

Drugs, a Global Contemporary Criminal Menace

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François Haut

*PhD in Law, Honorary Lecturer. Associate Professor at the China
Criminal Police University and George Mason University
(United States)*

During the extraordinary session of the UN in April, 2016 on the world drug problem, Algerian Minister of Justice, Mr. Tayeb Louh declared—I quote him—that “the threats raised by the problem of the drug are no longer *classic risks*,” but they have evolved, and that besides financing terrorism, “they threaten the democratic process in the world and they will weigh on the security and the stability of countries.”

I found that this vision of the problems raised by the narcotics—which are not *classic risks* anymore—was righteous. This is what gave me the idea to present this topic in a way which is not utterly *classical*, but considering drugs as a natural and spontaneous *global criminal menace*. With what consequences it can have in terms of approach and strategy when it comes to fight this threat.

On this topic of drugs, presentations always deal with trafficking, organizations, routes, figures, seeking to convince that such policy or such action is more appropriate than the another.

From the police point of view, the one who interests us here, narcotics are obviously the traffic, the traffickers, the markets, the seizures, the organizations, and the arrests.

However, I am going to try to present the problem differently because it is sometimes useful to state the obvious.

I think that today, it is absolutely necessary to present the drugs as a global threat because fighting all the aspects simultaneously, jointly, in a centralized way, is the only way to overcome this nuisance. I am deeply convinced that drugs are a terrible nuisance and I specify that I am without concession or indulgence on this point.

Last year, I had the honor to have a long conversation with Viktor Petrovich Ivanov, the former head of the FSKN, the Federal Drug Control Service of the

Russian Federation, who, I think had close cooperation with China's counterpart, and which is now a division of the Main Drugs Control Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Victor Petrovich had for long defended this idea of a global menace. The memory of this moment, when we shared the same conception of the fight against drugs, also comforted me to present this point of view in front of you.

Some people speak about plague. Yet, drugs are neither of accidental nature, nor a fate or a coincidence. It is, in no way, a natural phenomenon which, as the plague in the Middle Ages, swamped the humanity. Drugs, especially today, is an invented instrument, made and used by some men and their criminal organizations for purposes of profit which causes an unprecedented noxiousness.

An example: at the beginning of the 1980s, the cocaine was an expensive product, although easy to produce, that could only be consumed by the wealthiest people of the western world. The Colombian cartels were in overproduction. Facing this "crisis", they had to find a solution. They called upon chemists who, from the cocaine powder, created a new product that could be sold cheaper and in massive quantities; and sell off their surplus.

This new product was called "crack cocaine": much cheaper, much more addictive, you know that. A new market was there, opened to the poorest and very easily implemented. One of the direct and indisputable consequences of this invention, among many others in various domains, is that it set off a war between the drug street gangs of the city of Los Angeles, multiplying by 4 the number of homicides from 1984 till 1990; about two homicides a day!

This was the direct result of the combined and pernicious work of criminal entrepreneurs and unscrupulous chemists, 5,000 km away from there: anything but a scourge, which, like some Icelandic volcano, submerges Europe with its ashes and dust.

Yes, drugs are for good a global nuisance, a problem of world security, in spite of what some people think and without entering UN quibbles. I will explain myself.

The adjective *global*, which means *relating to* or *encompassing the whole of something*, is understood in two senses today: *relating to the whole world* or *concerning each of the aspects of a problem* handled in its whole.

The noxiousness of drugs, which according to Minister of Justice of Algeria is no longer a *classic risk*, is global in these both ways: it is a worldwide problem which affects all the aspects of life in a society.

Therefore, we cannot content ourselves with only certain aspects of the problem, as the immediate fight, the drug production or the drug traffickers.

Therefore, the answer to the drug problem has to consider its global nature, its ramifications, in a concentrated and cooperative logic.

It is also and above all because the drug is in the center of all the criminal activities, by the money that it generates, by the dependence that it engenders, by the forfeiture that it causes, by the lever that it represents, by the power that it gives ...

