

## Illegal Drugs, Policy Change, and State Power: The Case of Contemporary China

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*This article describes and analyzes the rapid resurgence of illegal drugs in contemporary China since the late 1970s. It also examines the evolution and implementation of China's anti-narcotic policy, especially the people's war on drugs launched in 1990. It is suggested that the resurgence of drug trafficking and drug abuse provides additional evidence of the severe erosion of regime legitimacy in China*

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[The eradication of drug abuse and drug trafficking in China is] a question of life and death.  
Jiang Zemin, CCP General Secretary<sup>1</sup>

DRUG TRAFFICKING IS PROBABLY the fastest growing area in both international crime and the shadow economy. The People's Republic of China, which had prided itself on being drug-free,<sup>2</sup> has once again been plagued by the rapid spread of drug trafficking and drug abuse since the early 1980s. To be sure, drug-related activities still account for only a tiny percentage of China's crime rate. In 1992, the number of officially registered addicts in China was about 250,000 and the total number of illegal drug users may be estimated at one to two million; in comparison, the United States had an estimated 12.6 million users in 1991 (in per capita terms, the Chinese figure is even smaller). Yet, as a report in the official *Legal Daily* (*Fazhi ribao*) put it:

The current situation in anti-narcotics work in China is very grim. The principal manifestations are rampant drug-trafficking and rising drug cases from year to year. The outstanding features are that drug trafficking crimes have been increasingly committed by groups, that they are increasingly professionalized and internationalized, and that the methods of committing crimes are also increasingly diversified; the number of drug-takers has risen substantially and the drug-kicking rate is very low.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, I provide a broad survey of the incidence of drug trafficking and abuse in China and examine the evolution and implemen-

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1 "Jiang Urges Eradication of Drug Use, Trafficking," AFP (Hong Kong) in English, October 23, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-205, October 23, 1991, pp. 25-26.

2 The CCP, both when it was still a guerrilla movement and after it came to power, had allegedly used poppy-growing and drug-trafficking as a political weapon. [Roger Faligot and Remi Kauffer, *The Chinese Secret Service: Kang Sheng and the Shadow Government in Red China*, translated from the French by Christine Donougher (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1989), pp. 233-234, 268-270.]

3 Zhao Jianrong, "Ministry of Justice Reeducation-Through-Labor Bureau Holds Forum to Probe Overall Plan for Stepping Up Work of Kicking Drug Habit by Reeducation Through Labor," *Fazhi ribao*, June 17, 1992, p. 1, FBIS-CHI-92-140, July 21, 1992, pp. 22-23.

tation of China's anti-narcotic policy. Secondly, I hope to shed new light on the interaction between state and society in China through the study of the spread of illegal drugs.

## I. The Scope of China's Drug Problem

### 1). The Numbers and the Users

Although the Chinese government in the mid-1950s proclaimed China a "drug-free country" and was quite successful in eradicating the widespread cultivation and use of narcotic drugs, recent publications suggest that drug trafficking persisted in some places after the early 1950s. For example, a Yunnan woman with the given name of "Zhen" was involved in drug trafficking after 1954 and fined 500 yuan in 1969 for drug trafficking in the southwestern province of Yunnan, which shares extensive borders with the Golden Triangle area. The home of the above named "Zhen" was barely 50 kilometers (31 miles) from the border. "Zhen" resumed drug trafficking in 1977 but was caught again in 1978 and given a jail sentence of seven years. In 1979 she was allowed to go home for medical reasons and would organize a huge drug trafficking network amid the societal decompression that ensued with the official termination of the Cultural Revolution.<sup>4</sup>

The spread of illegal drugs in Yunnan may be illustrated by the case of Menghai County in Xishuangbanna Autonomous Prefecture. In 1982, the Menghai county authorities not only found opium coming from abroad but privately planted opium poppies. In the county's twelve communes, 2,276 people, or one percent of the population, smoked opium. Moreover, drug traffickers shipped illegal drugs further inside China.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, the extent of drug trafficking, planting of opium poppies, and drug addiction in some localities so alarmed the Chinese leadership that the State Council issued a "Notice Reiterating the Strict Prohibition of Opium" (*Guanyu chongshen yanjin yapianyandu de tongzhi*) in the beginning of the 1980s. Yet the drug problem in Yunnan has severely worsened since then. In the first eight months of 1991, for example, the province reportedly uncovered 2,100 cases of drug dealings—an increase of 63.7 percent over the same period of 1990—and confiscated 1,189 kilograms of heroin and some opium (the amount of drugs captured grew by 21.8 percent). Despite the province's strenuous anti-drug efforts, provincial officials admit that "drugs coming from abroad have proved serious and drug addiction [has] also become more and more a problem."<sup>6</sup>

While Yunnan has faced the most intractable drug situation, other provinces have also become exposed to drugs. Guangdong found only a few drug-taking cases each year

<sup>4</sup> You Shang and Huang Ying, *Zhongguo jindu jishi* (A factual report on drug control in China) (Changsha, Hunan: Sanhuan chubanshe, 1991), p. 2. For a concise discussion of political trends, see Harry Harding, "Political Development in Post-Mao China," in A. Doak Barnett and Ralph N. Clough, eds., *Modernizing China: Post-Mao Reform and Development* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 13-39.

<sup>5</sup> "Guanyu jinjie yapian yandu de xuanchuan tigang" (Propaganda outlines concerning the prohibition of opium), in Chang Tse-min, *Communist China's Crimes in Drugging the World* (Taiwan: World Anti-Communist League China Chapter, June 1983), pp. 62-64. The publication information of this pamphlet makes apparent that it is not a disinterested study, but I believe the reproduced official documents from Mainland China are authentic. See also pp. 54-60 for documentation concerning a number of other places.

<sup>6</sup> Xinhua in English, October 13, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-201, October 17, 1991, p. 36.

in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the late 1980s, the airport in Guangzhou, the provincial capital, had become a transit hub for drug-trafficking from the Golden Triangle to Hong Kong and beyond.<sup>7</sup> The local drug-taking population expanded. Over 1983-1988, some 40-60 drug cases were uncovered in Guangdong each year. In 1987, the number of people caught distributing and taking illegal drugs increased noticeably to more than 100 in Guangdong, with most cases found in Guangzhou (the provincial capital), Shenzhen, and to a lesser extent Zhuhai, Foshan, Jiangmen, and other economically advanced areas. During 1989, the year of political turmoil in China, the drug problem deteriorated sharply in Guangdong, just as it did in China as a whole. In Guangzhou city alone 274 drug traffickers and users were caught, which was more than seven times the 1988 figure. In 1990, the figure rose further to 816. The corresponding figure for the entire province was 1,430 in 1990. According to provincial authorities, between 1981 and 1990, Guangdong uncovered over 1,000 major drug cases and apprehended 2,500 drug traffickers, confiscated over 400 kilograms of heroin and 1,400 kilograms of opium and other drugs. Given the illegal nature of drug use, it is impossible to know the exact number of people using illegal drugs. Nevertheless, according to a Chinese estimate, the number of drug users in Guangdong more than doubled in 1990 compared with 1989 and redoubled in the first half of 1991. As a result of the growing local demand and increasing government crackdown, the retail price of narcotics rose swiftly in Guangdong. The price of No. 4 heroin increased from under 20,000 yuan per 500 grams around 1989 to between 40,000-60,000 in late 1991.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 1. China: Antinarcotics Statistics, 1981-1992**

Year	No. of Cases Cracked	Opium Seized (kg.)	Heroin Seized (kg.)	No. of Traffickers Arrested (foreign nationals)
1981-82	18 (Customs cases)	n.a.	60.257	n.a.
1983	5	5.25	5 grams	10
1984	3	30	n.a.	4
1985	6	50	6.7	15
1986	12	112.7	24.1	32 (21)
1987	56	137.5	38.7	74 (66)
1988	268	239.1	166.2	188 (120)
1989	547	269.4 (289)*	488.3 (561)*	749 (716)
1990	3,670	782	1,632	5,612 (682)
1991**	8,395	1,980***	1,919	18,479 (829)
1992	14,700	2,660****	4,489	28,000 (n.a.)

Notes: n.a.: data not available.

\* The figures in parentheses for 1989 are from *Beijing Review* (see below for sources).

\*\* The data for 1991 are for Chinese drug enforcement agencies only. In addition, the Chinese Customs Administration also seized 256 kilograms of various illegal drugs.

- 7 "Statement of Robert C. Bonner before the Senate Judiciary Committee and the Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control Concerning the Drug Trafficking Situation in the People's Republic of China," mimeo., May 19, 1991, p. 1; Daniel Southerland, "Smugglers Using Routes in China to Move Heroin; Police Say Flow of Drug Is Increasing," *The Washington Post*, December 6, 1988, p. A33; Michael Weisskopf, "South China Is Channel for Heroin," *The Washington Post*, September 20, 1983, p. A10.
- 8 The data on Guangdong are drawn from Sun Jie, *Jinri redian jishi* (Report on today's hot spots) (Changchun: shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1992), pp. 48-49.

