General Assembly 4

Combatting the destabilising effects of the production and trafficking of narcotics in Latin America

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Introduction

Numerous substances that are today prohibited, including marijuana, opium, coca, and psychedelics, have been used for both spiritual and medical purposes for thousands of years. So why are some narcotics now legal while others are prohibited? It has everything to do with who is linked with these drugs and is not based on any scientific evaluation of the relative risks of these treatments.

Latin American nations have a long history of drug trafficking and are still suffering from its negative effects. Today Colombia and Mexico play the paramount roles in terms of production and distribution. Through these drug trafficking networks, illegal substances and trafficked people travel to the developed world, while smuggled goods like dirty money and weapons return in the opposite direction. Latin America is the only region in the world where violent crime, as indicated by rates of deliberate homicide per 100,000, is increasing rather than decreasing, thanks to the criminal organisations that run these networks. The worst of the criminal violence occurs in the nations in the region that are located near the major hubs of the trafficking networks.

An example of drug cartels-lords having an impact on a Latin state was Pablo Escobar who monitored every stage of the production of cocaine, from obtaining coca base paste in Andean countries to supplying a thriving US market and declared war with the Colombian government. During that time many assassinations occurred with the most significant one being the nation's then Justice Minister, Rodrigo Lara.[1]

Because of all this political instability in Colombia US President Richard Nixon declared the "war on drugs", which provided a range of policy options for governments to take into consideration, including targeted legalisation, health care for people suffering from addiction, and preventive initiatives meant to reduce the number of new users and to minimise drug trafficking. These sharp critiques and proposed legislative changes follow the U.S.'s massive financial commitment to the

[1] InSight Crime. "Pablo Escobar." *InSight Crime*, 21 Oct. 2021, https://insightcrime.org/colombia-organized-crime-news/pablo-escobar/.

militarization of the drug war and its far-reaching effects on society in Latin America and worldwide. But what best explains why the "war on drugs" has yielded so few victories and cost so much in terms of both money and human lives is the lengthy history of drug manufacture and distribution in Latin America as well as the United States' persistently high demand for narcotics.

Definition of Key Terms

Narcotics:
A substance used to treat moderate to severe pain. Narcotics are like opiates such as morphine and cocaine but are not made from opium. They bind to opioid receptors in the central nervous system. Narcotics are now called opioids.[2]

Cocaine:
Cocaine is a powerfully addictive stimulant drug made from the leaves of the coca plant native to South America. Although health care providers can use it for valid medical purposes, such as local anaesthesia for some surgeries, recreational cocaine use is illegal.[3]

Drug Cartels:
An illicit consortium of independent organisations formed to limit competition and control the production and distribution of illegal drugs. Drug cartels are extremely well-organised, well-financed, efficient, and ruthless. Since the 1980s, they have dominated the international narcotics trade.[4]

War on Drugs:
A government-led initiative that aims to stop illegal drug use, distribution and trade by dramatically increasing prison sentences for both drug dealers and users. [5]

Drug Trafficking:
A global illicit trade involving the cultivation, manufacture, distribution and sale of substances which are subject to drug prohibition laws.[6]

Narco-Terrorism:

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[2] "NCI Dictionary of Cancer Terms." *National Cancer Institute*, https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/def/narcotic.

[3] "Cocaine Drugfacts." National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 22 Mar. 2022, https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/cocaine.

[4] "Drug Cartel." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., https://www.britannica.com/topic/drug-cartel.

[5] History.com Editors. "War on Drugs." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 31 May 2017, https://www.history.com/topics/crime/the-war-on-drugs.

[6] "Drug Trafficking." *United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime*, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/drug-trafficking/index.html.

