

BUSTED BY THE FEDS? GOVERNMENT CORRUPTION AND DRUG TRAFFICKING

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Abstract

The international drug trade and the power of drug cartels have perplexed both analysts and policy makers for years. As drug production and trade grow, cartels have climbed to unthinkable heights of power and, in some cases, have crippled governments. This study explores this problem and attempts to answer the predominant question raised: why do states struggle to eradicate such powerful drug cartels and drug trafficking organizations? While multiple schools of thought emerge that answer this question, research finds that existing literature shows little quantitative and holistic analysis of government corruption as a possible explanation. Therefore, this study looks to government corruption as one possible answer to states' struggle to eradicate drug cartels. This study hypothesizes that high levels of government corruption lead to a decrease in a state's eradication of drug cartels. By looking at a corruption score per country and police reported drug trafficking offenses per country, the study uses a simple linear regression to test the hypothesis. Some data results, such as moderate correlation and low r-squared, show that many other factors affect a state's eradication of drug cartels, and government corruption plays only a small part in explaining cartels' power. However, the analysis suggests that higher levels of government corruption may lead to a decrease in a state's elimination of cartels.

Introduction

Throughout the world, drugs are an expanding business (UNODC 2010). As the demand for drugs grows, so do the cartels that supply the drugs. With the cartels' expansion comes power, and the state's eradication of these cartels may diminish. This predicament poses the question: Why do states struggle to eradicate drug cartels? This study will identify several paths, yet will explore only one reason as to why these organizations are able to not only exert such power over a government and its people, but how states have such a problem combatting them. Having a greater knowledge of why the cartels are so powerful can help action-based researchers understand how to stop them. Understanding the cause and effect behind drug cartels is important not only for the wellbeing and prosperity of the country itself, but also in terms of U.S. foreign policy. A huge percentage of drugs in the United States come from outside countries, and U.S officials are constantly struggling to stop this immense inflow of drugs. Drugs are being smuggled into the United States from states and cartels across the globe such as Russia, Asia, and South America at an alarming rate (UNODC, "Drug Trafficking" 2010). Understanding why states are unable to control drug cartels provides pertinent information for future action or policy-

based research that wishes to provide solutions to combat the cartels.

In order to answer the question of why states struggle to eradicate drug cartels, this study will first explore all possible answers to this question in terms of the evidence in the current literature. After exploring these answers, the study will look to government corruption as a possible explanation, hypothesizing that higher levels of government corruption lead to a decrease in state's eradication of drug cartels. In order to test this hypothesis, the study will conduct a statistical analysis of data from seventy four countries. First testing for statistical significance and correlation among corruption and cartel persistence, a simple linear regression analysis will provide an estimate of the change in the drug trafficking arrests that are associated with lower levels of government corruption. The results show that the association is statistically significant and a moderate positive correlation exists between the variables. Although lower levels of corruption only explain a modest proportion of the variation in drug trafficking arrests, suggesting that multiple other factors contribute to a state's eradication of drug cartels, statistical testing suggests that higher levels of government corruption lead to a decrease in a state's ability to eradicate drug cartels.

Four Accounts Explaining a State's Struggle to Eradicate Drug Cartels

Four schools of thought emerge that try to explain why cartels and drug trafficking organizations seem so immune to the counternarcotic policies brought against them. Extensive literature exists on the problem of drug cartels due to the fact that it can be considered a global problem. Countries in which strong cartels operate face the many, frequently violent, problems that come with cartels. Countries that are not plagued by cartels still feel their influence in the drugs imported from the cartels. The four most widely accepted explanations are insurgency group theory, negative international interference, poverty, and government corruption. Insurgency group theory, the first of these schools, makes the argument that often revolutionary or guerilla groups are the drug traffickers, and their political power makes them extremely hard to control (Robins 2008, 634). Second, scholars stress that international interference, specifically U.S interference, often has an extremely negative effect on a state's ability to fight cartels (Friesendorf 2005, 37). The poverty explanation asserts that high levels of poverty within a country increases a drug cartel's power in multiple ways, making it harder for the states (Klein 1999, 51). Lastly, scholars have often found high levels of government corruption in countries with powerful drug cartels (Knoester 1998, 94).