\*\*\* In addition to opium and heroin, 328 kilograms of cannabis and 33 kilograms of morphine were also seized in 1991.

\*\*\*\* In addition to opium and heroin, 910 kilograms of marijuana and 655 kilograms of amphetamine were also seized in 1992. Moreover, 58.8 tons of chemical materials for making illegal drugs were also confiscated. Furthermore, 1,354 drug-related criminals received life and death (including death with reprieve) sentences in 1992.

Sources: Data for 1981-1990 are from *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), June 27, 1991, p. 2, FBIS-CHI-91-132, July 10, 1991, pp. 43-44. The figures for 1983 to 1990 were originally compiled from public security organs and the customs administration. The Alternative figures for 1990 are from "Public Security Minister Declares War on Drugs," *Beijing Review*, no. 29, July 22-28, 1991, pp. 16-18; this source provides comparable figures for 1990 as in *Ta Kung Pao*. The 1991 figures are from "Envoy at UN Pledges To Step Up Drug Control," *Xinhua in English*, July 23, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-143, July 24, 1992, p. 1; "Chinese Narcotic Cases Up 20% Last Year," *Kyodo News Service*, June 26, 1992. For 1992, *Renmin ribao* (People's daily), overseas ed., April 1, 1993, p. 6; June 26, 1993, p. 3.

The drugs problem in China as a whole paralleled developments in Guangdong. As of 1992, internal Chinese documents revealed that serious drug-related crimes have been uncovered in all but four of China's 31 provinces.<sup>9</sup> As can be seen from Tables 1, which contains data from Chinese government sources, the number of drug cases uncovered as well as the amount of narcotic drugs seized have increased dramatically since the late 1980s and show no signs of abatement. In fact, the figures represented in the table clearly understate the extent of narcotics activities. For example, reports on one anti-drug rally in Yunnan in 1991 mentioned that "one ton of heroin, and four tons of opium" were burnt in 60 big cauldrons.<sup>10</sup> The amount of opium burnt on this occasion alone was more than the total amount of captured opium reported in Table 1 for China.

Despite this, the figures in Table 1 are suggestive of the exponential growth in narcotics trade and abuse since the early 1980s. In 1992, Chinese anti-drug authorities cracked more than 14,700 drug cases, confiscated 8,714 kilograms of heroin, opium, marijuana, and other narcotic drugs, as well as 58.8 tons of chemical materials for making narcotic drugs.<sup>11</sup> Judging by the number and composition of traffickers arrested, it appears that more and more people are involved in drug trafficking throughout China and that there is growing involvement by traffickers from outside of China. Though drug trafficking is still dominated by men, there is evidence that an increasing number of women are taking part in it.<sup>12</sup> Finally the types of narcotic drugs have diversified from plant-based to both plant-based and chemically manufactured, though the data in the table fail to illustrate this point.

The officially released number of registered drug-users also suggests that drug abuse has dramatically increased since the late 1980s. The number of registered drug users numbered around 70,000 in 1989,<sup>13</sup> it rose to an estimated 148,000 in 1991.<sup>14</sup> Internally

<sup>9</sup> Geoffrey Crothall, "Documents Suggest Drug Problem 'More Serious,'" *South China Sunday Morning Post*, May 17, 1992, pp. 1, 7.

<sup>10</sup> "Drug Conference Delegates Present," *Xinhua in English*, October 26, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-208, October 28, 1991, pp. 35-36.

<sup>11</sup> *Renmin ribao* (People's daily, hereafter RMRB), overseas ed., April 1, 1993, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Chen Chien-ping, "Beijing Strictly Orders All Localities To Fight Drugs," *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), June 14, 1991, p. 2, FBIS-CHI-91-118, June 19, 1991, pp. 30-31.

<sup>13</sup> "Public Security Minister Declares War on Drugs," *Beijing Review*, No. 29, July 22-28, 1991, pp. 16-18.

<sup>14</sup> "Health Official Reports 969 AIDS Cases," *Xinhua in English*, December 1, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-232, December 2, 1992, p. 3.

circulated Chinese materials estimated the number of addicts at 300,000 as of mid-1992.<sup>15</sup>

As is the case in other countries such as the U.S., there is evidence to suggest that the actual number of drug addicts is much higher than official estimates, owing to the large number of addicts not coming forth for treatment. In a 1987 study, almost 3.5 percent of the 65,000 surveyed in Yunnan admitted they were addicts and the majority of these took heroin.<sup>16</sup> Even if we assume that the survey sample was skewed and that the actual addiction rate was only 1/8 of the rate sampled for the population at 15 or above (which yields a population of 23,278,458), then, the number of drug addicts for Yunnan would still be 101,843 for 1987.<sup>17</sup> This is far more than the number of registered drug addicts for China as a whole in 1989. Indeed, quoting public security officials in Guangdong, one publication in Hong Kong reports that the number of drug users in Guangdong alone amounted to 500,000-600,000 at the beginning of 1992.<sup>18</sup> Even if drug abuse in the rest of the country were far less severe than in Guangdong and Yunnan, the total number of drug users in China would still add up to at least a million and most likely more. In fact, a significant number of other provinces, including Sichuan, Guizhou, Gansu, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, also face severe drug problems. An official Chinese report stated that by 1991 over 600 cities and counties, or about one third of the total, had been affected by drug-trafficking activities.<sup>19</sup> I think it is only in the context of such dramatically increasing numbers that the drastic measures taken by the Chinese leadership to combat drug abuse and trafficking since 1990 make sense.

A detailed and comprehensive profile of drug users in China is not available at the time of this writing. Yet scattered reports indicate that drug abuse in China cuts across occupations, social status, age, and geographic location.<sup>20</sup> While most drug users are young and often disaffected males,<sup>21</sup> one can also find among the users teenagers as well as "old opium pipes" who were forced to drop the habit in the early 1950s but returned

15 "Anti-Drug Abuse Film Reveals 300,000 Addicts," *The Standard* (Hong Kong), July 17, 1992, p. A-10, FBIS-CHI-92-138, July 17, 1992, p. 9; Geoffrey Crothall, "Documents Suggest Drug Problem 'More Serious'," *South China Morning Post*, May 17, 1992, pp. 1, 7.

16 Daniel Kwan, "China Seeks Aid," *South China Morning Post*, December 10, 1991, p. 3. No information was provided on how the survey was provided.

17 The 1987 population figures for Yunnan are derived from State Statistical Bureau, *Zhongguo tongji nianjian 1988* (Statistical yearbook of China 1988) (Beijing: Zhongguo tongji chubanshe, 1988), pp. 99, 109.

18 Hua Lianwen, "Guangdong xidu fandou xiezhen" (A portrayal of drug abuse and drug trafficking in Guangdong), *Jiushi niandai* (The nineties), no. 264 (January 1, 1992), p. 50.

19 Bi Shan, "Drug-Trafficking Becoming Serious Trend in China," *Zhongguo Tongxun She* in English, May 25, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-102, May 28, 1991, p. 41.

20 Unless otherwise noted, this and the following paragraph draws on an extensive reading of both Chinese and English sources. See especially Jin Wei, Ma Ying, Zhang Zhiqiang, "Dupin, heise de wenyi" (Narcotics, the black plague), *Xinhua yuebao* (New China monthly digest), no. 2 (1991), pp. 128-129; *Duhuo* (The drug plague) (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1992).

21 A survey of 5,000 addicts in Xi'an (Shaanxi) found that 90 percent of the them were males under the age of 25. The *Xinjiang daily* reported that 80 percent of the drug users in one area of Western Xinjiang province are between 14 and 28 years old. "China Battles Rising Tide of Drug Abuse," Kyodo News Service, October 29, 1992; "China Cracks Down on Rock Musicians, Artists," United Press International, October 4, 1992; Nicholas D. Kristof, "Heroin Spreads Among Young in China," *The New York Times*, March 21, 1991, p. A1.

to opium in the 1980s. They may be indigent farmers in Yunnan or Guizhou, the nouveau riche who have prospered as entrepreneurs, workers in Xi'an and Lanzhou, or the artistically talented in Beijing; cadres as well as teachers can also be found among them. In Guangdong, the unemployed and private traders made up 72.2 percent of users.<sup>22</sup> In an unidentified city in Yunnan, a 1990 survey found that of the 319 drug users, 20.38% came from cadre families, 47.02% came from working families, and 10.35% were farmers.<sup>23</sup>

While the trend among Chinese drug users has been toward hard drugs such as heroin, there appears to be some social as well as regional differentiation in the types of illegal drugs consumed. Farmers in Guizhou, Sichuan, or Inner Mongolia are more likely to smoke opium. In Yunnan, intravenous drug-use, involving mostly heroin, is rampant. Urban users are more likely to be from the more affluent strata of society, such as the entrepreneurs, or the artistically talented, such as performers or artists. Echoing drug abuse patterns in the U.S. two to three decades ago, these urban drug users are also more likely to use heroin, which is regarded as a symbol of status among users. According to one report, about 30 percent of all addicts are extremely wealthy by Chinese standards.<sup>24</sup>

In short, both the extent of drug trafficking and the number of domestic users of illegal drugs have increased exponentially in China since the mid-1980s, paralleling a similarly rapid growth in the former Soviet Union in the same period.<sup>25</sup>

## 2). From Trafficking to Domestic Production

Publicly, Chinese officials have maintained that the growing incidence of drug trafficking and abuse in China "is caused by drug trafficking outside the border [of China]." For them, because China borders on the Golden Triangle of Thailand, Burma and Laos, it is an "inevitable objective fact" that international drug traffickers would take advantage of China's open door policy and "try to turn China into a channel for transshipment of drugs."<sup>26</sup>

There is growing evidence that both the supply and demand of illegal drugs (especially opium) have also gone up significantly *within* China. China is fast becoming a drug-producing and consuming country. Internal Chinese documents "warn of the surge in internal narcotics production, with vast amounts being cultivated, processed

22 "Jiang Urges Eradication of Drug Use, Trafficking," AFP (Hong Kong) in English, October 23, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-205, October 23, 1991, pp. 25-26.

