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How successful has the US 'war on drugs' been in dealing with the global trade in illegal substances?

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1. Introduction. Since President Nixon declared the 'war on drugs' on 17th June 1971 it has been estimated that over $1 trillion has been spent on combatting this global trade in illegal substances (Gray, 2012). Despite this level of investment it is reported that "drugs are cheaper and more abundant than ever before" (Payan, 2013; p.9) and that "tens of millions of lives have been lost or ruined" as a consequence of this US-driven policy (Keane, 2012; p.41). This has led some to suggest that the effects of the war have been more harmful than the drugs themselves (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010) and that in reality, "the global war on drugs has failed" (Global Commission on Drug Policy, 2011; p.2). However others "point to the crushing of a number of criminal cartels and the arrests of their most important leaders" (Manaut, 2013; p.153-154) as evidence of success and assert that the war is being won and thus should continue. Moreover, those on this side of the argument state that an approach other than prohibition could lead to an overall increase in the consumption of these drugs and that from a public health perspective, governments are responsible for preventing this from happening (Wilson, 1990). Therefore given the polarised nature of the debate it is important to conduct an objective analysis of the war on drugs in order to determine whether it can be considered a success.

To begin, the paper will briefly explain what is meant by the term 'the war on drugs' by reviewing its origins, methods and objectives. Its success will then be measured against its record in reducing drug consumption, production and transportation at both the national and global levels. It will be shown that despite some minor, localised success, the war has predominantly failed to meet any of its objectives. Next, the paper will focus on the externalities of the war and discuss the impact it has had on the following: societal violence; conflict; minorities; health; families and children; free speech; state authority, the democratic process and development; the environment; and relationships the US has with its allies. The evidence presented will show that the war has had a detrimental effect on many of these areas and often causes more harm than good. The opinions of those on the front line of the war will then be examined in more detail and reveal that some of those responsible for executing this policy have questioned its effectiveness. The paper will then finish by concluding that the vast amount of resources spent on combating this illicit trade have achieved very little and that ultimately, the war on drugs has been unsuccessful.

2. What is the War on Drugs? Despite Nixon's declaration more than 40 years ago some argue that the war on drugs actually began in 1880 when the US negotiated a ban on the shipment of opium with China (Eddy, 2003 cited in Robinson & Scherlen, 2014; p.19). Others contend that it started with the introduction of the Harrison Act in 1914, "which brought the production, importation, and distribution of opiates under federal law for the first time in American history" (Payan, 2013; p.6). Whenever it began, this US-led approach to drug control has "become institutionalized, consolidated, and global" (Buxton, 2010; p.62) and has been adopted by a vast number countries and societies regardless of political or cultural orientation (Elvins, 2003). This is evident in the commonality of practices across the world with regard to the sentencing of drug traffickers (Newburn, 2002 cited in Fleetwood, 2011). In this respect, given the near universal acceptance of the prohibitionist regime it could be argued that the war on drugs has been a success from a policy implementation perspective.

However, it is reasonable to assume that many taxpayers would argue that a policy's success should not be determined by the level of support it receives, but by whether it has achieved its objectives. It is therefore necessary to articulate what the war hopes to achieve before the level of its success can be truly evaluated. It is argued that this is a policy which focuses on "the eradication of supplies, the interdiction of drug shipments, and the criminalization of the drug trade" (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010; p.12) because the US is unwilling or unable to tackle demand reduction, especially on the domestic front (Gray, 2012). Nonetheless, after studying the work of the US Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), Robinson and Scherlen (2014) suggest that the drug war has also focused on decreasing drug consumption or use. The section that follows will therefore assess whether the war on drugs has been able to reduce drug consumption or use, as well as cut the production and transportation of these illicit substances.

3. Measuring Success. As the title suggests, this section will analyse drug use, production and transportation at the global and national levels in order to determine whether the two stated objectives of the war on drugs have been met. A number of statistics will be presented as part of this analysis therefore it is important to highlight the main weakness in this approach before proceeding. The divisiveness that this policy engenders can lead to some using "faulty statistics" (Robinson & Scherlen, 2014; p.xiii)

in order to advance their side of the argument. Therefore this should be taken into consideration when reviewing the figures put forward in this debate, remembering that few statistics in reality are truly impartial.