The involvement of terrorist organizations and insurgent groups in drug trafficking.[7]

Guerrilla Warfare:
A type of warfare fought by irregulars in fast-moving, small-scale actions against orthodox military and police forces and, on occasion, against rival insurgent forces, either independently or in conjunction with a larger political-military strategy.[8]

Organised Crime:
Organised crime is a continuing criminal enterprise that rationally works to profit from illicit activities that are often in great public demand. Its continuing existence is maintained through corruption of public officials and the use of intimidation, threats or force to protect its operations.[9]

Black Market:
An economic activity that takes place outside government-sanctioned channels.[10]

Destabilising:
Making a government, area, or political group lose power or control, or making a political or economic situation less strong or safe, by causing changes and problems.[11]

General Overview[12]

The beginning of large-scale narco-trafficking in Latin America came with the production of coca and coca-based goods in Peru and the movement of opium and marijuana from Mexico into the United States. Many of the illegal narcotics used worldwide are produced in Latin America, with the Andean area serving as the world's principal source of coca and supplier of cocaine products. The United Nations reports that over the past year, coca cultivation has climbed by 3 and 5% in Colombia and Peru, respectively, while it has declined by 12% in Bolivia. Poppy is planted and processed on a limited scale in Mexico, Guatemala, Colombia, and Peru, but it is

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[7] Author(s) D Boyce. "Narco-Terrorism." *Narco-Terrorism | Office of Justice Programs*, https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/narco-terrorism.

[8] "Guerrilla Warfare." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., https://www.britannica.com/topic/guerrilla-warfare.

[9] Fromiti. "Organized Crime Module 1 Key Issues: Defining Organized Crime." *Organized Crime Module 1 Key Issues: Defining Organized Crime*, https://www.unodc.org/e4j/zh/organized-crime/module-1/key-issues/defining-organized-crime.html.

[10] Kenton, Will. "Black Market." *Investopedia*, Investopedia, 8 Feb. 2022, https://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/blackmarket.asp.

[11] "Destabilizing." *Cambridge Dictionary*, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/destabilizing.

[12] "The Shifting Terrain of Latin American Drug Trafficking." *Origins*, https://origins.osu.edu/article/shifting-terrain-latin-american-drug-trafficking?language_content_entity=en.

largely produced in Asia (from where opium and heroin are made). The drugs that are mainly produced in Latim American nations are cocaine and cannabis.

Through Mexico, Central America, or the Caribbean, trafficking routes from the Andean region's cocaine-producing nations reach the United States and Canada. Since reports claim that 80% of the cocaine headed for the United States currently goes across the isthmus, attention has recently turned to Central America. Due to a crackdown on Caribbean-based routes, land-based trafficking has increased, which has caused more social, economic, and political unrest in Central America.

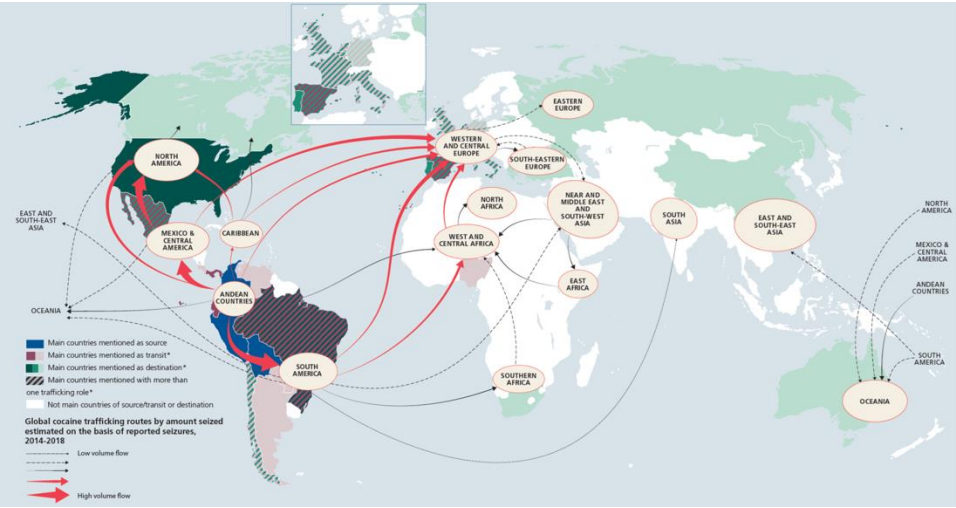

Figure 1: Global Cocaine Trafficking

History of Drug Trafficking[13]

