



United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

*Agenda: Analysing the Legitimacy of the US
War on Drugs*





A WORD FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Respected Delegates,

Greetings from the Executive Board!

It is an honor to be serving as the Executive Board of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at IUMUN '19. MUNs bring with them a lot of hope; a hope of a better today and prospective development in the future. It is with this hope that we expect all delegates to come forth and try to amalgamate their country's interests with the larger interests of the world. It is a challenging time for the world to sustain and the populace looks towards us, the young diplomats, to challenge today's reality. It then becomes our task and mission through this committee to come to a long-awaited consensus on issues that have ravaged the world.

For everyone who is afraid to speak or feels they would not be as researched as others, this background guide seeks to provide you a level playing ground and gives you a certain head start to your research. Do not hesitate to question what you do not consider logical. This is an imperative skill in a diplomat. Always remember that you are just as precious as others and have the moral obligation to contribute to the betterment of the society. It has been long overdue that all of us unite against the vices of our time to move ahead towards the Utopian world we have promised to the future generations. On this note, we wish you luck with the conference.

See you soon!

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UNODC AND ITS MANDATE

UNODC is a global leader in the fight against illicit drugs and international crime. Established in 1997 through a merger between the United Nations Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, UNODC operates in all regions of the world through an extensive network of field offices. UNODC relies on voluntary contributions, mainly from Governments, for 90 per cent of its budget.

UNODC is mandated to assist Member States in their struggle against illicit drugs, crime, and terrorism. In the Millennium Declaration, Member States also resolved to intensify efforts to fight transnational crime in all its dimensions, to redouble the efforts to implement the commitment to counter the world drug problem and to take concerted action against international terrorism.

The three pillars of the UNODC work programme are:

1. Field-based technical cooperation projects to enhance the capacity of Member States to counteract illicit drugs, crime and terrorism
2. Research and analytical work to increase knowledge and understanding of drugs and crime issues and expand the evidence base for policy and operational decisions
3. Normative work to assist States in the ratification and implementation of the relevant international treaties, the development of domestic legislation on drugs, crime and terrorism, and the provision of secretariat and substantive services to the treaty-based and governing bodies. In pursuing its objectives, UNODC makes every effort to integrate and mainstream the gender perspective, particularly in its projects for the provision of alternative livelihoods, as well as those against human trafficking.

HISTORY OF US DRUG POLICY

In 1971 President Richard Nixon declared war on drugs. He proclaimed, “America’s public enemy number one in the United States is drug abuse. In order to fight and defeat this enemy, it is necessary to wage a new, all-out offensive.” Nixon fought drug abuse on both the supply and demand fronts. Nixon’s drug policies reflect both the temperance view and disease view of addiction.

Nixon initiated the first significant federal funding of treatment programs in. In 1971, the government funded the then experimental and enormously controversial methadone maintenance program. In June 1971, Nixon addressed Congress and declared, “as long as there is a demand, there will be those willing to take the risks of meeting the demand.” In this statement he publicly proclaimed that all efforts of interdiction and eradication are destined to fail.

Unfortunately, Nixon failed to listen to his own advice. Nixon launched a massive interdiction effort in Mexico. The Drug Enforcement Agency was created in 1973. They initiated Operation Intercept, which pressured Mexico to regulate its marijuana growers. The US government spent hundreds of millions of dollars closing up the border. Trade between Mexico and the US came to a virtual standstill. Mass amounts of Mexican crops headed for the US rotted, while waiting in line at the border. In the end, Nixon achieved his goal of curtailing the supply of Mexican marijuana in America. Columbia, however, was quick to replace Mexico as America’s marijuana supplier.

The interdiction of Mexican marijuana was the government’s first lesson in the “iron law of drug economics .” Every effort the US government has made at interdiction since Operation Intercept has at most resulted in a reorganization of the international drug trade. Heavily monitored drug routes have been rerouted. Drugs enter the United States through land, sea, and air. Closing borders to drug smugglers is impossible as long as the demand exists.

