washington has looked to other governments in Europe to make its concerns known more forcefully in Sofia.

The fundamental point on which most analysts of the international drug situation agree is that given the extent of the demand in the United States for illegal imported drugs, there is virtually nothing that the U.S. government can do to stop the flow. Despite all the increased law enforcement efforts of recent years, the supplies of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana to the United States have been little affected. Although the latter half of the 1970s witnessed a decrease in purity and increase in the price of heroin to U.S. consumers, those trends appeared to have ceased and perhaps even reversed during the 1980s. Marijuana's price and availability have not changed much, although the availability and popularity of more potent brands of marijuana such as sinsemilla seems to have increased. And despite all the attentions focused on Miami and the cocaine traffic over the past few years, cocaine remains widely available for the millions willing to pay the price.

Given the persistence of the flow, and the government's seeming inability to curtail it, one is forced to ask whether the entire IDC effort is worth it. The answer to that question requires that one look realistically at

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what the IDC effort has accomplished, what its benefits and its costs are, and how it fits into the entire government effort to reduce drug abuse. More broadly, one is also obliged to consider the underlying assumptions of the entire anti-drug program. The remainder of this article briefly addresses each of these issues.

To be sure, the IDC effort has been successful insofar as most drugs continue to be relatively expensive and not readily available to the society at large. It is probably true that in the absence of this effort, drugs would be cheaper and more plentiful in American society. After all, it is the risks posed to drug trafficking by drug enforcement laws and operations that account for the many hundred-fold markup in price between the original producer and the eventual consumer in the United States. Thus, the United States' IDC effort can best be described as a relatively successful price and availability maintenance strategy. Because the relationship between availability and demand remains highly uncertain—although we can probably assume some correlation—we can only speculate as to the extent to which supply is limited by either demand or the government's IDC efforts. Nor can we do more than speculate as to the relationship between demand and the illegality of the drugs. The underlying premise of the government's drug abuse prevention strategy, however, has been that the best means to reduce drug abuse is to reduce drug use, in part by making certain drugs illegal and reducing their availability to potential consumers.

An IDC policy is deemed a requisite component of such a strategy for legal, political and practical reasons. Legally, Congress has required that an IDC policy be incorporated into the United States' overall foreign policy, in part

by making economic assistance conditional on foreign countries' cooperation. The United States has also joined most other states as a signatory to various international conventions on drug control. Politically, the temptation to point to the drug producing countries as the source and principal cause of the drug problem in the United States has often been irresistible. Practically, the IDC effort has been a logical component of the government's overall effort to reduce the availability of drugs. It can fairly safely be assumed that the greater the effort, the lesser the availability of foreign drugs in the United States.

One question which must be asked is whether there is anything more that the United States can do to reduce the supply of drugs into this country? Certainly, history has so far shown that the United States' power to reduce the supply of drugs from abroad is limited in two significant ways. On the one hand, there are limits not only on the U.S. government's ability to pressure other governments to crack down on drug production, but also on those governments' ability to crack down even if they wanted to. On the other hand, even when the United States has been somewhat successful, as in Turkey in the early 1970s or in Mexico in the mid-1970s, the global consequences of those successes have been transitory at best. Indeed, it may be that the disruption of supplies which followed the Turkish crackdown is no longer replicable because of the dispersion of sources and trafficking routes which have emerged since that time. It seems that traffickers have responded to that cutoff just as U.S. oil companies responded to the Arab oil boycott a few years later—by better distributing the sources of their product. This is not necessarily to say that the United States should abandon its

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pursuit of an IDC policy, since that policy does maintain a floor price and reduce overall availability. But there are severe limits as to what the United States can accomplish outside its borders. Indeed, it may be that absent a devastating drought or disease in drug producing regions, only a fortuitous confluence of events (which seems unlikely in the foreseeable future) could substantially reduce the flow of drugs to the United States. This is particularly the case with heroin, of which it has been said that the entire annual consumption in the United States could be produced within a poppy field of 10 square miles. Cocaine may differ from heroin and marijuana, however, inasmuch as its source is more geographically concentrated, the U.S. share of the market is relatively large, and the option of domestic production is not, to my knowledge, a practical one.

