

Amped in Ankara: Drug trade and drug policy in Turkey from the 1950s through today

Mahmut Cengiz
George Mason University

Improving Global Drug Policy: Comparative Perspectives Beyond UNGASS 2016

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings

- Drug trafficking in Turkey is extensive and has persisted for decades. A variety of drugs, including heroin, cocaine, synthetic cannabis (bonsai), methamphetamine, and captagon (a type of amphetamine), are seized in considerable amounts there each year.
- Turkey is mostly a transshipment and destination country. Domestic drug production is limited to cannabis, which is produced mainly for domestic consumption, and small amounts of captagon. An effective poppy cultivation licensing scheme in the 1970s ended illegal poppy cultivation and the diversion of opiates into the illegal trade.
- Since the 1970s, Turkish drug trafficking groups have grown in terms of their power, global reach, and market control. They are also among Europe's most powerful organized crime groups when it comes to heroin trafficking. Moreover, other international drug trafficking groups also operate in Turkey.
- The civil wars in Iraq and Syria have reshaped drug smuggling routes in the Middle East. Syrian drug traffickers now play a significant role in Turkey's illegal drug trade.
- The illegal drug trade in Turkey is a complex and multidimensional issue that poses public safety, national security, and public health threats and risks. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is strongly involved in drug trafficking and closely connected to terrorism in the region. Meanwhile, Turkish drug trafficking groups have also become involved in human smuggling, cigarette smuggling, and antiquities trafficking.
- Turkey's drug policy underemphasizes treatment, prevention, and harm reduction approaches, while overemphasizing drug seizures. Tens of thousands of people have been charged with drug trafficking for possession and sale of cannabis.

Policy Recommendations

- To improve its drug policies, Turkey should take a more balanced, evidence-based, comprehensive, and integrated approach. It should focus on and expand resources for reducing both demand and harm.
- Turkey should strengthen the capacity and independence of law enforcement and the judiciary through better laws, investigative procedures, and bolstered capacities.
- The government should improve anti-money laundering and anti-corruption capacities, regional counternarcotics cooperation, border security, and the vetting of migrants and refugees in Turkey for connections to terrorism and organized crime.

Introduction

For decades, Turkey has grappled with serious challenges related to the illicit trade and use of drugs. While drug cultivation has subsided since the 1970s, a variety of drugs are trafficked into and through Turkey each year. Although in recent years substantial amounts of illegal drugs have been seized, the number of drug traffickers and drug trafficking groups operating in Turkey appears to be increasing. Many of these drug trafficking networks have connections to Turkish drug trafficking groups that are operating in Europe. Sometimes they are part of these larger networks, and at other times they cooperate with them, for instance by helping to recruit operatives for their European operations. In fact, Turkish drug trafficking networks currently appear to dominate Europe's heroin market.¹ Foreign traffickers also operate in Turkey, and smugglers from a considerable number of countries have been arrested in Turkey in recent years. The illegal drug trade in Turkey thus has a distinctly transnational character.

This transnational character is hardly surprising, given the proximity of Turkey to key demand markets in Europe and the Middle East as well as its geographical location as a land bridge from supply countries, such as Afghanistan, to these markets. Turkey is thus a key vector of the smuggling route that carries Afghan heroin to the West through the Balkans. Moreover, Turkey's proximity to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria intensifies and shapes the drug trade in the country. Large amounts of Afghan heroin now flow into Turkey from Iraq and Syria, with drug traffickers having diversified their routes beyond Iran.

Beyond criminality and corruption, drug trafficking in Turkey is also a matter of national security. The drug trade has been a key source of terrorism financing in Turkey—the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), for example, is partly funded through drug trafficking. And drug trafficking networks in Turkey have diversified into and facilitated other forms of smuggling and illicit economies in Turkey, including the smuggling of Syrians to Western countries.

¹ Mahmut Cengiz, *Turkish Organized Crime: From Local to Global* (Saarbrücken: VDM Publishing, 2011), 66.

Equally troubling, drug consumption is also on the rise in Turkey, with a corresponding increase in the number of addicts. The drugs most frequently consumed are cannabis and bonsai (a synthetic form of cannabis), but heroin use is also rising. Despite inadequate data, there is a widespread popular sense in Turkey, shared by Turkish law enforcement agencies, that drug use is reaching alarming levels. Turkish media feeds this sense of drug policy urgency, for example, by reporting that the entry-age into drug use is increasingly lower. According to estimates by Türkiye Uyusturucu ve Uyusturucu Bagimlilik Izleme Merkezi (the TUBİM—Turkish Monitoring Center for Drugs and Drug Addiction) in 2014, the number of high-risk users was 100,621.² However, the Turkish government has paid inadequate attention to drug use prevention and treatment, both of which are vastly underfunded and underdeveloped. Harm reduction policies and even basic research and analysis have been lacking. Overall, Turkish drug policies remain mostly ineffective in curbing and appropriately responding to drug use, preventing drug trafficking in Turkey, and mitigating the threats it poses.

Drug trends: Production, trafficking, and use

Turkey primarily acts as a drug transit country.³ Production of illicit drugs has declined substantially over several decades compared to the period before the 1970s.⁴ Only small amounts of illicit drugs are produced in Turkey. Out of the almost 99,000 drug-related cases that the Turkish police reported in 2014, 82 percent were related to drug possession with the intent to use or to retail, 14 percent to the trafficking or the production of drugs, and 4 percent to the supervision of drugs.⁵ Drug-production-related cases

² KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Drug Report*, 17.

³ U.S. Department of State, *2015 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Turkey* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State, 2015), 302. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/239560.pdf>.

⁴ Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey. He interviewed 27 law enforcement officials and eight scholars between June and August 2016. The theoretical framework in obtaining this data is based on a qualitative technique, which primarily focuses on open-ended and ethnographic topical interviews. Respondents are experts on drug trafficking and drug policies. The law enforcement officials interviewed previously worked in Turkish cities that border Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

⁵ Department of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime, *2014 Turkish*

constituted the smallest proportion of all drug cases, with almost 65 percent of these cases being cannabis-related.⁶ It should be noted that this paper cites the 2014 Report of the Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime Department (Kacakçılık ve Organize Suçlarla Mücadele Daire Başkanlığı [KOM]) because the 2015 report has not been released.