In 1977, President Carter called for the decriminalization of marijuana. In a speech to Congress he said, “penalties against possession of the drug should not be more damaging than the drug itself. Although Carter endorsed lenient laws towards marijuana use, he was against legalization. Carter’s drug policy was focused on the supply front, with most funding going to interdiction and eradication programs.

HISTORY OF US DRUG POLICY

Marijuana decriminalization did not fail but failed to be realized. Carter's presidency witnessed a sharp increase in cocaine use. From 1978 to 1984, cocaine consumption in America increased from between 19 and 25 tons to between 71 and 137 tons. The demand for cocaine increased as much as 700 percent in just six years (Collett, 1989, p. 35). Marijuana was widely connected to cocaine as a feeder drug. Thus, the federal and state governments moved away from marijuana decriminalization.

In 1981, President Reagan gave a speech mirroring Nixon's admission that fighting the supply side of the drug war was a losing proposition. He said, "It's far more effective if you take the customers away than if you try to take the drugs away from those who want to be customers." Reagan, like Nixon did not heed his own advice. The average annual amount of funding for eradication and interdiction programs increased from an annual average of \$437 million during Carter's presidency to \$1.4 billion during Reagan's first term. The funding for programs of education, prevention, and rehabilitation were cut from an annual average of \$386 million to \$362 million (Rosenberger, 1996, p. 26).

Reagan's demand side initiatives focused on "getting tough" on drugs. The program became known as the "zero tolerance" program, where punitive measures against users were emphasized. The 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act gave the drug user full accountability. Drug users were to be prosecuted for possession and accordingly penalized. Although some block grants were given for drug treatment, the rehabilitative efforts were insufficient to meet the overwhelming amount of drug abuse. Reagan's demand side drug policy largely reflects the colonial, or moralist view of addiction.

Despite headlining innovative drug policies, Clinton has largely continued the Republican's supply sided drug policy. In the 1995 budget, Clinton earmarked an extra \$1 billion for both the demand and supply fronts of the government's drug policy. Clinton attracted the media's attention when he doubled the spending for rehabilitation and prevention programs. However, more substantial increases were made for eradication programs and law enforcement. The 1995 budget included \$13.2 billion for drug policy. \$7.8 billion was spent on supply sided efforts, while only \$5.4 billion was spent on education, prevention, and rehabilitation. Although Clinton did increase the percentage spent on the demand front of the drug war, his policy clearly reflects supply sided tactics.

HISTORY OF US DRUG POLICY

It is important to note that Congress has a significant influence on shaping America's drug policy. The Republican 104th Congress successfully killed many of Clinton's attempts to spend more on the demand side. Even the Democratic 103rd Congress of the early 1990's fought shifting the drug policy towards prevention and rehabilitation. Both Democratic and Republic Congresses overwhelmingly favored continuing with supply sided efforts.

Although Clinton didn't significantly change the direction of US drug policy, he presented some innovative proposals. Clinton encouraged Community Action Programs and grass roots organizations to participate in the demand side of the drug war. However, of the \$1 billion given to the Community Empowerment Program only \$50 million was allocated to drug education, prevention, and treatment. Thus, the potential of the programs was never realized.

President Trump stomped into the United Nations General Assembly meeting in September 2018 with a plan for "effectively addressing and countering the world drug problem." He rehashed a business-as-usual global strategy, centered on law enforcement that would crack down on drug trafficking, eradicate narcotics production, and "reduces demand." But today, the world is demanding something else altogether. Growing increasingly disillusioned with Washington's War on Drugs, some communities and lawmakers are raising a white flag, seeking instead more humane ways to fix the ruins of a failed crusade.

DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION

In 1973, 2 years after the declaration of the war on drugs, the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs was replaced by the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The mission of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is to enforce the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States and bring to the criminal and civil justice system of the United States, or any other competent jurisdiction, those organizations and principal members of organizations, involved in the growing, manufacture, or distribution of controlled substances appearing in or destined for illicit traffic in the United States; and to recommend and support non-enforcement programs aimed at reducing the availability of illicit controlled substances on the domestic and international markets.

