

**The Global Drug Landscape
Policy, Enforcement, and Innovation in the 21st Century**

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Abstract: The global drug trade is one of the most complex and pressing challenges of our time, nearly every country and affecting lives. From shifting patterns of drug production and distribution to the evolution of national and international policies, the drug landscape is constantly changing driven by political, economic, social, and technological forces. This book was conceived out of a need to better understand these changes and to provide a comprehensive, interdisciplinary view of the global drug phenomenon.

This book brings together insights from criminology, public policy and technology to examine the past, present, and future of drug-related issues. It explores regional case studies, policy models, enforcement strategies, and the growing role of innovation from artificial intelligence and big data to the rise of online drug markets. The book also assesses the role of public health in shaping more humane and balanced responses.

It is our hope that this book will serve as a valuable resources for researchers, policymakers, educators, legal professional, and community leaders. By presenting both empirical evidence and forward-looking perspectives, this book aim to contribute to ongoing conversation and efforts toward more effective, equitable, and informed drug policy frameworks.

Keywords: Drug, policy, global, technology, crime

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First Published 2026

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Author: Phoong Seuk Wai, Phoong Seuk Yen

Published by:
Penerbit UTHM
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
86400 Parit Raja,
Batu Pahat, Johor
Tel: 07-950 8529
Website: <http://penerbit.uthm.edu.my>
Email: pemasaran.uthm@gmail.com
<http://e-bookstore.uthm.edu.my>

Penerbit UTHM is a member of
Majlis Penerbitan Ilmiah Malaysia (MAPIM)

Printed by:
ATTIN PRESS SDN. BHD.
No 8, Jalan Perindustrian PP4,
Taman Perindustrian Putra Permai,
43300 Seri Kembangan, Selangor, Kuala Lumpur,
Phone number: 03-8939 0660
Email: attinpress@gmail.com



Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

National Library of Malaysia

A catalogue record for this book is available from the
National Library of Malaysia

ISBN 978-629-490-314-2

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PREFACE

The global drug trade is one of the most complex and pressing challenges of our time, nearly every country and affecting countless lives. From shifting patterns of drug production and distribution to the evolution of national and international policies, the drug landscape is constantly changing driven by political, economic, social, and technological forces. This book was conceived out of a need to better understand these changes and to provide a comprehensive, interdisciplinary view of the global drug phenomenon.

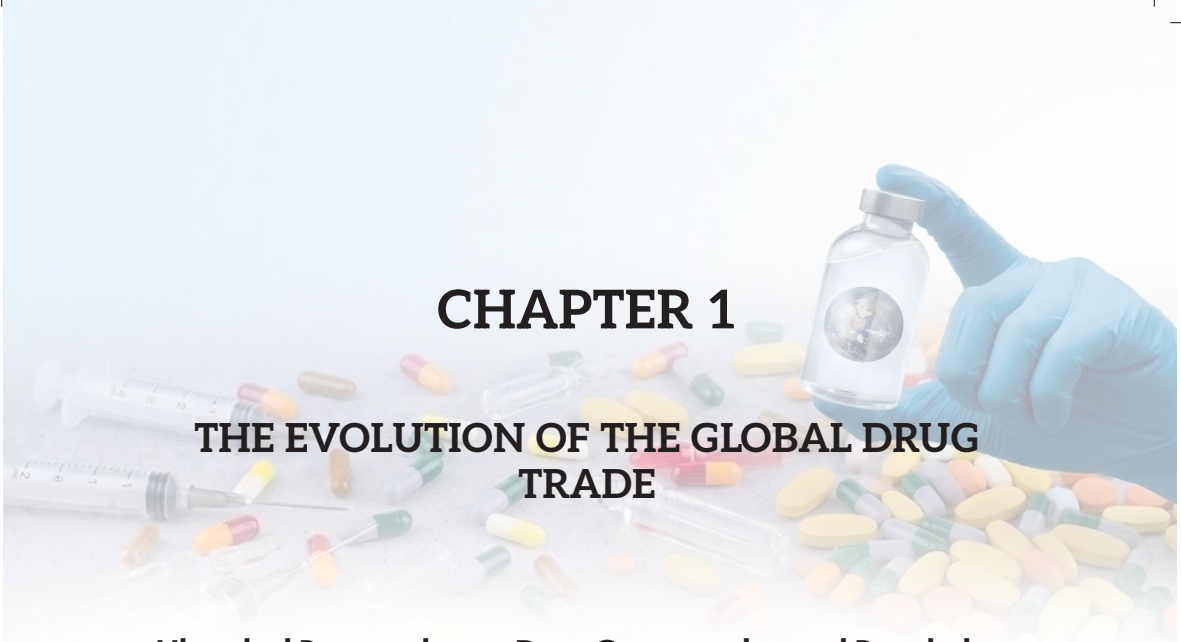
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to sincerely thank the Agensi Antidadah Kebangsaan (AADK), Malaysia, for the generous financial support that made this book possible. This publication was developed under a research grant (Grant No.: 2024-0199-106-10). The authors are also deeply grateful to their respective institutions, Universiti Malaya and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, for their understanding and support, which enabled the successful completion of this book.