The Beginning of the Latin American Narco-System

Coca is one of the oldest, most potent and most dangerous stimulants of natural origin. In South America, where it originated, it has been a significant part of daily life, and ritual activity, for thousands of years, as archaeologists explain. Coca is vulnerable to frost and can't grow in the highlands, a fact which may have helped shape the region's empires. There's evidence that the Wari Empire, which preceded the Inca, may have colonised a lowland valley to cultivate coca there. Only during religious occasions would the native Peruvians consume coca leaves. The Catholic Church in colonial South America saw use of the coca leaf as undermining the spread of Christianity. In 1551, Catholic bishops urged the Peruvian government to prohibit the use of coca. Ultimately, it wasn't banned, but restrictions were put on the amount of land used for coca cultivation.

But as the nineteenth century progressed, coca became a topic of scientific interest. The stories that were spread by European explorers attesting to the coca leaf's ability

[13] "The Shifting Terrain of Latin American Drug Trafficking." Origins, https://origins.osu.edu/article/shifting-terrain-latin-american-drug-trafficking?language_content_entity=en.

to enable native peasants to work endlessly and perform incredible feats of strength as muleteers and carriers served as the basis for these interests.

German chemist Albert Nieman isolated cocaine from coca leaves in 1860. He noticed that the powdery white substance made his tongue feel numb. More than two decades later, Austrian ophthalmologist Carl Koller experimented with cocaine as a surgical anaesthetic because cataract surgery was typically performed without anaesthesia at the time. Cocaine attracted Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist who developed the science of psychoanalysis. Early in his professional life, he started experimenting with the substance.

In the years that followed, a booming international market emerged for coca and medicinal cocaine. The U.S. quickly became the largest and most enthusiastic market for coca products and rivalled German manufacturers in terms of cocaine production. In response to this new market, a legal cocaine industry emerged in Peru in the late nineteenth century and serviced pharmaceutical and commercial concerns in Europe and the United States. Nearly two dozen cocaine factories were in active operation by 1905.

In 1912, the United States government reported 5,000 cocaine-related deaths. That's why, The Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914 was introduced by Representative Francis Burton Harrison of New York to effectively outlaw the sale and use of coca and opium products. Racist sentiment fueled support for the law. Newspapers, politicians and physicians capitalized on white fear of the mythical "Negro cocaine fiend"—black cocaine users, some believed, made particularly dangerous criminals. By 1922, the drug was officially banned. The United States led a global campaign to outlaw cocaine in the 1920s, while America's alcohol Prohibition. The League of Nations, as well as exporters like Peru, the Netherlands, and Japan, opposed the initiative.

The second period of Latin America's evolving drug trade

Drug manufacturing and distribution grew more structured and regional in scope as it continued to migrate throughout Latin America in this new global setting and in the very unpredictable political atmosphere of post-war Latin American politics. Most sadly, at this time, drug-related violence dramatically increased.

The United Nations adopted the goal of eradication of the Andean coca bush in 1948. Peru, isolated politically and led by a pro-U.S. military junta, finally criminalised cocaine. After its 1952 revolution, Bolivia became a big player in the growth of the illicit cocaine complex. The national army was disbanded as a result of the fall of the Bolivian government, which immediately led to a power vacuum. With the criminalization of the cocaine industry in Peru, Bolivia stepped in after 1952 to nurture this illegal enterprise.

U.S. criminal groups in Mexico encouraged the cultivation of opium and worked to produce less bulky, yet more valuable derivatives. Traffickers utilised twenty to thirty airfields to facilitate the movement of these drugs into the United States. Air trafficking of drugs intensified in the coming years, prompting the Mexican government to postpone all commercial flights in the states of Chihuahua, Durango,

Sinaloa, and Sonora. By the 1960s, officials estimated traffickers used some 300 airfields in northern Mexico alone.

The Rise of Colombia and the US "War on Drugs"

As traffickers became more sophisticated and demand increased, the U.S. Government declared a War on Drugs in June 1971. And while the United States devoted more resources to eradication, interdiction, and the extradition of traffickers, the level of drug violence in Latin America and the U.S. surged dramatically.