In carrying out its mission as the agency responsible for enforcing the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States, the DEA's primary responsibilities include:

1. Investigation and preparation for the prosecution of major violators of controlled substance laws operating at interstate and international levels.
2. Investigation and preparation for prosecution of criminals and drug gangs who perpetrate violence in our communities and terrorize citizens through fear and intimidation.
3. Management of a national drug intelligence program in cooperation with federal, state, local, and foreign officials to collect, analyze, and disseminate strategic and operational drug intelligence information.
4. Seizure and forfeiture of assets derived from, traceable to, or intended to be used for illicit drug trafficking.
5. Enforcement of the provisions of the Controlled Substances Act as they pertain to the manufacture, distribution, and dispensing of legally produced controlled substances.
6. Coordination and cooperation with federal, state and local law enforcement officials on mutual drug enforcement efforts and enhancement of such efforts through exploitation of potential interstate and international investigations beyond local or limited federal jurisdictions and resources.
7. Coordination and cooperation with federal, state, and local agencies, and with foreign governments, in programs designed to reduce the availability of illicit abuse-type drugs on the United States market through non-enforcement methods such as crop eradication, crop substitution, and training of foreign officials.
8. Responsibility, under the policy guidance of the Secretary of State and U.S. Ambassadors, for all programs associated with drug law enforcement counterparts in foreign countries.
9. Liaison with the United Nations, Interpol, and other organizations on matters relating to international drug control programs.

WAR ON DRUGS OPERATIONS

The US fights the war on drugs both domestically and overseas.

On the domestic front, the federal government supplies local and state police departments with funds, legal flexibility, and special equipment to crack down on illicit drugs. Local and state police then use this funding to go after drug dealing organizations.

"[Federal] assistance helped us take out major drug organizations, and we took out a number of them in Baltimore," said Neill Franklin, a retired police major and executive director of Law Enforcement Against Prohibition, which opposes the war on drugs. "But to do that, we took out the low-hanging fruit to work up the chain to find who was at the top of the pyramid. It started with low-level drug dealers, working our way up to mid-level management, all the way up to the kingpins."

"Some of the funding, particularly from the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant program, encourages local and state police to participate in anti-drug operations. If police don't use the money to go after illicit substances, they risk losing it — providing a financial incentive for cops to continue the war on drugs.

Although the focus is on criminal groups, casual users still get caught in the criminal justice system. Between 1999 and 2007, Human Rights Watch found at least 80 percent of drug-related arrests were for possession, not sales.

It seems, however, that arrests for possession don't typically turn into convictions and prison time. According to federal statistics, only 5.3 percent of drug offenders in federal prisons and 27.9 percent of drug offenders in state prisons in 2004 were in for drug possession. The overwhelming majority were in for trafficking, and a small few were in for an unspecified "other" category.

Internationally, the US regularly aids other countries in their efforts to crack down on drugs. For example, the US, in the 2000's, provided military aid and training to Colombia — in what's known as Plan Colombia — to help the Latin American country go after criminal organizations and paramilitaries funded through drug trafficking. Federal officials argue that helping countries like Colombia attacks the source of illicit drugs, since such substances are often produced in Latin America and shipped north to the US. But the international efforts have consistently displaced, not eliminated, drug trafficking — and the violence that comes with it — to other countries.

HONDURAS

DEA announces arrest of former Honduran congressman and brother of current President of Honduras for drug trafficking and weapons charges

The U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and federal prosecutors announced the arrest of former Honduran congressman Juan Antonio Hernandez Alvarado, aka “Tony Hernandez,” who was charged in Manhattan federal court for drug trafficking, weapons charges, and making false statements to federal agents. Hernandez is the brother of the current President of Honduras, Juan Orlando Hernandez. Hernandez was arrested on Nov. 23, 2018, in Miami.

