

III. Economics

War Governments Legalize High-Strength Pot: Tobacco Billionaires Turn to Cannabizness

by EIR Staff

May 3—The two biggest NATO powers arming for war against Russia, the providers, between them, of 99% of armaments given and sold to Israel for its war crimes, have both announced within a month of one another that marijuana is legal. Both governments are openly currying favor with younger voters in preparation for elections, essentially telling them to get high and forget their opposition to war.

As of April 1, the possession and consumption of cannabis are legal for adults in Germany. For 18-year-olds and over, possession of 25 grams for personal consumption will be allowed, which can also be carried in public areas. In terms of volume and weight, this is roughly comparable to two heaping tablespoons of potting soil. In their private homes, consumers may keep up to 50 grams of dried cannabis, and may grow a maximum of three cannabis plants. Harvesting is only permitted for personal consumption, while purchase of cannabis is restricted to members of cannabis clubs which must be registered.

On April 30, The Biden Administration’s Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) announced that it is planning to reclassify cannabis from a Schedule I drug to a Schedule III drug, effectively removing any Federal law problem for all the states which have legalized it. An [article](#) on NBC News emphasizes:

By rescheduling cannabis, the drug would now be studied and researched to identify concrete medical benefits, opening the door for pharmaceutical companies to get involved with the sale and distribution of medical marijuana in states where it is legal.

NBC News notes this is now a \$34 billion “industry,” although that number applies only to the legal side of the operation, with the illegal side internationally being an order of magnitude larger. And the *Financial Times* of London [wrote](#):

Reviewing the classification of marijuana had



White House/Adam Schultz

President Joe Biden greets German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the Oval Office of the White House. Germany, like the U.S., is easing its laws on dangerous drug use.

emerged as a top political priority for President Biden in recent months as he has battled to shore up the youth vote ahead of the November election pitting him against Donald Trump.

In other words, if youth are protesting against the Gaza genocide, give them legal pot to smoke to “chill out.”

German First Responders’ Protests in Vain

In Germany, the legislation was approved by the three-party government majority in the Bundestag, on the argument that decriminalization would make

consumption easier to control than letting the issue be handled by the black markets. The fact that the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats voted in favor of the legalization was not surprising, but the green light from the Social Democrats (SPD) was. Their giving in to the wishes of the other two coalition partners may have a lot to do with the hope of securing certain new constituencies, to make up for all those who have deserted the SPD. About four million Germans are said to consume cannabis often or regularly, certainly a significant number of voters—provided they care about voting at all.

Police, law enforcement officials, drug prevention experts, and teachers have massively protested against the legalization, but to no avail. “This law is not enforceable,” complained Leipzig’s police chief René Demmler. One reason is that they have “no resources for comprehensive checks” which are implied in the second paragraph of the new law. This lists the places where the “public consumption of cannabis” is still prohibited, namely: schools, day-care centers, sports facilities, and from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. in pedestrian zones, and on playgrounds.

Cannabis use among youngsters can affect the development of the central nervous system, leading to an increased risk of developing psychosis and schizophrenia, experts have warned. Germany’s Health Minister Karl Lauterbach, a medical doctor, recognized that cannabis consumption “can be dangerous.” Making itself laughable, the government announced that cannabis will remain banned for anyone under 18 years of age and within 100 meters of schools, kindergartens, and playgrounds.

The CGTN radio program *World Today* asked Schiller Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche on April 2 for her [comments](#) on the legalization of marijuana. She pointed out that drug use damages the mind and distracts citizens from addressing the very real crises the world faces. She also refuted the idea that legalization would somehow dry up the black market.

U.S. Senators Want To Legalize the Money Trail, Too

In the United States, the international financial speculators who have always favored drug legalization



Schumer Facebook page

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (at podium) and Sens. Ron Wyden (right) and Cory Booker are introducing the Cannabis Administration and Opportunity Act in Washington, D.C.

are working on another key angle: legalizing the drug money flows. This is New York Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer’s specialty. the *Financial Times* reported that he “cheered the [DEA] move on Tuesday.” And the NBC News report added that Schumer stated that “he is ‘strongly committed’ to moving forward with both the SAFER Banking Act and the Democratic bill to remove cannabis from the Controlled Substances Act entirely.

