



Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America

Peter Andreas

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America is a smuggler nation. Our long history of illicit imports has ranged from West Indies molasses and Dutch gunpowder in the 18th century, to British industrial technologies and African slaves in the 19th century, to French condoms and Canadian booze in the early 20th century, to Mexican workers and Colombian cocaine in the modern era. Contraband capitalism, it turns out, has been an integral part of American capitalism.

Providing a sweeping narrative history from colonial times to the present, *Smuggler Nation* is now available in paperback to retell the story of America -- and of its engagement with its neighbors and the rest of the world -- as a series of highly contentious battles over clandestine commerce. As Peter Andreas demonstrates in this provocative and fascinating work, smuggling has played a pivotal and too often overlooked role in America's birth, westward expansion, and economic development, while anti-smuggling campaigns have dramatically enhanced the federal government's policing powers. The great irony, Andreas tells us, is that a country that was born and grew up through smuggling is today the world's leading anti-smuggling crusader. In tracing America's long and often tortuous relationship with the murky underworld of smuggling, Andreas provides a much-needed antidote to today's hyperbolic depictions of out-of-control borders and growing global crime threats. Urgent calls by politicians and pundits to regain control of the nation's borders suffer from a severe case of historical amnesia, nostalgically implying that they were ever actually under control. This is pure mythology, says Andreas. For better and for worse, America's borders have always been highly porous.

Far from being a new and unprecedented danger to America, the illicit underside of globalization is actually an old American tradition. As Andreas shows, it goes back not just decades but centuries. And its impact has been decidedly double-edged, not only subverting U.S. laws but also helping to fuel America's evolution from a remote British colony to the world's pre-eminent superpower.

Smuggler Nation: How Illicit Trade Made America Details

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Elizabeth says

borrowed from library, 1 Feb. 2014

I heard the author on Marketplace interviewed by Kai Ryssdal. Really good.

<http://www.marketplace.org/topics/lif...>

I am next in line for this at the library. I got it, not easy reading, get it again.

What helped people break away from the mother country became troublesome to the govt when they were their own country. Smuggling is an ever-present border activity and it is part of the underground economy which never goes away either.

from the library computer:

Table of Contents

Preface ix

Introduction: A Nation of Smugglers 1 (12)

PART I THE COLONIAL ERA

1 The Golden Age of Illicit Trade

13 (16)

2 The Smuggling Road to Revolution

29 (16)

3 The Smuggling War of Independence

45 (18)

PART II THE EARLY REPUBLIC

4 Contraband and Embargo Busting in the New Nation

63 (19)

5 Traitorous Traders and Patriotic Pirates

82 (16)

6 The Illicit Industrial Revolution

98 (17)

PART III WESTWARD EXPANSION, SLAVERY, AND THE CIVIL WAR

7 Bootleggers and Fur Traders in Indian Country

115 (15)

8 Illicit Slavers and the Perpetuation of the Slave Trade

130 (24)

9 Blood Cotton and Blockade Runners

154 (23)

PART IV THE GILDED AGE AND THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

10 Tariff Evaders and Enforcers	
177 (14)	
11 Sex, Smugglers, and Purity Crusaders	
191 (17)	
12 Coming to America Through the Back Door	
208 (19)	
13 Rumrunners and Prohibitionists	
227 (26)	
PART V INTO THE MODERN AGE	
14 America's Century-Long Drug War	
253 (38)	
15 Border Wars and the Underside of Economic Integration	
291 (39)	
16 America and Illicit Globalization in the Twenty-First Century	
330 (23)	
Epilogue	353 (4)
Notes	357 (70)
Index	427

Sara Whitford says

This book examines at the constant undercurrent of an underground economy in America, and how in many ways, this nation was built on that very thing. In short, people don't like being told what they can and can't buy, and they don't like having to pay endless taxes for a government that they feel is largely out of their reach. I originally purchased "Smuggler Nation" as part of the research for my historical fiction novel, "The Smuggler's Gambit", which is set in 1765 right around the time the Sugar Act and Stamp Act first went into effect. It was during that period in American history when the seeds of Revolution were being planted and frustration with the Crown began to foment. "Smuggler Nation" doesn't stop its expose at the colonial era, of course, so I ended up learning so much more from it than I ever expected. It follows the smugglers (and the money) all the way through to modern times. I've still only scratched the surface of reading this hefty volume, but am glad to have it as a useful addition to my reference shelf.