“Drug trafficking and corruption around the world threatens the rule of law, fuels violence and instability, and harms innocent families and communities,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Raymond Donovan, who leads the Special Operations Division. “Hernandez and his criminal associates allegedly conspired with some of the world’s most deadly and dangerous transnational criminal networks in Mexico and Colombia to flood American streets with deadly drugs. DEA looks forward to Hernandez facing American justice and answering for his alleged crimes.”

“As alleged, former Honduran Congressman Tony Hernandez was involved in all stages of the trafficking through Honduras of multi-ton loads of cocaine that were destined for the U.S.,” said Manhattan U.S. Attorney Geoffrey S. Berman. “Hernandez allegedly arranged machine gun-toting security for cocaine shipments, bribed law enforcement officials for sensitive information to protect drug shipments, and solicited large bribes from major drug traffickers. Thanks to the ongoing work of the DEA, Hernandez is now in custody on U.S. soil and facing justice in the U.S. courts.”

As stated in the unsealed indictment resulting from DEA’s investigation, from at least in or about 2004, up to and including in or about 2016, multiple drug-trafficking organizations in Honduras and elsewhere worked together, and with support from certain prominent public and private individuals. These included Honduran politicians and law enforcement officials, who received multi-ton loads of cocaine sent to Honduras from, among other places, Colombia via air and maritime routes, in order to transport the drugs westward in Honduras toward the border with Guatemala and eventually to the United States. For protection from official interference, and in order to facilitate the safe passage through Honduras of multi-hundred-kilogram loads of cocaine, drug traffickers paid bribes to public officials, including certain members of the National Congress of Honduras, according to DEA’s investigation.

HONDURAS

Other details from the charges state that Hernandez is a former member of the National Congress of Honduras, the brother of the current President of Honduras, and a large-scale drug trafficker who worked with other drug traffickers in, among other places, Colombia, Honduras, and Mexico, to import cocaine into the United States. From at least in or about 2004, up to and including in or about 2016, Hernandez was involved in processing, receiving, transporting, and distributing multi-ton loads of cocaine that arrived in Honduras via planes, go-fast vessels, and, on at least one occasion, a submarine. Hernandez had access to cocaine laboratories in Honduras and Colombia, at which some of the cocaine was stamped with the symbol “TH,” i.e., “Tony Hernandez.” Hernandez also coordinated and, at times, participated in providing heavily armed security for cocaine shipments transported within Honduras, among other weapons, machine guns.

As part of his drug-trafficking activities, Hernandez and his co-conspirators bribed law enforcement officials for sensitive information to protect drug shipments and solicited large bribes from major drug traffickers. In or about February 2014 in Honduras, Hernandez met with Devis Leonel Rivera Maradiaga, the former leader of a violent Honduran drug-trafficking organization known as the Cachiros, for a meeting arranged by, among others, a former member of the Honduran National Police. During video and audio-recorded portions of that meeting, Hernandez agreed to help Rivera Maradiaga by causing Honduran government entities to pay money owed to Cachiros money-laundering front companies in exchange for kickback payments from Rivera Maradiaga. Rivera Maradiaga paid Hernandez approximately \$50,000 during the meeting.

Honduras President targeted in DEA drug-trafficking and money laundering investigation

The President of Honduras has been named as a target in a DEA investigation into drug-trafficking and money laundering, according to U.S. Federal Court documents as on 31st may 2019.

Juan Orlando Hernández, members of his family and advising group have been targeted since 2013 for their involvement “in large scale drug trafficking and money laundering activities relating to the importation of cocaine into the United States”.

The DEA investigation was revealed in previously-sealed documents filed Tuesday by the Southern District of New York. The initial documents included a 2015 application requesting digital companies to grant limited access into two of Hernández’s email accounts.

Hernández responded to the claims Tuesday in a press release saying the DEA “found no evidence to support the accusation against the President and his collaborators,” and the agency “considers the President a trusted partner in the fight against crime.”