What the “Secure and Fair Enforcement Regulation (SAFER) Banking Act” does is to essentially legalize drug-money laundering—i.e., make it possible for financial transactions of the “cannabis industry” to cross state lines without any legal penalties. Schumer passed it through his Banking Committee by 14 to 9 and wants to bring it up for a floor vote as soon as possible. At least three Republicans have voted for it, and Schumer plans to get many more “single issue” Republicans by adding to his banking bill a clause to allow cannabis consumers to buy and keep firearms.

Kevin Sabet, president and CEO of the group Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM), said that the decision to reclassify marijuana

will be devastating for America’s kids, who will be bombarded with attractive advertising and promotion of kid-friendly pot products. The only winner here is the marijuana industry, who will receive a new tax break and thus widen their profit margins.

Reclassifying marijuana as a Schedule III drug sends the message that marijuana is less addictive and dangerous now than ever before. In reality, today's highly potent, super-strength marijuana is more addictive and linked with psychosis and other mental illnesses, IQ loss, and other problems.

Sabet further noted that the HHS decision “redacted key information about their internal process, and intentionally limited any transparency.” HHS ignored volumes of data and countless scientific studies that link the psychoactive product in marijuana, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), to addiction, psychosis, schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and lost mental cognition.

According to the narrative promoted by the major media, only complete legalization and total state control over both the production and consumption of cannabis, initially for “therapeutic” use, then for “recreational” use, will “protect” our young people and curb the black market and the mafia! To prevent the situation from worsening, will the State become the great drug dealer Leviathan?

In France, MP Caroline Janvier (of French President Emmanuel Macron's party), rapporteur for the fact-finding mission that delivered its report on the regulation and impact of the various uses of cannabis in May 2021, proposed then:

a well-regulated framework, i.e. a legalization that allows the State to take control of the production, consumption [and] distribution of cannabis by controlling the substances that are sold, enforcing the ban on sales to minors, and ultimately protecting the health of consumers and the safety of the French.

Media have highlighted the “failure” of this legislation, but miss the point: Potentially efficient laws have never been backed by a genuine educational and preventive effort against all addictions, nor by national mobilizations to hit the narcotics oligarchy “in the wallet.” That would mean banning banks like London-based HSBC, whose role in financing drugs, crime, and terrorism was fully established a decade ago by thorough investigation by committees of the same U.S. Senate; and it would mean closing down the tax havens that enable dirty money to be laundered.

Lobbies Carry Out Ambush

A clique of billionaires allied to (mainly Anglo-American) alcohol and tobacco producers have bet big on the “emerging market” of cannabis. For decades, the tobacco industry knowingly concealed the direct link between cancer and smoking. Will you believe them today about the “harmlessness” of cannabis and THC?

In the United States, according to an article published in *Open Secrets* on April 4, 2022, beverage giant Constellation Brands (Corona, Modelo beers, SVEDKA vodka) had by then already spent \$240,000 lobbying for the legalization of marijuana. The group owns 36% of Canopy Growth Corp, which for its part has spent nearly \$1 million for the same purpose. On its website, Canopy presents itself as “a leading global cannabis company focused on unleashing the power of cannabis to improve lives.” In 2021, *Open Secrets* found:

Tobacco companies British American Tobacco and Altria Group spent nearly \$2.1 million and \$6.6 million, respectively, on lobbying, particularly in support of the MORE (Marijuana Opportunity Reinvestment and Expungement) Act.

The law was also endorsed by Amazon.com, which on Jan. 25, 2022, declared itself “eager to work with Congress and other supporters to achieve much-needed reform of the nation's cannabis laws.”

A *Forbes* [article](#), “How Tobacco Giant Altria Is Becoming A Cannabis Company,” already rang the alarm in February 2021. Since 2003, this rather friendly name has concealed the American cigarette manufacturer Philip Morris, the world's largest tobacco company with sales of almost 23 billion euros (\$24.8 billion).