3.1 Objective One: Reduction in Drug Consumption or Use. In the US alone, the war on drugs does appear to be having a significant impact on reducing drug consumption. For instance, there has been a gradual reduction in the level of cocaine use since the early 1990s (Bagley, 2013) and between 1999 and 2009 the country experienced a substantial 40% drop in consumption (UNODC, 2011). In addition to cocaine, the government "has managed to stabilize or even reduce demand for most illicit drugs" (Bagley, 2013; p.24) indicating that domestically, considerable progress has been made. However, it has been argued that since 1914 the number of drug addicts in the US has remained constant at 1.3% of the population (Gray, 2012) and that the country still remains "the largest single consumer market for illicit drugs on the planet" (Bagley, 2013; p.2), therefore these reductions might not be as impressive as they first seem. In addition, this drop in consumption hasn't even come close to being replicated at the global level. For example, it is reported that between 2006 and 2013 the estimated number of illicit drug users across the world increased from 208 to 246 million (UNODC, 2015) and that between 1998 and 2008, the annual consumption of opiates, cocaine and cannabis[1] rose by 34.5%, 27% and 8.5% respectively (Payan, 2013). Moreover, it is not just the consumption of these three main illicit drugs that are increasing – in 2014 the number of psychoactive substances reported for the first time was 450, up from 126 in 2009 (UNODC, 2015).

It is also important to note that the reduction in demand for cocaine in the US has largely been offset by a dramatic growth in consumption in Europe and South America, with the number of users in the former increasing from 4.3 to 4.75 million (Bagley, 2013). Research has shown that source-country control, which is the cornerstone of the war on drugs, is the least effective way of reducing cocaine consumption (Rydell & Everingham, 1994 cited in Lal, 2008) therefore these figures shouldn't be that surprising. Some would disagree with this assertion and claim that usage would be higher if anything other than a prohibitionist approach were adopted (Wilson, 1990). However this reliance on deterrence seems misplaced given that the hundreds of millions of

[1] Marijuana and cannabis will be used interchangeably throughout the paper.

dollars spent on the war appear to have had little to no effect in reducing global drug use; instead it seems that consumption has actually increased in many parts of the world. Therefore it can only be concluded that the first objective of the war on drugs has not been met.

3.2 Objective Two: Reduction in the Production and Transportation of Drugs. This objective is harder to assess as the trends for cocaine and heroin differ quite dramatically and those for cannabis are "difficult to estimate" (UNODC, 2015; p.57). In terms of cocaine, substantial reductions were observed between 2002 and 2013 when global illicit cultivation of the coca bush fell from 173100 hectares to 120800 hectares, which was the lowest recorded level since the mid-1980s (UNODC, 2015). In addition, there have been significant declines in cocaine production in the Andean region and Columbia in recent years (Bagley, 2013). Conversely in 2014 global opium production reached the second highest level since the late 1930s and the cultivation of opium poppy in the world's main growing regions increased from 216204 hectares in 1999 to 310891 hectares in 2014 (UNODC, 2015). Given these variations it is important to interrogate the figures in more detail in order to determine whether this objective has been met.

Although coca production has apparently fallen the statistics don't seem to match those given for cocaine use. As noted above, decreases in consumption in the US have largely been offset by increases in Europe and global annual cocaine use is estimated to have increased by 27% between 1998 and 2008, yet there has been this reported fall in production. Therefore if production really is down and consumption is up it is important to consider where this 'extra' cocaine has come from.

Firstly, if it is assumed that these figures are accurate then it is possible that cocaine producers and traffickers have stockpiled huge quantities of the drug and have been able to continue meeting demand. Those operating in this market have been noted for their ingenuity (Delevingne, 1931 cited in South, 1998) and are generally known to have vast resources at their disposal, including light aircraft and even submarines (Payan, 2013), therefore it is entirely feasible that they could obtain the vast storage space and logistical expertise required. Secondly, the so-called 'balloon effect' has seen cocaine production in Latin and South America shift continually from country –to-country in response to intensified enforcement action (Bagley, 2013). Considering the

resourcefulness of producers and traffickers and that illicit drugs can be cultivated in a "wide range of conditions" (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010; p.11) these shifts may have forced production underground. Therefore it is possible that the figures presented for cocaine cultivation are inaccurate and that actual production is a lot higher. Moreover, it has been argued that "the supply of drugs now exceeds the demand" (Manaut, 2013; p.158) and that in general, the price of illicit drugs in the main consumer markets of the US and Europe "have been stable or declining" (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010; p.31). This further supports the assertion that cocaine cultivation has been sorely underestimated as basic economic principles would normally equate a drop in cultivation with a reduction in supply and an increase in price. It also suggests that traffickers are encountering few problems when delivering the drug to consumer markets.