It is possible, of course, that the United States could make a substantial, and even significant, dent in the flow of drugs to this country. But this would require radical extensions of present policies and abandonment of numerous restraints. Other foreign policy objectives, including the stability of otherwise friendly regimes, would have to be risked. Respect for the sovereignty of foreign nations would have to be downgraded. And other norms of international law would have to be violated. Theoretically, the United States could engage in either covert or overt chemical warfare against drug-producing countries. Drug traffickers and corrupt foreign officials could be "eliminated" with U.S. funds or even agents. (Indeed, this idea was bandied about by former CIA operatives who had joined the DEA in the mid-1970s, but was apparently rejected by higher-level officials. Similar proposals are now being considered by

officials in the Reagan administration concerned with preempting and punishing terrorists.) Foreign governments which protected or profited from drug trafficking could be destabilized and overthrown. (This may have actually been the case with the previous Bolivian regime.) And the waters and skies of foreign countries could be penetrated by U.S. military craft in pursuit of drug smugglers. If the war against drugs were truly regarded as such, such options might realistically be considered and implemented. But it is not a war as such, nor is it likely to become one. U.S. laws and opinion, and the established norms of the international system, will likely remain overwhelming obstacles.

On a more realistic level, the United States could make some small impact on the price and availability of drugs by spending a good deal more money abroad. It could offer governments substantially greater financial incentives to crack down on drug production and force farmers to shift to other crops. But such expenditures, to make any impact, would easily have to mount into the billions, and would in effect reward those countries which have done little so far while giving nothing to those others which have honored their international obligations without being paid off. Expanding international cooperation in narcotics law enforcement would probably be the most cost-beneficial improvement. Increasing the DEA presence overseas, negotiating extradition and mutual legal assistance treaties, and subsidizing and providing training to foreign police agencies would all have the effect of raising the risks of engaging in drug trafficking. Lastly, encouraging the legislation of asset forfeiture laws around the world, and creating an international exception to the inviolability of bank secrecy laws in the case

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of narcotics investigations, would both help to take the money out of drug trafficking. Indeed, all of these avenues are currently being pursued by the U.S. government, if not always with the same urgency and priority that the law enforcement community would like to see.

An evaluation of the IDC policy's costs and benefits is both a difficult and intrinsically subjective exercise. One reason is that the process of weighing and identifying costs and benefits is heavily value-laden. A second is that one often cannot be sure of the relationship between the policy and what are perceived as its consequences. And a third is that one person's or nation's benefit may be another's cost. That being said, there are certain observations which can be made with some degree of objectivity. Beyond its intended objective of keeping drug prices high and availability limited, perhaps the greatest positive byproduct of the IDC policy has been the stimulation which it has given to international efforts to increase overall cooperation in law enforcement matters. New extradition treaties and treaties to facilitate cooperation in criminal investigations and prosecutions are being negotiated at an unprecedented pace. DEA's international training program has exposed thousands of foreign law enforcement officials to more sophisticated techniques. DEA's extensive presence around the world, such that it is regarded by many as a type of international agency (which often proves faster and more responsive than INTERPOL), has helped broaden the willingness of governments to treat criminal matters non-politically. Over the long run, it is possible that the enhanced cooperation in transnational criminal matters stimulated by the concern over drug trafficking and drug

abuse will have even greater impact in dealing with other forms of criminal activity, most notably terrorism and various types of economic fraud.

Foreign countries have also received some benefit from the U.S. IDC policy. Those countries which are concerned about domestic drug abuse have utilized U.S. assistance in attacking their own problems. U.S. development aid has been useful in building infrastructure and increasing agricultural production in remote and impoverished regions. But for U.S. concern over their poppy, coca, or marijuana production, these countries might well have been passed over in the granting of U.S. aid. Another interesting byproduct has been the recipient countries' use of U.S. equipment and information against domestic insurgencies, some of which have also been involved in drug trafficking.

There is even greater subjectivity involved in assessing the costs of the IDC policy. The most obvious cost has been in terms of other U.S. foreign policy objectives. Obviously, the application of pressure on foreign governments to do something that they are not otherwise particularly keen on doing has never been cost free. When the United States has chosen to pressure foreign governments on the drug issue, it has sacrificed political capital which might otherwise have been available for other objectives. In this sense, the analogy to U.S. human rights policy is appropriate. As the active human rights policy of the Carter administration demonstrated, imposition of unwelcome demands on foreign governments risked antagonizing those regimes, to the detriment of other foreign policy objectives.

Another cost, of particular concern to civil libertarians, has been the amendment to the Posse Comitatus

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Act, which increased military involvement in enforcement of civilian laws. This narrowing separation between military and civilian authorities has been viewed warily by those who fear the potential consequences of increasing the government's powers of surveillance.¹⁸ On the other hand, those military units which have become involved in tracking and pursuing drug traffickers in the Caribbean have received useful training in the event of more serious forms of conflict or smuggling.

One of the more conspicuous victims of the U.S. IDC policy has been the apprehended producer of the illegal crops abroad. (The unapprehended producer has been a beneficiary.) He has frequently suffered a drastic cut in income and the destruction of his legitimate produce. Of greater concern, however, has been the failure of U.S. aid programs or foreign governments to follow through on the latter half of crop substitution projects. The result has been that farmers who have refrained from planting their illegitimate crops have been left with no source of income in following years, with their lands often lying fallow. For the local government, the consequences have been to incur farmers' wrath, to eliminate valuable sources of foreign exchange and employment, and to create further dependence on governmental resources.