The insurgency group theory asserts that many countries' cartels are not primarily drug trafficking organizations, rather powerful political revolutionary groups that use drug trafficking as a means to fund their cause. Robins (2008, 632) uses the country case study of Turkey to illustrate this theory. Turkey had almost beaten their drug problem until the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) came in as a revolutionary group. With the arrival of the PKK came an increase of violence, and in turn, an encouraged narcotics trade (Robins 2008, 634). The powerful political influence that the PKK was able to exert over civilians made it extremely hard for the standing government to focus on the increasing narcotics problem, especially as they were already preoccupied with an existing revolution. It can also be argued that in countries with strong counterinsurgency groups, the people of the country are often not pleased with the government and perhaps less likely to support any government policies, even if they are counternarcotic policies. This school of thought is an extremely good explanation of the situation in Turkey specifically as well as other select states plagued by revolutionary groups. However,

it cannot be broadly applied since not every country hindered by drug cartels is also experiencing a political revolution. The first school of thought can be explored in countries where strong resurgent groups are present, but all revolutionary groups do not traffic drugs to fund their activities as a profit. The insurgency group theory should be explored with countries experiencing political revolutions, but is inapplicable in the present case.

The theory that international interference, specifically interference by the U.S, impedes a state's eradication of their cartels is one that is widely accepted by drug policy scholars (Friesendorf 2005, 37). There are multiple reasons cited by scholars for this phenomenon. Friesendorf argues a displacement theory and maintains that U.S attempts to eradicate drug cartels simply create more unintended problems. By applying their economic and military aid in one place, the U.S simply creates problems in others. Drug use and location grown are simply shifted to another area, global opinion of the U.S is weakened, and the power of the existing state government is often undermined. Another key point that Friesendorf emphasizes is the detrimental effects that arise when the aid falls into the hands of paramilitary groups (Friesendorf 2005, 37). Knoester also uses this argument as his central thesis in determining the negative effects of U.S and foreign aid. Both scholars assert that often the aid is given to groups who are notorious for violence and civilian abuse. Therefore, an increase in aid from the U.S. corresponds with an increase in violence, civil unrest, and narcotics. While Knoester's argument is clearly defined and supported by careful empirical evidence, he applies it specifically to the case study of Colombia. These numbers cannot be applied in every situation and, as was the case with Robins' research, the theory therefore cannot be applied on a broader level. Friesendorf does an excellent job of applying his research on a more comprehensive level, even though his goal was to explain the specific displacement of the South American cocaine business.

The third theory is that poverty not only increases cartels' production and power, but decreases a state's eradication of cartels. Klein points to the correlation between poverty and drug use: a strong positive correlation exists between individual consumption intake of drugs and the level of poverty in certain areas or states (Klein 1999, 51). Thus a supply and demand market is present; this theory argues that an increase in demand for drugs causes an increase in quantity of drugs supplied, and thus an increase in cartel production. Chouvey (2011) similarly argues that economic development is necessary to a state's successful eradication of drug trafficking organizations. States that suffer from poverty often have fewer resources to fight drug cartels, thus hindering their suppression. Similarly, states that suffer from poverty may also suffer from a myriad of other problems that divert the governments' time and attention. Chouvey sees economic development as an answer to these problems. Theoretically, a decrease in poverty will result in a decrease in demand that will bring a decrease in cartels. This argument certainly provides a direct answer to the question posed. However, since many drug cartels export internationally, solving economic problems in one country will not immediately decrease poverty and drug consumption in another.

Klein (1999) and Block (2001) argue that poverty increases drug production, and thus the size and power of cartels. Block explains how in many underdeveloped countries with few other viable sources of income, farmers have no other choice but to farm agricultural drugs. Between punishment and survival, poor farmers will choose survival and face the few consequences that drug farming brings (Block 2001, 3). Smith supports this argument in the case of coca producers in Colombia, who also have little to no other means for survival and will therefore continue their coca production (Smith 1992, 99).

Cartels continue to have their supply of drugs, and states cannot eradicate those who have no other means of income. While this theory can point to why drug production is still high in cartel states, it can only indirectly answer why cartels themselves are so powerful.

Government corruption is the last argument as to why cartels are so hard to eradicate, and in this case it seems the most applicable theory. Ulloa (1998, 3-18) states that entire legislative systems, from the police to the courts, are often undermined by cartels. Both Robins (2008) and Knoester (1998) point to government corruption as a cause of the cartels' power in their case studies. Both also state that in almost any country that struggles with cartels, there will be some level of government corruption (Robins 2008, 635; Knoester 1998, 94). In countries that are plagued by cartels, the corruption reaches to the highest levels of government.