23 Zhi Shi, "Xidu diaocha yu zonghe zhili chuyi" (A survey of drug use and my opinions on dealing with it comprehensively), *Chuxiong sheke luntan* (Chuxiong social science forum), no. 1 (1991), pp. 65-69.

24 Nick Driver, "Internal Propaganda Film Underlines China Drug Fears," United Press International, July 12, 1992.

25 Rensselaer Lee, *Dynamics of the Soviet Illicit Drug Market* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1990).

26 Zhang Zhiye and Jin Duoshan, "Striving To Purify Our Lovely Land," *RMRB*, overseas ed., November 6, 1991, p. 4; FBIS-CHI-91-226, November 22, 1991, pp. 21-22. See also, "Public Security Minister Declares War on Drugs," *Beijing Review*, No. 29, July 22-28, 1991, pp. 16-18.

and used, often with the involvement of local officials."<sup>27</sup> The drug plague appears to be more of a manifestation of the corruption of the Party-state than of the open policy.

The most widely produced illegal drug in China is opium. One report, citing interviews with Chinese officials, suggests that opium is illegally cultivated in 27 of China's 30 provinces.<sup>28</sup> Provinces that are most affected include Yunnan, Sichuan, Guizhou, Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Hunan, Qinghai, though opium cultivation is also reported to have reached serious proportions in Hebei, Jilin, Heilongjiang, and, to a lesser extent, Shanghai.<sup>29</sup> According to police officials, China eradicated some 36 million poppy plants in 1990 alone. Indeed, one hard-to-reach area of Inner Mongolia has acquired the nickname "Black Triangle."<sup>30</sup> *The South China Morning Post*, drawing on classified Chinese documents compiled in late 1991, reported that police in Inner Mongolia had by then discovered more than 10,000 opium poppy fields, covering an area of more than 200 hectares.<sup>31</sup> Because the growing of opium poppies usually occurs under careful camouflage, the true extent of opium cultivation is probably far more extensive than the official figures would suggest. A report by the Inner Mongolian Radio Network sums up well the scope of the drug problem in the region and the social concern it has aroused:

Over the past few years, the region [Inner Mongolia]'s narcotics-related crimes and violations of law have been revived and are spreading. In particular, the illegal planting of poppy is quite serious and criminal cases concerning narcotic drugs have increased on a large scale. The number of drug addicts who are seriously endangering society has increased. Incidents caused by drug addicts, such as losing their family fortune, selling their children, and causing ruin and death in their families, have frequently incurred. [Drug-related] criminal cases, such as engaging in gambling, extortion, blackmail, robbery, and mugging, have steadily increased and aroused the attention of the vast number of people.<sup>32</sup>

Opium cultivators grow the crops mainly as a lucrative cash crop.<sup>33</sup> Local officials have connived in this development in some areas. Some have simply decided to profit from the crop themselves. One cadre in Leierqi Township of Inner Mongolia had more

27 Geoffrey Crothall, "Documents Suggest Drug Problem 'More Serious,'" *South China Sunday Morning Post*, May 17, 1992, pp. 1, 7.

28 Nick Driver, "Internal Propaganda Film Underlines China Drug Fears," *United Press International*, July 12, 1992.

29 For a general discussion, see Hua Lianwen, "Guangdong xidu fandou xiezhen" (A portrayal of drug abuse and drug trafficking in Guangdong), *Jiushi niandai* (The nineties), no. 264 (January 1, 1992), pp. 50-53. For reports concerning Hebei, Jilin, and Jiangsu, see Sun Yuehui and Luo Zhenxu, "Hebei Province Holds Work Conference on Banning Narcotics and Attacking Smuggling," *Hebei Ribao*, November 5, 1991, p. 1; FBIS-CHI-91-239, December 12, 1991, p. 63; Wang Chengyong, "Resolutely and Effectively Crack Down on Criminal Activities Related to Drugs," *Jilin ribao*, September 5, 1991, p. 1, FBIS-CHI-91-230, November 29, 1991, p. 68; and "Chen Huanyou Attends Anti-Smuggling Meeting," *Jiangsu People's Radio Network*, October 19, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-203, October 21, 1991, p. 49. On the planting of some 3,500-odd opium poppies by six farmers in suburban Shanghai, see "The Mainland Adopts Stern Measures To Ban Drugs," *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), March 25, 1991, p. 20, FBIS-CHI-91-060, March 28, 1991, pp. 27-28.

30 Nick Driver, "Internal Propaganda Film Underlines China Drug Fears," *United Press International*, July 12, 1992.

31 Geoffrey Crothall, "Documents Suggest Drug Problem 'More Serious,'" *South China Sunday Morning Post*, May 17, 1992, pp. 1, 7.

32 "Inner Mongolia Cracks Down on Narcotics," *Inner Mongolia People's Radio Network*, June 26, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-125, June 28, 1991, pp. 61-62. I have made slight changes in the translation.

33 Cf. Zhu Youdi, *Liegu xuebing* (Avalanches in valleys) (Jinan: Shandong wenyi chubanshe, 1991), pp. 26-33, esp. 28.

than a thousand opium plants growing in his backyard.<sup>34</sup> In contrast, drug lords in some areas of Yunnan even gained control at the expense of the state.

There are also indications of the illegal processing of heroin and other more sophisticated narcotic drugs in China, often with the involvement of drug traffickers from abroad.<sup>35</sup> *The People's Daily* reported that a prison officer and 10 others were arrested for refining 10 pounds of opium into 1.5 pounds of heroin in Gansu province in 1988,<sup>36</sup> clearly showing an indigenous processing capability. In a number of cases, drug dealers from Taiwan and Hong Kong, aided by Mainland middlemen, requested Mainland pharmaceutical and chemical factories to process these drugs for alleged legitimate medical uses, such as manufacturing amphetamines (Ice) on the pretext of processing antihistamine and antitussive drugs. One Beijing chemical reagent factory produced a total of 479 kilograms of processed amphetamine for Taiwan dealers. About 381 kilograms of the drug was smuggled into Hong Kong and a small amount was shipped to Yunnan Province. Similar cases have also been uncovered in Guangzhou and Xiamen.<sup>37</sup> The largest such case was uncovered in Fujian on September 30, 1992, where police cracked an "Ice" manufacturing operation in Longmen village of Changle County and seized 310 kilograms of "Ice", 171 kilograms of semi-finished products, and 2.6 tons of raw materials. The operation also involved members of secret societies from Hong Kong.<sup>38</sup>

Because of their legitimate cover, the huge number of pharmaceutical and chemical factories eager for cooperative business arrangements on the Mainland, and the large amount of illegal drugs produced in each case, this trend is potentially the most dangerous. In 1991, the Chinese government seized 49 tons of chemical materials to be used for making illegal drugs.<sup>39</sup> Lax control and a hunger for quick profits have led some local Chinese officials to make *de facto* illegal drug deals. When Taiwan police confiscated 250 kilograms of ephedrine from a fishing boat in 1991, the skipper confessed that he bought the material from Xiechang Development Company in Fujian at the suggestion of the director of the "Taiwan Compatriots Reception Center" in Quanzhou, Fujian Province. The official was a go-between for a drug deal involving a substance loosely controlled on the mainland.<sup>40</sup>

34 Geoffrey Crothall, "Documents Suggest Drug Problem 'More Serious,'" *South China Sunday Morning Post*, May 17, 1992, pp. 1, 7.