Let us try to raise a list which, far from being exhaustive, are the sectors corrupted by drugs:

- Money, in all its dimensions, nerve center of all the criminal problems: one of its main sources is drugs, even if others appear today. Money which, besides luxury and pleasure, allows the criminal organizations to invest in new, less hazardous but equally lucrative illicit markets, such as forgery.
- Public health, it is an obvious fact, with all the debates around it—such as the decriminalization—which aims in weakening the fight against narcotics. But also the increase of consumption—according to cycles and trends which would ask for a specific study—widely influenced by the characteristics of the offer and the consequences which it can have on a population, especially the youngest.
- Criminality in all its aspects: from the transnational level, obviously, to the penniless junkie in need, who will steal anything to buy a fix; as well as the criminal organizations which developed in the prisons worldwide, whose main source of funding is drugs;
- Money laundering and transformation of dirty cash, allowing investments in the justifiable economy, with the consequences described by many experts
- Corruption, obviously, at first to facilitate trafficking but also to penetrate institutions at the highest level and, among others, influence the public policies concerning narcotics;
- The economy of certain countries and its perversion. I refer to the excellent book, even if already a little old, of our friend and colleague Marie Christine Dupuis, “Narcotics, prices and profits”, which deserves to be the first book describing these perverse interactions. We shall return later on examples.
- Public security and the contempt of the law: for example, when a whole district of a French city is enslaved by a gang of drug dealers
- Financing of terrorism, we shall return there also
- Arms trafficking, in all its dimensions, by drug traffickers to protect their business or to set up actions of influence which are not without effects on the appearance or the perpetuation of conflicts;
- The emerging organized crime of gangs, running narcotics supermarkets and that are the most important cause of homicides in the United States, far more than terrorism ...
- And all the facets I probably forgot, knowing than they interlace and intermingle to infinity and that there are many other ways of presenting them. However, it is definitely a problem of international security.

I will now go back to some examples to illustrate these assertions.

At first an illustration of the rank of drugs in the scale of values and its incidence on the economy through an analysis of the peace agreement signed between the Colombian government and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces, the FARC, last August.

This agreement is based on five points which I will quote, but not in detail:

Point 1. The end of political violence.

Point 2. Justice for victims of the conflict.

Point 3. Rural development.

Point 4. The entrance of the FARC in the politics of the Country.

And at last, Point 5. Ending the drug trade.

Probably the most impacting on the future of the country, this point comes the last one, even though it is probably the most difficult to solve.

Colombia's illegal coca crop is the fuel that has kept the armed conflict running all these years, and the rebels owe their massive military expansion in the 1990s to an increasing dominance of the drug trade. Under the peace accords, FARC essentially agrees to go out of business as a narcotics-trafficking organization and to work with the government and others attempting to wean Colombia's rural farmers off coca. It would not be easy. This is one of the most fraught aspects of the peace deal, and many are bracing for a period of increased bloodshed as other illegal armed groups compete to take over FARC's considerable share of the billion-dollar coca business.

But, beyond these conventional aspects, how really is asked the question?

How many people depend on this black economy? Hundreds of thousands.

How long will it take to set up the planned capacities? Too long.

Is the demand going to fall? No! Why then reduce the offer and the income which it gets?

Thus everything let think that the situation will continue; that the Colombian Government, satisfied with the end of the armed struggle and a prisoner of its social and political commitments will not try to recreate tensions with an important part of the population, and weaken the state's economy by going without the parallel income of the drug trafficking.

Managed by FARC or by competitors, the economy of the cocaine is so bound to the life of the country, that it cannot disappear, at least not before a very long time. And still ... If the United States try to get involved, nothing indicates that they will have again the agreement of the Colombian government.

It is an example of the global nature of the threat represented by the drugs, making any solution almost impossible to find. More, by finding this question in the last position of the terms of the peace agreement we really have the feeling that it had been included because it was not possible to do otherwise, but that it was not

really part of the problem—even though it was probably the most important one ...

Because there is no treatment for this cancer so much the tumor is enormous.

And, even if the parameters are different, the diagnosis is similar for Afghanistan and the production of poppy: the consubstantiality of the drug and the state economy. With different consequences, likely the bankruptcy of the State—if it is not already achieved—and the financing of terrorism.

Indeed, it seems that *Islamic State* could be benefiting from smuggled heroin passing from Afghanistan and into Western Europe. In 2015, Russia's FSKN estimated that IS makes 1 billion dollars annually from the illicit trade.

As airstrikes pummel the jihadist's oil fields and other positions in Syria and Iraq, the extremists may want to find other income to mount terrorist operations against the west.

So, they are also active in Afghanistan where an estimated gross value of opium of 1.56 billion dollars was produced in 2015, even though it is 45% less than in 2014.

IS affiliates now operate from Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq in the Middle East to Nigeria, Mali, and Libya in Africa.

So, If you look at the routes that opium takes from Afghanistan, there is a lot of territory controlled by IS and therefore it will be making money out of it.

It is not clear that IS is currently able to control production, but there is evidence that it is more and more active in Afghanistan. This obviously makes IS profiting from this position and, as other sources of income are squeezed, they will be looking for other sources of revenue.