By 1975, Colombia had surpassed Mexico as the country with the highest marijuana output, as a result of a dramatic increase in demand in the United States. Following persistent American pressure, the Mexican government launched Operation Condor in 1975, which targeted the distribution and manufacturing of opium and marijuana in the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Durango, and Sinaloa in the country's north-west. As the Mexican authorities began a campaign against its local manufacturers, the United States closed its border with Mexico.

These laws unintentionally provided Colombian criminals with a chance to control the marijuana industry. Colombia handled 70% of the marijuana entering the United States from other countries by the end of the 1970s. Within a short period of time, Colombia was supplying as much as seven tenths of the marijuana smuggled into the US. Cocaine shipments increased from people transporting little amounts to huge quantities on boats and low-flying aeroplanes as drug traffickers—especially those from Medellín—diversified into the drug trade using the proceeds from marijuana. This illegal, profitable trade gave rise to two significant mafia-like groups known as drug cartels, the first of which was based in Medellín and was headed by Pablo Escobar, and the second in Cali.

The Colombian local economy benefited greatly from the complexity of marijuana trafficking. On marijuana farming, 30,000 to 50,000 small farmers along Colombia's Atlantic coast depended. Up to 50,000 more seasonal employees, traffickers, security personnel, financiers, and other individuals were also a part of the scheme. Newly wealthy drug lords sought to buy off authorities at all levels, married into local important families, and acquired legitimate companies to launder money. Unfortunately, when police and judicial systems deteriorated, violence increased along with productivity and profit levels. Entrepreneurs from Medellín, Colombia seized on the opportunity presented by the collapse of democracy in Chile and the elimination of Chilean smugglers. And they took drug transportation to new levels. In the mid-1970s, Carlos Lehder and Jorge Luis Ochoa transformed the trafficking of cocaine into huge airlift operations.

In an effort to legitimise their business in Colombian culture, Medellín traffickers tried to increase their social and political influence. Traffickers contributed to political campaigns. Many figures, including Lehder, acquired newspapers and radio stations. Escobar established a welfare system, donated to the needy, constructed affordable

homes in slums, and gained election as an alternative congressman on the Liberal Party ballot.

Crack cocaine—a crystallised form of the drug—became popular in the 1980s. Crack usage began to surge in the 1980s. Between 1985 and 1989, the number of regular cocaine users jumped from 4.2 million to 5.8 million people. Around the same time, crime in some major cities spiked.

Other events in the early 1980s transformed the landscape of Colombian drug production and distribution. In 1984 individuals linked to the international drug trade assassinated the minister of justice. The next year M-19 guerrillas entered the Palace of Justice in Bogotá and took scores of hostages; when the military assaulted the building, some 100 people were killed, including half of the Supreme Court judges. These events pointed to an ominous growth in the power of drug traffickers and to an apparent inability of the government to control terrorist activities. Betancur tried to put a stop to guerilla warfare. He enacted a law giving practically all guerrillas amnesty, and in the years that followed he was successful in persuading the FARC and the M-19 to sign cease-fire agreements. During this time, the number of vigilante organisations in the nation increased. These groups were variously referred to as "self-defence" or "paramilitary" organisations, depending on your perspective. In an effort to restore public order, Virgilio Barco Vargas, a former mayor of Bogotá, took office in August 1986. Instead, paramilitary organisations killed far more people than the leftist rebels had, and guerrilla groups were more active than ever. Additionally, drug cartels started using terrorism to strengthen their negotiating position with the government, particularly the Medellín cartel. As a result, homicide made it to the top cause of death in the nation, making 1989 the bloodiest year in Colombia's cruel history. There were more violent fatalities per capita than in any other year during La Violencia. The period known as "La Violencia" - which began fifty years ago with the murder of populist leader Jorge E. Gaitán and led to pervasive rural violence - was characterized by a peasantry influenced by leftist ideas.