Grillo also supports this theory and discusses how, in Mexico, governments accepting drug money for favors is simply another means of business and fundraising. In their government, "corruption was not a rot but rather the oil and glue of the machine" (2011, 35). Grillo references similar attitudes by the government in Chinese opium growth (35). Government corruption, although changing in form, continues today; this corruption further complicates the problem and hinders the governments' ability to fight the drug cartels (Grillo 2011, 104). In order to solve the cartel problem, a state must rid itself of government corruption (Grillo 2011, 24). Grillo's argument successfully answers the question as to why Mexico in particular has such trouble ridding itself of cartels. Even though his argument is specific to Mexico, the literature from Knoester, Robins and Ulloa suggests that government corruption is often an underlying problem for states struggling with cartels. Although almost every study references government corruption as a possible cause, there is very little research that explores the relationship on a broader scale, which is what this paper will attempt to do.

In conclusion, government corruption is an extremely applicable answer to why states struggle to eradicate drug cartels. The power of paramilitary or revolutionary groups cannot answer the question since these groups do not exist in every single country suffering from drug cartels. International interference has been shown to impede states' fight against cartels, yet not every state garners international attention and much of the literature is too context-dependent, and hard to apply in a more general sense. Poverty is also a plausible explanation, yet poverty does a better job explaining the power of drug consumption, and it does not give a direct answer as to why states struggle to eradicate drug cartels. However, the account of government corruption directly answers the question, instead of pointing to indirect factors that could provide a speculative relationship. Almost all country case studies and broad literature point to government corruption as a means of power for the cartels, yet very little existing literature explores underlying theories of this relationship. This paper will attempt to test for a possible relationship between a states' eradication of drug cartels and government corruption on a more comprehensive scale.

How to Explore Corruption's Effect on a State's Eradication of Drug Cartels

One hypothesis that explains this relationship can be derived from the fourth school of thought, or the theory of government corruption. This hypothesis states that if there is an increase in government corruption, then states' willingness or ability to eradicate of drug cartels will decrease. Countries with high levels of government corruption will theoretically have more powerful drug cartels. Government corruption, the independent variable, will be operationalized by a corruption perception

index score, or CPI score, by country. Transparency International rates countries' government corruption on a scale from zero to ten, with ten being the least corrupt and zero being the most corrupt (Transparency International 2006). The 2006 CPI score is computed by "12 different polls and surveys from 9 independent institutions. The data must be well documented and sufficient to permit a judgment on its reliability. All sources must provide a ranking of nations and measure overall extent of corruption. This condition excludes surveys which mix corruption with other issues" (Transparency International, CPI 2006). Using two years of data, the surveys include the observations of both resident and non-resident business and state analysts on government corruption. "It is important to note that resident's viewpoints correlate well with those of non-resident experts" (Transparency International, CPI 2006).

The eradication of drug cartels, the dependent variable, will be operationalized by the drug trafficking crime rate by police recorded offenses in each country. High levels of police reported offenses of drug trafficking equates to high levels of eradication of drug cartels by the states. The measure of drug trafficking crimes does not include offences that relate to personal use. This definition eliminates the problem of small time users and gives a better indication of the overall trafficking by cartels in each country. Using the rate per 100,000 also accounts for a possible population bias between smaller and larger countries. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime conducts data and analysis reports, and the Drug Crimes statistics contains data per country of the rate per 100,000 offences for drug trafficking as reported by police (UNODC 2010). The analysis uses the year 2006 to keep the results consistent. The UNODC did not list the drug trafficking crime rate for each country in 2006, so data were drawn for Cote d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Armenia, Estonia and Oman from 2007 and for Sierra Leone from 2008.

Since this is a quantitative study of seventy-four countries with two key variables, a linear regression analysis will be used to test this hypothesis. The analysis will primarily assess correlation and statistical significance. It is assumed that the police in countries with lower levels of government corruption (i.e. higher scores on the CPI) are also less corrupt. Countries with less government and police corruption will have a police force that is more likely to be report drug trafficking between cartels and organizations. Higher levels of police reporting drug trafficking means that the government is doing a better job of eradicating drug cartels. The police, who are acting as agents of the states, are stopping the flow of drug trafficking by cartels. Since the effect of government corruption changes the positivity or negativity of the relationship between the operationalized definition of each variable, Table 1 shows the hypothesis applied to each variable.