Production

Drug production in Turkey is mostly confined to cannabis cultivation for domestic use. While cannabis cultivation exists throughout the country,⁷ it is most prevalent in the southeastern regions, where the PKK focuses its cultivation,⁸ further elaborated below in the section on the threats and harms posed by the drug trade and drug policies.⁹ Until recently, cannabis cultivation was an offense punishable by one to seven years of imprisonment, but in 2014, the penalty was increased to four to 12 years.¹⁰ In addition to cannabis, small amounts of captagon (a type of amphetamine) are also produced in Turkey.¹¹

Prior to the 1980s, significant illegal cultivation of poppy also existed in Turkey, which was effectively addressed through a licensing scheme, described below in the section on the evolution of Turkish drug policies.¹²

Trafficking

Turkey acts as a key transshipment country for the international drug trade.¹³ Drug trafficking in and through Turkey dates back to before the 1960s.¹⁴ During the 1970s, Iranian

drug traffickers started using Turkish routes to bring Afghan heroin into Western Europe. After gaining experience and developing their own smuggling skills through cooperation with Iranian drug traffickers, Turkish smugglers increasingly took over the so-called Balkans Route and became some of its most active players. Eventually, the growing volume of opiates smuggled from Afghanistan through Turkey gave rise to expanded opiate use in Turkey itself.¹⁵

Today, at least a third of Afghan heroin is trafficked along the Balkans Route through Turkey. The eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey are most frequently used as entry points for drugs into the country. Unsurprisingly, yearly heroin seizures in Turkey are highly correlated with levels of Afghan opium production.¹⁶

The reach and market share of Turkish drug trafficking groups, especially those involved in Europe's heroin market, appear to be increasing. Turkish law enforcement agencies assess that a substantial portion of the European heroin market is now run by Turkish organized crime groups, composed of Turkish immigrants to Europe.¹⁷ Many of these criminal networks were formed by the Turkish diaspora in the 1980s, while some date as far back as the 1960s.¹⁸ These criminal groups were uniquely positioned to connect Turkey and the Middle East to drug consumption markets in Europe. In the late 1990s, several Turkish criminal groups based in Europe severed their links to criminal groups based in Turkey and began to operate independently, often organized in loosely connected cells.¹⁹

Many have diversified their portfolios and connections to the global drug trade since. Turkish drug smuggling networks have grown to supply heroin not only to European countries such as Great Britain, Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands, but also across the Atlantic Ocean to

Drug Report (Ankara: KOM Daire Başkanlığı, 2014), 20.

6 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime* (Ankara: KOM Daire Başkanlığı, 2014), 8.

7 *Ibid.*, 10.

8 Mahmut Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği ve Terörün Finansmanı* (Ankara: Seçkin Yayınevi 2015), 174.

9 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

10 Cevdet Erdol, "Uyuşturucu cezaları ne kadar oldu?," *Milat Gazetesi*, August 29, 2014, <http://www.milatgazetesi.com/uyusturucu-cezaları-ne-kadar-oldu-makale-60613>.

11 "Kayseri'de film gibi captagon operasyonu," *Hurriyet*, August 14, 2013, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/kayseride-film-gibi-captagon-operasyonu-38488798>.

12 Kyle Evered, "Poppies Are Democracy: A Critical Geopolitics of Opium Eradication and Reintroduction In Turkey," *Geographical Review* 101, no. 3 (July 2011): 299-315.

13 Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up Counterinsurgency and the War on Drugs* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 2.

14 Philip Robins, *Middle East Drugs Bazaar* (New York: Oxford

University Press, 2016), 160.

15 Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 136.

16 Behsat Ekici and Adem Coban, "Afghan Heroin and Turkey: Ramifications of an International Security Threat," *Turkish Studies* 15, no. 2 (June 2014): 341-64.

17 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

18 Cengiz, *Turkish Organized Crime*, 50, 54-55.

19 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

Canada.²⁰ In a criminal case recorded in the Netherlands in 2009, a Turkish drug trafficking group was identified as trading heroin and cocaine directly with South American groups.²¹

Conversely, many international drug traffickers now also operate in Turkey. In 2010, traffickers from 47 countries were arrested in Turkey.²² For example, Iranian traffickers have been charged with delivering and distributing metamphetamines in Turkey,²³ while Nigerian traffickers have been arrested for marketing cocaine.²⁴

Beyond Turkey's location along the Balkans Route, two additional factors explain the intensification and diversification of drug trafficking to and through Turkey. First, the growth of the Turkish economy and increasing levels of disposable income in the country since the 1990s have presented Turkish and international drug traffickers with opportunities to establish new markets for illegal drugs. Second, violent conflicts in Syria and Iraq over the past 15 years have reshaped drug smuggling routes in the Middle East.²⁵ As both countries lost the ability to police their territories and borders, drug traffickers have come to use Iraq and Syria as alternative routes for smuggling heroin and other drugs, such as captagon.²⁶ This has resulted in a partial reduction of drug flows through Iran, and has further enhanced the comparative advantage and centrality of Turkey, which borders all three countries and has strong geographic and economic ties to European markets.²⁷

20 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 3 and 5.

21 Cengiz, *Turkish Organized Crime*, 67.

22 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2010 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime* (Ankara: KOM Daire Başkanlığı, 2010), 40-42.

23 Behsat Ekici and Salim Ozbay, "Iranian Methamphetamine and Turkey: An Emerging Transnational Threat," *Trends in Organized Crime* 16, no. 3 (September 2013): 286-305.

24 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2010 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 41; Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 145.

25 Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 106.

26 For instance, with drugs having entered Turkey from Iraq, Turkish police seized 333 kilograms of heroin in 2012 and 266 kilograms of heroin in 2013. See Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 106; KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2012 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime* (Ankara: KOM Daire Başkanlığı, 2012), 30; and KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2013 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime* (Ankara: KOM Daire Başkanlığı, 2013): 6.

27 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

In recent years, Turkish law enforcement agencies ramped up their efforts to arrest drug dealers and traffickers.²⁸ Of the 60,000 individuals named as drug trafficking suspects by Turkish law enforcement agencies in 2014, 65 percent were low-level cannabis traders.²⁹ Only a small number belonged to transnational drug trafficking organizations. Between 2008 and 2013, only 718 foreign drug smugglers and almost 164,000 Turkish smugglers and dealers were arrested in Turkey on cannabis smuggling charges.³⁰

Beyond cannabis, heroin is, predictably, the most frequently seized illegal drug in Turkey. In addition to being smuggled onward to Europe and the Middle East, it is also used in Turkey. In 2014, Turkish law enforcement conducted 4,435 operations against heroin traffickers and seized almost 10 tons of heroin.³¹ Despite intense law enforcement interdiction efforts, heroin continues to flow into and through Turkey in large volumes. Heroin traffickers have demonstrated great adaptivity, using alternative land routes as well as sea routes through the Black Sea. Turkish officials discovered at least 18 destinations for Afghan heroin exiting Turkey in 2014.³²

While certainly not as prevalent as heroin trafficking, cocaine smuggling has also increased in Turkey in recent years, with about 400 kilograms of cocaine seized in 2014.³³ Originating in Ecuador, Brazil, Bolivia, and Colombia, and traversing through Southern and Western Africa, cocaine is smuggled into Turkey by couriers or containers via at least 26 different routes.³⁴ Nigerian traffickers are some of the key actors involved in cocaine smuggling into Turkey, 54 of whom were arrested in Turkey in 2014, according to Turkish law enforcement statistics.³⁵

28 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 28.

29 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 8 and 28.

30 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2013 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 11.

31 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 4-5.

32 Ekici and Coban, "Afghan Heroin and Turkey," 17-19.

33 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 12.

34 *Ibid.*, 13.

35 *Ibid.*, 13.