Brian says

Enjoyable look at the important role illicit commerce has played in the history of the U.S., from rum as a way to avoid sugar tariffs before the revolution and separate natives from their land, to slave running, the theft of intellectual property from England in the Industrial revolution, prohibition and the war on drugs. Makes the current positions on trade and immigration in other countries kind of hard to defend.

Lynn says

A wonderful book on how smuggling is ever present (probably in every country) and how tough enforcement

leads to even greater smuggling. The British was practically lax about the American Colonies smuggling because of the enforcement costs and the fact that more money was made not enforcing the laws on the books. This allowed American colonists to be independent in many way from Britain. When Britain won the Seven Year's War, they had a world wide empire to rule and attempted to create a uniform system of laws governing their new and old colonies. It didn't work and the American colonies were able to overthrow their British rulers. Confronted with a need as a new country to enforce their own laws, the smugglers continued on their way hurting a war effort with Britain in 1812 and eventually helping by the British defeat in New Orleans. All types of products were brought in over the years, slaves, drugs, exotic animals, liquor, cotton, etc as different products were banned and smugglers took up the trade. War can't be fought without smuggling and it often drags the process out for good and ill. Lincoln allowed Northern smugglers to buy cotton from the South in order to keep the Northern mills and shipping trades happy and to prevent the cotton from being sold to Britain and France for arms for the South. The drug trade has increased as border patrols have increased and those patrol officers who were hired quickly, fell for the corruption and money of the trade. Immigrants are still smuggled in and as it gets more difficult at the Mexican border, they are woven into the drug trade for transportation and labor. What a great book and I learned so much. Who knew a book about smuggling could be so entertaining!

Lissa Notreallywolf says

This is a very interesting way to approach the American psyche, through colonial to current day. A conversation with a friend who grew up in New Orleans exposed how little I know about the connection between slavery and smuggling. Jean Lafitte was the target subject, but ultimately I learned how New England economy was linked to slavery, distilling rum from Barbados sugar and molasses. Slaves were actually priced by the number of barrels they would bring at market.

I very much enjoyed these earlier chapters, and had a certain disgust for the final, more current chapters. Prohibition is also of interest to me, but not from the aspect presented here. What was fascinating is that Americans have, from the inception of the colonies, resisted taxation and trade restriction, often trading with the enemy in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War and the Mexican American War. This is an excellent perspective on economic history.

H. P. says

Smuggler Nation joins a handful of books that have fundamentally changed my understanding of American history. Andreas' thesis is simple: smuggling always has and continues to play a central role in America. To that end, he has written a history of smuggling in America that stretches from American colonists smuggling goods across battle lines to the French during the French and Indian War to modern day smuggling of drugs and people across the Mexican border.

I knew that smuggling has played an important part in American history, but there is so much that I didn't know, and I never appreciated just how thoroughly intertwined in our history it has been. Sure, smuggling is central to the Civil War (blockade running), Prohibition (rum running undermined enforcement efforts), and modern politics (drugs and immigration). But it's ubiquitous. Americans sold to the French during the French and Indian War. American privateering and smuggling made success in the American Revolution possible, but Americans also sold to the British. Americans sold to the British again during the War of 1812. Blockade running prolonged the Confederacy, but Americans on the Union side of the Mason-Dixon line

sold across the lines. Seemingly everyone crossing the Atlantic during the Gilded Age smuggled to avoid protectionist tariffs. Rum running doomed Prohibition.

Smuggler Nation demonstrates well how history repeats itself. The Bahamas were a smuggling conduit early in our history. They surfaced again as a smuggling conduit in the early days of the drugs wars. Success in stopping the Colombian connection through the Bahamas and South Florida led smuggling to shift to Mexico. Our porous border with Mexico has been permeated by more than immigrants. The Union's blockade efforts were stymied by trading through a neutral Matamoras port conveniently located across the river from the Confederacy (unfortunately for the Confederates Matamoras was still too remote to make a difference). Illicit trade across the Mexican border continued, with an explosion of drug trade in relation to efforts to stop the South Florida drug trade.