So, the transit of heroin from Afghanistan through the Islamic State-controlled territories is a huge financial sponsorship.

Another problem to deal with ...

As I said earlier, drugs smuggled in prison are a huge problem too as it is the major fuel of the prison gangs. Here is now an example of what such criminal organizations can become ... in jail.

In Brazil, the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (PCC) reigns over prison life, mostly in the São Paulo region. This organization was created by eight prisoners, after a football game on August 31, 1993 in the Taubaté high-security prison, known as *Piranhão* the “Great Piranha.” The political motivation was obvious—the PCC was formed to “fight oppression in the prison system of São Paulo” and “avenge the deaths of 111 prisoners, victims of the repression of October 2, 1992” at Carandiru prison.

But What Gave the Gang Its Power is Drug Trafficking

In February 2001, Carlos Ambrósio Idemir Sombra became the most prominent leader of the organization, which referred to itself as the “Syndicate” at the time. The gang was initially quite unobtrusive, but one day, Sombra used a

mobile phone, from his cell, of course, to organize and coordinate one of the largest prison revolts in history. 27,000 inmates simultaneously took control of 29 prisons and kept 14,000 people hostage for 27 hours. Although 16 detainees were killed, it was a huge demonstration to the country's authorities of the power of the PCC to mobilize inmates. Five months later, Sombra, also known as "Father" was beaten to death at *Piranhão* by five members of a more highly criminalized faction of the PCC in search of power. This was duly seized by Césinha and Geleião, founders of the PCC too and originators of an alliance with the Comando Vermelho, the "Red Commando", one of the major prison gangs in Rio de Janeiro.

From the maximum-security facility in which they were both incarcerated, the two new leaders organized attacks against public buildings and used terrorist methods to intimidate the prison authorities. Considered too violent, they were removed from power in November 2002 by other gang members.

The organization was then taken over by Marcos "Marcola" Herbas Camacho, also known as "Playboy."

He immediately put a bounty on the heads of his predecessors for the betrayal to the authorities and for founding a dissident group, the "Third commando of the Capital".

Marcola, like the others, took a hard line against officials of the authorities, and the PCC was suspected of killing two judges in 2003, as well as the director of the *Penitentiary Readaptation Center* (CRP), the most secure prison in the country. For sponsoring this crime, Marcola was sentenced to 29 years in prison. The PCC also announced among its objectives, its intention to generate and use the uprisings in prison to "demoralize the government" and "destroy the CRP."

The leaders of the PCC give their orders with mobile phones brought into the prisons by henchmen or sympathizers, either obeying orders or willing to render services for money. Please note that not only phones make their way into prisons, but also weapons, prostitutes and food and whatever you can imagine But mostly drugs, even in using carrier pigeons!

Since its show of force, the PCC has been politicizing its proclamations and is implicated in the assassination of judges and the funding of mass escapes.

The authorities appear to be overwhelmed as violent actions and mass escapes continued.

One of the most significant: in May 2006, as ever, from their cells using mobile phones, the leaders of the PCC, under Marcola's command, directly challenged the São Paulo authorities in response to their plan to destroy the PCC by splitting its leaders up and getting rid of them.

As this prison gang has huge roots and support in the streets that are part of its drug trafficking network, it managed to launch 300 separate attacks against public buildings and police stations, public transportation, and banks in Sao Paulo and its suburbs, which were executed simultaneously. Seventy prisons suffered riots. For several days, the region experienced unprecedented pressure in a climate

of civil war. Forty-three policemen and 91 attackers were killed (170 people in total according to some sources); sixty buses were burned.

Of course, since these events, the PCC has been monitored more closely, especially in the prisons holding its most important leaders. As a result of this pressure and losses incurred, the PCC later had difficulty meeting its expenses.

The PCC has also been forced to decentralize parts of its command structure to compensate for the loss of some leaders and the more stringent containment measures imposed on others.

More recently, it seems that the PCC has turned to other ambitions—it is seeking no less than representation at the Brazilian parliament.

But still, in the streets, the PCC is one of the most important drug trafficking organizations of Brazil. An still rules the prison.

Finally, here is how an intense traffic of marijuana has been able to ruin the life of a French neighborhood during long years. It became an archetype, a laboratory for conscientious criminologist because the trials of this case supplied indisputable and essential information for the knowledge of the most frequent criminal entities in France.