In contrast to cocaine, the statistics for opium production seem to correlate with those for opiate consumption. As already mentioned, the latter increased by 34.5% between 1998 and 2008 and the former by approximately 100000 hectares between 1999 and 2014. In addition, the military intervention in Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9/11 has provided the UN and other organisations that measure illicit drug production with greater access to that country for most of the 21st century. Therefore given Afghanistan's unrivalled position as the world's biggest opium producer, it could be argued that the figures for opium poppy cultivation are more reliable than those for cocaine as increased access to cultivation areas might mean better estimates. As a result the recorded increases in production and consumption suggests that the war on drugs is failing to deter cultivation or transportation of the drug.

The difficulty in analysing cannabis production has already been mentioned, although as before, cultivation and production can be assessed by other means. From a national perspective Belize provides a notable, albeit rare example of a case study where real success appears to have been achieved. In the mid-1980s the country was reportedly the fourth-largest producer of marijuana in the world (Taswell, 1985 cited in Steinberg, 2004) and the largest per-capita (Steinberg, 2004). Yet by the 1990s and with the help of the US the government managed to turn the nation's marijuana industry into "a mere shadow of that which existed during the 1980s" (Steinberg, 2004). However, like other drug war successes these reductions apparently haven't been replicated at the international or global level. The aforementioned 8.5% increase in annual cannabis consumption between 1998 and 2008 suggests that there has been a constant supply of

the drug. In addition, the fact that a considerable number of US states have legalised marijuana (Sanchez-Moreno, 2015) implies that the government has failed to stop cultivation and production of the drug at source and the trafficking of the drug into the US.

In conclusion, coca bush cultivation may have fallen yet the figures suggest the supply of cocaine remains stable. Additionally the cultivation of opium has increased and cannabis production appears constant. Furthermore, consumption levels indicate that all three substances are reaching their markets and are being successfully trafficked from producer regions. As a result, it is argued that only minor, localised progress has been made in combating the production and transportation of these illicit substances and that in effect, these successes have been 'cancelled out' by the ability of the global market to absorb new demand. Therefore the war on drugs still has much to do if it is to meet its second objective and to date, it is argued that is has largely failed.

4. (Un)intended Consequences. In its pursuit of those involved in this illicit trade the war on drugs has had a number of far-reaching and harmful side-effects that have potentially impacted upon whole societies. Some argue that the war "undermines development by fueling conflict, damages human rights regimes, promotes stigma and discrimination, threatens public health, creates crimes, enriches criminals, causes deforestation… [and] pollutes" (Payan, 2013; p.8). Any policy that causes this amount of harm whilst failing to achieve its goals should not be considered a success, therefore it is important to interrogate these claims in more detail in order to assess their validity.

It has been noted that those involved in the drug trade nearly always resort to intimidation and violence to resolve their disputes as the nature of their business doesn't give them access to the civil courts (Gray, 2012). Often this violence extends to murder as rivals vie for control of the market, especially in areas where the state is weak, corrupt or lacks legitimacy. This is evident in many areas of Latin and South America where violence is commonplace in everyday life and the homicide rate is exceptionally high. For example, in the 1990s it is estimated that drug-related violence caused around 27000 deaths per year in Columbia and that in recent years, similar numbers have died in Brazil (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010). In addition, it has been reported that approximately 164000 people were murdered in Mexico between 2007 and

2014 (Breslow, 2015). Considering that the US provided $1.4 billion worth of aid to the Mexican Government during this period to help them fight the cartels (Payan, 2013) these numbers are shocking and indicate that the war on drugs has largely been unable to curtail drug-related violence.