Bonsai, ecstasy, methamphetamine, and captagon are also seized in Turkey. While a substantial amount of ecstasy seized in 2014 originated in Belgium and the Netherlands,³⁶ traffickers have also been smuggling it to Turkey through Syria, Armenia, and Iran.³⁷

Methamphetamine shipments appear to be entering Turkey mostly from Iran, by way of planes or trucks. In 2014, 21 out of 24 arrested foreign methamphetamine traffickers were Iranian.³⁸ Increased meth seizures in recent years suggest not only increased methamphetamine smuggling into Turkey, but also greater use of the drug within Turkey itself.³⁹

Bonsai, which is increasingly being used within Turkey, appears to be smuggled into Turkey by different trafficking networks than those involved in heroin and cocaine smuggling, mostly being supplied by Turkish drug traffickers connected to other such groups in the United States, Portugal, the United Kingdom, Hungary, and Spain.⁴⁰

Captagon trafficking to Turkey has undergone a dramatic shift in recent decades. In the 1990s, Eastern European countries, particularly Bulgaria, supplied the drug to Turkey. However, illegal captagon manufacturing and smuggling relocated to Syria after the onset of the country's civil war in 2011.⁴¹ In 2014, 73 percent of the captagon seizures made in Turkey took place in southern Turkish cities neighboring Syria. For example, the 4.2 million captagon pills that were seized in the Turkish city of Hatay in 2013 were manufactured in Syria and were destined for the Gulf states.⁴² Some 80 percent of the captagon traffickers now operating in Turkey are believed to be Syrian.⁴³ But captagon laboratory busts and seizures of precursor materials in Turkey indicate that Turkish drug trafficking networks still have the capacity to manu-

facture captagon from within the country. In 2013, for example, Turkish police officers seized 500 kilograms of captagon precursor agents in a laboratory in Kayseri, a city in central Anatolia.⁴⁴

Use

Like drug smuggling, drug use has also steadily risen in Turkey over the past two decades. According to 2011 estimates by TUBIM, lifetime drug users constituted 2.7 percent of Turkey's residents aged between 15 and 65 years old, which amounts to a total of almost 1 million drug users.⁴⁵ In 2013, the European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs conducted a survey of drug use in Turkey by sampling 6,149 young people and found a lifetime use prevalence of 4 percent for cannabis, 2 percent for ecstasy, 2 percent for heroin, and 2 percent for cocaine.⁴⁶

As the above statistics—as well as seizures and arrests—indicate, cannabis appears to be the most commonly consumed drug in Turkey.⁴⁷ Turkish law enforcement officials believe that cannabis use is increasing and that the number of users of heroin and synthetic drugs, such as methamphetamine and bonsai, are also growing.⁴⁸ They consider cannabis to be a gateway drug to harder substances,⁴⁹ though many drug policy experts in the United States and Western Europe dispute such claims.⁵⁰

44 "Kayseri'de Captagon Operasyonu," *NTV*, August 14, 2013, <http://arsiv.ntv.com.tr/news/228857.asp>.

45 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2012 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 30; Behsat Ekici, "International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey," *Journal of Politics and Law* 7, no. 2 (May 2014): 113-126.

46 "Turkey Country Overview," European Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/countries/turkey>.

47 "There is no reliable information about the actual numbers of cannabis users in Turkey. The high number of people arrested in Turkey on charges of cannabis possession, dealing, and trafficking is one indicator of the apparently high prevalence of cannabis use. Between 2013 and 2014, the total number of people charged with cannabis dealing in Turkey was 79,000." See KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 9.

48 "Mesele yalnızca narkotik değil," *Radikal*, July 16, 2013, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/mesele-yalnizca-narkotik-degil-1141889/>.

49 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016. Also, this approach is confirmed by the findings of a focus group study with 15 heroin addicts conducted by the author in Gaziantep city, Turkey in April 2015.

50 Robert MacCoun and Peter Reuter, *Drug War Heresies: Learning*

36 *Ibid.*, 14.

37 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2013 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 8.

38 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 41.

39 *Ibid.*, 19.

40 *Ibid.*, 15.

41 *Ibid.*, 18.

42 *Ibid.*, 18.

43 *Ibid.*, 18.

However, existing data on Turkish drug use and trends is hardly adequate. Time series data in particular is lacking. Relying on inconsistent data occasionally provided by drug rehabilitation centers does not allow for dependable estimates on actual drug use. Many drug addicts in Turkey refrain from applying for treatment or to rehabilitation centers because they fear social stigma. Being known as a drug user may subject the individual to challenges in getting employment, being ostracized, or possibly law enforcement prosecution.⁵¹

Despite the insufficient data, there is a widespread belief among Turkish law enforcement officials that Turkey is experiencing a sharp increase in drug consumption. They attribute this rise to several causes: Turkey's geographic location along key drug smuggling routes, and thus the volume of drugs flowing into and through Turkey; the ease of cannabis cultivation; the growth in disposable income among the Turkish population, coinciding with persistent and deep-seated poverty in areas of cannabis cultivation; the lack of drug inspections at Turkish schools; media coverage of Turkish celebrities who are known drug users; and inadequate treatment and prevention approaches and capacities.⁵²

Cheap access to illegal drugs is easy in Turkey, especially in metropolitan areas. This not only facilitates drug use generally, but is believed by Turkish law enforcement officials to effect a lower average age for first time drug use in Turkey.⁵³ A Turkish media report suggested that even some elementary school children are now beginning to use drugs, feeding a sense of a drug use crisis.⁵⁴

As found in other parts of the world, drug use in Turkey is heavily concentrated within schools, particu-

larly high schools, colleges, and universities. A lack of drug inspections at schools exacerbates drug availability among youth. School guidance counselors are unable to prevent drug dealing within schools or provide adequate assistance to student users. School principals and other school staff are reluctant to provide information on drug dealers to law enforcement authorities because they fear that dealers, who are believed to be operating within larger drug smuggling networks, will retaliate against them.⁵⁵

For some drug users, media portrayals of drug use appear to be a factor to which they attribute to their own use. Some interviewed heroin addicts have explicitly stated that several popular youth-oriented TV shows that presented drugs as an alternative way of finding relief motivated them to experiment with drugs.⁵⁶ Another significant factor in the prevalence of drug use among youth is the celebrity effect. In recent years, the Istanbul Police Department has arrested several celebrities on drug use charges,⁵⁷ including movie and pop music stars widely looked up to by Turkish youth.⁵⁸

Threats and harms generated by the drug trade in Turkey

Drug trafficking in Turkey generates multiple threats to the state and society. First, drug trafficking in Turkey is intertwined with other forms of criminality. Recent Turkish law enforcement investigations show that drug trafficking groups have applied their smuggling know-how to other illegal trades and diversified their criminal enterprise portfolios. Illegal activities with high profits but reduced risk of arrest and lesser penalties are particularly attractive areas for expansion.

From Other Vices, Times, and Places (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

51 Ekici, "International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey," 118.

52 Author's interview with law enforcement officials, Istanbul, Turkey, June and August 2016.

53 Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 137.

54 "2015 Uluslararası uyuşturucu kullanımı ve kaçakçılığı ile mücadele," *Milliyet*, June 27, 2016, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/2015-uluslararasi-uyusturucu-pembnar-detay-genelsaglik-2079616>.

55 Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 137-139.

56 Author's focus group study with addicts, Gaziantep City, Turkey, April 2, 2015.

57 "One of them was Tarkan, the pop singer, who was detained with charges of possessing some amount of hashish in Istanbul." See Robins, *Middle East Drugs Bazaar*, 159.