35 Quoting unidentified Chinese officials, UPI reported that "officials privately admit that some heroin is produced in the country." "Southeast Asian Drug Traffickers Said To Be Moving Into China," United Press International, November 24, 1992. For evidence on involvement by Taiwanese drug traffickers, see Gao Ling and Na Jiahua, "Kunming Police Crack Another Drug-Trafficking Case Committed by Unlawful Elements From Taiwan," *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, July 29, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-147, July 31, 1991, pp. 49-50; "China Nets Seven Taiwanese Drug Smuggling Suspects," United Press International, August 26, 1992.

36 "Chinese Prison Officer Said To Be At Heart of Heroin Ring," Reuters, July 18, 1988.

37 Chang Hong and Liang Jun, "Firms Said 'Tricked' by Drug Dealers," *China Daily*, October 26, 1991, p. 1.

38 Yao Lishi, "Jiaqiang shehui zhian" (Strengthen public security), *Liaowang* (Outlook), overseas ed., no. 51 (December 28, 1992), p. 17.

39 *Renmin ribao* (People's daily), June 26, 1992, p. 1.

40 "Mainland Said to Smuggle Ephedrine into Republic," Taipei CNA in English, June 10, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-112, June 10, 1992, p. 58.



### 3). Drugs, Diseases, and Crime

As in other drug-infested countries, growing drug abuse using needles conjures up the specter of spreading AIDS and other infectious diseases and fuels the rise in crime rate.

China faces daunting challenges in containing the spread of AIDS.<sup>41</sup> In late 1991, serum tests on 480,000 persons in 15 provincial units, including Liaoning, Yunnan, Guangxi, Guangdong, and Beijing revealed 705 people infected with the HIV virus and eight full-blown AIDS cases.<sup>42</sup> By the end of 1992, 969 cases of HIV and AIDS infection had been reported in China.<sup>43</sup> The combination of poor monitoring, lack of anonymous treatment, and the long time-lag between HIV infection and full-blown AIDS suggests that the threat of AIDS is real in China.<sup>44</sup>

About three quarters of all reported HIV and AIDS cases are intravenous drug users, the majority found in Yunnan, where most addicts face serious "overdose" and needle-sharing problems.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, intravenous drug use is on the rise along the coast, especially in Guangdong. Reports suggest that the coastal users take no more care than users in the interior. China's internal film on drugs contains footage showing junkies shooting up with a mixture of heroin and urine or sewer water.<sup>46</sup> Partly owing to an official unwillingness to publicize the threat of AIDS, the degree of public ignorance about it is shocking. A limited Yunnan survey found that the majority of people thought that AIDS was "impossible to control" and none of those surveyed could answer correctly how the disease spread.<sup>47</sup>

For traffickers, both the potential profits and risks from the drug trade are huge. As the legal penalties on serious drug trafficking usually led to death sentences or life imprisonment, traffickers appeared to prefer fighting it out rather than face the law. Not only are the traffickers armed with sophisticated communications, but they invariably have weapons.<sup>48</sup> In early 1990, Chinese police seized 221 kilograms of heroin, seven

41 I focus on the relationship between drug abuse and AIDS here. Meanwhile, there has been an alarming increase in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases in China, which suggest that the sexual transmission of AIDS is also assuming dangerous proportions.

42 "705 Cases of HIV-Infected Persons Discovered," *Zhongguo Xinwen She in English*, June 10, 1992; FBIS-CHI-91-114, June 12, 1992, pp. 22-23.

43 "Health Official Reports 969 AIDS Cases," *Xinhua in English*, December 1, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-232, December 2, 1992, p. 3.

44 "China's Ability To Control AIDS 'Inadequate'," *Zhongguo Tongxun She in Chinese*, January 3, 1993, FBIS-CHI-93-013, January 22, 1993, pp. 32-33.

45 "Health Official Reports 969 AIDS Cases," *Xinhua in English*, December 1, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-232, December 2, 1992, p. 3. See also Geoffrey Crothall, "Documents Suggest Drug Problem 'More Serious'," *South China Sunday Morning Post*, May 17, 1992, pp. 1, 7; Zhu Li and Yu Changhong, "Aizibing koukai guomen" (AIDS enters China), Zhang Chijian, Xie Jinhu, and Jiang Yaobo, eds., *Baozha xing xinwen* (Beijing: Gaige chubanshe, 1991), p. 49.

46 Nick Driver, "Internal Propaganda Film Underlines China Drug Fears," *United Press International*, July 12, 1992.

47 Daniel Kwan, "China Seeks Aid," *South China Morning Post*, December 10, 1991, p. 3.

48 Sun Jie, *Jinri redian jishi* (Report on today's hot spots) (Changchun: shidai wenyi chubanshe, 1992), pp. 48-65.

guns and 500 rounds of ammunition, as well as vehicles and communications equipment.<sup>49</sup> Poorly equipped, the life of an anti-drug policeman is fraught with danger.<sup>50</sup>

There is significant involvement by outside elements, especially in border areas.<sup>51</sup> In Shenzhen, Guangdong, one of China's four special economic zones, drug-trafficking has also involved criminal gangs and triad organizations, often from across the border in Hong Kong.<sup>52</sup> In fall 1991, the Shenzhen municipal government issued a "Circular on Banning Drugs and Suppressing Triad Organizations."<sup>53</sup>

Drug addicts are a major source of crime. As Dr. Wan Wenpeng of the Yunnan Mental Hospital put it: "The addicts are not like us. Their motif: 'smoke (drugs) first, then the money will come'. So once they got hooked, they would do whatever they could just to get the money, lawfully and unlawfully."<sup>54</sup> In consequence, as a vice-governor of Qinghai province noted in fall 1991: "Criminal drug-related cases have doubled and redoubled, endangering the people physically and mentally and threatening public security."<sup>55</sup> A survey conducted by Nanning police in Guangxi indicated that 80 percent of drug users had lost their life's savings, 45 percent had become separated from their spouses and 78 percent had become involved in criminal activity. In Guangxi alone, the amount of economic losses from drug abuse were conservatively estimated to exceed 450 million yuan annually.<sup>56</sup> The situation in Yunnan's Dali autonomous prefecture is even worse. According to the public security bureau, more than 80 percent of the crimes committed in the area in 1990 were perpetrated by drug addicts. To get more money for drugs, they resorted to armed robbery, extortion, even murder.<sup>57</sup> Groups of drug addicts roamed China's railway lines to steal in order to support their drug habit. A Baotou (Inner Mongolia) group of 29 wandered from place to place, especially along the Beijing-Guangzhou, Beijing-Baotou, and Beijing-Shanghai railways.<sup>58</sup> Their mobile activities posed special challenges to the fragmented railway security administration.<sup>59</sup>

49 "UN Envoy Stresses Antinarcotics Cooperation," Xinhua in English, May 1, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-084, May 1, 1991, pp. 3-4. For additional cases, see "Two Criminals Executed in Chongqing in Efforts To Crack Down on Drug Trafficking Activities," Zhongguo Tongxun She, March 26, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-060, March 28, 1991, p. 60.

50 For a profile of one policeman's work and the ruthlessness of drug dealers, see Wang Fan, "Police Efforts Profiled," *China Daily*, August 22, 1991, p. 6, FBIS-CHI-91-163, August 22, 1991, pp. 29-30.

51 "Crimes by Outside Elements in Guangdong 'Serious'," Zhongguo Tongxun She, April 27, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-088, May 6, 1992, pp. 34-35.

52 Cf. Anita Chan, Richard Madsen, and Jonathan Unger, *Chen Village Under Mao and Deng* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 293-294.

53 "Shenzhen Cracks Down on a Number of Triad Gangs," *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), August 15, 1991, p. 3, FBIS-CHI-91-162, August 21, 1991, p. 56.

54 Daniel Kwan, "China Seeks Aid," *South China Morning Post*, December 10, 1991, p. 3. I have made a slight change in the translation.

55 "Qinghai Meeting on Anti-drug Campaign Opens," Qinghai People's Radio Network, August 28, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-170, September 3, 1991, p. 66.

56 "China's Guangxi Cracking Down on Narcotics Trade," Kyodo News Service, October 6, 1992. The data were originally reported by the China News Agency (Hong Kong).

57 Geoffrey Crothall, "Documents Suggest Drug Problem 'More Serious'," *South China Sunday Morning Post*, May 17, 1992, pp. 1, 7.

