

Jordan, David C. *Drug Politics: Dirty Money and Democracies*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999.

Books about the drug trade generally focus on one of two prominent elements, producers or consumers. The world's drug problems are divided by those who view it as a supply problem and those who view it as a problem of demand. From the perspective of the United States and other affluent Western societies, where drugs are consumed in great quantities and hard currency is transferred to third world producing countries, the focus on the drug problem has been on the suppliers. For third world countries that produce drugs, and have increasingly become dependent on the drug trade for hard currency, the drug trade is a problem caused by consumers.

The great strength and, ironically, weakness of this book is that it departs from those tired scenarios. In contrast, it argues that the drug trade is best understood from the perspective of the structure of globalization, in the form of increased contacts among societies and increased international economy activity. This has resulted in the ascendance of global criminal and financial regimes that strain the reach of even the most powerful nation states. The book implicitly adds to this engaging and somewhat novel perspective by viewing the drug trade in terms of a global, structural-functional model. Those disinclined to such abstractions and their obligatory jargon need not be scared away. The model is implicit, and the author's prose is devoid of the pseudo-scientific jargon that so peppers those disciplines that suffer from incessant physics envy.

The author is at his best when framing this alluring theoretical scheme. I confess that I could not wait to see it unfold. Yes, there have been other attempts at encapsulating the drug problem in such ways. There is Rachel Ehrenfeld's theory of narco-terrorism, suggesting the narcotics trade is part of a worldwide communist conspiracy using narcotics to support revolution. As Nicholas Damask and I have shown in the journal *Terrorism and Political Violence*, narco-terrorism is an equal opportunity myth, serving the political fantasies of both the right and the left. Indeed, anyone who had a casual acquaintance with Rens Lee's work on the narcotics trade would have dismissed it out of hand.

In the Parthenon of drug hysteria, one can also find former journalist Gary Webb, whose fantasy of the CIA flooding America's black ghettos with drugs is another structural-functional approach. This one like Lazarus keeps coming back to haunt us, most recently in Webb's book, which was produced from his discredited newspaper series. (A detailed analysis of Webb's thesis can be found in my "How the CIA Fell Victim to Myth Posing as Journalism," in the *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*.) So, against David Jordan's fluid prose and scholarly conceptualization, the reader awaits what appears finally to be a meaningful theoretical formulation of the drug problem.

But the execution is disappointing. In part, this is not entirely the author's fault, for he is walking through a literature that is an intellectual minefield. This literature is filled with innuendo, and it routinely takes complex relationships and reduces them to the most

simplistic common denominator. The author follows in this vein having absorbed the literature uncritically to the point where Ehrenfeld herself becomes a credible source.

As I read the book, I was reminded of the cynical observation of one of my wiser and older colleagues that scholarship is often gossip with footnotes. And when I came across a statement that could have been written by Gary Webb (but wasn't), ". . . there is considerable evidence that individuals in the United States government have been consciously involved in the facilitation of narcotics trafficking for political purposes," I just had to know the source. So, I looked up the author's footnote (note 27 on p. 68) and regrettably there is no note 27. The notes for Chapter 4 jump from 25 to 31.

I am not implying that I have discovered a conspiracy. This is obviously a major proofreading error, but the issue shows how source dependent the author (and the rest of us) are on the existent literature in any field. In this case, the literature is so contaminated by hyperbole and conspiracy theories that it has to be taken with a grain of salt, and, consequently, we have to know what is being cited.

Although the author's execution is far from being convincing, the work does possess some attractive elements. He does make an argument for the global spread and coordination of criminal groups and their ensuing impact on the drug trade and democracy that is at least partially credible. His chapter on "the criminalization of the international finance system," (of the same title) while somewhat overstated, as the title suggests, does lend some support to his theory, and is, at least in my judgment, the best part of the book.

After the first two chapters, which read as if they were a dissertation's warmed-over literature review the author's prose flows nicely. From the perspective of style, the remainder of the work is a joy to read. And it should be read, for despite its flaws, there are elements here of a somewhat credible theoretical approach to analyzing the drug problem. This is the kind of analysis that needs to be continued and better documented. If nothing else, Jordan has pointed us in the right direction.

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