

# Peter Andreas: Killer High: A History of War in Six Drugs

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Earlier last year, Oxford University Press published a book called *Killer High: A History of War in Six Drugs*. The author of this publication is Peter Andreas, who has been working at the prestigious Brown University for a long time, specifically since 2001. In earlier years he was an academic at Harvard University, a researcher at the Brookings Institution and a member of the Social Science Research Council-MacArthur Foundation for International Peace and Security. He works at his current institution as a professor of International Studies and Political Science and International and Public Affairs. In his research scope Andreas specializes primarily in investigating the secret dimension of globalization. This includes illegal cross-border flows of people, goods, money, and information. He tries to blend the traces of the interaction between states, and the illicit flows across time and space in his publications, focussing mainly on the practice of government policing efforts and politics along and across borders. Due to such a research focus, his publications could be classified under the field of International Relations. However, in a more precise way, it could be said that their spectrum extends to the fields of security studies, political economy, history, and the study of transnational crime.

The political debate on transnational crime is still relevant in today's international environment. However, this debate sometimes seems misleading, as it does not always use terms such as "narco-terrorists", "narco-insurgents" and "narco-guerrillas" in an appropriate way. It could even be argued that through such a presentation of this issue politicians create a common tendency in society to consider the relationship between drugs and wars as a completely new phenomenon. For example, the so-called narco-trafficking is often related mainly to organized crime groups. Andreas's latest work, *Killer High*, comes to confront this social and political discourse. After opening it, we quickly find out that Andreas, with his research, is trying to prove that the mentioned relationship between drugs and wars is older than it might seem at first glance. Its history dates back to not only past decades but even past centuries. And Andreas sets out on this path because the mainstay of his research in *Killer High* is mapping the drug-war relationship from early antiquity to the present. He examines the relationship itself through six powerful drugs: alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, opium, amphetamine, and heroin. Through the interconnectedness of these selected drugs and wars Andreas tries to confront the ingrained opinion about and novelty of this relationship. Thus, his research traces the history of wars through the lens of drugs and the history of drugs through

the lens of war, on which he based his two main research questions: *"How did drugs make wars?"* and *"How did wars make drugs?"*

The book is divided into an introductory part, six main chapters, and a conclusion in the form of a final discussion and evaluation. In the book, Andreas reveals new nooks and crannies of often well-known and very often researched world events through the drugs mentioned above. For example, his analysis of the British Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and specifically before the Opium Wars, confronts today's notion about narco-states. In the third and fourth chapter, we find out that, according to Andreas, the British Empire in this period was a kind of so-called narco-empire. From the British government's position, the supply of tea to British consumers from China was made possible by creating an opium addiction among the Chinese population. On the one hand, there was a tendency to satisfy consumers addicted to an "acceptable" drug, but on the other, this situation led to the creation of consumers of a more dangerous drug. In the following years it was precisely due to these circumstances that the situation escalated into the Opium Wars. At the same time, however, the British tea and opium trade was far from being the only or the most significant British drug trade. The British Empire had long relied on taxes on alcohol and tobacco. The British, of course, were not unique in this regard at the time. Every power (not only during the mentioned period) relied on these taxes. However, we see that this fact had an even greater importance for the British after we read that tobacco and alcohol taxes ensured the British victory over Napoleon (p. 33).

Furthermore, in the text and particularly in the description of the formation of empires with the help of addictive substances, we also find the topic of hypocrisy. For example, we learn that the Bolsheviks during the Russian Revolution were staunch prohibitionists in the field of alcohol. However, after taking power they returned to their former customs and filled their state treasury with income from vodka just like their tsarist predecessors. Similarly, the Nazi ideology was hypocritical in this respect as well. It was also anti-drug, but at the same time the Nazis were able to aggressively supply their soldiers on the war front with amphetamine. Paradoxically, even Hitler himself was an exemplary addict. As is written on page 140, during his reign in Nazi Germany he was given up to eighty-two different drugs. Such data makes one wonder whether this hypocrisy is a reality in which political propaganda represents only the will of a rational ruler and is far removed from the cruel truth.

From the whole work it is evident that in it, the author continued his work from previous years (SEE THE ARTICLES “DRUGS AND WAR: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP?” AND “CRIME, VIOLENCE, AND ILLICIT ECONOMIES IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE” OR THE BOOK SMUGGLER NATION: HOW ILLICIT TRADE MADE AMERICA), as the text shows extensive expertise in this research area. Moreover, we can appreciate Killer High even more by seeing it as his masterwork in terms of the collected data. A kind of drug-war relationship typology was created in the book, representing the main essence of the author’s research path and helping to answer his research questions. The first type of relationship is “war while on drugs”, an experimental condition where drugs are consumed by combatants and civilians during a war. Andreas’s second type is “war through drugs”, which means the use of drugs to finance wars or weaken the enemy. The third is “war for drugs”, where wars lead to securing the drug market. The fourth situation is a “war on drugs”, which occurs when military means are used to suppress drugs or to attack or discredit military opponents in the name of drug suppression. The last, fifth type is “drugs after the war”, i.e., drug use by victors and losers after the conflict (PP. 8–11). This typology is a critical issue in the text as across observations of the individual types, the author confirms his initial hypothesis: “drugs made war and war made drugs” (PP. 1–14). This statement will surely sharpen the reader’s attention if he or she senses an apparent reference to Charles Tilly and his quote “*states make wars and wars make states.*” Even with such an assumption, the reader will not be far from the truth.

Throughout his research and conclusion, Andreas refers to Tilly’s work (P. 181). In connection with the system theory of statehood, it could be said that Andreas’s research is a very high-quality and innovative interpretive output of Tilly’s theory. In the dimension of so-called statecraft or, if we want, state-making, there is a considerable innovation in the drug-war relationship described in the book. As Andreas himself said, by extending Tilly’s dynamics to different contexts we can say that “*states create drug wars and drug wars create states.*” This conclusion represents one of the most important answers to the hard research questions as it brings a new perspective on the mentioned state-building process. In addition to the new perspective, it also brings new questions for the future. As is well known, the violence in Mexico continues to rage more than a decade after the former President Felipe Calderon launched his action against drug cartels. Moreover, looking at the militarized interventions against drug cartels in this country we may ask what type of state is being built. Will drug wars lead to an excessive strengthening of state institutions?

Overall, we could obligatorily say about this work that Andreas successfully managed to combine and connect his knowledge of the research areas mentioned above, and his many years of academic practice. Moreover, unlike other works such as *The Drug War* by Arnold S. Trebach, *Blitzed: Drugs in the Third Reich* by Norman Ohler, or *The Opium War: Drugs, Dreams, and the Making of Modern China* by Julia Lovell, *Killer High* does not focus on just one segment of narcotics problems. Also unlike them, Andreas brings his academic approach, insight, and structural, systemic thinking to the issue by grasping narcotics and wars together, which brings to the social sciences the first holistic work of this type and a new innovative research approach in this research field. The very genius of Andreas's research lies in grasping the human hunger for addictive substances. These, as it is known, have accompanied humanity since time immemorial.

Moreover, like addictive substances, wars have accompanied humanity for centuries as well. By connecting these two factors in the context of history we find the just mentioned innovation, namely placing them in the study of wars, the process of state formation and the issue of economic interconnectedness in international relations. It is no wonder then that his book has recently been nominated for the Lionel Gelber Prize, a literary award for the world's best non-fiction book in English on foreign affairs that seeks to deepen public debate on significant international issues. The book can satisfy the eye and mind of those interested in international relations and history, but also sociology, economics, and psychology.

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