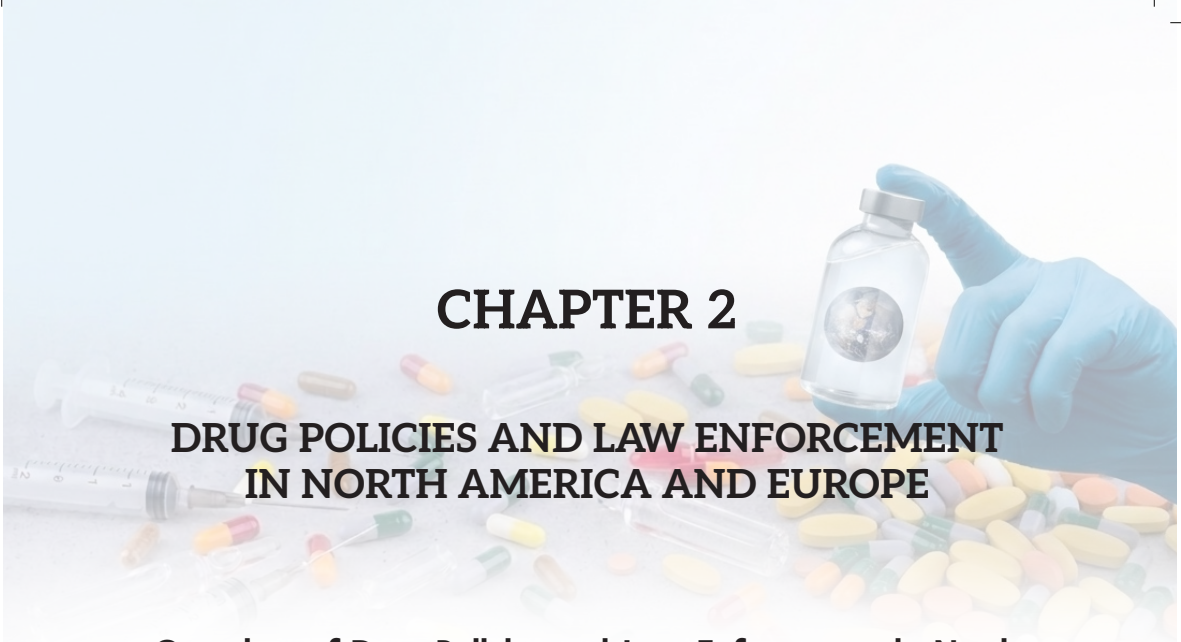


CHAPTER 1

THE EVOLUTION OF THE GLOBAL DRUG TRADE

Historical Perspective on Drug Consumption and Regulation

The historical view on drug usage and regulation illustrates a complex interplay of social, legal, and cultural issues that have influenced policy over time. Substances that change awareness and mood are called psychoactive drugs. In a medical setting, many different types of antidepressants, stimulants, and medicines for mental disorders are given to patients without any problems. However, psychoactive drugs have a very bad image when they are used for reasons other than medicine, like for fun, creativity, social connection, performance enhancement, self-medication, or spiritual reasons (Greif, 2019). In the pharmaceutical industry, a drug is any substance that is used to change or investigate a person's bodily system or pathological state. Ancestors used plants, bark, leaves, herbs, and roots to treat pain and keep diseases under control. However, using drugs is not a bad thing. When