Hypothesis Applied to Each Variable and their Operationalized

Definition

	X (Independent Variable)	Y (Dependent Variable)
Variable	Increase in government corruption	Decrease in Eradication of Drug Cartels
Opr. Def.	Decrease in CPI	Decrease in Police Recorded Drug Trafficking Crime Rate

Table 1.

Thus, data analysis should yield a positive linear association between CPI and the drug

trafficking crime rate by police reported offenses. If there is a higher CPI score, government employees, such as policemen, are less influenced by corruption. Higher police reports of drug trafficking should thus translate to higher eradication of drug cartels, supporting the hypothesis that if there are lower levels of government corruption, then eradication of drug cartels will increase.

Government Corruption and Drug Trafficking as Indicator of Eradication of Cartels

Data Analysis and Results

Before running the regression, it is helpful to test for correlation and statistical significance. This will show whether government corruption, or CPI, has any relation at all to eradication of drug cartels, or the level of the drug trafficking crime rate. Table 2 shows the results from a simple correlation and statistical significance test between the drug trafficking crime rate and the CPI.

Correlations			
		Drug Trafficking Crime Rate	Corruption Perception Index
Drug Trafficking Crime Rate	Pearson Correlation	1	.344**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.003
	N	74	74
Corruption Perception Index	Pearson Correlation	.344**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
	N	74	74
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Table 2.

The Pearson correlation, also commonly referred to as r , is .344. This means there is a positive correlation between the two variables, although it is only a moderate correlation. The moderate correlation suggests that there are other variables that factor into this relationship and that could be accounted for in future research, and it is still unclear which factor causes the rise in the other. Furthermore, the significance level for the correlation is .003. Using conventional standards for the social sciences, the correlation is only considered significant at the .01 level which means that the correlation is statistically significant. The statistical significance allows a rejection of the null hypothesis, or the idea that no association exists between the two data sets. However, it does not test for causation, so it is still unclear whether a rise in CPI causes a rise in the drug trafficking crime rate, or vice versa. It is still important to take away that a positive relationship does exist between the two variables and that this relationship is statistically significant.

A simple linear regression is used to test for associations that can support the hypothesis. It is important to remember that causation can never be explicitly proven in these types of tests, although data can often suggest a causal relationship. The linear regression uses government corruption, operationalized by the 2006 CPI per country, as the independent variable, and eradication of drug

cartels, operationalized by the 2006 drug trafficking crime rate per country, by police recorded offenses. The regression analysis produces the results shown in Table 3.

Coefficients ^a						
Model (R2 = .118)		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.722	14.787		.049	.961
	Corruption Perception Index	8.291	2.671	.344	3.104	.003

a. Dependent Variable: Drug Trafficking Crime Rate Per 100,000, police recorded offenses

Table 3.

The Beta of .344 again shows the positive correlation of the two variables. Furthermore, the linear regression produces an r-squared of .118, which signifies that variation in government corruption explains about twelve percent of the variation in the rate of police recorded drug trafficking crimes. Other factors explain eighty-two percent of the variation in the rate of police recorded drug trafficking crimes. This is a relatively low r-squared, which again suggests that many other variables factor into the relationship between government corruption and eradication of drug cartels. Although the estimate of the constant (i.e., the y intercept of the regression line) would be zero in a perfectly deterministic relationship, the significance statistic shows that the listed B₀ value of .722 is not significantly different from zero. The model produces the following function for drug trafficking arrests (Y):