Some suggest that the war hasn't just failed to tackle this violence but that it has actually exacerbated the problem (Gray, 2012). This appears counterintuitive, yet it has been claimed that "violence often intensifies as governments attempt to disrupt the drug trade by killing or arresting the heads of the criminal organizations: their semi-stable oligopoly is replaced by a multitude or warring factions" (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010; p.19). This seems to have happened in Mexico following the aforementioned aid deal with the US, when in 2007 President Calderon adopted a new, militarised strategy that aimed to tackle the drug cartels (Manaut, 2013). In 2006 the number of drug-related homicides per 100000 people in the country stood at 2231, however after two years of implementing the new strategy this rose to 8255 in 2009 (Milenio, 2010 cited in Manaut, 2013; p.164). In addition, the aggravating effects of increased enforcement action have been observed elsewhere and include many instances where innocent people have lost their lives as a result of this action. For example, 2500 deaths are reported to have occurred in just a 3 month period in 2003 after the Thai authorities launched a campaign against drug traffickers and it is claimed that half of those killed had no connection to the drug trade (The Economist, 2008 cited in Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010; p.20). And in the US there have been numerous cases in which innocent parties have been shot and killed by the police and other law enforcement agencies during the execution of drug search warrants (Gray, 2012). Furthermore, the authorities themselves often become victims as the drug traffickers retaliate against those who seek to disrupt their business. For instance, in Mexico it is estimated that the police and military comprise 7% of the drug-related deaths that occur in the country (Selee, Shirk & Olson, 2010) and that in 1995, five years after delivering a lecture to the Colombian Supreme Court, a prominent US legal historian noted that 12 of the 25 justices he had spoken to had been killed by narco-terrorists (Finkelman, 2013). Also, it appears that in Mexico the apparent inability of the authorities to protect themselves or their populations has led to outbreaks of vigilantism and further violence, as several towns have taken "the law into their own hands, through lynching and extra-judicial executions" (Payan, 2013; p.13).

It could also be argued that the war on drugs has prolonged local and regional conflicts and resulted in a greater levels of violence and death than would have otherwise been expected. This is likely to have happened in Afghanistan and Columbia, where groups fighting the government managed to boost their legitimacy and popular support in areas dependent on the illicit drug economy by actively opposing US-sponsored eradication programmes (Felbab-Brown, 2010). Moreover these groups have been able to finance their violent campaigns by directly participating in the narcotics trade, with the Taliban in particular reported to derive around 40% of their funding from opium cultivation (CBS News, 2015). Therefore from a counter-insurgency perspective, it is reasonable to assume that these groups would have been defeated or significantly incapacitated if they were deprived of this funding and support, thereby reducing their potential for violence.

Some assert that the war on drugs has also made "criminals out of otherwise law abiding citizens" (Gray, 2012; p.xii) and that "young people go into prisons... as youths and come out as hardened criminals" (Robertson, 2010 cited in Newsmax, 2010). This seems to be especially true in the US where the number of individuals imprisoned for drug offences increased tenfold between 1982 and 2002 (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010) and has reached a total of 400000, which rather astonsighingly is more than the prison populations of England, France, Germany and Japan combined (Gray, 2012). These dramatic increases seem in part to have resulted from draconian legislation which mandates sentences up to life imprisonment for third offences, many of which are triggered by drug charges as minor as possession of marijuana (Howard, 2012). Similarly, research has shown that sentencing guidelines based on quantities of drugs carried often results in disproportionate punishments for drug mules, who in many cases are merely the unwitting pawns of professional drug traffickers (Fleetwood, 2011). The development of this legislation is also alleged to have made females "more vulnerable to arrest now than they were in the past" (Merolla, 2008; p.268), which might explain why the US female prison population has grown from 8.2% of the population in 2000 to 9.3% in 2015 (Walmsley, 2015). In addition, a disproportionate number of African Americans and other minorities have been imprisoned for drug-related offences (McNamara, 2011; Sanchez-Moreno, 2015) which has led to accusations that war on drugs is inherently racist (Weikel, 1995 cited in Gray, 2012). All of these points suggest that in an attempt to prosecute its way to victory, the war on drugs has criminalised whole sections of society and fostered division amongst populations.