In the autumn of 2011, the Police ended the activities of Shitland. It was not an amusement park. It is the name a criminal gang had given to “its” territory, which was transformed into drugs supermarket and systematically bled dry. For years, the inhabitants of the neighborhood of *Les Boullereaux* in the *Champigny-sur-Marne* city had been subjected to the predation of the gang, living in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, enduring the presence of aggressive junkies in need of their fix and lived a simplistic, but effective kind of corruption. This gang had taken up the four highrise buildings of the district and had established an enormous traffic of cannabis there. The hardcore of this gang was three cousins: two organized the operations in the concerned district, the third lived in the Netherlands from where he sent the main part of the goods, delivered by “go fast”. The buyers came from all over Paris region, because Shitland was considered for the quality of its goods. One could see up to 500 “customers” a day and too often rows were forming at the foot of these buildings.

Customers of Shitland were very closely taken care of and watched. From their entrance, the consumers could read a graffiti, *Welcome to Shitland*. Higher in the stairs, there was another graffiti: *Prepare your notes and unfold them! Thank you!*. Farther still, there was a warning: *forged bill = attached in the cellar with punishment*. The junkies were then searched before, finally, meeting the one who was going to hand them over the precious product. That was for the “trade” component.

The upper floors of buildings, there were what we call in France the “wet nurses”, that is to say, the “ordinary” people corrupted by the gang and paid to store bigger amounts of narcotics in their apartment. Paid about 2,000 Euros per month, three or four times the price of their rent ... Higher up, squatted apartments, that

is to say occupied with the paid collusion of officials of the buildings to be used as a fallback in the case of a police raid. Very young gang members, positioned in the stairs, were paid 300 Euros a night to watch for and warn of a possible police operation. There were also some kids outside the buildings ...

The rest of the inhabitants of the neighborhood had to pay the gang members 10 Euros each time they wanted to use an elevator, or dispose of part of their purchases to be allowed to come home.

And if violence and intimidation were dominant, everyone who could be helpful was corrupted, starting with building employees.

In this case, the Prosecutor reported *a system of terror*, to portray the lives of the dwellers; he described a neighborhood *where threats and violence were exercised daily*. What we call *Street terrorism!*

Not to mention the trafficking itself that generated a “turnover” of approximately 30,000 Euros per day, nearly 12 million Euros per year, for years ... Another aspect of what narcotics induce.

CONCLUSION

These are just a few examples of impacts in different and varied levels produced by drugs and still much more to say.

There is no doubt that drug noxiousness is a global issue of international security; it is a problem of *global criminality!*

Fragile and vulnerable states that are involved in the production, supply and use of drugs forbidden under international prohibition, are politically and economically destabilized. Producer and transit countries as Colombia, Mexico, Afghanistan, and West Africa are prime examples. One estimates the value of the global drugs market at 300+ billion dollars a year [379 billion, according to the specialized website Havocscope]—rivaling the worldwide markets in oil, wheat, and arms. The proportions of this anarchic trade dwarf the GDP of many smaller states, even not so small.

I am not a police officer, I am an academic, but I have known very well and spent quite a lot of time with men of action who fought against the *narcos* in Colombia.

Therefore, my conception of globality of the drug problem, especially for our meeting, has at first an *operational approach*.

One must then progress gradually, keeping aware at the team level of the global nature of this issue. Even though their specialties are different, operatives must closely collaborate, with a single vision of this multiform threat. They have to share all the information, compare, analyze, and add it, so that everything goes in the same direction, without specialty chauvinism. One must really work together because we are not, I repeat, dealing with a *classic risk*; even if it is not the

only criminal activity not to be “classic” today. Think we have to deal with a *global criminality*.

And, above all, I believe that transverse and cross skills in cohesion must be developed in law enforcement agencies for everyone to understand the entirety of what they are fighting against.

This is the first condition for an effective response.

Then one has to share information, intelligence. This is done today and international collaborations are numerous. But, again, it must be done without losing sight of this specific *global* aspect of this threat, because every single bit counts in this jigsaw puzzle of thousands pieces.

Third, the consequence of what I have just stated, is an appropriate answer, a comprehensive response.

One must not have anymore either emotional or philosophical debates. One must not seek fake excuses or find an intellectual comfort in decriminalisation of substances or in setting “fix rooms” One must not consider anymore that prohibition of narcotics has perverse consequences, even though the United States gave a very bad example in terms of prohibition. But remember, they could only get rid of their problem by the global response they made, including tax proceedings and trials.

Today, there should be no more tolerance.

We must, as advocated Victor Ivanov when he was still in office, conduct a *global war* against trafficking, traffickers and all they generate. Because the threat is global, because it is a question of survival!