Andreas shows just how ineffective anti-smuggling efforts have been. It's always been too easy for smugglers to shift ingress and egress. When the government cracked down on domestic production of alcohol during Prohibition, Americans got their alcohol from Mexico and Canada and ships just offshore. And when the government cracks down even further? We get a different class of smuggler. The morally flexible merchants are replaced by true gangsters. And the effect of that? An expansion of policing, that in itself an expansion of government power. Smuggler Nation drives home the role our efforts to rein in smuggling have played in the vast growth of government.

Andreas understands that immigration is just another form of smuggling, smuggling people instead of goods. The first immigrant backlash came against the Chinese. Our first efforts to stop Chinese immigration shifted it through Canada, then through Mexico. Efforts to stop European immigration shifted it through Mexico as well. (Presaging Cheech's efforts in *Born in East L.A.*, one of the easiest ways to cross in those days was to pass as Mexican. Mexicans at that time were viewed migratory labor force not threatening to stay permanently.)

This is an academic work, and Andreas doesn't offer any real prescriptions (although, given his weird non-sequitur about global finance at the end, perhaps that's for the best). He has, however, given the reader plenty to think about and that of the utmost importance.

Disclosure: I received an advance e-copy of *Smuggler Nation* through NetGalley.

Lee Ellen says

This is an academic approach to illicit trade in the United States and how it was an integral part of its development as a nation. The author, Peter Andreas, acknowledges the ambition of his goal: he mentions in the preface that the primary challenge of his particular historical research is that he is attempting to uncover details that have, by their very nature, been covered up, hidden, and otherwise obfuscated. Nevertheless, Mr. Andreas posits that ignoring the rich history of smuggling due to its difficulty to be uncovered is misguided, resembling "a drunkard looking for his keys under the lightpost because it is the only place he can see." Happily, the author exhibits great skill in finding usable data: diaries, customs records, accounting logs, and artifacts themselves have all served him well in his research.

Mr. Petras focuses his topic by highlighting the most important embargo of every era of American history: sugar in colonial times and cotton during the Civil War are some of the early topics. Each chapter can be read on its own, as if it were an essay. The chapter on efforts to sidestep the usurious duties taxes of the

Gilded Age makes for particularly interesting reading. The last chapters cover migrants, drugs, and, finally, pirated content and internet neutrality.

Smuggling creates fascinating stories, not all of them violent. Some of the best moments were where problem-solving efforts met quirky human ingenuity. For example, the Gilded Age smuggler who could barely walk due to the quantity of silver spoons sewn into the lining of his clothing; or perhaps the Mexican parrot smugglers who dosed their birds with tequila to keep them quiet. These sorts of anecdotes abound, though they are often interspersed throughout a story fraught with violence, corruption, and woe. Overall, it is amazing what one might uncover when one dares to shed light on a most shadowy part of history.

Wisteria Leigh says

SMUGGLER NATION: How Illicit Trade Made America, Peter Andreas, Oxford University Press, February 14, 2013, 472 pages, Hardcover, \$29.95, 978-0-19-974688-0.

Really? America was made through smuggling and other illicit trades? Peter Andreas presents a fascinating view of history in his book SMUGGLER NATION. His purpose is to tell how smuggling and the endless quest to police it have made and continued to remake America through our present day.

Perhaps a shocker to many Americans, this compelling narrative is backed up with extensive research and the writer's skillful logical well planned chronology of events. From the early days of our nascent nation smuggling was inherent in its growth. Beginning with the infamous triangular trade routes to the recent history of drug smuggling, arms smuggling and human smuggling, the evidence is certainly convincing. The author puzzles together the history of America which unfolds with captivating high adventure drama. Andreas pens a historical narrative of violence, crime, war, greed, corruption and that is a storyboard for an action big screen movie. For example, he documents the stories of smuggling guns and supplies for the American Revolution, smuggling and busting through blockades during the American Civil War and the smuggling of industrial technology from Europe. Astor, Brown, Hancock names of some of the first successful and often multi-millionaire merchants were smugglers or relied on illicit trade to gain advantage.

The author notes the irony. "that a country made of smuggling has now become the world's leading anti-smuggling crusader."

SMUGGLER NATION is a remarkably candid history, naked in fact without cover-up, that will undoubtedly stimulate discussion and reflection. Peter Andreas excites his readers with an unexpected and atypical history.