Colombia's Rebel Group

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia's (FARC) has developed from a modest peasant group to its current unmatched military strength. Profits from the FARC's taxation on the manufacture of illegal drugs have contributed to this rise. However, the FARC's support is partly a result of the government's failure to address the tremendous problems that peasant farmers in the area are experiencing. During the first years of the FARC, a very small number of guerrilla founders concentrated on expanding their base of support. Although originally largely Liberal, the peasant founders of the FARC followed the political lead of the Colombian Communist Party. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the FARC was one of a number of new, small guerrilla groups, including the National Liberation Army (ELN), founded in 1964, the Popular Liberation Army (EPL), founded in 1967, and the M-19, founded in 1970. In the late 1970s, the FARC was a relatively marginal guerrilla force, with barely nine fronts and with enormous internal divisions. The guerrillas faced ongoing conflict over whether to expand their military or political facets of their activities throughout

this period of expansion. Despite the now-discredited idea of "combining various forms of struggle," in the case of the FARC, space for electoral political action was preserved first through the Communist Party structure and then by the Patriotic Union, a coalition of left-wing forces working to establish a third major party. Political violence against UP party members and candidates throughout the whole 1980s, including threats and assassinations, to the point where the party was rendered inactive by the early 1990s. The FARC's military case, in particular, was highlighted by the eradication of the UP, which highlighted the insurgents' military argument.

Mexico Taking over

Drug cartels have existed in Mexico for many years, but they did not become the powerful, violent organisations prevalent today until the 1990s. With the demise of the Colombian cartels, which controlled distribution into North America, Mexican drug trafficking organisations now dominate the wholesale drug trade in the United States. There are four major Mexican drug trafficking organisations (DTOs)—the Gulf, Sinaloa, Juárez, and Tijuana—who have sometimes formed alliances. The Tijuana and Gulf organisations joined forces after their respective leaders struck an agreement in prison. The so-called Federation emerged after agreements by leaders from the Sinaloa, Juarez and Valencia cartels. According to the U.S. Attorney General's office, the Sinaloa cartel imported and distributed almost 200 tons of cocaine and large amounts of heroin between 1990-2008. As the decade went on and competition grew fiercer, cartels started to form their own private armies of enforcers to defend their market dominance by whatever means necessary. Recently, Mexican cartels have also started to form connections with American street gangs and traffickers to make sure that their product is consistently distributed across the country.

Calderón ordered a significant reform of Mexico's security forces almost immediately after entering office in an effort to combat the supposedly growing dominance of the drug gangs, particularly in the north. The deployment of 50,000 soldiers into the streets was the main element of this policy adjustment. The militarization of the drug war has had, at best, mixed consequences. First off, despite an increase in trained military soldiers fighting the cartels, the level of violence has not considerably decreased. Nearly 50,000 individuals have died in drug-related incidents across Mexico since Calderón took office in 2006. Second, new questions concerning corruption and human rights have been brought up by the militarization of police enforcement. The number of allegations of human rights violations against the Mexican government has significantly grown since 2006 and approximately 66,000 individuals have vanished, often at the hands of nefarious groups like cartels, while government forces also play a part.

In 2015, the number of homicides had risen to the highest level in modern Mexican history, when Enrique Pena Nieto took office. President Lopez Obrador, the current Mexican president, declared shortly after taking office that his administration will stop trying to capture cartel leaders and instead concentrate on enhancing security and lowering homicide rates. His "hugs not bullets" strategy for fighting organised crime aims to deal with the socioeconomic causes of the issue. His administration

started a campaign against corruption, disrupted cartel funding, and suggested legalising marijuana and giving low-level cartel members amnesty.

The Turn towards the EU

Between 2009 and 2019, there were four times as many cocaine seizures in Europe as there were in 2009. According to the non-profit investigative organisation InSight Crime, despite the fact that these catches only make up a small portion of what is actually being smuggled, Europe has emerged as the "epicentre of the worldwide cocaine trade." The majority of these goods pass through Rotterdam and Antwerp in the Netherlands, which has two of the biggest ports on the continent. For criminal groups, the ports' world-class transportation infrastructure makes servicing the nearly 500-million-person European Union market as convenient for them as app-based delivery services are for their customers. But regardless of one's position in the cocaine supply chain, the main reason for the shift towards Europe is the same: It makes good commercial sense. In comparison to $28,000 in the US, a kilo of cocaine is worth an estimated $41,731 to wholesale purchasers in Europe. Moreover, traffickers see the EU as an easier place to operate. As an added perk, European law enforcement agencies haven't been prepared to deal with the resourcefulness of today's traffickers.