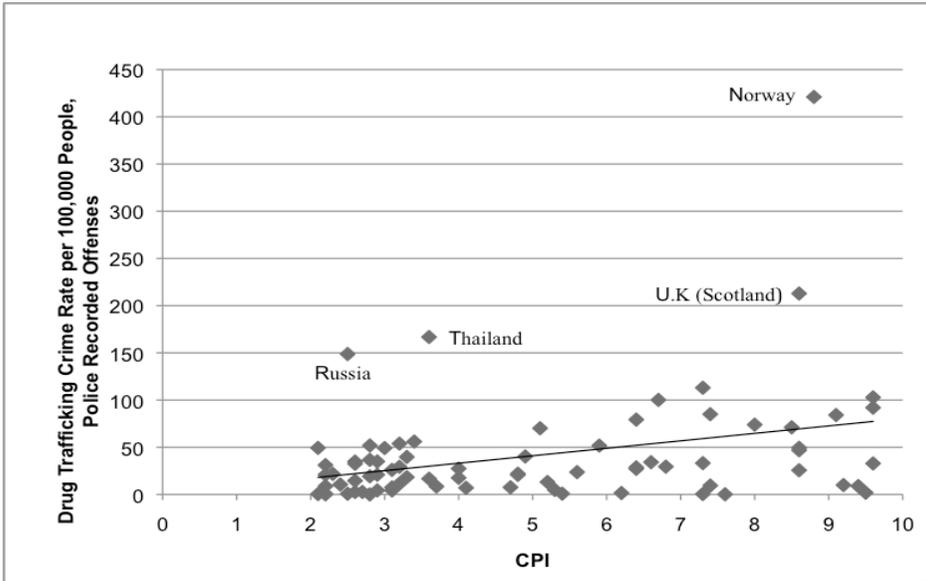
$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * CPI + e$$

$$\hat{Y} = 0.772 + 8.291 * CP$$

The function shows the estimated impact of the CPI on drug trafficking. It is important to note that higher values of CPI mean less corruption, which has an estimated association with higher arrest rates of drug trafficking, and thus a higher eradication of cartels. More specifically, it shows that when the CPI increases by one unit, the police recorded drug trafficking crime rate will increase by 8.3. The presence of a positive slope supports the idea that a positive relationship exists between the two variables. In other words, an increase in CPI, or a decrease in government corruption, is associated with an increase in the police recorded drug trafficking crime rate, or an increase in the eradication of drug cartels. The evidence is in support of the hypothesis that if there are higher levels of government corruption, states' eradication of drug cartels through arrests will decrease. A slope of zero or a negative slope would disprove the hypothesis. The statistical significance of the estimated coefficient, the positive correlation, and the fact that the linear regression produced yields a positive slope all support the idea that not only does a positive relationship exist between the two variables, but that an increase in government corruption may cause a decrease in the drug trafficking crime rate by police recorded offenses. Applying the variables to each operationalized definitions, it can be

observed that an increase in government corruption may cause a decrease in a state's eradication of drug cartels. Graph 1 illustrates this relationship through the plotted points, as well as with the trend line that the linear regression produces. CPI, which represents government corruption, is plotted as the X value since it is the independent variable. Drug trafficking crime rate by police recorded offenses, which represents eradication of drug cartels, is plotted as the Y value since it is the dependent variable.

Drug Trafficking Crime Rate versus CPI, 2006



Graph 1.