Wisteria Leigh
February 14, 2013

Michael Duane Robbins says

Ohh, we are such a virtuous nation...what bullshit. we tend to view America through a narrow prism,

regarding our early American patriots are saints spontaneously rising against British tyranny. the truth is there are many shades of grey, and lots of smuggling involved. John Hancock, 1st man to sign the Declaration? Rum smuggler. Oh, the heroes of the Alamo and Texas independence? Squatters and slavers. Virtue is all well and good, but as far as imposing the weight of the law on Porn and Alcohol--well, congratulations, y'all made both into major industries. That's the sound of one hand clapping, folks.

Birgit says

I've always been a friend of reading about history from a different angle. In *Smuggler Nation* Peter Andreas presents US history as a "smuggling story" which is a vantage point that sounded highly promising to me. Presenting the impact and significance smuggling had in terms of the building of the US as a nation - from the early colonial era, up until the modern day - this is a both extensive and comprehensive work on the topic. It's the fascinating questions of how and why smuggling became such an essential, sometimes even necessary, ingredient for the nation, that hooked me right away.

While this book offers a broad view of the complex relationship America had, and still has, with smuggling, the author also skillfully highlights the progression of illicit trade throughout the years culminating in the battle to subvert it today. It's funny how we look back with a nostalgic glance on those colorful smuggling tales of times long gone and only ever grasp the ramifications of what illicit trade means to a country and its people when being faced with it in the present. And it's the present which is awarded just as much attention as the past, reaching beyond drug and border wars straight into the realm of illicit globalization.

Highly recommended for all history enthusiasts who're not scared of a fair share of economy between the pages too.

In short: Fascinating account on how smuggling made a nation!

Dave Blair says

Really enjoyed with two caveats. Presents his thesis (spoiler alert: America is a smuggler nation) clearly and supports it with a survey of American history. Does a great job of highlighting perennial problems, and historically contextualizing present discussions about globalization and crime.

Rigorous balanced presentation in earlier chapters, especially on the suppression of the slave trade, a particular (read dissertation) interest of mine. This is a vast improvement over the treatment of this case in previous international crime control lit - where *Policing the Globe* writes this case off as an outlier, he takes it seriously in this work, recognizing it in its contingency and complexity (even though the British effort is tangential to the American experience.). Synthesis of secondary sources, but that is to be expected (and is likely the best route) for a survey of this much time and space.

Caveat one: The work declines precipitously when he moves into some of his harder ideological commitments - the chapters on narcotics and US transnational regimes - from a charitable, even handed tone to a much preachier tack. His points could have been made, and his thesis well supported, without devolving to a screed in these places.

Caveat two: The swipe at Naim in the conclusion was unprofessional. While the book does an excellent job of widening the aperture (and reducing globalization panic), he would have made his point better with grace and charity to opposing views. This unnecessary snark undermined his credibility in my eyes in trusting him

to interpret cases where I was unfamiliar with his secondary sources.

Besides those caveats, and excellent work. And this from someone who didn't like Policing the Globe much.

Kimfu says

Excellent book! But the author made so many points -- and they were all so intricate and at the same time so relevant to his major topic -- that I'll need to read this book at least two more times to keep them all straight! This book certainly makes you look at American history in a new light. And there's one sentence from the book that I'll remember to say the next time someone complains about China's stealing intellectual property from America and other nations: China should do what the American government says and not what it did! Turns out, in the 18th and 19th centuries, America was one of the biggest thieves of intellectual property around!

"Smuggler Nation" was Book No. 15 for 2015!

Nils says

"No policy debate," explains Peter Andreas, in reference to DC debates over the control of illicit markets, "has been more devoid of historical memory, learning, and reflection." (329) His book is a grand synthetic effort to correct that amnesia. It provides a broad survey of the way in which contestation over deviant marketplaces has served as a sort of Zelig of the history of American policy economy, always around on key occasions, sometimes playing a decisive role in the outcome of events. And this is very much true, whether ranging from the way that Brit efforts to suppress illicit non-mercantalist trade precipitated the American revolution, or how illicit liquor literally lubricated the suppression of Indians in the West, or how the debate over "blood cotton" led to the Civil War, or how the effort to control drugs leading to the creation of the national police state, and so on down to the present drug war as a way to control the post-industrial urban underclass (a fact he actually shies away from stating quite baldly enough).