58 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

For example, after a smaller opium harvest in Afghanistan in 2011, some Turkish heroin smugglers shifted to smuggling cigarettes. At the time, cigarette smuggling fetched even higher profits than opiate trafficking, while prison term penalties for cigarette smuggling were much lower than those for heroin smuggling. Massive Turkish police crackdowns on heroin trafficking networks in 2012, resulting in the arrests of thousands of traders and dealers and producing some of the world's largest heroin seizures at the time, also crucially motivated their decision to switch to less risky smuggling ventures.⁵⁹ Between 2010 and 2012, 122 suspects previously convicted of trading 50 grams or more of heroin were arrested for cigarette smuggling.⁶⁰

Some Turkish drug smuggling and trafficking groups have also branched out into human smuggling. Along with other independent human smuggling networks that have emerged in Turkey in recent years, they transport East African, Central Asian, and Middle Eastern (particularly Syrian) migrants to Europe.⁶¹ Turkish drug traffickers have also become involved in the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist organization's trafficking of antiquities and oil. To traffic both, ISIS has used local Syrian smugglers with connections to Turkish counterparts, some of whom were previously convicted in Turkey of drug trafficking charges.⁶²

Furthermore, drug trafficking has played a critical role in the internationalization of Turkish organized crime, as detailed above. It allowed Turkish criminal groups to build robust and diverse connections to European and other global counterparts. Turkish organized crime groups are now considered to be key interlocutors for global organized crime networks involved in human smuggling, sex trafficking, cigarette smuggling, and illegal antiquities dealing.⁶³ Thus,

Turkish drug trafficking networks have adversely facilitated the development of additional forms of crime and illicit economies within Turkey.

Second, drug trafficking also poses a security threat to Turkey. The country has fought terrorist groups for several decades, some of which are still active today. These groups have been funded by various revenue streams, including human smuggling, extortion, and cigarette smuggling, but drug trafficking constitutes a large share of their income. In particular, the PKK is known to be widely involved in drug smuggling.⁶⁴ The PKK's involvement in drug trafficking dates back to the 1980s, when traffickers smuggling drugs from Iran through Turkey were required to pay a tax to the PKK, which controlled both sides of the Turkey-Iran border.⁶⁵ Drug traffickers arrested in Turkey in 2012 stated that it was impossible to cross the border without paying the PKK. Only traffickers connected to the terrorist organization would be allowed to cross without a payment.⁶⁶

In addition to receiving taxes from drug traffickers, the PKK controls cannabis fields in the southeast region of Turkey. In rural areas near the city of Diyarbakir, where the PKK presence is strong, cannabis cultivation mushroomed after a government truce with the PKK was signed in 1999. Even after the truce collapsed in 2004, cannabis cultivation did not subside. At least 80 villages around Diyarbakir now grow cannabis and derive their principal income from drug cultivation. In fact, cannabis cultivation has only flourished in the parts of southeastern Turkey where there is a strong PKK presence. As was the case with drug traffickers smuggling drugs into Turkey from abroad, the PKK demands that cannabis farmers pay a tax to the group, without which the farmers will not be allowed to cultivate the crop.⁶⁷

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Mahmut Cengiz, *Orta Dogu'da Kuresel Tehditler* (Ankara: Adalet Yayınevi, 2016): 96.

⁶¹ Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016. Also see Cengiz, *Orta Dogu'da Kuresel Tehditler*, 97 and 114.

⁶² Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

⁶³ Author's focus group study with heroin addicts, Gaziantep City, Turkey, April 2, 2015.

⁶⁴ KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2013 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 4; and Michele Steinberg, "PKK Terrorists Named Drug Kingpins; Narcos Move Against Narcoterrorism," *Executive Intelligence Review* 35, no. 30 (August 1, 2008): 48-52.

⁶⁵ Cengiz, *Türkiyede Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 173-174.

⁶⁶ KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2013 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 83.

⁶⁷ Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

The Turkish police have conducted a series of operations in recent years to suppress this cannabis cultivation. When the operations began in Diyarbakir city in 2011, farmers connected to the PKK strongly protested.⁶⁸ The PKK encouraged farmers to cultivate more cannabis, and provided them with weapons to counter law enforcement raids.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the police seized around 10 tons of cannabis that year,⁷⁰ and another 13 tons in Diyarbakir in 2012.⁷¹ Seizures within the city peaked in 2013, when 61 tons of cannabis were confiscated by the police.⁷² Cannabis cultivation still persists within the area today.

Furthermore, Turkish law enforcement authorities believe that the PKK is increasingly playing a direct role in drug trafficking in Turkey and that the terrorist organization is active in the distribution of drugs in Europe.⁷³ Between 1984 and 2013, Turkish police have discovered 377 cases of PKK-related trafficking. In these cases, more than 1,200 traffickers were arrested, and multiple kinds of narcotics—including heroin, cannabis, opium gum, cocaine, and synthetic drugs—were seized.⁷⁴

During the 1990s, the PKK is believed to have derived some \$300 million annually from the drug trade.⁷⁵ Many Turkish law enforcement and intelligence officials assess that the group's drug income has subsequently increased, particularly after 2001. Some believe that the PKK today obtains \$500 million a year from the cultivation and smuggling of cannabis alone.⁷⁶ Some drug policy experts, however, question those numbers, as that would suggest that the PKK obtains considerably more

money from the cannabis trade than the Taliban does from its participation in poppy cultivation and heroin trafficking in Afghanistan.⁷⁷ Thus, such a claim is highly suspect.

Third, drug use and addiction generates public health costs in the forms of drug-related deaths (DRD) and the spread of communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS. In 2013, the reported number of direct DRDs was 232, up from 162 in 2012.⁷⁸ However, the actual number of DRDs is likely much higher, since hospitals rarely report DRDs, even in response to questionnaires. Also, official statistics do not reliably account for the number of traffic and workplace accident deaths that occur under the influence of drugs.⁷⁹ The number of indirect DRDs was 295 in 2014, with accident and homicide deaths accounting for many of these indirect DRDs.⁸⁰

Drug use has also been connected to a rise in suicide cases in Turkey, with cannabis and ecstasy the most frequently used drugs among those who committed suicide. However, those correlations do not reveal the direction of the causal relationship and can reflect many endogenous effects and spurious correlations. Turkish law enforcement officials, however, believe that ecstasy use makes people more vulnerable to suicidal tendencies.⁸¹

According to the 2014 Turkish Drug Report, out of 7,528 HIV cases reported between 1985 and 2013, 174 cases were linked to intravenous drug use,⁸² though these numbers may be an underestimate. Needle sharing among drug users is a key cause for the spread of HIV/AIDS. Drug use also facilitates the spread of the Hepatitis B (HBV) and Hepatitis C (HCV) viruses. In

68 “Mesele yalnızca narkotik değil,” *Radikal*, July 16, 2013, <http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/mesele-yalnizca-narkotik-degil-1141889/>.

69 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

70 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2011 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 28.

71 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2012 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 34.

72 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2013 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 12.

73 Cengiz, *Turkish Organized Crime*, 76-79; and KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2013 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 27.

74 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2013 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 27.