taken as prescribed, they can be beneficial to health. Unfortunately, some drugs also have side effects that are very appealing at first, like euphoria, or "feeling good," or being happy, calm, or strong. It started as a fun thing to do, but over time, it turned into a problem of abuse and dependence. In the last 20 years, drug use and trade have grown at a speed that has never been seen before. They can



CHAPTER 2

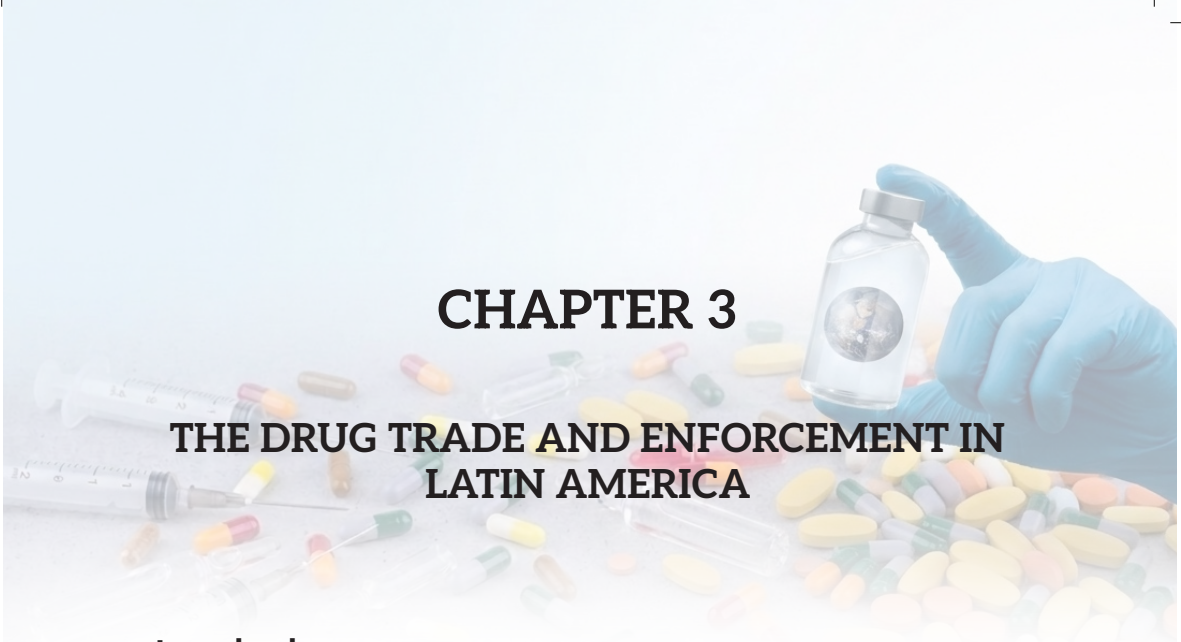
DRUG POLICIES AND LAW ENFORCEMENT IN NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE

Overview of Drug Policies and Law Enforcement in North America and Europe

It has undergone significant transformation over recent decades with regard to drug policies and law enforcement strategies across North America and Europe. Addressing drug-related issues through diverse approaches is now being common to both continents, for instance, while North America traditionally emphasized punitive measures, Europe shifted toward harm reduction and public health-oriented strategies.