As much as I wanted to give this book five stars, I couldn't for three inter-related reasons:

1. It is under-theorized: why if illicit commerce creates so many perverse effects does the American state continue to make some market illicit. There are possible Marxist explanations (a cover for bourgeois efforts to control underclasses), Foucaultian explanations (it's about biopolitical control and the extension of discipline and control). That the American state emerges the stronger for all its successive failures to control illicit commerce, and the seeming inability of the state to reflect on this fact in an explicit and thoughtful way, seems to be underlying historical facts begging for an explanation. Andreas does a nice job of laying out these two facts, but has no account for WHY these peculiar, paradoxical, and perverse effects have continued to manifest themselves in one way or another for centuries. Why, in short, is consistent failure to achieve policy ends such an effective state-building tool, at least in America? This is a key question that he never manages to get his hands around.

2. The national frame of reference. Why does he frame this in terms of a specifically AMERICAN history? Hasn't the roll of the illicit played the same role in the constitution of other state-building exercises? If not, why not. In some places, the illicit ends up colonizing the state, hollowing it out, perhaps even collapsing it -

some comparative assessment of why this is not the case (indeed nearly the opposite is the case) in the US might have helped with the theorization issues listed above. The national focus is doubly odd, since he explicitly chose to include or exclude episodes of the role of the illicit in American history based on whether they involved trafficking with "foreign" countries (thus, for example, the Whiskey Rebellion is not discussed, since in Andreas's estimation this was a purely "domestic" issue - though that distinction was of course one of the central questions that was at stake in the rebellion). But this framing leads to a failure to consider the purely domestic purposes of efforts to control the illicit -- thus feeding into (and being a manifestation of) the failure to adequately theorize the role of the illicit in national and international institution construction.

[Here's a couple of hints, however: First, societies are defined by their prohibitions, as Durkheim taught us over a century ago, including the prohibitions they seek to impose on others - so the illicit is tied up in a fundamental way with issues of identity. Second, the illicit provides a higher moral discourse with which to justify the effort of certain segments of the population to control other sectors of the population, for reasons that may be only dimly related to the supposed moral taint of the illicit activity.]

3. Lack of primary sources. Every chapter is in the main a synthesis of the two or three key monographs on the topic area. The book is immensely readable and would make a good alt.history textbook to assign in survey courses alongside the more conventional surveys, but it's not a work of original scholarship in itself. Andreas appears not to have hit a single archive himself, and has not advanced a single historical argument about a period or episode which was not already available in the historiographic literature. The contribution is mainly in having assembled the material all in a single well-written volume. This is no mean feat, but also not one that could ever produce something truly great.

Pat Frank says

This book is not an easy read because it is so dense with information that needs to be digested. But now, having read this a while ago, I can say that the information that I've gained from reading it comes to mind frequently when reflecting on current events and issues. Therefore, I have revised my review and added a star. I highly recommend this book for all that want a more nuanced view on our history.

Void lon iXaarri says

A truly eye opening book. The portrayal of American history from this perspective sheds such an illuminating light on such a big dark corner and explains many things. It's also full with fascinating facts, and incredibly entertaining. It's often very funny to see ironies of history, how some things which used to be legal are illegal now or the other way around, or how countries which now condemn smuggling of some products/technologies/people used to regard it as their great priority and of great patriotic value. I never knew for example how important smuggling was for America's succeeding in breaking away from the British empire (particularly interesting in today's world of many secession conflicts), or how even on a government level industrial espionage and illegal smuggling of hardware and knowledge was encouraged only to then turn around as they had more to lose from it than win, and the parallels to today's countries.

I also quite liked how the book reveals the similarities about the many different types of smuggling, whether they are the typical illegal products that come to mind today or less obvious stuff like sugar, books, products

excessively taxed or forbidden for social reasons like alcohol, and last but certainly not least people smuggling themselves in and out of country. I also liked the author's balanced view on a lot of topics. For example though he often points out the advantages for civilizations of the free trade of smuggling he doesn't shy away either from the stories of less reputable smuggling be it slave trade or more clearly damaging substances or weapons. Overall I would call this a truly eye opening book which I'm quite convinced might open the eyes to some unpopular perspectives to even the most hardened minds who read it and shows the world from a different point of view, both present and historical, and the probable/possible futures.