58 "Railway Police Crack Down on Theft, Drugs," Beijing Central Television Program One Network, December 6, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-235, December 6, 1991, p. 26. See also "Railroad Police Arrest 12 Heroin

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## II. The State and the Drug Menace: From Passive Containment to People's War

### 1). The Reactive State in the 1980s

Officials both created and were influenced by the ideology that the drug problem was not to be found in socialist China. Thus, when the drug problem began to reemerge in the early 1980s, they hushed it up in an attempt to protect China's drug-free image. In consequence, as Peng Jianfei, Director of the Yunnan Provincial Anti-drug Office, pointed out, while Yunnan was the first to set up an anti-drug apparatus, the province did not publicize its anti-drug effort--since publicity would have been an admission of a drug problem.<sup>60</sup>

Yunnan quietly set up China's first provincial anti-drug apparatus with central approval in 1982, after having encountered significant drug trafficking activities from Burma and Thailand in 1981. That apparatus included a provincial antinarcotics committee, which oversaw a special drug enforcement contingent of over 1,000 members. Various levels of the provincial Public Security Bureau also established counter-narcotics units. The province issued a set of administrative rules on banning drugs and increased border surveillance and antinarcotic inspections along transport routes in order to block the flow of drugs into and through the province.<sup>61</sup>

For the rest of the 1980s, the Yunnan contingent was China's only provincial level drug enforcement force. The central government sought to contain the spread of drugs by "strengthening leadership," by relying on existing institutions such as the Ministry of Public Security and the Customs Administration, and, most importantly, by issuing new anti-narcotic laws.<sup>62</sup>

This last effort paralleled legislative developments in other countries. Great Britain, for example, saw the passage of the Controlled Drugs (Penalties) Act 1985 and the Drug Trafficking Offenses Act 1986.<sup>63</sup> In China, the 1979 version of the Criminal Code had stipulated that persons making, selling, or trafficking in opium, heroin, morphine and other drugs would be sentenced up to five years' imprisonment, plus a punitive fine.

59 Traffickers," Guangdong People's Radio Network, September 30, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-190, October 1, 1991, p. 19. In this case, 20 kilograms of heroin were seized.

For an intimation of the extraordinary problems facing railway security in China, see Zhang Xiangchi, *Zhongguo daji tielu feidao jishi* (A factual report on China's crack-down on railway robbers) (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1991).

60 Hsing Yu and Li Feng-hsiu, "Yunnan Has Made Progress in Struggle Against Drug Trafficking-Interview With Peng Jianfei, Director of Yunnan Provincial Anti-drug Office," *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), October 27, 1991, p. 2, FBIS-CHI-91-216, November 7, 1991, pp. 51-51. See also Lu Niu, "Yunnan To Cut Off 'White Corridor' to Hong Kong," *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong), February 10, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-031, February 14, 1992, pp. 46-47.

61 Lu Niu, "Yunnan To Cut Off 'White Corridor' to Hong Kong," *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong), February 10, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-031, February 14, 1992, pp. 46-47; Hsing Yu and Li Feng-hsiu, "Yunnan Has Made Progress in Struggle Against Drug Trafficking-Interview With Peng Jianfei, Director of Yunnan Provincial Antidrug Office," *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), October 27, 1991, p. 2, FBIS-CHI-91-216, November 7, 1991, pp. 51-51. The provincial antinarcotics committee was headed by a vice governor and comprised of officials representing police, industry, commerce, customs, revenue, and public health.

62 Daniel Kwan, "China Seeks Aid," *South China Morning Post*, December 10, 1991, p. 3.

63 Nicholas Dorn, Karim Murji, and Nigel South, *Traffickers: Drug Markets and Law Enforcement* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 183-187.

Serious offenders faced sentences of more than five years as well as the confiscation of assets. In 1983, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress amended the criminal code so that serious offenders faced sentences of more than 10 years, up to the death sentence. Regulations issued in 1986 criminalized drug-taking. Persons caught taking opium or injecting morphine were subject to detention of 15 days and a punitive fine of 200 yuan. Those who grew opium poppy and other narcotic plants illegally were subject to detention of 15 days and/or a punitive fine of up to 3,000 yuan.<sup>64</sup> These laws and regulations were to be applied to both Chinese and foreign nationals. In 1987, two foreign nationals, one from Thailand, the other from Hong Kong, were executed in China for trafficking 50 pounds of heroin in late 1986 through Yunnan.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, China signed a number of international conventions on narcotics control in the mid-1980s, joining the emerging international prohibition regime.<sup>66</sup> Chinese police also initiated cooperative relationships with counterparts in other countries beginning in 1984. In a celebrated "Goldfish" case of 1988, Chinese police cooperated with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration to smash a drug trafficking ring that extended from the Golden Triangle to Hong Kong, Shanghai, and San Francisco.<sup>67</sup>

Nonetheless, China's efforts to crack down on drug trafficking and drug abuse were not imbued with a sense of urgency. By the end of the 1980s, drug trafficking and drug abuse had spread far beyond Yunnan.

Around 1988-89, the Chinese leadership began to admit that China had a drug problem.<sup>68</sup> The Goldfish Case seemed to indicate a new degree of official resolve to crack down. When the Chinese leadership planned a comprehensive clean-up in public security in January 1989, drug traffickers were prominently listed among the groups targeted for a crackdown.<sup>69</sup>

## 2). The Transition to a People's War on Drugs

"June 4" highlighted the regime's shaky political and social foundations and underscored the urgent need to boost the legitimacy of the regime.<sup>70</sup> While practicing political suppression, the Chinese leadership decided in fall 1989 that a campaign against social ills would skirt the politically more divisive issues generated by the military crackdown and gain social support for the regime. On November 13, 1989, the State Council called for eradicating "six evils" (*liuhai*): prostitution, pornography, the kidnapping and trafficking of women and children, the production, use, and trafficking of illegal drugs, gambling, and superstition.<sup>71</sup>

64 "Public Security Minister Declares War on Drugs," *Beijing Review*, no. 29, July 22-28, 1991, pp. 16-18.

65 "China Executes Two Foreign Drug Dealers," Reuters, February 18, 1987.

66 "China's Attitude Towards Narcotics Control," *Beijing Review*, vol. 30, no. 11 (March 16, 1987), pp. 21-22.

67 William Sexton, "China-U.S. Solution on Drug-Stuffed Fish," *Newsday*, March 18 1988.

68 "China Admits It Has Drug Problem," *Kyodo News Service*, October 6, 1989.

69 *Xinhua yuebao* (New China monthly digest), no. 1 (1989), p. 24. Of the dozen types of criminals, drug traffickers were listed after murderers, robbers, rapists.

70 Cf. Lawrence R. Sullivan, "The Chinese Communist Party and the Beijing Massacre: The Crisis in Authority," in David S.G. Goodman and Gerald Segal, eds., *China in the Nineties: Crisis Management and Beyond* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 87-104.

71 *Xinhua yuebao* (New China monthly digest), no. 11 (1989), p. 30. Also *Ibid.*, no. 2 (1990), pp. 34-35.

A confluence of factors pushed the drug problem into greater prominence in 1990. The spread of drug abuse and drug trafficking accelerated between 1989-1990, especially in urban areas such as in Guangdong and Beijing. This disturbing trend was clearly related to the disillusionment generated by the political crackdown and economic austerity measures. Increasing urban drug use also meant greater consumption of heroin (cf. Table 1), a drug that is harder to detoxify. One major case the Ministry of Public Security was able to crack between 1989 to early 1990 spanned at least four provinces (Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Guangdong). 51 persons were arrested. In addition to 221 kilograms of heroin, the police also seized seven guns and more than 500 rounds of ammunition.<sup>72</sup>

The sharp increase in drug abuse as well as drug trafficking stimulated stronger demands for state action. Leaders in hard-hit areas were vocal advocates for severely cracking down on drug-related criminal activities and requested more police forces and funds.<sup>73</sup> There were also personal appeals from society, including a joint plea by over 100 parents to the central authorities, asking for help to save their drug-addicted children.<sup>74</sup> Orthodox members of the establishment took great pains at emphasizing the importance of state control.<sup>75</sup>

In response to these push factors as well as its own assessment of the deteriorating situation, the central government embarked in 1990 on a new phase of antinarcotic work centered on new legislation, institutional building at the national level, and a get-tough strategy in Yunnan, meaning executions. In 1990, the province executed more than 240 people for drug smuggling. At one mass sentencing rally in June, 40 people were given death sentences for drug-related offenses. "Deal with [the drug problem] through severity, that's our [new] motto," said Yang Ming, director of the Education, Science, Culture and Public Health Committee of the Yunnan provincial people's congress and concurrently a member of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. According to Yang, "we were a bit soft [before 1990] and didn't pay enough attention to this problem [of drugs]...now we are very serious. If we can sentence someone to death, we certainly will."<sup>76</sup>

By fall 1990, the get-tough strategy was made China's national anti-drug policy. The new legislative initiative was a "Decision on the Prohibition of Drugs," which amended and supplemented the relevant articles in the Criminal Code. In late October 1990, the Law Committee of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) submitted a draft version of the decision to the Standing Committee for approval.<sup>77</sup> Invoking the memory of humiliation China had suffered after the Opium

72 "Fight Against Drugs To Intensify," Xinhua in English, November 15, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-221, November 15, 1991, p. 34.

73 *Xinhua yuebao* (New China monthly digest), no. 10 (1990), p. 25.

74 Chen Chien-ping, "Beijing Strictly Orders All Localities To Fight Drugs," *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), June 14, 1991, p. 2, FBIS-CHI-91-118, June 19, 1991, pp. 30-31.

