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OPIUM

Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy

By Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy



Opium: bitter, brownish, sticky – and highly addictive. But its impact goes beyond tales of personal pleasure or misery. It is a story played out on an international stage: major powers, local war lords, national governments – all have a stake in the continuing story that is illicit opium production. Pierre Chouvy exposes the politics behind illicit opium production. In particular he explores the remote mountainous regions of Asia that produce 90% of the world's illicit opium – the Golden Triangle of Thailand, Laos and Burma and the Golden Crescent of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. He reveals the real drivers of the modern day trade and shows why a century of international effort, and forty years of a US led war on drugs, have failed. A powerful insight into the complex international politics of the poppy.

'Drawing on his deep, unequalled understanding of the political economy of illicit drugs, Pierre Chouvy has produced an exemplary study of the complex forces driving illicit narcotics production in the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent regions of Asia. Through careful analysis of the historical, economic, and ecological forces behind the rapid growth of illicit drug production in Central and Southeast Asia, Chouvy shows how and why the coercive crop eradication schemes favored by the United States and United Nations have failed in the past and will fail again in the future. His evidence is unassailable and his argument is compelling. The social costs of forty years of failed "drug wars" have been high and the gains precious few. After a full century of failed drug prohibition, 1909 to 2009, Chouvy makes a persuasive case for an alternative approach.' – Alfred W. McCoy, author of *The Politics of Heroin*

'This book establishes Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy as the successor to Alfred McCoy: he not only deciphers the long history of the opium poppy and the complex geopolitics of illicit drugs in Asia but also explains how and why decades of a costly 'war on drugs' have failed.' – Alain Labrousse, former Director of Geopolitical Drug Watch (Observatoire géopolitique des drogues)

Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy received his PhD from the University of the Sorbonne. A geographer and leading specialist in the politics of illicit drugs in Asia, he is currently Research Fellow with the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in Paris. He has travelled extensively throughout Southwest and Southeast Asia and created and edits www.geopium.org.

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