The Ukrainian War and Drug Trafficking in the EU

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is triggering shifts in the smuggling routes for illegal drugs to Europe, the EU drugs agency warned. The battle, according to EMCDDA head Alexis Goosdeel, has already "directly impacted" one of the heroin trafficking routes out of Afghanistan that formerly passed via Ukraine and other neighbouring countries. In an online press conference, he stated that drug traffickers "Drug traffickers have no interest to continue to use this route," adding that there were already indications of increased trafficking on the borders between Turkey and Bulgaria and Turkey and Greece. Goosdeel said the conflict was also forcing smugglers using the Black Sea to opt for other routes as some ports were now out of reach. He said it was likely trafficking would increase through the Greek islands and the southern Mediterranean.

Drug Trafficking in the EU and Covid-19

Officials have warned that since the coronavirus pandemic's disruptions, there has been a sharp increase in the supply and usage of illicit narcotics in Europe due to transnational criminal networks' exploitation of digital communications and commercial shipping. According to law enforcement experts, cocaine availability has surpassed pre-pandemic levels, and as synthetic drug manufacturing rises, more dangerous and strong illicit narcotics are beginning to appear in European cities. Partnerships between European and international criminal networks had given rise "to record availability of cocaine and industrial-scale methamphetamine manufacturing within the EU", Ylva Johansson, European commissioner for home affairs said. After being disrupted by social distancing and stricter border restrictions put in place during the pandemic, medication supply and consumption quickly recovered, the EMCDDA stated, demonstrating the market's resilience. Covid-19 also

seems to have encouraged the development of digital networks among drug dealers, with more and more transactions being made over social media and encrypted platforms.

Future of Drug Trafficking in Latin American

Since the start of the "war on drugs," despite numerous legislative restrictions and global initiatives to eradicate illicit narcotics, nothing has been done to stop narco-trafficking. Instead, they have tended to only have an impact on distribution channels and the place of manufacturing. The cycles of product manufacturing and distribution are still being driven by consumer demand for these medications and their associated profitability. The DTOs in Colombia are finding more and more new markets for cocaine. Europe is a desirable location since its market is profitable and its wholesale and retail sanctions for trafficking are substantially less severe than those in American law. As a result of Colombians exploiting unstable West African governments as transit hubs, law enforcement agencies have observed an increase in the amount of cocaine smuggled in Spain and the United Kingdom. Additionally, Colombians are more aggressively entering Asian markets, using Hong Kong as a point of entry into China and Thailand. The main sources of methamphetamine entering the US now are Mexican DTOs.

The future of narco-trafficking in Mexico remains unclear. Families mourning over the brutality have denounced this frontal assault strategy, which is mostly funded by taxpayer money in the United States. Some people have started civil society organisations that call for a change in policy and contend that trafficking must be stopped, but not at the price of the greater social fabric of Mexico.

Addressing the issue of wanting to use these opioids and stimulants must serve as the foundation for developing programmes and regulations that can reduce misuse, addiction, and violence related to the drug trade.

Destabilising Effects of Drug Trafficking

Through Latin drug trafficking networks, illegal substances and trafficked people travel to the developed world, while smuggled goods like dirty money and weapons return in the opposite direction. Latin America is the only region in the world where violent crime, as indicated by rates of deliberate homicide per 100,000, is increasing rather than decreasing, thanks to the criminal organisations that run these networks. Throughout the entire region, in both drug production and trafficking areas, there has been an upsurge of violence, corruption, impunity, erosion of rule of law, and human rights violations caused by the emergence of powerful organised crime groups and drug cartels.