75 Mark Galeotti, “Turkish Organized Crime: Where State, Crime, and Rebellion Conspire,” *Transnational Organized Crime* 4, no. 1 (1998): 25-42.

76 Cengiz, *Türkiye’de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 174.

77 The annual profits that the Taliban extracted from poppy cultivation in 2012 was \$100 million. See Michelle Nichols, “Taliban Raked \$400 million from diverse sources: U.N.,” *Reuters*, January 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-un-taliban-idUSBRE88A13Y20120911>; and Vanda Felbab-Brown, *Aspiration and Ambivalence: Strategies and Realities of Counterinsurgency and State Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013).

78 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Drug Report*, 70.

79 Ekici, “International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey,” 108.

80 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Drug Report*, 77.

81 *Ibid.*, 86.

82 *Ibid.*, 66.

Turkey, 20 HBV and 1,206 HCV cases were reported among drug users in 2013.⁸³

Fourth, drug trafficking—as well as the smuggling of other contraband and people—also increases the amount of illicit money entering the Turkish economy. Behsat Ekici, a narcotics analyst who for many years worked for the Turkish National Police, estimated that the total retail value of drugs seized in Turkey in 2012 was approximately \$1.1 billion for heroin, \$1.2 billion for cannabis, \$44 million for cocaine, and \$110 million for amphetamine-type stimulants.⁸⁴ Given the significant increase in drugs seized in 2013, the retail value of the Turkish drug market in 2013 could be considerably higher. In 2014, Ekici estimated drug revenue in Turkey to amount to \$15 billion.⁸⁵

Drug money affects the Turkish economy in multiple complex ways. Money that originates in the drug trade is often not taxed, representing revenue losses to the state.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, since drug money is laundered through the legal economy in Turkey, some drug revenues are ultimately taxed. Money laundering seems to take place predominantly through the retail and tourism sectors. Many Turkish drug traffickers operating in Europe transfer money to Turkey in cash and buy hotels and apartments in tourist areas, such as Antalya.⁸⁷

As noted by Vanda Felbab-Brown, a scholar of illegal markets, a labor-intensive illicit economy often generates beneficial microeconomic effects for poor and marginalized populations, even as it can also produce detrimental macroeconomic effects.⁸⁸ That is indeed the case in Turkey. Drug smuggling brings microeconomic benefits, employment, and revenue to some of Turkey's least developed eastern and southeastern regions. For example, the unemployment rate in 2013 in cities located within the southeastern region was approximately twice the rate

of that in Istanbul city.⁸⁹ The drug trade not only provides employment opportunities that are otherwise lacking, it has also given rise to a new wealthy, if small, elite. Thus, in addition to providing (illegal) socio-economic opportunities to local people, it also exacerbates local inequality.⁹⁰ Such complex economic effects of the drug trade are also evident in Iranian and Iraqi cities near the border with Turkey. For decades, these cities have served as key drug transshipment hubs. In addition to drugs, smuggling of various other commodities, including legal products such as tea and sugar, is also prevalent in these towns.⁹¹ Like on the Turkish side, the smuggling economy provides employment for many people left out of the legal economy. Border smuggling, including of drugs, has significantly shaped the economic and social patterns among local residents.⁹² It should be noted that Turkish laissez-faire policies in border regions paved the way for a flourishing of trafficking and smuggling cases. Governments have not enforced prohibitive rules against the illicit economy as needed.⁹³

Finally, public expenditures devoted to suppressing drug trafficking represent a significant budgetary burden. Between 2012 and 2013, Turkey's public expenses in combating drugs grew almost 50 percent to approximately \$250 million.⁹⁴ This includes resources for law enforcement agencies, courts, correctional facilities, treatment and hospital services, and resources (however meager) for research and analysis.⁹⁵

The evolution of drug policies in Turkey since the 1950s

Drug trafficking in Turkey has been a major problem for decades, but the country's efforts to fight the

83 *Ibid.*, 67 and 68.

84 Behsat Ekici, "African Transnational Threat to Turkey," *African Security Review* 22, no. 3 (July 2013a), 123-144.

85 Ekici, "International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey," 119.

86 Ekici, "International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey," 119.

87 Cengiz, *Türkiyede Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 224.

88 Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up Counterinsurgency*, 6, 21, and 27.

89 "İl Bazında Temel İsgucu Göstergeleri," TUIK, <http://www.tuik.gov.tr/UstMenu.do?metod=temelist>. According to this index, where the unemployment rate was 11.2 percent in Istanbul city in 2013, it was 18.7 percent in Diyarbakir city, 20.6 percent in Mardin, 23.4 percent in Batman, and 20.5 percent in Siirt city located in the southeastern region of Turkey.

90 Ekici, "International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey," 120.

91 Robins, *Middle East Drugs Bazaar*, 161.

92 Cengiz, *Türkiyede Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 108.

93 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

94 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Drug Report*, 35.

95 *Ibid.*, 35.

drug trade have only been partially successful. In contrast to suppressing drug smuggling, the country has been far more effective in significantly reducing the production of illicit crops, specifically opium poppy. Still, Turkish drug policy overall is ineffective, sporadic, and not comprehensive.⁹⁶ Potential government responses include eradication, interdiction, laissez-faire, alternative livelihoods, partial or full licensing, demand reduction, decriminalization, and legalization.⁹⁷ Thus far, Turkish governments mainly have adopted the policies of licensing of production, laissez-faire, demand reduction, and interdiction.⁹⁸

As prefaced above, the cultivation of opium poppy has a long history in Turkey. The country began to legally export opium in the 1950s, and it rapidly became the country's primary export during that period. Turkey's status as a legal exporter was codified by the United Nations (U.N.) Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs in 1961.⁹⁹ However, in the 1960s, the United States and several European countries, including Germany, France, Spain, and the Netherlands, put intense pressure on Turkey to end the illegal production taking place alongside production of legal opiates for export, and to prevent the diversion of opiates into the illegal drug trade. According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), 150 tons of opium were harvested annually in Turkey in the early 1970s, with between 35 and 50 tons diverted to the illegal drug trade.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, Turkey was considered a source country for opium destined for the United States.¹⁰¹ Thus, under intense international pressure, in 1971 the Turkish government of Nihat Erim prohibited opium poppy cultivation. Immediately, however, the ban became highly contentious politically, and most political parties campaigned to end the ban, making the policy reversal their elections pledge. Indeed, in 1974, the new Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit revoked the ban

on opium cultivation immediately upon assuming office. Nonetheless, the international community, including the United States, remained opposed to the policy change.¹⁰² Indeed, Ecevit's repeal of the opium ban was cited as an additional factor contributing to the U.N. decision to impose an embargo on Turkey during the Cyprus crisis of 1974.¹⁰³

However, far more important for the ultimate elimination of illegal poppy cultivation in Turkey was the adoption of a far more effective licensing scheme to ensure that the cultivated poppy would only supply the legal medical trade and not be diverted to the illegal one. The licensing scheme was embedded in a set of international political agreements among Turkey, the U.N., and other countries, including, crucially, the United States, which specifically guaranteed a medical market for Turkey's opiates. Under the so-called 80-20 rule, the United States promised to import for its medical purposes at least 80 percent of morphine-containing opiates from the two traditional supply countries, Turkey and India.¹⁰⁴

The licensing scheme turned out to be highly successful and Turkey became a model for other countries of how to successfully implement such licensing approaches. Turkey's strong state presence and its effective territorial control were instrumental in achieving positive results and helped eliminate the illegal cultivation of poppy.¹⁰⁵ Moreover, Turkey's adoption of the so-called poppy straw method to harvest the opium poppy significantly reduced the chance that the poppy could be diverted into heroin production, and contributed to the success in Turkey.¹⁰⁶

96 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

97 Felbab-Brown, *Shooting Up Counterinsurgency*, 23.

98 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

99 Ryan Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 134.

100 Ugur Mumcu, *Papa-Mafya-Agca* (Istanbul: Ugur Mumcu Vakfi Yayinlari, 1994).

101 James Windle, "A very gradual suppression: A history of Turkish opium controls, 1933–1974," *European Journal of Criminology* 11, no. 2 (April 2014): 201.