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE DEA

Deals with drug cartels

For over a decade, under multiple administrations, the U.S. government allegedly had a secret agreement with the ruthless Mexican Sinaloa drug cartel that allowed it to operate with impunity. In exchange for information and assistance in quashing competing criminal syndicates, the Bush and Obama administrations let the Sinaloa cartel import tons of drugs into the United States while wiping out Sinaloa competitors and ensuring that its leaders would not be prosecuted for their long list of major crimes. Other revelations also point strongly to massive but clandestine U.S. government involvement in drug trafficking.

Corrupt DEA agents made millions off the drugs they were supposed to be taking off the street

Giving anybody access to drugs worth millions of dollars can pose problems. But when those same people have spent years familiarizing themselves with networks that know how to turn drugs into profit, there's a clear potential for abuse. DEA corruption was particularly rampant in the late 1980's. Much of this corruption was run-of-the-mill, such as DEA agents ripping off dealers for cash and drugs, which went largely unreported. But a number of more flamboyant scandals also surfaced, damaging the reputation of the agency. In one notorious case, DEA agents were caught stealing drugs from the agency's evidence vault. The agents gave the drugs to an informant, who sold them and sent at least \$1 million in profits to the agents over five years. Later, the same agents, who reportedly spent this dirty money lavishly, also confessed to stealing bundles of cash from drug busts.

Another case from two decades ago suggests that DEA corruption hasn't always been so blatant. In an undercover money-laundering operation in the 1990's that targeted narco-traffickers in Colombia, corrupt DEA operatives were regularly skimming cash from the pool of money they were supposed to be laundering, according to former agents with knowledge of the case. The agents' actions nearly got an informant killed, according to reports. One agent was found guilty of pocketing \$700,000 during the operation and sentenced to two years in jail. He was the only person prosecuted as a result of the failed sting. Bill Conroy of the Narcosphere recently reported that \$20 million is still unaccounted for in the case, which remains unresolved.

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE DEA

The agency has even killed people on foreign soil

DEA agents working with local authorities on a Honduran anti-drug mission shot and killed smuggling suspects in two separate incidents over the course of a few weeks in 2012. In both cases, officials claimed the suspects were armed and refusing to surrender, but the episodes nonetheless underscored emerging concerns about the DEA's respect for Honduran sovereignty.

Those killings came just a month after DEA agents took part in an anti-smuggling operation that led to the deaths of four innocent Hondurans, including a pregnant woman. Honduran police initially called the mission a success, but an investigation by journalists and human rights activists later revealed the truth – the victims of the anti-drug operation that night were on a boat entirely unconnected to the supposed smuggling activity. U.S. officials defended the DEA's involvement, claiming agents didn't fire any rounds during the mission, but the incident sparked aggressive local protests calling for the DEA to leave the area.

Members of Congress later called for a further investigation into the episode and, specifically, the role DEA agents played. But the DEA declined to open an investigation. Months later, reports suggested the agency had not cooperated with local authorities investigating the incident, which led Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Ga.) to ask earlier this year:

DEA has threatened and terrorized people

In 2003, 14-year-old Ashley Villarreal was shot in the head by a DEA agent while driving just blocks away from her San Antonio home. Agents who had been staking out the Villarreal household mistakenly believed the person in the car with the teen was her father, whom they suspected of dealing cocaine. Two days later, Villareal died. A few days after the shooting, Villareal's father was arrested on drug conspiracy charges.

The agents never faced charges in the teen's death, even though testimony from witnesses and subsequent reports conflicted with official accounts of the incident. The details of this case are painful to read, but perhaps most upsetting is the fact that they aren't necessarily unique.

Indeed, Villareal's case is an extreme example of what has become a trend of concerning incidents. As the DEA and other law enforcement agencies have ramped up their use of no-knock raids over the past 25 years, a pattern of disturbing behavior has emerged, with mistakes leading to the injuries and deaths of both civilians and law enforcement. Other times, the damage isn't physical. During a DEA raid in 2007, agents forced their way into a mobile home in California, allegedly shouting obscenities and pointing their guns at the heads of the 11 and 14 year old girls asleep in the home. The girls were later handcuffed. A few hours later, agents realized they'd ransacked the wrong home. The family later filed a lawsuit claiming the DEA's actions constituted "intentional infliction of emotional distress."