Tens of thousands of people have died as a result of the brutal turn the drug war in Mexico has taken in recent years. The drug trade has not ended because of law enforcement efforts to put cartels out of business by apprehending important figures, but rather due to the deadly power conflicts. No matter how dangerous or violent it becomes, the drug trade will always exist if prohibition supports drug prices. Some of the most dangerous cities in the world are now situated in Central America, with Honduras having the highest homicide rate in the

world (82.1 murders per 100,000 people). The area has become dangerous for those who protect human rights and journalists who report on the violence, as well as for politicians and security personnel who refuse to be bought off by drug cartels.

In production countries, destabilising effects include environmental and community damage from forced eradication of coca crops such as aerial spraying and the funding of guerrilla insurgent groups through illicit crop cultivation and sale, most notably, FARC in Colombia and the Shining Path in Peru.

Colombia: The different armed organisations deforested huge extensions of forest in the areas they controlled, extracted minerals and planted illegal crops, like the coca plant, to finance their operations. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development is already planning to create different programs that could help preserve biodiversity in Colombia. Protecting and managing water resources, as well as promoting and strengthening green businesses through carbon markets, are an essential part of this plan.

Peru: The main forest is allegedly being surrounded by coca plantations, and the indigenous Shipibo-Conibo people who once protected it have left due to an armed wing of drug traffickers. The district attorney conducted an investigation when the leaders of Flor de Ucayali protested in 2020 about what they claimed was continuous deforestation and death threats.[14]

Major Parties Involved

Colombia

Colombia is in the top two coca bush producing countries in the world. Despite widespread violence that is supported by both narcotics trafficking and guerrilla insurgencies, the Colombian economy has expanded since 1974. Following the significant enforcement initiatives started by Mexican authorities in 1975, the nation's position as a supplier in the global drug market quickly increased. Within a short period of time, Colombia was supplying as much as seven tenths of the marijuana smuggled into the US. Cocaine shipments increased from people transporting little amounts to huge quantities on boats and low-flying aeroplanes as drug traffickers—especially those from Medellín—diversified into the drug trade using the proceeds from marijuana. This illegal, profitable trade gave rise to mafia-like groups known as drug cartels.

These groups that were formed during that time were variously referred to as "self-defence" or "paramilitary" organisations, depending on your perspective. In 1986, paramilitary organisations killed far more people than the leftist rebels had, and guerrilla groups were more active than ever. Additionally, drug cartels started using terrorism to strengthen their

[14] "Drug Trafficking Threatens Indigenous Shipibo Communities in Peru." Mongabay Environmental News, 3 Sept. 2021, https://news.mongabay.com/2021/09/drug-trafficking-threatens-indigenous-shipibo-communities-in-peru/

negotiating position with the government. As a result, homicide made it to the top cause of death in the nation, making 1989 the bloodiest year in Colombia's cruel history.

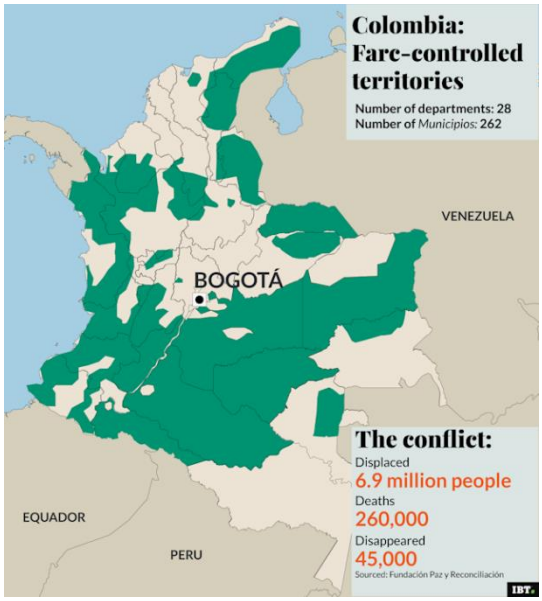

*Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC2: FARC-Controlled*

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia are Colombia's largest rebel group and have developed from a modest peasant group to its current unmatched military strength. Profits from the FARC's taxation on the manufacture of illegal drugs have contributed to this rise. However, the FARC's support is partly a result of the government's failure to address the tremendous problems that peasant farmers in the area are experiencing. While the FARC have some urban groups, they have always been an overwhelmingly rural guerrilla organisation.