Specifically, North America has continued to follow a stringent “War on Drugs” approach with a sharp focus on criminalization and law enforcement over the past decades, notably the United States. Its impact on the United States has led to highly raised rates of incarceration for drug offenses accompanied by marginalized communities (Reuter, Falco, & MacCoun, 1993). In recent times, however, the trend has been toward placing treatment and prevention programs alongside enforcement to create a more balanced policy.

The Netherlands has historically taken a much more tolerant approach, particularly for cannabis—the sales of which are regulated by licensed “coffeeshops.” This is meant to separate



CHAPTER 3

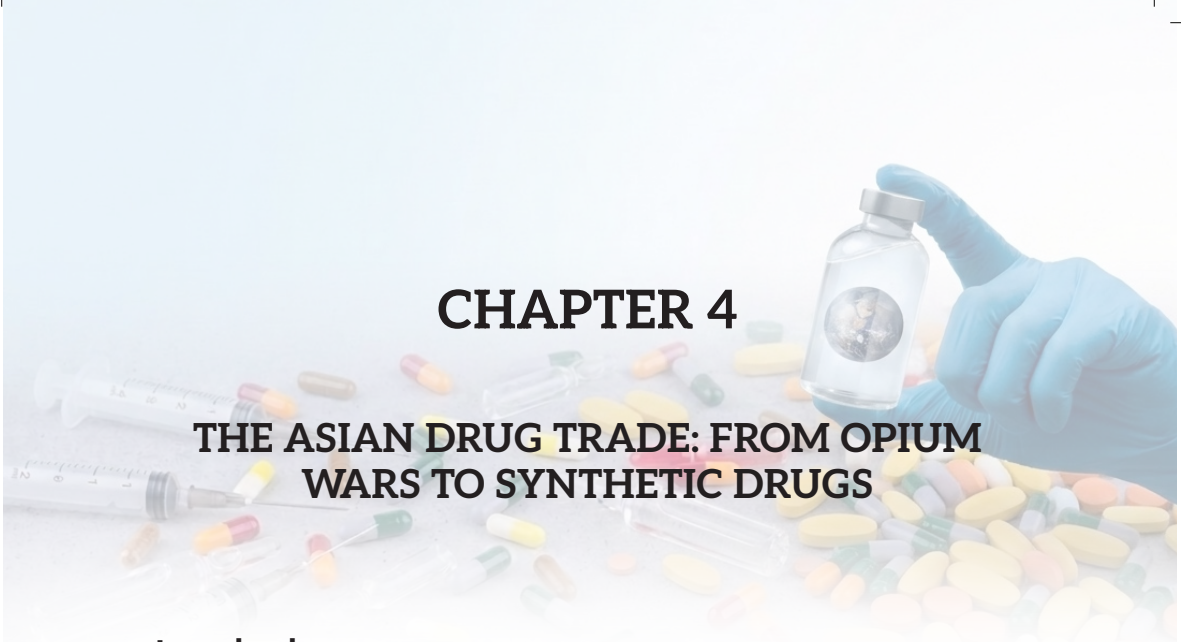
THE DRUG TRADE AND ENFORCEMENT IN LATIN AMERICA

Introduction

Illegal drug trade and law enforcement of drugs in Latin America have been exemplary issues shaping politics, society, and economy within the region. Being the largest hub of illegal drug manufacture and commerce specifically cocaine, marijuana, and chemical drugs Latin America is plagued by complex issues of violence, corruption, poverty, and weak institutions. Efforts at fighting drug trafficking, usually spearheaded by local actors and foreign allies such as the United States, have yielded ambiguous outcomes, leading to discussions on militarized approaches, human rights, and other options such as decriminalization and social progress. Hence will discuss the drug trade and consumption in Latin America, the impact of U.S. intervention and the war on drugs, the evolution of cartels and organized crime networks and socioeconomic factors behind the drug trade.