ALLEGATIONS AGAINST THE DEA

The agency is so unwilling to reconsider some of its outdated policies that the DEA chief once refused to acknowledge that marijuana is less harmful than crack and heroin

For all of the sketchy things the DEA has done while waging the drug war, perhaps most upsetting to critics is the agency's often stubborn insistence that the war should be fought with the same aggressiveness on all fronts.

Earlier this year, the Drug Policy Alliance, an advocacy group dedicated to drug law reform, issued a report showing how the DEA has systematically rejected scientific evidence to maintain current prohibitive drug scheduling laws. The report cited several cases in which the DEA has undermined, ignored or circumvented research suggesting that marijuana and MDMA, or Ecstasy, don't belong in DEA's Schedule I, a category for substances with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse or severe psychological or physical dependence.

The agency's unwillingness to reconsider its policies in the face of countervailing scientific evidence was perhaps best demonstrated when DEA Administrator Michele Leonhart testified before Congress in June 2012. In her testimony, Leonhart refused to answer the seemingly straightforward and obvious question of whether heroin or crack are worse for a person's health than marijuana. State and local governments are increasingly acknowledging through policy shifts that marijuana is less harmful than those more potent drugs. But the DEA has insisted on treating marijuana with equal severity. Admitting that it is, in fact, less harmful could have been especially awkward for Leonhart, considering the DEA at the time was in the midst of an aggressive crackdown on medical marijuana facilities.

Raids on legal marijuana facilities have slowed in recent years, and Leonhart's stance on the drug war has appeared increasingly at odds with the more progressive views of Attorney General Eric Holder. Still, the DEA chief recently suggested that the push toward legalization only drives the agency to "fight harder."

IMPACT OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

Impact on other countries

The expansion of United States (U.S.) drug enforcement operations abroad emerged from the Former U.S. President Richard M. Nixon's administration's declared war on drugs, as well as its policy to recruit foreign governments in the global execution of the war. What became known as the "Americanization" of global drug enforcement combined the global expansion of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) with robust efforts to modernize the drug enforcement capabilities of foreign police (Nadelmann 1993:194–195). By the 1980s, efforts to recruit foreign governments into the drug war and modernize their enforcement capabilities invariably involved the use of the certification process, which in many instances coerced foreign governments into making legal and judicial reforms that were compatible with the DEA's enforcement operations (Freeman and Sierra 2005:285–286).

The growth of DEA agents in foreign countries demonstrates America's policy commitment to supply-side drug control and to the policy of recruiting and cultivating foreign partners in the global war on drugs. But more importantly, the expansion of DEA agents stationed abroad in U.S. embassies signaled to foreign governments that drug enforcement has become a high level foreign policy objective to Washington (Andreas and Nadelmann 2006:130). Operationally, the global expansion of the DEA expanded the scope of the Administration's central objectives: the immobilization or the arrest of drug traffickers and working with foreign law enforcement to interdict drugs in source and transit countries before they enter the U.S. By the late 1980s, DEA enforcement operations were increasingly adopted by foreign police agencies and legalized by their legislatures and courts (Nadelmann 1993:192–193).

Although the global scope of U.S. drug enforcement has continued to increase, very little attention is being given to the domestic consequences on foreign countries in waging Washington's sponsored drug war on their soil. Country study research posits that the recent rise in violent crime in Latin America is the "collateral damage" of the "Americanization" of drug enforcement that encourages Latin American governments to militarize the drug war, consequently creating an environment in which the drug trade and the accompanying violence continues to increase (Bagley 1992; Crandall 2002; Youngers and Rosin 2005).

IMPACT OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

Impact on other countries

From the late 1980s to the present day, i.e., 2017, the United States government has spent a total of \$1.5 trillion in its war on drugs. A budget of this scale has not been provided. It seems like the United States government is obsessed with the drug war.