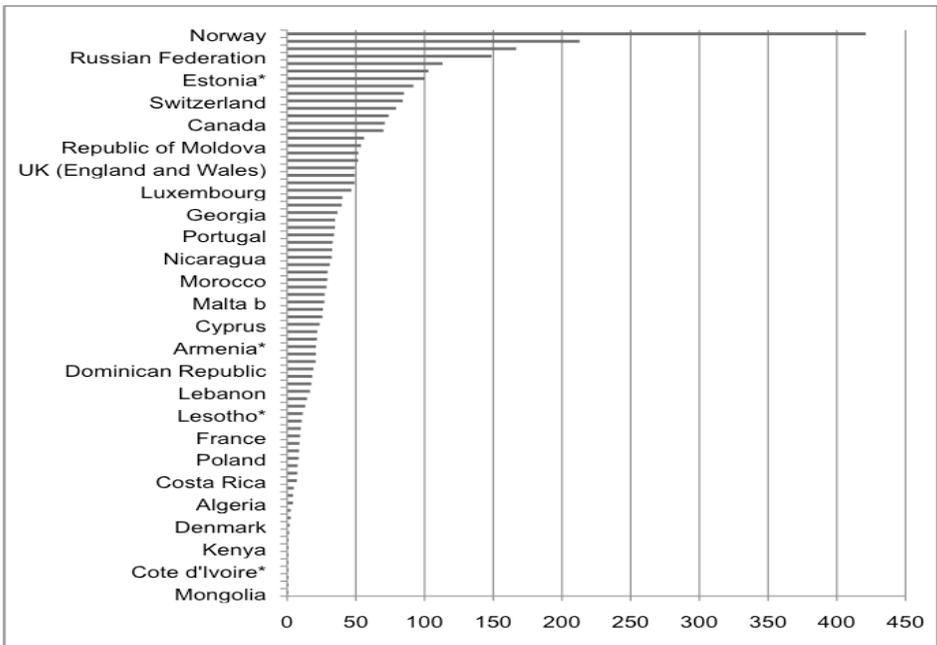
Most points are clustered around the inserted trend line and show a positive linear regression. This graph, along with the positive slope of the points and trend line, simply visualize how the data support the hypothesis that less government corruption leads to higher levels of police-recorded drug trafficking crime arrests, or a higher effort towards eradication of drug cartels within a state. Mexico, a country notorious in international media and politics for its powerful drug cartels, has a CPI of 3.3 and a police recorded drug trafficking crime rate of 39.715 per 100,000 population. This country fits into the relationship fairly well since it has a low CPI and a relatively low level of police recorded offenses for drug trafficking. Two countries that fall onto the trend line and successfully demonstrate the hypothesized causal path are Panama and Canada. Canada, a country with low levels of corruption and a high CPI score of 8.5, shows a high rate of 71.12 police recorded drug trafficking offenses per 100,000 population, and thus a high level of the state's eradication of drug cartels. Panama, a country with high levels of corruption and a low CPI score of 3.1, shows a low rate of 26.01 police recorded drug trafficking offenses per 100,000 population, a thus a decrease in a state's eradication of drug cartels with an increase in corruption.

It is important to note four outliers that exist: Russia, Thailand, Scotland and Norway. Russia

and Thailand show relatively high levels of corruption, scoring at low values of 2.5 and 3.6 on the CPI, respectively. However, they also show high levels of police recorded drug trafficking crimes, levels above even countries that were scoring close to 10 on the CPI. Possible explanations include that these countries have simply a larger cartel problem to begin with, or perhaps that government corruption is prevalent in their countries in ways other than police corruption.

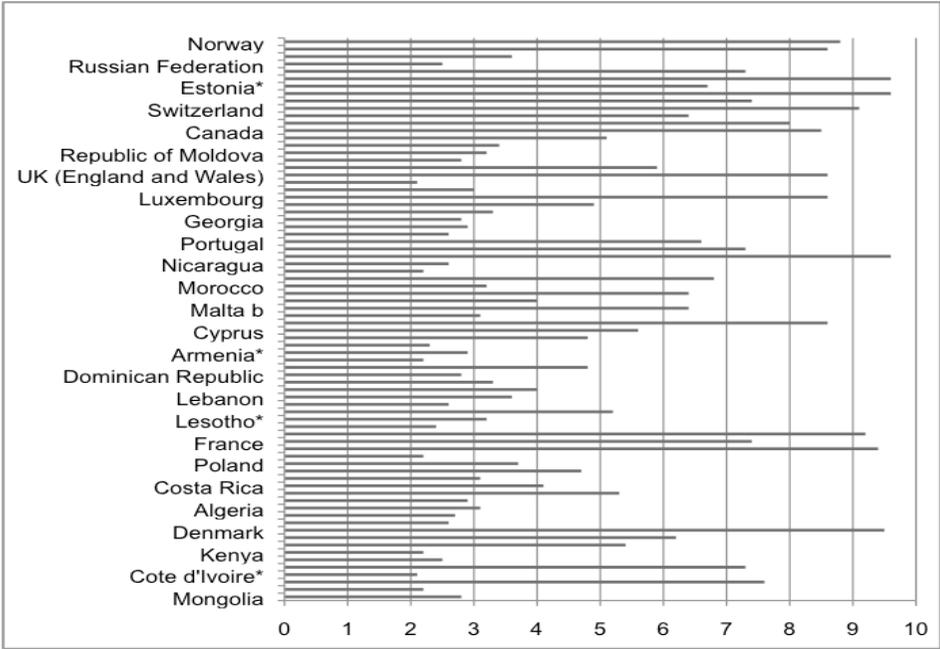
Similarly, Scotland and Norway agreed with the prediction in that high levels of government “cleanliness” yield high numbers of drug trafficking crimes as reported by police. However, the number of police-reported trafficking crimes was much higher than any of the other countries that fell at that CPI level. Scotland, at a CPI of 8.6, yielded a drug trafficking crime rate of 213 per 100,000 people. Norway scored especially high with a CPI of 8.8, but a drug trafficking crime rate of 421 per 100,000 people. Perhaps these countries are especially diligent about police reporting drug trafficking, or in the past have passed more severe laws in terms of what is considered drug trafficking. These four outliers could be studied in the future as individual country case studies to explore why their rankings fall so far above the general cluster of plotted points. This future research could even shed new light on why some states are so successful in eradication of drug cartels even if, as in the case of Thailand and Russia, they suffer from government corruption, or what laws are effective in eradicating cartels, as Scotland and Norway’s numbers are so high.

