

## Main findings of the RAND report

- Lack of reliable evidence leads to wild speculation over the illicit market. It means that policy and argument “has been dominated by speculation and hypotheses” that have “generated some widely accepted theories of how the illicit antiquities market operates”.
- Bloggers, journalists and advocacy groups tend to exaggerate claims to attract headlines, funding or political attention. This is a common occurrence.
- The RAND study shows that the size and structure of the illicit market is at odds with the conventional wisdom espoused by some journalists and researchers. “Our research points to a market that looks smaller and is less organized.”
- The end market for looted antiquities is not only the West. It is more geographically dispersed and fragmented. Failure to recognise this means “existing policy frameworks may be poorly suited to addressing the decentralized nature of the problem”.
- “Our analysis suggests that it is unlikely that large volumes of looted antiquities are being sold through observable channels in Europe or the Americas”.
- RAND’s analysis shows there is virtually no evidence of antiquities sales on dark web platforms.
- Trafficking in antiquities/cultural property cannot be ranked in importance next to drugs and weapons because the data is not there to show this.
- There is no evidence that trafficking in antiquities/cultural property overlaps that in drugs and weapons. “Most citations supporting this claim refer to a single original source, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Colonel Matthew Bogdanos’s experiences during the Iraqi Civil War. In fact, evidence from the postings on this channel suggest that there is little overlap of these markets in online platforms.” This misreading of the problem leads to the wrong policy being introduced.
- Field research relies far too much on unsubstantiated anecdotal data.
- Fakes are a major problem.
- Facebook offers are often fake themselves, using images from museum websites or publications.
- The importance of provenance to collectors shows that the market is self-policing to a degree.
- Low sell-through rates at auction and galleries show muted demand, suggesting “that auctions could act only as a limited conduit for illicit sales”.
- Existing policy is often unrealistic and unenforceable.
- Policy should move away from ineffective “expensive and resource-intensive investigations” [like Pandora and Athena] towards “broader-based disruption tactics” such as undermining confidence in online sales using messaging campaigns.