102 Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey*, 201–202.

103 Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 44.

104 U.S. General Audit Office, "Drug Control: US Heroin Control Efforts in Southwest Asia and the Former Soviet Union. Briefing Report to the Chairman," *Briefing Report to the Chairman*, U.S. Senate. GAO/NSIAD-97-148BR. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997), 45, <http://www.gao.gov/archive/1997/ns97148b.pdf>.

105 Vanda Felbab-Brown, "Improving Supply Side Policies: Smarter Eradication, Interdiction, and Alternative Livelihoods and the Possibility of Licensing," *LSE Drug Reform Series*, May 2014. <https://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2014/05/07-improving-supply-side-policies-felbabbrown/improvingsupplysidepoliciesfelbabrown.pdf>.

106 David Mansfield, "An Analysis of Licit Opium Poppy Cultivation: India and Turkey," accessed November 17, 2016, 7, http://www.davidmansfield.org/policy_advice.php.

Thus, still today, both the United States and the International Narcotics Control Board characterize Turkey as a producer of poppy for the licit market with no visible diversion to the illicit market. Turkey's effectiveness in suppressing domestic opiate production is further demonstrated by the fact that in 2014 Turkish law enforcement discovered only one primitive heroin lab in the country, located in its southeast region.¹⁰⁷

Even after the licensing scheme successfully ended illegal poppy cultivation, Turkey remained a major drug transshipment and processing country for opiates, including heroin. Heroin laboratories, such as in the Van province, continued to be detected in the late 1970s. At that time, large amounts of opiates and heroin continued to be trafficked through Turkey from Iran and Afghanistan. Precursor agents, such as acetic anhydride, were smuggled into Turkey from Europe.¹⁰⁸

Persistent political instability throughout the 1980s and 1990s, characterized by military coups and rampant corruption, also affected Turkish drug policies. Weak Turkish governments during this time turned out to be unable and unmotivated to combat drug trafficking. Although during the 1980s and 1990s some politicians and bureaucrats were arrested for their purported links to drug trafficking, the political instability created an overall favorable context for drug trafficking, with a significant number of important government officials likely involved in the drug trade.¹⁰⁹ The notorious Turkish drug trafficker and illegal arms dealer, Behçet Cantürk, for example, commented in the 1980s that "large amounts of drugs cannot be trafficked into Turkey without the protection of the government."¹¹⁰

The political turmoil, weak governance capacity, and top-level corruption continued into the 1990s, with ineffective drug policies also persisting. In 1996, the so-called Susurluk Scandal, a car accident involving a

top police official, publicly confirmed the dark relations between the state and drug trafficking groups.¹¹¹ In the trunk of the crashed car belonging to a tribal leader, there were illegal drugs and weapons.¹¹² However, in the 2000s, the fight against drug trafficking gained momentum in the context of greater political stability and newly effective political leadership. The new government of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan not only significantly strengthened government and law enforcement capacities, but also sought to modernize anti-trafficking and anti-organized crime units in the process of joining the European Union. Turkey began to adopt more effective counternarcotics laws and Western-style counternarcotics models. Investments were made in the overall development and modernization of the Turkish police.¹¹³

These investments paid off. Police capacity grew robustly. Turkish law enforcement agencies began to seize large amounts of heroin and dismantle criminal organizations. But a significant disruption of this positive trajectory came as a result of two anti-corruption police investigations conducted in December 2013: First, on December 17, the sons of four Turkish cabinet ministers were indicted for taking bribes from an Iranian businessman who laundered Iranian money¹¹⁴ during economic sanctions imposed by the United States, U.N., and EU on the grounds that Iran refused to suspend its uranium enrichment program.¹¹⁵ Second on, December 25, another prosecutor investigated a group of high level politicians and bureaucrats, including the son of President Erdoğan, with charges of tender rigging and taking bribes.¹¹⁶

111 Gingeras, *Heroin, Organized Crime, and the Making of Modern Turkey*, 2.

112 Mark Galeotti, "Turkish Organized Crime: Where State, Crime, and Rebellion Conspire," 25-42.

113 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

114 Glen Johnson, "Turkey's politicians, gold dealer and the pop star," *The Telegraph*, December 29, 2013, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/10540423/Turkeys-politicians-gold-dealer-and-the-pop-star.html>.

115 United Nations Information Service, "Security Council Demands Iran Suspend Uranium Enrichment by 31 August, or Face Possible Economic, Diplomatic Sanctions," Press release, SC/8792, July 31, 2006, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2006/sc8792.doc.htm>.

116 "İşte Bilal'in ifade çağrısı," *Cumhuriyet*, December 26, 2013, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/turkiye/22987/iste_bilal_in_ifade_cagrisi_.html.

107 U.S. Department of State, *2015 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, 303.

108 Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 45.

109 *Ibid.*, 41-46.

110 *Ibid.*, 46.

The prosecutor indicted over 50 suspects, including the son of President Erdoğan. However, newly-assigned personnel after the December 17th operation did not obey the court decision and did not make arrests. Both cases suspiciously dropped.¹¹⁷ In what grew into a major graft scandal known as the December 17-25 Operations, Turkish police uncovered significant corruption among the very top levels of the Turkish government.¹¹⁸ The uncovered evidence was robust and included surveillance footage and records, as well as wiretap transcripts.

The response of the Erdoğan government was to gut the police's investigative capacity and undermine police and judicial independence. The extensive and determined efforts to neuter rule-of-law capacity and independence lasted for months and eviscerated the capacity of Turkish law enforcement agencies to fight against terrorist financiers, contraband smugglers, and drug traffickers.¹¹⁹ Even though enforcement operations in the graft scandal were undertaken only by the Istanbul Financial Crimes section, the government subsequently fired the entire staff of many other law enforcement agencies in Turkey, including the intelligence, anti-terrorism, and anti-corruption departments, as well as entire counternarcotics units throughout the country. Almost all of the personnel in these units were suspended, forced out of their jobs, or incarcerated with fabricated charges. The Erdoğan government also issued various restrictions on the investigative procedures of law enforcement and judicial authorities.¹²⁰

117 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

118 Tim Arango, "After an Indictment, Turks Give U.S. Prosecutor a Hero's Welcome," *New York Times*, March 26, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/world/europe/turkey-preet-bharara-reza-zarrab-indictment.html?_r=0.