75 For reports and articles on this, see *Xinhua yuebao* (New China monthly digest), no. 6 (1990), pp. 37-42.

76 The statistics and quotation in this paragraph come from David Schlesinger, "China's Drug-Plagued Yunnan Province Sees Executions as Answer," Reuters, March 29, 1991.

77 The drafting of the decision had the support of and was probably initiated by the State Council.

War,<sup>78</sup> sponsors of the statute called for a tougher stance on illegal drugs. The new law, approved in December 1990, carries a 15 year jail sentence, life imprisonment, or, in severe cases, the death penalty, with the forfeiture of assets, for those convicted of smuggling, trafficking or manufacturing over one kilogram of opium or 50 grams of heroin or a large quantity of other drugs.<sup>79</sup>

As the NPC Standing Committee debated the merits of the draft decision, the State Council headed by Premier Li Peng on November 23, 1990 established a National Narcotics Control Commission (NNCC), which was made up of representatives from 16 ministries and commissions. One of NNCC's first jobs was to conduct a national survey on drugs, analyze the drug situation both in and outside of China, and formulate drug control policy recommendations in preparation for a national anti-drug work conference.<sup>80</sup>

Neither the NNCC survey nor its policy recommendations have been made public. Internal reports reached the conclusion that, in many areas of the country, drug trafficking was rampant, drug abuse was widespread, and the drug control situation was grim. As NNCC head Wang Fang would put it, "The current drug situation in China is the grimmest the country has experienced since 1952."<sup>81</sup> This realization helped galvanize the top leaders. General Secretary Jiang Zemin commented that the eradication of illegal drugs is "a question of life and death."<sup>82</sup> Thus the Chinese leadership launched a massive people's war on drugs, though still insisting that the drugs came from abroad.<sup>83</sup> National pride mattered as Wang Pingchun, the mayor of Kunming (capital of Yunnan), reported to an inspection team of the National People's Congress: "Though Kunming has made progress in the anti-drug campaign, the relevant situation remains desperate. We are determined to work hard to preserve the state's reputation, safeguard the nation's interests, and maintain social stability, resolutely holding the spread of drug abuse in check."<sup>84</sup>

78 As legislator Deng Jiatai put it: "In old China, foreigners use to look down upon the Chinese because of the drug addiction and prostitution that was rampant in the country." "China Approves Death Penalty for Drug Smuggling, Pornography," Reuters, December 28, 1990.

79 "UN Envoy Stresses Antinarcotics Cooperation," *Xinhua in English*, May 1, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-084, May 1, 1991, pp. 3-4. In the draft that was submitted to the Standing Committee, the threshold amount was set at 1500 grams of opium or 100 grams of heroin. This was reduced by the Standing Committee. In addition, the final version also included penalties on those who planted large number of poppies as well as those who lured or taught others to use or inject drugs, or supply state-controlled drugs or mind-altering drugs to those who sell, eat, or inject drugs. *Xinhua yuebao* (New China monthly digest), no. 10 (1990), p. 25; no. 12 (1990), p. 10.

80 "Public Security Minister Declares War on Drugs," *Beijing Review*, no. 29, July 22-28, 1991, pp. 16-18.

81 "China Says Drug Problem Grim, Calls New Crackdown," United Press International, June 25, 1991.

82 "Jiang Urges Eradication of Drug Use, Trafficking," AFP (Hong Kong) in English, October 23, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-205, October 23, 1991, pp. 25-26. Jiang's remarks, which were most likely made in early 1991, were first reported in the *China Youth News* (*Zhongguo qingnian bao*).

83 As Yu Lei told reporters: "What should be specially pointed out is the fact that the source of the Chinese domestic drug problem is abroad, and the transit drug problem is the major one China is fighting." Nick Driver, "China Executes Dozens of Traffickers As Drug Woes Deepen," United Press International, June 26, 1992.

84 "NPC Group Inspects Anti-drug Campaign in Yunnan," Yunnan People's Radio Network, October 9, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-201, October 17, 1991, p. 36.

### 3) The People's War on Drugs

The war on drugs was an elite-engineered and guided program to mobilize the population to stay away from illegal drugs, by force if necessary. Central to this war on drugs was the execution of traffickers after cautionary sentencing rallies in giant stadiums. The spectacle of state power cannot be separated from the real thing.

China launched its war on drugs in mid-1991, with major activities organized around international anti-drug day at the end of June. In a strongly-worded directive issued a little earlier, the CCP Central Committee demanded that all localities adopt all feasible measures to bring the drug menace under control within two or three years. Policy centered on the "three prohibitions" (drug trafficking, cultivation, and addiction).<sup>85</sup> The goal was to bring China back to the "drug-contamination-free" social conditions of the 1950's through a multi-dimensional drug control program that included drug interdiction, mass education, prevention, and rehabilitation.<sup>86</sup>

The imposition of severe penalties, including death sentences, on those convicted of drug offenses is a practice commonly known as "killing the chicken to frighten the monkey." In 1991, China sentenced 866 people to life imprisonment, death or suspended death sentences for drug offenses.<sup>87</sup> The comparable figure for 1992 was 1,354 (Table 1, note 4). The sentences are usually read out in front of thousands of spectators called in by local governments to bear witness and to learn lessons. On October 26, 1991, Kunming, the capital of Yunnan province, as well as 15 other prefectures in Yunnan held grand sentencing rallies.<sup>88</sup> The Kunming rally--the third or the fourth in the city since fall 1990--had an estimated audience of 40,000, including delegates from across the country. During this rally, 35 drug offenders were given death sentences and executed immediately after the rally.

State television showed the prisoners hustled into the stadium in Kunming ... at the start of an anti-drug rally.... While crowds looked on from the packed stadium seats, the men were sentenced to death as they were held by police equipped with helmets and machine guns.

Such sentencing rallies have become a common scene, especially at the end of June in observance of the international anti-drug day. At the end of June 1992, a compilation of reports by state-run newspapers and news agencies indicated that sentences on more than 230 traffickers were read out in such gatherings in Yunnan, Sichuan, Guangdong and Hunan in the south, and Shaanxi and Gansu in the west. On June 28, 1992, 62 drug

85 "Fight Against Drugs To Intensify," *Xinhua* in English, November 15, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-221, November 15, 1991, p. 34.

86 Chen Chien-ping, "Beijing Strictly Orders All Localities To Fight Drugs," *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), June 14, 1991, p. 2, FBIS-CHI-91-118, June 19, 1991, pp. 30-31.

87 *RMRB*, June 26, 1992, p. 1. Amnesty International recorded more than 1,600 death sentences and over 1,000 executions in 1991. About a quarter were for drug charges. The organization said its unofficial sources suggested the actual number of executions was as high as 20,000 for the year. "China Executes at Least 39 for Drugs," *Reuters*, June 26, 1992.

88 The following account on Yunnan is based on "China Executes 35 Drug Offenders After Public Trial," *Reuters*, October 26, 1991. 88. For report on the Yunnan rally of August 16, 1991, see Ren Weidong, "Kunming Wins Initial Victory in Banning Drugs," *RMRB*, August 18, 1991, p. 3, FBIS-CHI-91-163, August 22, 1991, p. 6.

offenders were executed in four provinces, including 17 in Sichuan, 18 in Guangdong, 21 in Yunnan, and 6 in Gansu.<sup>89</sup>

Also featured at the public rallies is the burning of seized drugs.<sup>90</sup> In July 1991, the Guangdong provincial anti-narcotics committee launched its campaign by burning captured opium and heroin on the banks of the Pearl River. Governor Zhu Senlin, who lit the fire, commented: "The fire expressed the provincial government's determination to carry the anti-drug battle through to the end."<sup>91</sup>

The historical parallels were not lost on reporters. One hundred and fifty-two years ago (June 3 to 25, 1839), Imperial Commissioner Lin Zexu burnt opium near the mouth of the Pearl River, thereby precipitating the Opium War. One reporter pointed out that the drug-burning scene reminded him of "Lin Zexu's just struggle against opium."<sup>92</sup>

One after another, Guangdong, Guizhou and Yunnan and other places have set fire to huge piles of confiscated drugs before tens of thousands of people. The billowing smoke and the raging flames indicate the firm determination of the Chinese people who suffered enough from the Opium War imposed by the imperialist power to prevent history from repeating itself.<sup>93</sup>

The public rallies, sentences, and drug-burning are all components of a symbolic confrontation between the state and uncivil society. To win such a war, however, symbolism is not enough. Below we describe and analyze developments in institutional building, public education, rehabilitation, and policy implementation.

