Pierre E. Caquet, *Opium's Orphans: The 200-Year History of the War on Drugs*. **London, UK: Reaktion Books, 2022.**
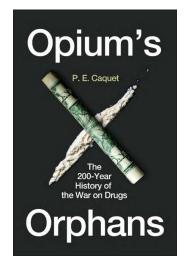
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In *Opium's Orphans: The 200-Year History of the War on Drugs*, Pierre Caquet explores the history of drugs and drug policies and their impact on individuals and society. The author points out that contemporary drug prohibition came as a result of multiple events, starting with the Qing Dynasty's drug enforcement and ending with the United Nations Drug Control Conventions. However, Caquet does not stop at only analyzing international drug-related legal frameworks but also details the successes and failures of national drug policies around the world.

The book is split into five major parts. The first part of the book is dedicated to the prelude, interlude and aftermath of the Opium Wars. Furthermore, Caquet details the

first diplomatic attempts at creating an international drug policy, attitudes toward the opium trade and the early national methods of enforcing drug prohibition. The second part discusses the consequences of opium prohibition and the rise of organized crime. Moreover, the second part explores the multitude of drugs that replaced opium (e.g. cocaine, heroin) as alternatives and their medical effects. The third part goes into detail about the League of Nations and the United Nations framework in regard to drug policy. Additionally, Caquet explores the efforts of several countries to prohibit narcotics, and their relationship, if any, with the League of Nations and the United Nations. The fourth part details the rise of cocaine and crack cocaine and the rise of new drugs such as psychedelics in the sixties. In addition, Caquet explores the War on Drugs and the opioid epidemic. Lastly, the fifth part presents the current drug legalization debate, and various contentious issues, such as marijuana and coca plant legalizations. Caquet argues that in order to devise a new sensible drug policy, historical perspectives should be taken into account.

Caquet emphasizes that the journey towards an international drug control treaty was hindered by disagreements among politicians on how and which drugs should be tackled. Additionally, Caquet argues that countries faced different political, economic and cultural circumstances, which dictated their stance on supporting, tolerating or tackling drugs. In the case of opium, Caquet points out that the British Empire supported and tolerated drugs as a result of a prominent British merchant class active in China. On the other hand, the Qing Dynasty opposed opium sales, due to its perceived negative effects on the population and external interference in Qing's internal affairs. Caquet mentions the medical effects of each popularly-used drug on individual health, as well as the societal attitudes towards drugs. The author argues that socioeconomic and political circumstances dictated public attitude towards narcotics, rather than moral grounds.

Caquet disputes the official numbers of drug addicts given by the Qing Dynasty and argues that numbers were inflated in order to promote drug policies. Additionally, Caquet points out that the numbers of drug addicts given by authorities in various countries are controversial because it is impossible to track the actual number of drug addicts. In public statements, the number of drug addicts is generally expressed in a different manner, usually as a population percentage, rather than being statistically

tracked. In the case of opium, the Qing Dynasty banned the imports of opium in 1817, however, Caquet argues that authorities failed to quickly implement drug policies. As a result, corruption was seen as prevalent within Chinese society, and lax enforcement of the law resulted in less adherence to the law. On the other hand, the Japanese administration of Taiwan established monopolies on opium, which reduced the number of opium dens. Caquet aims to provide various historical examples of different drug policies to emphasize that some policies reduced the number of drug users, while other policies created sociopolitical and economic issues.

The book points out a dichotomy in regard to drug addicts. Caquet points out that drug addicts are classified by law enforcement as either victims or offenders. Drug policies are and have been based on the aforementioned classifications, meaning that drug victims would be treated as persons in need of help. On the other hand, drug traffickers would be treated as criminals and receive punishments. Caquet argues that most drug traffickers are addicted to drugs, which means that the dichotomy needs to be revised to ensure fair justice. Unfortunately, the dichotomy is blurred or nonexistent in authoritarian countries, with drug possession being considered equal to drug trafficking. Caquet states that drug possession has been decriminalized in several countries, however, other countries are not willing to decriminalize drug possession.

Interestingly, Caquet points out that various myths surrounding drugs have influenced public policy, with opium being seen as "fashionable" (68) by high society. To further increase opium's appeal to customers, whether rich or poor, opium sellers would advertise opium as having medicinal properties and being able to soothe the body and mind. This type of marketing pattern also applies to other drugs, such as cocaine. However, so-called drug popularity is tied to drug effects on health, meaning that drugs have different levels of reputation and notoriety. Drug effects which are less adverse to health are more likely to be accepted into mainstream society. Moreover, positive or negative media portrayals of drugs have the ability to influence public perception and start a debate on drug legalization.

The book stays shy of recommending drug policies for the future, as the book is not a guide to policy making nor does it aim to be. The book offers a historical perspective of periods when certain drugs were legal and treated as a commodity. Furthermore, Caquet goes into the consequences of drug enforcement and argues that a future drug

policy would need to take into consideration the historical precedents. The book has numerous references and uses a large number of sources; Caquet emphasizes that "the literature on drugs and drug prohibition … is effectively infinite" (390). Caquet's research is extensive because it uses authors who have published on drug-related fields, however, the research would benefit from the addition of non-English translated sources.

Overall, the book is excellent in providing an overview of drug prohibition policies and how they came to be enforced across the globe. The book's content is mostly focused on analyzing opium and its impact on societies and cultures, however, it does not neglect to detail other drugs that have been declared illegal. The book is useful for experts and people interested in fields of medicine, political studies, international relations, communication studies and lastly, history.

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