The war has also failed to deal with the health problems associated with drug use and in many cases might have actually exacerbated these problems. For example, it has been noted that opioid overdoses are the main cause of drug-related deaths globally (UNODC, 2015) and that between 2010 and 2013, the number of deaths in the US resulting from heroin use rose dramatically from 3036 to 8527 (Hedegaard, Chen & Warner, 2015 cited in UNODC, 2015). This may explain why some claim that the country is "in the midst of an opioid overdose epidemic" (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2016). In addition, US drug-related hospital admissions for heroin, cocaine and marijuana grew steadily from 1978, then more than doubled between 1990 and 2002 (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010) indicating that this issue has been ongoing for a number of years. Moreover these problems aren't just confined to the US; in 2014 the drug misuse mortality rate in England and Wales reached 39.9 deaths per one million of the population, the highest rate ever recorded (Great Britain. Office for National Statistics, 2015). And at the global level, it is estimated that "one in six problem drug users accesses treatment each year" (UNODC, 2014; p.3). Given that there are approximately 246 million illicit drug users worldwide (UNODC, 2015) this equates to around 41 million people. These health problems are to some extent attributable to the prohibitionist regime that forms the backbone of the war on drugs, which forces many users to purchase low-quality, potentially unsafe drugs from the black market then self-administer them in unhygienic environments using equipment that can facilitate the spread of disease (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010).

It should also be noted that the figures above do not account for the considerable number of users who do not seek treatment or delay asking for medical attention for fear of prosecution, which in many cases has resulted in the death of the individual involved (Gray, 2012). This is largely because the war on drugs sees illicit drug users "as criminal offenders rather than as patients needing help" (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010; p.15) and leads many to believe that they will be arrested if they visit a hospital for treatment. In addition, this approach has prevented illicit drugs from being used for justifiable medical purposes such as the prescription of marijuana for chronic pain relief, which again has forced many to the unregulated black market (Gray, 2012).

The opportunity costs of the war on drugs have also potentially negatively impacted upon the health of those who do not consume illicit narcotics. For example, it has been reported that the US state of California spends around $960 million per year on

enforcing marijuana legislation, yet in the same state thousands of rape kits[2] have gone untested because of funding issues (Gray, 2012). Consequently many of those that perpetrated these sex crimes have not been identified and could have harmed again, and in many instances the lack of a prosecution might also have left a psychological mark on the victim. Furthermore, the money spent on enforcing prohibition around the globe could have been spent on things that might help improve people's health, such as the provision of more doctors and nurses, and free or subsidised medication for poorer sections of society.

The impact of the war on drugs on families has also been devastating and in many instances children have been deprived of parents as a result of death or imprisonment. For example, in the US it has been reported that 54% of prisoners are parents of small children and that more than 120k are mothers (de Rugy, 2011 cited in Gray, 2012), meaning that a significant number of young people are growing up without the stability, support and love that a parent should provide. In addition, when released many parents are denied welfare benefits because of their drug conviction (Mauer, 2007), which further impacts upon their ability to rehabilitate and provide a stable environment for their families. Consequently, it could be argued that this approach also punishes the children of drug convicts by limiting their prospects in life and making them more susceptible to poverty and crime, which in turn may negatively impact upon future generations and inhibit their social mobility.

In addition, some of the policies adopted by the war have apparently made children more vulnerable to being recruited by drug cartels and gangs. Blumstein (1995, cited in Borden, 2013) has argued that the introduction of harsh mandatory minimum sentences for drug possession in the US in 1986 contributed to the recruitment of many juveniles as drug dealers, as the new legislation wasn't applicable to them at that time. In Mexico the same phenomenon has been observed, as tough legislation and limited opportunities have created the conditions in which many children have been recruited to smuggle drugs across the border with the US (Gray, 2012). In this country the situation has become so bad that some children have even been hired to kill, with one fourteen-year-old confessing to have murdered four people from the age of eleven, in exchange for a weekly 'salary' of $200 (Ellingwood & Wilkinson, 2010).

[2] A 'rape kit' is used by law enforcement to collect evidence in cases of alleged sexual assault.

The war has also seemingly infringed upon the right of free speech, particularly affecting those who advocate an approach other than prohibition. This is especially true in the US where many politicians and public servants feel too intimidated to express their true opinions on drug policy and some have been fired from their job for doing so (Gray, 2012). Additionally, in many cases the war has also undermined the authority of the state, the democratic process and opportunities for development. In Mexico in particular, the levels of violence unleashed by the war have weakened the state's monopoly on violence, caused many to question the ability of the government to protect them, and forced a considrable number of middle-class citizens to migrate abroad (Payan, 2013), which in turn has severely hampered the country's development. This is also apparent in Afghanistan, where it has already been shown that the Taliban gained legitimacy and public support by opposing the government's efforts to eradicate opium crops. It has also been alleged that these eradication efforts, especially in Latin America, have had severe environmental consequences and in many instances have polluted the land (Gray, 2012) and caused deforestation in biodiversity hotspots (Rincon-Ruiz & Kallis, 2013).