#### 4) A War on Many Fronts

The NNCC was expanded and upgraded administratively to enhance its authority within the bureaucratic system. The Chinese government also allocated more funds to and expanded the size of the frontier armed police units in Yunnan.<sup>94</sup> Ten provinces including Guangdong and Guangxi set up special anti-drug forces by 1991. Yunnan and nine other provinces and autonomous regions established special institutions to lead the anti-drug campaign.<sup>95</sup> The provinces held meetings to relay the message. Most provinces drafted resolutions or programs that incorporated the central message while paying attention to the local situation (See Appendix 1 for a translation of the Inner Mongolia decision).<sup>96</sup>

89 "Swift Justice Mounts for China Drug Offenders," United Press International, June 27, 1992; "China Executes 62 In One Day For Drug Crimes," Reuters, July 1, 1992; "China Executes 45 Drug Smugglers," Kyodo News Service, June 27, 1992. It is entirely possible that others were executed in provinces not listed here.

90 During the Kunming just described, one ton of heroin and four tons of opium, seized during the latest anti-drug drive were burnt in 60 large cauldrons.

91 "Chinese Governor Lights Bonfire of Seized Drugs," Reuters, July 13, 1991.

92 "Zhu Senlin at Guangdong Antinarcotics Ceremony," Guangdong People's Radio Network, July 12, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-135, July 15, 1991, p. 74.

93 "Roundup: China Set To Eliminate Drug Trafficking," *Xinhua in English*, December 27, 1991; FBIS-CHI-91-250, December 30, 1991, p. 27.

94 Chen Chien-ping, "Beijing Strictly Orders All Localities To Fight Drugs," *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), June 14, 1991, p. 2, FBIS-CHI-91-118, June 19, 1991, pp. 30-31.

95 "Fight Against Drugs To Intensify," *Xinhua in English*, November 15, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-221, November 15, 1991, p. 34. Unfortunately, we have little detailed information on these local institutions at this time.

96 "Fight Against Drugs To Intensify," *Xinhua in English*, November 15, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-221, November 15, 1991, p. 34; "Yunnan Drug Abuse, Trafficking Laws Take Effect," *Xinhua in English* May 31, 1991,



One key element of societal mobilization was public education about the dangers of illegal drugs. Yunnan, Shaanxi, and other provinces had by late 1991 made more than 10,000 copies of video tapes--which had titles such as "The Harm of Drugs," "Poisonous Mist and Warning Alarm," and "Drug Prohibition Is Inevitable"--and shown them to an estimated 100 million people.<sup>97</sup> In 1992, the NNCC and Ministries of Health and Public Security jointly produced and released the video film *Drugs in China*, a graphic portrayal of the harsh reality of drugs in contemporary China. This film was released for internal viewing only.<sup>98</sup> In the meantime, the State Education Commission and the Ministry of Public Security issued China's version of the "just say no" anti-drug handbook in June 1992.<sup>99</sup> Targeted at middle-school students, the 57-page handbook reviews the painful history of China's fight against narcotic drugs and warns of the harm drugs have brought to the nation and to individuals.

The Chinese government also invested in rehabilitation facilities and the development of new detoxification medications.<sup>100</sup> Furthermore, the state gave itself a broad mandate to effect rehabilitation. Drug addicts will be forced to quit their habit as needed. Repeaters may be put into reeducation-through-labor camps and forced to quit.<sup>101</sup> By mid-1992, the number of compulsory detoxification centers in China's cities and counties had increased to 232,<sup>102</sup> more than doubling the number before the anti-drug campaign.

According to Wang Fang, head of the NNCC, the central focus of the crackdown on drugs was to block the flow of drugs from abroad. Therefore, China strengthened police work along the border areas of Yunnan and Guangxi, as well as coastal provinces such as Guangdong, Fujian. Moreover, efforts were made to curb the drug traffic to the interior and smash drug transaction centers in Sichuan and Guizhou.<sup>103</sup>

Chinese police and anti-drug forces have launched a number of major campaigns. The most dramatic confrontation took place in fall 1992 in Yunnan's Pingyuan, a multi-

FBIS-CHI-91-108, June 5, 1991, p. 69; 96. "Guangdong Steps Up Antinarcotics Measures," Xinhua in English, August 5, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-151, August 6, 1991, p. 50.

97 "Fight Against Drugs To Intensify," Xinhua in English, November 15, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-221, November 15, 1991, p. 34.

98 "Anti-Drug Abuse Film Reveals 300,000 Addicts," *The Standard* (Hong Kong), July 17, 1992, p. A-10, FBIS-CHI-92-138, July 17, 1992, p. 9.

99 "China Gets First 'Just Say No' Anti-Drug Handbook," Reuters, June 24, 1992; "China's Tally of Drug Abusers Doubles," Reuters, October 29, 1992.

100 Chen Chien-ping, "Beijing Strictly Orders All Localities To Fight Drugs," *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), June 14, 1991, p. 2, FBIS-CHI-91-118, June 19, 1991, pp. 30-31.

101 "Public Security Minister Declares War on Drugs," *Beijing Review*, no. 29, July 22-28, 1991, pp. 16-18; Zhao Jianrong, "Ministry of Justice Reeducation-Through-Labor Bureau Holds Forum to Probe Overall Plan for Stepping Up Work of Kicking Drug Habit by Reeducation Through Labor," *Fazhi ribao* (Legal daily), June 17, 1992, p. 1, FBIS-CHI-92-140, July 21, 1992, pp. 22-23. For evidence regarding the imposition of reeducation-through-labor, see Ren Weidong, "Kunming Wins Initial Victory in Banning Drugs," *RMRB*, August 18, 1991, p. 3, FBIS-CHI-91-163, August 22, 1991, p. 6.

102 *RMRB*, overseas ed., June 26, 1992, p. 1. For details on local developments, see "Public Security Minister Declares War on Drugs," *Beijing Review*, no. 29, July 22-28, 1991, pp. 16-18; "Guangdong Steps Up Antinarcotics Measures," Xinhua in English, August 5, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-151, August 6, 1991, p. 50.

103 "People's War Against Drugs To Be Launched," XINHUA in English, July 16, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-136, July 16, 1991, p. 38.

ethnic area close to the Sino-Vietnamese border.<sup>104</sup> In this area, drug traffickers teamed up with other criminal elements as well as local officials (such as Lin Hongen, a deputy head of Pingyuan township) for drug dealing and arms trafficking. Their networks extended throughout southern China and beyond. Since at least the mid-1980s, the area has been like "a country within the country." Attempts by the Chinese government to regain control were rebuffed by the gangs working in concert with local minority populations.

On August 31, 1992, Yunnan provincial authorities, with approval from the Central Committee and the State Council, launched a military-style attack on the area, the largest military operation on drugs in the history of the P.R.C. It lasted for 80 days and involved more than 2,000 people from the people's armed police and special units. Fierce gun battles using armored vehicles and cannon helped subdue the traffickers. By November 20, the police had rounded up 854 people on drug charges (seven have been sentenced to death), captured 981 kilograms of illegal drugs (including 896 kilograms of heroin) and 353 pieces of illegal military rifles and 611 rifles for non-military use, and confiscated more than 10 million yuan in cash and 64 houses built with drug money. Once control was reasserted, a complete reshuffle of local government and party leaders was instituted "to eliminate the influence of evil forces on some grass-roots organizations." "In Pingyuan, Yunnan has fought a pretty fight," Communist Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin was quoted as saying in his message of congratulation.

That the state lost control of the area underscores the growing influence of drug dealers. Might the state win the battle of Pingyuan and yet still lose the war on drugs? To be sure, more and more offenders are being apprehended, convicted, and executed for drug-related offenses. The amount of drugs captured has also increased significantly. Some areas such as Quanzhou saw a greater incidence of the sale of fake heroin.<sup>105</sup> Yet the fact that there are more traffickers to arrest and more illegal drugs to capture suggests that the drug problem has not gone away. Drug traffickers may move to other areas where anti-drug institutions are not well developed. As Dorn, Murji, and South have commented in a different context, tougher enforcement notwithstanding, "drug markets continue to expand internationally and domestically in most countries: trafficking thrives, drug availability increases, use of illicit drugs is buoyant, going through changes in fashion in regard of the substances concerned but hardly crumpling under the on-

104 Details on this case in this and next paragraph come from the following reports: Zhou Jize and Hu Manhong, "Pingyuan da saodu jishi" (A factual report of the anti-narcotics campaign in Pingyuan), *Minzhu yu fazhi* (Democracy and law), no. 3 (1993), pp. 7-11; "China Details Assault on Outlaw Drug Capital," January 17, 1993, Reuters; "China Mounts Military-Style Attack on Drug Lord," December 23, 1992, Reuters; and *RMRB*, May 31, 1993, p. 3. The English reports are in turn based on two Chinese publications *Southern Weekend* and *Legal Daily*, which I have not yet seen.

For additional cases of anti-narcotic work, see Shi Xiaoyan, *Shijimuo de teshu zhanzheng* (The special war of the century's end) (Kunming: Yunnan daxue chubanshe, 1993).

105 "Fujian's Quanzhou City Executes Drug Traffickers," *Zhongguo Xinwen She* in Chinese, November 3, 1991; FBIS-CHI-91-221, November 15, 1991, p. 66.

slaught of enforcement."<sup>106</sup> China's short experience with drugs so far appears to fall into the same pattern.