However, successful results are lacking. The government indeed claims to have won several battles. They have ended the reign of several cartels. However, they are mere claims. Drug abuse has increased in America instead of getting reduced. If the government takes down one cartel, it is simply replaced by another. Smuggling routes are replaced with newer routes, and drug bosses keep changing. However, the supply of drugs never goes down. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) has been successful in stopping less than 1% of the drugs that are destined for the United States.

From an economic point of view, the whole war on drugs was flawed from the very start. This is because the government was only focusing on the supply side economics. Their efforts were meant to stop the problem at the source. The problem is that when demand remains stagnant, and supply falls, the prices start to go up. This is simple economics that applies to illegal drugs as much as it applies to any other product or service!

The price rise makes the drug trade even more lucrative. An increasing number of criminals want to get involved in this trade because of the massive amounts of money that can be made. The government should adopt a policy that focuses more on the demand side. The drug trade leads to violent cartels only because government measures make it impossible for anyone except violent cartels to be a part of this trade.

IMPACT OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

Humanitarian impact

The real cost of the war on drugs is far greater than the \$1.5 trillion that has been spent by the federal government. Millions of human lives have been lost. Human rights violation has become a norm in many of the countries. Also, the number of people dead in countries like Mexico is much higher than in Iraq and Afghanistan combined, even though the latter are war zones with one of the world's deadliest conflicts.

Mass Incarceration: The war on drugs has led to one of the highest rates of incarceration in the United States. Even though the United States has only 5% of the world's population, they have more than 25% of the world's prison population! Also, most of the people belong to the minority community.

More than 40% of the people in American prisons are of Latin American or African American descent. The prison population has grown more than five times since the war on drugs began. This is costing the government billions of dollars. However, it is also ruining the lives of these young adults who have to go to jail for these non-violent crimes. Also, once they have these crimes on their record, they have no source of legitimate employment and hence are forced to turn to a life of crime.

The economic impact is therefore threefold. First of all, there are expenses related to incarceration that need to be borne by the state. Secondly, the government has to forego the tax revenue that these otherwise normal individuals would provide. Thirdly, the government has to spend more money on law enforcement since they have converted a bunch of teenagers into criminals who have no other source of employment.

Violence and Destabilization: The cost of the war is even higher when you consider the amount of turmoil that is being borne by the countries that are in the front line of this battle. Countries like Mexico and Colombia have seen violence like the world has never seen before. Medellin and Ciudad Juarez have both been murder capitals of the world at different times. Several governments have been changed since the war on drugs began. The violence and destabilization have led to lost economic output and increasing law enforcement expenditure in these countries as well. An economic approach would have been much better in this situation as compared to a military approach.

IMPACT OF THE WAR ON DRUGS

Social Impact

Incarceration has become the sentence of choice for drug offenses at the Federal level and in most States. During the mid-1990's, an average of three 500-bed prison facilities have opened each week in the United States, and they are filled with inmates convicted of drug offenses. The war on drugs has also produced an unprecedented racial disproportion of inmates in the prison system.

Funds spent on prison-building have diverted resources from education and social programs, and hence, the citizens are less able to compete in an increasingly competitive marketplace, as skills are less and employment opportunities become limited. Such conditions only breed more criminals. A growing proportion of prison inmates have been convicted of nonviolent drug offenses; e.g., in 1979, 6 percent of State prison inmates were convicted of nonviolent drug offenses, and by 1998, the proportion had increased to nearly 21 percent. The causal chain that links incarceration, joblessness, and weak social bonds has made social and economic conditions particularly difficult for Black families since so many young Black males have been incarcerated for drug offenses.

Besides, 2 to 3 percent of State and Federal inmates are HIV-positive or have AIDS, a rate five times higher than in the general population. Unfortunately, Federal and State prison authorities have been slow to develop policies to deal with this crisis, such that the increase in the prison population poses not only the threat of AIDS for the inmates, but also for the general population as prisoners return to the community with HIV/AIDS. The war on drugs has also involved a steadfast refusal by Federal authorities to approve the use of marijuana for medicinal purposes, even though there is strong evidence for its effectiveness in relieving some painful symptoms. In analyzing the impact of the war on drugs, it is necessary to expand the inquiry to examine the societal consequences of public policies that disenfranchise so many people from a positive future, particularly racial minorities who face disadvantages apart from the impact of the war on drugs.