Finally, it could be argued that US efforts "to force, cajole, threaten, and bribe other governments to cooperate with its policy" (Payan, 2013; p.7) have created a strong feeling of Anti-Americanism in producer countries. For instance, in Bolivia and Peru "coca has a long history of cultivation and use among the indigenous population and is closely related to cultural identity" (Keefer, Loayza & Soares, 2010; p.17), therefore the imposition of an American-led policy of eradication is likely to be widely opposed. Consequently, many governments that pledge their support to the US in this regard might actually adopt a conflicting stance when dealing with domestic issues, in order to maintain the support of their population whilst at the same time benefiting from American aid. This raises further questions about the effectiveness of the whole war on drugs.

5. A Lost War? The discussion thus far has largely relied upon statistical evidence in order to determine whether the war on drugs has been a success. However it is also important to consider the opinions and views of those who are fighting, or have fought the war on the frontline as they can provide an authoritative insight that is so often lacking in a quantitative analysis. It is interesting to note that over a 19 year period a

US magistrate judge never once received a positive response when asking DEA[3] agents whether they thought the war on drugs was being won (Sanderson Jr, 2012 cited in Gray, 2012). This is particularly instructive given that the DEA are the US agency at the forefront of the war against drugs. In addition, former presidents of Brazil, Columbia and Mexico have all questioned the prohibitionist approach (Gray, 2012) and the latter two countries called for the recent UN General Assembly Special Session that discussed the issue (Glenza, 2016), indicating that they too are not satisfied with the international community's current stance. Moreover the Global Commission on Drug Policy (2011; p.2), which comprises a significant number of world leaders, intellectuals and influential persons believes that the current policy has failed and that "fundamental reforms in national and global drug control policies are urgently needed". Also, the aforementioned impact on free speech indicates that many more individuals might potentially hold similar views but wont express them for fear of retribution. All of these points suggest that even many of those involved in prosecuting the war do not believe it has been a success.

6. Conclusion. Despite limited success in the US, the recent increases at the global level in the consumption of opiates, cocaine and marijuana suggests that the war on drugs has been unable to tackle the demand for illicit narcotics. Additionally, it doesn't appear to have done any better in its primary objective of reducing the supply of these substances; opium cultivation has risen dramatically, especially in Afghanistan and levels of marijuana use indicates that production of the drug has also increased. Although global cocaine production and Columbian and Andean coca cultivation is reported to have dropped substantially over the years, consumption levels, the 'balloon effect' and falling prices suggest that supply remains constant and perhaps may have been sorely underestimated.

In its attempt to reduce both the supply and demand of illicit narcotics the war on drugs appears to have had a number of dire consequences for countless people across the globe. It has failed to contain the extreme levels of violence linked to the trade, particularly in Latin and South America, and in many cases its policies may have actually precipitated further violence. Arguably, it has also prolonged regional and local conflict, criminalised large segments of society, fostered division and had a detrimental

[3] Drug Enforcement Agency.

impact on the health of both users and non-users. What's more, families seem to have suffered immensely as a result of its policies, especially children, who are more vulnerable to being recruited as drug dealers, runners and smugglers where punishments are severe. And the list doesn't end there; the war on drugs has apparently infringed upon free speech, undermined state authority and democracy, damaged the environment, and fuelled anti-Americanism.

Many prominent individuals, including those who have fought this war do not believe it has been successful and it is possible that many more share this view. In addition, the move to legalisation in various parts of the world indicates that faith in prohibition is waning and that the US are struggling to convince their allies that the war should continue. These points, together with the evidence presented above suggests that no one is winning in the war on drugs; billions of dollars have been spent yet supply remains high, demand is constant and the execution of the war has had dire consequences for many societies and individuals across the globe. Therefore it can only be concluded that the war on drugs has been unsuccessful and has failed to deal with the global trade in illegal substances.

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