The combination of drugs, political power, and economic control in the Pingyuan case also suggests the embeddedness of drugs in many communities and the difficulties of eradication. Members of the elite, including cadres and professionals, are involved. Such involvement indicates that parts of the state may be corrupted by drugs. In the "Zhen" case of the early 1980s, she had a significant number of military personnel and state workers in her drug trafficking network, sometimes using military vehicles to transport opium.<sup>107</sup>

In some areas of Guangdong, drug trafficking and drug abuse are protected by local despots in some villages and towns infested with drugs. Wielding political power, clan authority, and financial control, these local despots are drug barons in the guise of cadres. They bribe their superiors for protection. Some of the villages and towns are even designated as advanced in socialist material civilization and spiritual civilization.<sup>108</sup> In other areas, such as Hebei, officials report that a major problem in law enforcement was that law enforcement agents replaced legal penalties with fines in drug cases.<sup>109</sup> Such incidents suggests a degree of state complicity in the spread of drugs. While the agents of the state use the fines to supplement their income, traffickers can simply carry on as before. Finally, drug rehabilitation facilities are far from adequate. As NNCC head Wang Fang revealed, while the number of officially registered drug users reached 250,000 in 1992, only 46,000 (including repeaters), or 18.4%, received compulsory rehabilitation treatment.<sup>110</sup> The shortage of facilities has led to perverse phenomena. In Yunnan, some parents used family connections in order to get their drug-addicted children put in re-education camps. In other areas, according to Gu Yingqi, a vice minister of public health, the growing demand for treatment centers led profit-hungry individuals to establish "drug rehabilitation centers" that are in reality drug-supply centers.<sup>111</sup> In Beijing, one drug clinic sold opium to 3,776 people and allowed them to smoke opium in the clinic over a three-year period.<sup>112</sup> Equally vexing for Chinese institutions is the problem of relapse. As Dr. Li Lixun of Guangdong Psychiatric Research Institute put it, "in this area, we can say that we have not achieved our expected outcome."<sup>113</sup> In the

<sup>106</sup> Nicholas Dorn, Karim Murji, and Nigel South, *Traffickers: Drug Markets and Law Enforcement* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 199.

<sup>107</sup> You Shang and Huang Ying, *Zhongguo jindu jishi* (A factual report on drug control in China) (Changsha, Hunan: Sanhuan chubanshe, 1991), pp. 10, 12.

<sup>108</sup> Hua Lianwen, "Guangdong xidu fandu xiezhen" (A portrayal of drug abuse and drug trafficking in Guangdong), *Jiushi niandai* (The nineties), no. 264 (January 1, 1992), pp. 50-53.

<sup>109</sup> Sun Yuehui and Luo Zhenxu, "Hebei Province Holds Work Conference on Banning Narcotics and Attacking Smuggling," *Hebei ribao*, November 5, 1991, p. 1; FBIS-CHI-91-239, December 12, 1991, p. 63.

<sup>110</sup> "Number of Drug Users in China Hits 250,000," Kyodo News Service, November 19, 1992.

<sup>111</sup> "Official Warns on Fake Drug Treatment Centers," *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, December 4, 1992, p. 23.

<sup>112</sup> "The Mainland Adopts Stern Measures To Ban Drugs," *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), March 25, 1991, p. 20, FBIS-CHI-91-060, March 28, 1991, pp. 27-28.

<sup>113</sup> Daniel Kwan, "China Seeks Aid," *South China Morning Post*, December 10, 1991, p. 3.

past few years, China has also experimented with the psychological treatment of drugs, but the number of people treated using this method is minuscule.<sup>114</sup>

### 3. Conclusions and Implications

Drug trafficking, drug abuse, and drug-related crimes have grown extremely rapidly in China since at least the early 1980s. However, because of China's past success in suppressing drugs and because of the official ideology that drugs are not a problem in socialist countries, the Chinese state was slow to react. It was not until 1989-90 that the Chinese leadership confronted the drug problem in a serious manner.

The rapid spread of drug trafficking and drug abuse in a relatively short period of time in China suggests that liberalizing societies are vulnerable societies. For a significant fraction of the population, temptation is born of the forbidden; what is forbidden by a politically oppressive regime is attractive and worthy of some experimentation, if not outright adoption. Yet, precisely because the society had been sealed off, such a population is usually not adequately prepared to deal with the social and moral responsibilities that come with such experimentation; nor does the government possess the panoply of institutions needed to deal with drug abuse. In the meantime, extremely rapid socio-economic change under the reforms has also produced a disenchanting social stratum more predisposed to finding escape in illegal drugs. These two mechanisms largely explain the swift turn to illegal drugs in liberalizing societies such as China, the former Soviet Union, and Spain after Franco.<sup>115</sup>

No state can afford to sit idly by as drug trafficking and drug abuse spread. In consequence, rising drug-related crime has stimulated state-building (in terms of both legislation and law enforcement), particularly in large countries where leaders think they can get things under control. In North America (both the U.S. and Canada), this has meant a war on drugs and a military attack on one alleged drug-trafficking government (Panama).<sup>116</sup> In Australia, an offensive against drug trafficking and illicit drug use has been launched.<sup>117</sup> In Britain, the spread of drugs has stimulated the modernization of policing and propelled it half-way towards a national police.<sup>118</sup> The imperatives of the drug menace have forced the hands of the state and, in the words of one commentator, have led to "the warlike administration of justice."<sup>119</sup> In tandem with increasing criminalization for drug-related offenses, the Chinese state has expanded the police forces

114 "Symposium Discusses Treatment of Drug Addicts," *Xinhua* in English, November 21, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-226, November 22, 1991, p. 34.

115 On Spain, see Axel R. Reeg, "Drugs and the Law in Post-Franco Spain," in Harold H. Traver and Marks S. Gaylord, eds., *Drugs, Law, and the State* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), pp. 49-64; on the Soviet Union, see Rensselaer Lee, *Dynamics of the Soviet Illicit Drug Market*.

116 Numerous writings are available on the war on drugs. For one analysis, see Bruce K. Alexander, "Alternatives to the War on Drugs," *Journal of Drug Issues*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1990), pp. 1-27. Alexander includes an extensive bibliography of publications on the war on drugs.

117 Robert Marks, "A Freer Market for Heroin in Australia: Alternatives to Subsidizing Organized Crime," *Journal of Drug Issues*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1990), pp. 131-176.

118 Nicholas Dorn, Karim Murji, and Nigel South, *Traffickers: Drug Markets and Law Enforcement* (London: Routledge, 1992).

119 Eugene H. Czajkowski, "Drugs and the Warlike Administration of Justice," *Journal of Drug Issues*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1990), pp. 125-129.

devoted to drug-related crimes as well as taken on the task of providing education, rehabilitation facilities for addicts, and research.

The confrontation was shaped by the legacy of China's past experience with drugs and the memory of humiliation associated with it. This legacy forecloses the option of legalization. Instead, like the U.S., Australia, and many other countries, China launched its own war on drugs with virtually no debate about other options. Nevertheless, the criminalization of drug offenses and the increasing use of force by police have failed to stem the tide of drugs sweeping onto China.

Yet the interaction between the state and uncivil society is paradoxical for states engaged in a process of liberalization because the crackdown on drugs demands greater state penetration of society. The intrusion of the state into society has increased surveillance and even harassment of suspect groups and individuals. In the fall of 1992, Chinese police in Beijing detained at least 30 young anti-establishment musicians and artists on suspicion of using and selling drugs and allegedly employed beatings and other forms of coercion to force confessions.<sup>120</sup>

Ironically, the illegitimacy of the current regime may even discredit legitimate anti-drug activities such that the present rulers may turn out to be uniquely incapable of checking the drug plague in China. The leaders of China's drug-enforcement apparatus appear to have concluded that the war may never end. Yu Lei, a vice-minister of public security, commented that the combination of increasing worldwide production of illegal drugs and China's porous borders means that "cracking down on drug trafficking and abuse will be a long-term, arduous task." "It is unrealistic to expect that China can wipe out drug crimes in a very short period of time, like one or two years."<sup>121</sup> Minister Tao Siju likewise conceded that crime rates across the country would very likely continue to rise in the next few years. The "six vices or evils" [including drugs] would definitely not be eliminated by simply taking a few measures to ban or crack down on them. They would resurface with ease and might spread further in some localities.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Nick Driver, "China Cracks Down on Rock Musicians, Artists," United Press International October 4, 1992.

<sup>121</sup> "Drug Crackdown Said 'Long-Term, Arduous Task,'" Xinhua in English, November 21, 1992, FBIS-CHI-92-226, November 23, 1992, p. 30.

<sup>122</sup> Lou Lixian, "Minister Speaks [at Public Security Meeting]," Xinhua Domestic Service, March 9, 1991, FBIS-CHI-91-048, March 12, 1991, pp. 31-32.