119 In May 2016, the Southern District Court of New York filed a similar indictment against suspects of the Turkish December 17th operation—Reza Zarrab and two accomplices—for engaging in hundreds of millions of dollars worth of transactions on behalf of the government of Iran and other Iranian entities, which were barred by U.S. sanctions, to launder the proceeds of those illegal transactions and defraud several financial institutions by concealing the true nature of these transactions. See U.S. Attorney's Office, "Manhattan U.S. Attorney Announces Arrest of Turkish National For Conspiring To Evade U.S. Sanctions Against Iran, Money Laundering, And Bank Fraud," March 21, 2016, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/pr/manhattan-us-attorney-announces-arrest-turkish-national-conspiring-evade-us-sanctions>.

120 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and

Turkish law enforcement agencies have been profoundly traumatized and demoralized as a result of these purges. Institutional memory, experience, and many other capacities have been lost.¹²¹ This capacity loss is profound and far-reaching. Even elemental law enforcement statistics reflect the decline in law enforcement capacities: For example, in 2014, seizures of cannabis declined by 49.5 percent compared to 2013, while opium seizures declined by 4.3 percent, cocaine by 12.2 percent, captagon by 94.5 percent, ecstasy by 53.6 percent, and acetic anhydride by 98.1 percent.¹²² The Turkish graft scandal is an example of how political corruption harms the capacity of a country to combat the drug trade.

Drug policy in Turkey today

Formally, the Turkish National Police (TNP) Department of Fighting Against Drugs, the Gendarmes, and the Turkish Coast Guard are responsible for fighting against the supply side of drug trafficking. The Ministry of Health (MOH) is charged with managing the importation of substances for legitimate purposes, such as medical use. Along with other national actors, the MOH is also responsible for providing treatment to drug addicts and preventing drug use. Lastly, the Ministry of Finance is tasked with money laundering investigations.¹²³ These bodies, and Turkey more broadly, face several obstacles to developing a more effective policy against drug trafficking.

First, Turkish drug policy centers on large seizures, but neglects to conduct basic research and analysis on which to base interdiction, including seizures, and drug policy more broadly. For example, no research and analysis has been carried out to systematically estimate the size of the Turkish drug market and the extent of drug demand in Turkey.

Second, Turkish drug policy concentrates on the supply side and mostly ignores demand, even though de-

August 2016.

121 *Ibid.*

122 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 28.

123 U.S. Department of State, *2015 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, 302.

mand-side policy interventions are crucial. For example, no credible estimates of the number of drug users and addicts in Turkey have been developed. One reason for the reluctance of the Turkish government to develop better estimates of the number of drug users is its fear that evidence of extensive drug use would be seen as an indication of its policy failure.¹²⁴

Treatment of drug addiction thus remains insufficient and underprovided, with existing programs often ill-designed, even as greater numbers of addicts have sought out treatment.¹²⁵ In 2011, some 155,000 addicts applied for slots in the Alcohol and Substance Treatment Center (AMATEM) programs around the country, but only 2,117 were able to receive in-patient treatment.¹²⁶ The overwhelming majority of applications were rejected due to the lack of treatment facilities. Moreover, treatment centers are provided only in 15 of Turkey's 81 provinces, with waiting lists for their slots running for months and years. Nationwide, there are only 25 treatment centers, with only 35 beds for teenagers. The extent of provided treatment is thus vastly insufficient relative to the need and is below the norm in Western countries.¹²⁷ Furthermore, rehabilitation programs underperform and lack appropriate reintegration components. Relapse is very common. In 2013, 48.5 percent of drug users in treatment centers had previously received treatment.¹²⁸ Moreover, drug addicts receiving treatment in AMATEM centers have complained that the centers have been infiltrated by drug dealers.¹²⁹

Only a limited number of non-governmental organizations and religious organizations have contributed efforts to deal with drug use. Their activities have

centered mostly on organizing events and panels that aim to raise awareness about the harms of drug use. Furthermore, harm reduction policies, such as methadone maintenance and provision of clean needles, are almost entirely lacking in Turkey.¹³⁰

Third, Turkey struggles to track dirty money generated from drug-related crimes and confiscate criminal proceeds. Only a few money laundering investigations have been undertaken and completed. Law enforcement agencies tasked with tracking criminal proceeds and asset recovery—the Financial Crimes Investigation Board and the Proceeds of Crime Unit of the Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime Department (Kacakçılık ve Organize Suçlarla Mücadele Daire Başkanlığı [KOM])—employ cumbersome procedures requiring a lot of time to complete investigations and generate evidence. The Turkish Criminal Procedures Law enables law enforcement to use wiretapping, surveillance, informants, and undercover agents in drug investigations. Substances seized as part of an investigation must be sent to labs for analysis and when a court convicts a suspect, the investigation into criminal proceeds begins, all requiring significant time. The limited number of investigators working at both institutions are incapable of dealing sufficiently with the approximately 80,000 drug cases that occur per year.¹³¹ Moreover, the lack of political will to curb the flows of illicit money into the Turkish economy hampers effectiveness.¹³²

Fourth, the lack of Turkish policies to fight corruption is another obstacle to the development of more effective policies against organized crime, terrorism, and corruption, which are often intertwined, and according to Shelley, entangled in a three-body problem. Most countries tend to view this as a two-body problem, mostly ignoring corruption. However, it is clear that corruption is the enabler of crime and terrorism.¹³³ Thus, Turkey's inadequate anti-corruption

124 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

125 Ekici, "International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey," 118-119.

126 Ali Unlu and Ugur Evcin, "Sosyo-Ekolojik Model Bakış Açısıyla Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Madde Kullanım Problemi ve Önlemler," *Uyuşturucu Gerçeği* (Ankara: Atılım Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013), 20.

127 Ekici, "International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey," 119.

128 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 18.

129 Meltem Yılmaz, "Bağımlılık tedavisinde 'elektroşok' skandalı," *Cumhuriyet*, July 19, 2014, http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/saglik/96489/Bagimlilik_tedavisinde_elektrosok_skandal.html.

130 Author's research on the drug trade and policies in Turkey, June and August 2016.

131 Ekici, "International Drug Trafficking and National Security of Turkey," 121.

132 Cengiz, *Türkiye'de Organize Suç Gerçeği*, 224.

133 Louise Shelley, *Dirty Entanglements: Corruption, Crime, and Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 331, 334.

tion efforts facilitate drug trafficking. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, given the post-2013 purges of law enforcement agencies, Turkey lacks an independent and effective unit to fight bribery. Corruption remains extensive within the country and has worsened over time. For example, throughout much of the past decade, Turkey ranked in the 50s and lower 60s among the 168 countries listed in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, which measures countries' corruption, with the number one ranking being the least corrupt. In 2015, however, Turkey's score fell by three ranks to number 66, making Turkey one of the index's worst performers within the past four years.¹³⁴

The lack of cooperation between Turkey and its neighbors is the fifth obstacle to developing a more effective policy against drug trafficking. Interrogations of traffickers in Turkey show that extensive cooperation among Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, and Turkish drug traffickers has persisted for decades.¹³⁵ However, government and law enforcement authorities have not been able to achieve equivalent and adequate cooperation to counter the traffickers. The military conflicts in Iraq and Syria have further affected such regional counternarcotics efforts. Former drug trafficking routes have been altered, with some traffickers relocating their operations to Syria and Iraq, while the region's countries often support opposing sides in the conflicts, further hampering cooperation. Thus, Turkey's counternarcotics engagement with government authorities in Iran and Iraq remains highly limited. For example, out of the nine controlled drug delivery operations (sting operations in which police track the smuggled narcotics to uncover routes, methods, and actors) Turkey mounted in 2014, none were conducted jointly with any of Turkey's neighbors.¹³⁶

134 "Corruption Perceptions Index 2015", Transparency International, <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2015/>. Also see "Turkey Falls in 2015 Corruption Perception Index," *Good Morning Turkey Istanbul*, January 27, 2016, <http://www.goodmorningturkey.com/politics/turkey-falls-in-2015-corruption-perception-index>.