2006 Drug Trafficking Crime Rate per 100,000 People, Police Recorded Offense



Graph 2a.

2006 Corruption Perception Index



Graph 2b.

Graph 2a Graph 2b highlight the complex relationship between government corruption and eradication of drug cartels. Both graphs are set in terms of the rankings of country by their police reported drug trafficking rate. When arranged according to the rankings of countries by the drug trafficking arrest rate, the CPI graph has much variation by country rather than a similar curve. Overall, the distribution does follow roughly the same curve, yet many cases with low drug trafficking arrest rates reach unexpectedly high levels on the CPI graph. This simply visualizes the main points drawn from the analysis results. While overall the data suggest that government corruption causes low eradication of drug cartels, many other factors play into this relationship. The variance in the graphs shows this complexity.

Alternative Ways to Analyze Corruption and Eradication of Cartels

Originally, and in preliminary analyses conducted, the study used the number of drug laboratory seizures per country in 2006 to operationalize the eradication or drug cartels in each country. Lower number of drug laboratory seizures would account for lower eradication of drug cartels per country. Countries with low seizures, and therefore low eradication, would be expected to also have high levels of government corruption as their corresponding independent variable. This variable provides a more direct operationalization of eradication. However, problems arose with countries that

do not have a large drug problem to begin with. There were many countries like France, which has a low CPI and low number of laboratory seizures simply because there was not a huge drug problem to begin with. Countries like this made the data have almost no correlation, and no statistical significance. It is also possible to try to normalize the laboratory seizures by dividing it with another variable that would account for the level of drug cartels within each country, such as an indicator for the overall drug trafficking problem within each problem. If the laboratory seizures were normalized this way or possibly as a covariate in a regression with multiple independent variables, then perhaps the data would yield different results. The laboratory seizures also include any lab apprehended, no matter the size or group that ran it. This inclusion means that small time laboratories that had little to no affiliation with large scale drug trafficking organizations or drug cartels were included in the data.

Perhaps the biggest weakness in the operationalization of eradication of drug cartels used in this analysis is the level to which catching the traffickers affects the cartels themselves. Catching the traffickers does hurt the cartels, since their product is not being sold and delivered, but the extent to which catching small time traffickers hurts the big time cartels is questionable. At the very least, low levels of government corruption do to some extent help to eradicate certain processes of the cartels.

This study also originally considered focusing on only Latin American countries since Latin America is a continent notorious for large scale drug cartels, and specifying a particular continent might account for some regional bias. It is also hard to measure eradication of drug cartels when some countries simply have bigger cartel problems than others. Focusing on Latin America, in which cartels exist in many of the countries, might account for these differences. However, there were not sufficient data to use only Latin American countries to run a statistical analysis. Since this is such a complex issue, further research could focus in on an area to see if certain regional causes may exist.

Further research could also explore the other causes that affect a state's eradication of drug cartels. Using the theories listed at the beginning of this paper, poverty, negative international interference and insurgency group theory are all extremely viable theories that can be explored. The variation in the bar graphs, the moderate correlation, and the low r-squared show that many other causes likely contribute to states' unsuccessful eradication of drug cartels. Substantial data sets exist that depict the poverty level in each country, and one of these data sets could perhaps act as another independent or explanatory variable. The literature review shows that international efforts to help states who struggle with cartels often have a negative effect. A measure of international interference could be used in addition to government corruption since so many individual countries, as well as international organizations, work to prevent drug trafficking and drug cartels in other states.