Ultimately, any analysis of the U.S. IDC policy must be viewed within the context of the U.S. government's overall policy toward illegal drugs. Analysis of that policy is inevitably a far more subjective enterprise than considering merely its international component. That is so for a number of reasons. The first is that the overwhelming rhetoric which attaches to the policy breeds loose analysis, as well as a fair degree of cynicism and

hypocrisy. Too many high-level officials and politicians, including a few presidents and attorney generals, have decreed the "drug problem" the "number one threat facing America" without honestly considering the actual nature of the problem. One result has been a general failure to distinguish drug use from drug abuse. Another has been the failure to acknowledge that the corrupting influence of the drug trade on government and society stems in good part from the illegality of products that remain in great demand by millions who are cynical of, or indifferent to, their illegal status. A third result has been a virtual self-imposed censorship among politicians and government officials—including many who have analyzed or been involved in combatting drug trafficking for many years—who have grave reservations as to the current policies and propaganda which characterize this area. This silence stems not only from a fear of losing their jobs, but from a fear of being inaccurately labeled and a sense that dissent in this area is not respected.

A second reason why analyzing drug policy is so subjective is that alternative policies, such as various legalization regimes accompanied by government regulation, have never been tried so that there is little to which to compare the present policies. Comparison with the nineteenth century, when there were few drug laws, is of limited help for any number of reasons, not the least of which is the lack of information. The closest comparison is probably with the imposition and lifting of Prohibition in the first part of this century. That experience suggested that making a broadly desired product such as alcohol illegal to buy, sell, and consume would reduce both the use and abuse of the substance. But it also revealed that a pro-

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hibition policy would not eliminate the supply of, and market for, the product. Rather, a somewhat reduced market would merely be driven underground, where criminal organizations would make untaxed billions supplying the demand. The additional billions spent by the government on enforcement efforts would have the principal effect of merely increasing the profits of those criminals who managed to evade the law. Among the other byproducts of the prohibition policy were the corruption of law enforcement and other public officials, as well as a growing cynicism of a government and law enforcement establishment which enforced such laws where it was not corrupted. Perhaps the most indeterminate, but certainly substantial, cost of all is the effects which such laws had on the tens of millions of Americans who considered themselves law-abiding citizens, but whom the law identified as criminals because they consumed—often without abusing—the illegal substance.

A third reason—perhaps the central one—for the inevitable subjectivity of the analysis is that at its core it concerns the fundamental question of what role government should play in attempting to protect people from themselves and their own weaknesses. That, after all, is the bottom line of what drug laws are all about. In that sense, they are similar to laws against gambling, prostitution, and pornography, and different from laws against murder, assault, robbery, extortion, fraud, and other laws which punish people for hurting not themselves but others. Although one of the principal justifications for the drug laws has been that consuming drugs causes people to commit violent crimes, there has been a paucity of evidence supporting such claims, particularly as far as marijuana and cocaine are con-

cerned. Of all drugs, it is the principal legal one—alcohol—which has been most associated with inspiring violent crimes.

My conclusion, therefore, is a mixed one. On the one hand, there is no reason not to continue to pursue and prosecute the criminals who profit from the drug trade, particularly insofar as they are involved in all sorts of other criminal activities. Similarly, even greater efforts are warranted in identifying and seizing their ill-gotten gains. On the other hand, there is a strong need to be more honest and open minded in our analysis of the drug problem. The rhetoric and propaganda which emanate from government could be toned down, perhaps increasing the credibility of its worthwhile drug education programs. More honest consideration could be given to the questions of hypocrisy which arise from the fact that the two most widely consumed legal drugs—alcohol and tobacco—are each responsible for more economic loss, physical suffering, and death than all of the illegally consumed drugs combined. More recognition could be given to the fact that millions, perhaps even tens of millions, of Americans use illegal drugs without abusing them and without harming anyone else. Greater efforts could be made to distinguish the costs of drug abuse from the many costs which arise from the illegality of the drugs. These include the untold effects on the millions of non-abusing drug consumers; the existence of powerful and violent drug trafficking organizations; the loss of tens of billions of dollars into an untaxed, underground economy; and the billions of taxpayers' dollars spent on catching, prosecuting, and imprisoning drug traffickers as well as mere drug consumers. Lastly, it is time for both the public and the government to give renewed, and more honest, consideration to the question of what costs we want the government to incur and impose in order to prevent a substantial minority of our country from consuming what are now illegal drugs.