The Drug Trade and Consumption in Latin America

The drug trafficking, along with extensive and far-flung use of unlawful drugs, across the wide and diversified landscapes of Latin America, is an overriding and chronic challenge which has constantly conditioned and determined the social, political,



CHAPTER 4

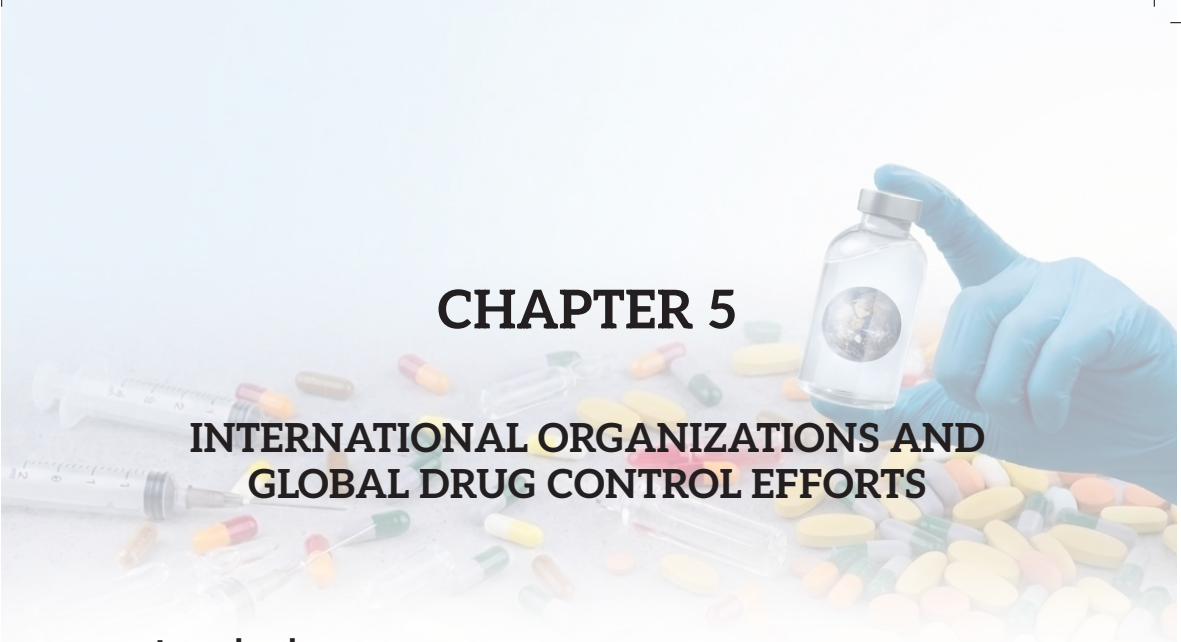
THE ASIAN DRUG TRADE: FROM OPIUM WARS TO SYNTHETIC DRUGS

Introduction

The history of the drug trade in Asia is long and complicated, closely bound up with the political, economic, and social evolution of the region. From the 19th-century Opium Wars that remade international relations and colonial enterprise to the contemporary emergence of synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine, Asia has continued to be a primary theater for the global narcotics trade. Hence will discuss Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle and its role in global drug production, methamphetamine epidemics in East and Southeast Asia, strict drug policies in China, Singapore, and Malaysia, Asia's youth drug crisis and prevention strategies, from opium to methamphetamine: the evolution of drug types in Asia and the rise and challenges of new synthetic drugs.

Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle and its role in global drug production

The Southeast Asian illegal drugs trade has likewise been transformed at its core from its earliest beginnings in opium cultivation to today's supremacy of man-made substances, a shift with profound effects on the world and the region. The Golden Triangle, where Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand converge,