Altria also holds a 10% stake in global beer giant Anheuser-Busch InBev. As with Constellation Brands, Altria's main shareholders are the asset-management giants: Capital Group (14.75%), Vanguard Group (7.89%), State Street (3.78%) and BlackRock (2.16%). These world's biggest “shareholders,” accustomed to hunting in packs, hold between 15% and 20% of the main companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange and the CAC40, and have a stranglehold on the military-industrial complex, major banks, rating agencies, retailing, the media, etc.

Forbes noted that Big Tobacco is well and truly taking over the cannabis industry—slowly, but “out in the open, and in a form similar to other big business techniques: acquisition, intellectual property and lobbying

for favorable regulation.” In the U.S. Senate, their man is Chuck Schumer, against whom LaRouche independent candidate Diane Sare campaigned.

Several Altria moves indicate its conversion to “cannabizness”:

- In 2016, Philip Morris invested \$20 million in Syqe Medical, an Israeli company developing a “medical” cannabis inhaler. It was the second-largest investment of the year in this field.

- The company paid \$1.8 billion in December 2018 for a 45% stake in Cronos Group, one of the largest legal cannabis multinationals, based in Canada (\$125 million in sales).

- In February 2020, Altria filed two patent applications for vaporization devices specifically designed for cannabis, after acquiring, in December 2018, a 35% stake in e-cigarette producer Juul Labs for \$12.8 billion.

CBD, the Trojan Horse

Forbes documented how tobacco and alcohol companies, with hundreds of lobbyists in Brussels, are massively promoting cannabidiol (CBD), one of hemp’s 113 molecules, supposedly harmless and “unrelated” to tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana and hashish. The legalization of CBD inevitably laid the foundation for the legalization of hemp production, with all that it contains.

Promoted for its supposed therapeutic benefits or as an imaginary source of well-being (and tragically sought after, for want of any other therapy, by individuals seeking to get off cannabis, hashish, or cocaine), CBD comes in a huge variety of commercial forms (oil, balm, cream, gel, lotion, capsules, chocolates, cookies, candy, chewing gum, suppositories, etc.). Sellers also offer it for our pets!

Since its widespread commercialization (and not before then), CBD has been the subject of numerous scientific studies aimed at proving its safety and finding therapeutic applications for it, which “nevertheless remain nearly totally unsuccessful at present,” according to French drug expert Professor Jean Costentin, President of the National Center for the Prevention, Study and Research of Addiction (CNPERT).



CC/Gage Skidmore

Peter Thiel, big-time investor in the cannabis industry, is also the founder of Palantir, a key company of the military-industrial-financial complex.

Peter Thiel, Cannabizness Leader

Revealing of the current intertwining of big finance, Silicon Valley, and dope, high-level executives of the Canadian company Tilray, the leading exporter of cannabis products to Germany, [got invited](#) to a discussion with German authorities on Sept. 6, 2022, to work out with them the best framework for the legalization of cannabis!

Most recently, Tilray became big and powerful after receiving a major capital injection in 2015 from a handful of Silicon Valley billionaires led by Peter Thiel, co-founder of PayPal and one of Facebook’s first major investors.

With initial CIA funding, Thiel also created the artificial intelligence firm Palantir, a key company of the military-industrial-financial complex.

A Libertarian who flirts with white supremacists, Thiel spent \$30 million supporting pro-Trump candidates in the latest mid-term elections. Also of note is his unconditional support for NATO’s use of Ukraine in its war on Russia.

His investment in the cannabis industry was made via Founders Fund (\$11 billion under management by 2022), which in 2015 placed a stake valued at \$15 billion in Privateer Holdings. Privateer, which owns 76% of Tilray, merged completely with the latter in 2019. It’s also worth noting that Tilray, an “honorable” advocate of “medical cannabis,” has been—like Altria—steadily increasing its investments in beer! As an outspoken venture capital firm, Privateer presents itself as

a group of investors from around the world seeking to put an end to cannabis prohibition and the social harm it causes. Through a combination of acquisitions, investments and incubation, we are focused on building a portfolio of global brands that will lead, legitimize and define the future of cannabis.

In a September 2018 article entitled “How Peter Thiel bet on cannabis,” the French economic daily *Les Echos* noted that Thiel “was the first venture capitalist to invest in the legal cannabis market.”