When looking at observational data, it is important to control for as many factors as possible. Poverty was presented as another important factor in the literature review, and poverty could be an important control when studying not only a state's eradication of drug cartels, but furthermore the root cause of corruption itself. This study ran a preliminary analysis controlling for GDP per capita (purchasing power parity) as an operationalized variable for poverty. Using data from the International Monetary Fund, GDP per capita (PPP) was used to define poverty as it not only controls for GDP based on population, but by factoring in PPP, it also controls for different monetary values and inflation (IMF World Database 2006). The effect of the corruption rate considerably diminished by using GDP per capita (PPP) as a control, and eliminated statistical significance as well. However, if this study were

to be continued, it would be important to control for all factors, not just poverty. A myriad of other factors affect a state's eradication of drug cartels, as was shown by the data in the bivariate analysis. The point of this study was to look at simply the bivariate relationship between government corruption and eradication of drug cartels.

Importance of Corruption as an Answer to Low Levels of Cartel Eradication

The most important thing to remember is that the eradication of drug cartels is an extremely complex problem that does not have an easy answer. Although the data in this study suggest that higher levels of government corruption negatively affect a state's eradication of drug cartels, data also show that this is only a small piece of the puzzle in accounting for why states struggle to eradicate cartels. Nevertheless, it is an important question to ask considering the low quality of life and high levels of violence in many states with large scale drug cartels, as well as the fact that it becomes a U.S security issue when so many of the nation's drugs are coming in from overseas.

As more and more drugs are coming into the U.S from foreign cartels and countries, the U.S is becoming increasingly concerned with the power that cartels are beginning to exert on their respective countries and the difficulty each country is having in checking this power and eradicating cartels. Having a greater knowledge of why the cartels are so powerful can help action-based researchers understand the effectiveness of policies to stop them. Understanding the cause and effect behind drug cartels is important not only for the wellbeing and prosperity of the individual countries, but also in terms of the United States and U.S. foreign policy. A huge percentage of drugs in the United States come from out of the country, and U.S officials are constantly struggling in terms of how to stop this immense inflow of drugs. Not only are the drugs coming in, the gangs and cartels that control these drugs are also establishing themselves in the U.S. MS-13, one of the most notorious gangs in the U.S, has members throughout the U.S, along with established gangs in El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Mexico (Buckley 2007). This issue, and knowledge of what policies to enact in order to combat the foreign influx of drugs, is a constant problem for the United States government. Understanding why states are unable to control drug cartels provides pertinent information for future action or policy based research in order to provide solutions to combat the drug cartels that exist around the world.

North America currently consumes forty percent of the world's entire cocaine production (UNODC, World Drug Report, 2010). However, the majority of the world's illicit drug production is coming from large scale drug producing organizations, or cartels, in Latin American, Asian and Middle Eastern countries (UNODC 2010). The U.S feels threatened by the influx of "cocaine, synthetic amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS), marijuana and heroin" (INCRS 2007, 16). In 2006, President George W. Bush declared twenty countries that were thought of as "major illicit drug producing or drug transiting" countries: Afghanistan, The Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Burma, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Laos, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela (INCRS 2007, 4). The countries were put on this list because large scale drug production and trafficking continued despite copious efforts by the state to eradicate production and cartels. The U.S is currently using a policy that specifically targets the production of drugs, not the cartels themselves. They are trying to diminish drug production by "targeting the first three links

of the grower-to-user chain: cultivation, processing, and transit” (INCRS 2007, 15) While this is the most direct effort to target drug production, the data above suggest that perhaps the U.S can start looking to help government corruption as another possible way to fight drug cartels and their large scale production.

Conclusion

States’ inabilities to eradicate drug cartels are a problem that has plagued policy makers and analysts. There are many reasons why this inability exists, and the data analysis confirms the complicity of the cartel problem. However, government corruption provides one possible answer. The corruption perception index (CPI) score successfully operationalizes government corruption, and the rate of police reported drug trafficking offenses successfully operationalizes a state’s eradication of drug cartels, as police are often seen as agents of the state. By examining a state’s CPI score and the police recorded offenses of drug trafficking, a statistical analysis of a simple linear regression can explore the relationship. Statistical significance and analysis of the data does suggest that there is an association between higher levels of government corruption leading to a state’s low eradication of drug cartels. Although further analysis should continue to explore this complex relationship, these results help provide new insight on a problem that greatly affects both international and domestic politics. ✕

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