135 Despite the fact that drugs are extensively smuggled across the Turkey-Iran border, there are still only 21 border security posts on the Turkish side, a vastly insufficient number. Traffickers offer bribes to gendarmarie and senior police chiefs to turn a blind eye to the transfer of drugs at the border. See Robins, *Middle East Drugs Bazaar*, 161-162.

136 Instead, these operations were carried out with Germany (four), Canada (two), Sweden (one), Austria (one), and the United Kingdom

Sixth, Turkey's recent immigration policy also complicates efforts against the illegal drug trade. As of October 2016, the number of Syrian refugees worldwide was around 4.8 million, with almost 2.8 million of them being hosted in Turkey.¹³⁷ After European countries closed their borders to Syrian refugees and other migrants, the Turkish government struck a deal with the European Union in 2016 to absorb the refugees within Turkey. The country has granted temporary protection status for Syrians, which entails providing education, health, and job services.¹³⁸ Most are not vetted in Turkey. Some of these refugees and migrants, if only a very small percentage, are likely implicated in drug trafficking and other forms of smuggling. For example, between 2009 and 2010, before the Syrian war began, only four Syrians were arrested in Turkey on drug trafficking charges (for possession of 26 kilograms of cannabis). However, between 2012 and 2013, the number of Syrians arrested in Turkey on drug trafficking charges increased to 36, and the amount of cannabis seized from them grew to 1.7 tons. By 2014, Syrians constituted 86 percent of all foreign traffickers arrested in Turkey.¹³⁹ Ostracizing, inadequately supporting, and failing to integrate the refugees and migrants not only worsens their humanitarian conditions, but may also push some into crime and illegal economies as avenues for earning a living. However, failing to conduct effective vetting and registration procedures not only undermines the access of social workers to the refugees and migrants, but also generates public safety and criminality risks, including to the migrants themselves.

Turkey needs to adopt fundamental reforms in its fight against the drug trade and its efforts to limit the negative effects of drug use. Among the crucial reforms to be adopted are the following:

(one). See KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 2.

137 "Syria Regional Refugee Response," United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, last modified February 1, 2017, <http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/regional.php>.

138 Kaya, Ibrahim and Esra Yılmaz, "Türkiyedeki Suriyelilerin Hukuki Durumu," *SETA*, accessed December 12, 2016, 47, 57-60, http://file.setav.org/Files/Pdf/20151230134459_turkiyedeki-suriyelilerin-hukuki-durumu-pdf.pdf.

139 KOM Daire Başkanlığı, *2014 Turkish Report of Anti-Smuggling and Organized Crime*, 10.

- Turkey urgently needs to start focusing on its domestic drug use. It should undertake systematic research and analysis of the size and scope of the domestic drug trade, including by developing better estimates on the number of users and addicts.
- Turkey needs to significantly increase the number of its treatment centers and rehabilitation programs and improve their design, quality, and effectiveness. Turkey should also develop harm reduction programs.
- Turkey should strengthen the capacities and independence of counternarcotics units that have been significantly weakened as a result of the bureaucratic reorganization in the aftermath of corruption scandals.
- The bureaucratic ranking of counternarcotics units should be upgraded from the department level to the general directorate level.
- Turkey needs to enact more effective laws for anti-money laundering efforts and asset forfeiture policies. It also needs to improve its law enforcement capacities to investigate these types of crimes.
- Turkey should review the laws, regulations, and procedures against organized crime enacted in the aftermath of its graft scandals. Those that hamper counternarcotics and anti-organized crime efforts need to be revised.
- Turkish law enforcement agencies should approach counternarcotics efforts from a broader perspective and incorporate other kinds of smuggling into policy design considerations.
- Turkey should review its immigration policy, including toward Syrian refugees. It needs to vet refugees and migrants for their possible linkages to terrorist organizations, drug trafficking, and other smuggling groups.

Conclusion

Drug trade is a multidimensional issue in Turkey that deals with the production, trafficking, and use of drugs. Whereas cannabis is the most produced and consumed drug domestically, drug trafficking is transnational and very common in Turkey. In addition to heroin, which facilitates the transformation of Turkish trafficking groups into transnational groups, cocaine, bonsai, methamphetamine, and captagon have been trafficked in Turkey. Drug use is also another problematic dimension of the drug trade. The numbers of heroin and bonsai addicts are at alarming levels. Due to the huge potential of the drug trade, the number of drug trafficking groups have not only increased, but they have internationalized to become a strong part of global drug networks.

Turkey has adopted various policies to counter the drug trade. One is the licensing of poppy cultivation in the 1970s, which produced successful results in controlling opium. Turkey has also locally enforced laissez-faire policies which lacked prohibitive rules in controlling cannabis production in its eastern and southeastern regions. Turkey has mainly spent its energy on interdicting drug trafficking. Although interdiction policies occasionally provide successful results in making huge amounts of seizures, corrupt governments have discontinued such ongoing efforts. Whenever police operations have revealed corruption within the government, law enforcement and judiciary personnel have been fired. After decades of political turmoil, weak governance capacity, and political interference in law enforcement, Turkish police and law enforcement agencies experienced significant modernization, institutional development, and robust growth in capacities between 2002 and 2013. These changes reflected more effective policies toward drug trafficking. Unfortunately, this capacity growth has been eviscerated by the post-December 2013 government purges.

Turkish drug policies today are not effective, comprehensive, and integrated. The volume of drugs flowing through and consumed in Turkey has increased significantly in recent years. Current drug policies over-

emphasize supply-side efforts and do not pay sufficient attention to demand-side measures. Drug treatment and prevention and harm reduction approaches remain woefully underprovided and underemphasized. It is crucial for Turkey to adopt multidimensional approaches and policies in the prevention of drug production, trafficking, and use.

*Associate Professor **Mahmut Cengiz** is an adjunct faculty and a research scholar at the Terrorism, Transnational Crime, and Corruption Center (TraCCC) at George Mason University. He is a leading expert on transnational crime, terrorism, money laundering, terrorist financing, human trafficking, and smuggling of nuclear materials. His recent research projects have focused on the ISIS crime-terrorism nexus, the impact of the Syrian conflict on crime in the Middle East, and the effects of corruption on instability in the Middle East.*

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