DRUG POLICY ALLIANCE

The Drug Policy Alliance envisions a just society in which the use and regulation of drugs are grounded in science, compassion, health and human rights, in which people are no longer punished for what they put into their own bodies, but only for crimes committed against others, and in which the fears, prejudices and punitive prohibitions of today are no more. They wish to put an end to the War on Drugs.

Their mission is to advance those policies and attitudes that best reduce the harms of both drug use and drug prohibition, and to promote the sovereignty of individuals over their minds and bodies.

A Broad Coalition

Their supporters are individuals who believe the war on drugs must end. Together, they work to ensure that US drug policies no longer arrest, incarcerate, disenfranchise and otherwise harm millions – particularly young people and people of color who are disproportionately affected by the war on drugs.

Values & Priorities

1. Extensively reducing the role of criminalization in drug policy, so that people are no longer punished for what they put into their bodies, but only for crimes that hurt others
2. Advocating for responsible and equitable legal regulation of marijuana to reduce the harms caused by prohibition and bring in new sources of tax revenue
3. Promoting health-centered drug policies by advocating for services such as treatment on demand, supervised consumption services, drug maintenance therapies, and syringe access programs
4. Empowering youth, parents, and educators with honest, reality-based drug education that moves beyond inaccurate, fear-based messages and zero-tolerance policies

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION

There are three major treaties: the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs of 1961, the Convention on Psychotropic Drugs of 1971, and the UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. Combined, the treaties require participants to limit and even prohibit the possession, use, trade, and distribution of drugs outside of medical and scientific purposes, and work together to stop international drug trafficking.

There is a lot of disagreement among drug policy experts, enforcers, and reformers about the stringency of the treaties. Several sections of the conventions allow countries some flexibility so they don't violate their own constitutional protections. The US, for example, has never enforced penalties on inciting illicit drug use on the basis that it would violate the rights to freedom of speech.

Many argue that any move toward legalization of use, possession, and sales violates international treaties. Under this argument, some governments — including several US states and Uruguay — are technically in violation of the treaties because they legalized marijuana for personal possession and sales.

Others say that countries have a lot of flexibility due to the constitutional exemptions in the conventions. Countries could claim, for instance, that their protections for the right to privacy and health allow them to legalize drugs despite the conventions. When it comes to individual states in the US, the federal government argues that America's federalist system allows states some flexibility as long as the federal government keeps drugs illegally.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER UPON

- 1) Should the War on drugs operations be continued under the current Trump administration?
- 2) Should the working and operations of the DEA be modified and reassessed?
- 3) What role does the Drug policy alliance play?
- 4) Should U.S. interfere through its drug operations in South America?
- 5) Could U.S. agents be engaged in the 'war on drugs' abroad operate without any sort of accountability?
- 6) Could new international policies and treaties be signed in order to reduce illicit drug trade?
- 7) Are the allegations against the DEA justified?
- 8) Has the war on drugs improved or worsened the situation of drug trade in the US?
- 9) Was the arresting of former President of Honduras justified?
- 10) With the majority of drugs arriving via legal ports of entry, can the wall proposed by President Trump stop them?

LINKS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

<https://www.vox.com/2016/5/8/18089368/war-on-drugs-marijuana-cocaine-heroin-meth>

https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty_prejudice/paradox/htele.html
<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/07/2012721152715628181.html>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/upfront/2019/04/war-drugs-failed-190412163328603.html>

<https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2018/11/26/dea-announces-arrest-former-honduran-congressman-and-brother-current>

https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/poverty_prejudice/paradox/htele.html

<http://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/brief-history-drug-war>

<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/upfront/2019/04/war-drugs-failed-190412163328603.html>

<https://globalsouthstudies.as.virginia.edu/key-issues/global-war-drugs>