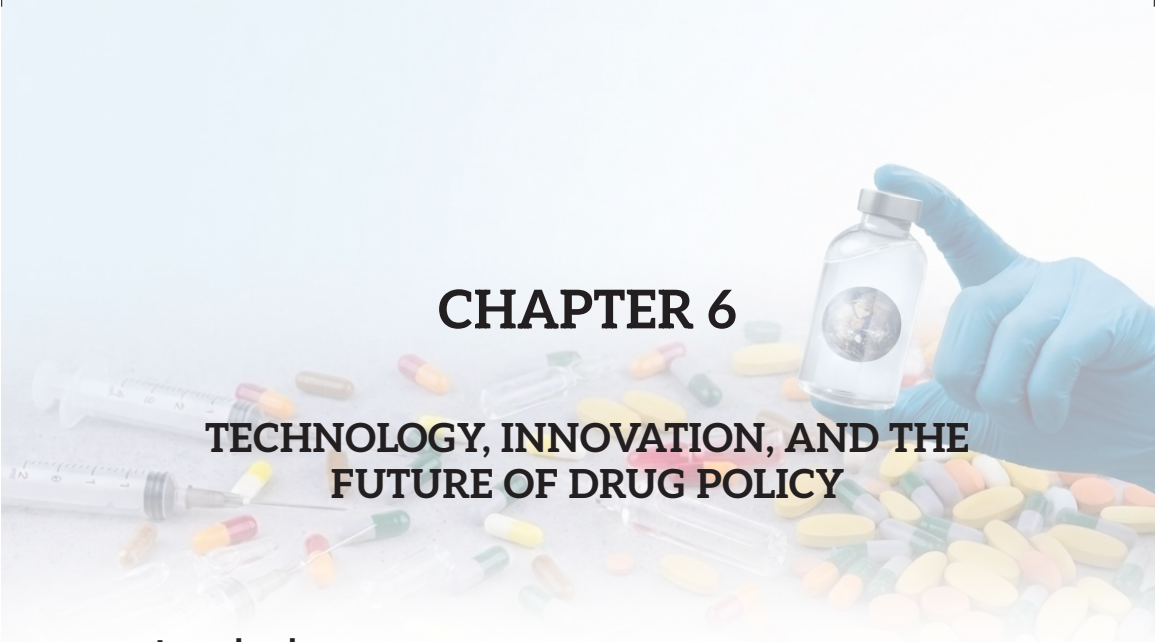
CHAPTER 5

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GLOBAL DRUG CONTROL EFFORTS

Introduction

The regulation of psychoactive substances represents one of the most complex domains of international governance, requiring sustained and multifaceted cooperation across legal, public health, and law enforcement sectors. As global drug markets continue to diversify through technological advancements, the emergence of novel psychoactive substances, and evolving socio-political dynamics, the imperative for coordinated international responses has become increasingly pronounced. Central to these efforts are international organizations whose mandates, strategies, and institutional mechanisms collectively shape the global drug control regime.

This chapter examines the roles and contributions of three principal international organizations, United Nations (UN), World Health Organization (WHO), and International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) within the broader architecture of global drug control. The UN plays a foundational role in establishing normative frameworks and advancing human rights-based approaches to drug policy. WHO provides critical leadership in the development of regulatory standards, the promotion of pharmacovigilance, and the rational use of medicines. Interpol facilitates operational coordination,



CHAPTER 6

TECHNOLOGY, INNOVATION, AND THE FUTURE OF DRUG POLICY

Introduction

Contemporary drug policy is situated at a critical juncture, where accelerating technological innovation and evolving socio-political paradigms are reshaping traditional approaches to substance use, enforcement, and rehabilitation. Historically dominated by punitive models prioritizing criminalization and interdiction, drug control strategies are increasingly confronted by the limitations of these frameworks in addressing the complex, dynamic realities of the modern drug landscape. The advent of advanced technologies including artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and decentralized digital infrastructures—has profoundly altered the operational environment for enforcement agencies, policymakers, and public health practitioners, necessitating a reexamination of conventional methodologies and objectives.

Technological advances now offer law enforcement unprecedented capabilities for surveillance, predictive analysis, and operational efficiency. AI-powered systems enhance pattern recognition and decision-making processes, enabling the proactive identification of trafficking networks and emerging threats. Big data analytics facilitate the integration and interpretation of vast, heterogeneous datasets, supporting

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ISBN 978-629-490-314-2



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