Since 1974 limited progress has been made on those issues; however, the Colombian economy has grown despite pervasive violence, fed both by guerrilla insurgencies and traffic in narcotics. The Government of Colombia continues its efforts against illicit drug crop cultivation through a variety of programmes focusing on legal alternative crops and the preservation of the environment. The Government's efforts to assist farmers who give up cultivating coca bush through alternative development initiatives such as the Forest Warden Families Programme and the Productive Projects Programme, have been supported by various organisations like the UNODC. These initiatives ensure that former coca bush farmers have legal and adequate incomes. These rural activities are integrated into broader socio-economic development strategies and benefit rural, indigenous and Afro-Colombian populations. [15]

However, the unrest that was caused by guerrilla warfare had environmental impacts as well. The different armed organisations deforested huge extensions of forest in the areas they controlled, extracted minerals and planted illegal crops, like the coca plant, to finance their operations. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development is already planning to create different programs that could help preserve biodiversity in Colombia. Protecting and managing water resources, as well as promoting and strengthening green businesses through carbon markets, are an essential part of this plan.

Mexico

For more than ten years, Mexican authorities have fought a brutal war against drug cartels, but their efforts have mostly failed. Every year, the violence claims the lives of thousands of Mexicans, including journalists, students, and politicians. Since the government launched war on the cartels in 2006, there have been more than 300,000 killings throughout the nation. Mexican drug trafficking groups—sometimes referred to as transnational criminal organisations—dominate the import and distribution of cocaine, fentanyl, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine in the United States. Mexico's drug cartels are in a constant state of

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[158] "Colombia." *United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime*, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/alternative-development/colombia.html.

flux. Over the decades, they have grown, splintered, forged new alliances, and battled one another for territory.

Figure 3: Narcotics Trafficking Flows and Operational Zones in Mexico

In Mexico, the cartels use a portion of their vast profits to pay off judges, police, and politicians. They also coerce officials into cooperating; assassinations of public servants are relatively common. With new politicians in power, cartels ramped up violence against the government in an effort to re-establish their hold on the state. After U.S. government agencies dismantled Caribbean networks used by Colombian cartels to export cocaine in the late 1980s, Mexican cartels started to play a far bigger role on a global scale.

In 2015, the number of homicides had risen to the highest level in modern Mexican history, when Enrique Pena Nieto took office. President Lopez Obrador, the current Mexican president, declared shortly after taking office that his administration will stop trying to capture cartel leaders and instead concentrate on enhancing security and lowering homicide rates. His "hugs not bullets" strategy for fighting organised crime aims to deal with the socioeconomic causes of the issue. His administration started a campaign against corruption, disrupted cartel funding, and suggested legalising marijuana and giving low-level cartel members amnesty.

For years, journalists, civil liberties organizations, and others have criticized the Mexican government's war against the cartels, alleging that the military, police, and cartels have committed numerous violations of human rights, such as torture, extrajudicial executions, and forced disappearances. Since 2006, approximately 66,000 individuals have vanished, often at the hands of nefarious groups like cartels, while government forces also play a part. Violence associated with the cartels, inefficiency and corruption in the government, and other issues have frequently thwarted efforts to locate the missing and bring those guilty to justice.

United States of America

The United States is deeply affected by crime and violence carried out by transnational criminal organisations, including drug cartels.

In June 1971, Nixon officially declared a "War on Drugs," stating that drug abuse was "public enemy number one." A rise in recreational drug use in the 1960s led to President Nixon's focus on targeting some types of substance abuse. As part of the War on Drugs initiative, Nixon increased federal funding for drug-control agencies and proposed strict measures, such as mandatory prison sentencing, for drug crimes. Nixon created the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 1973. This agency is a special police force committed to targeting illegal drug use and smuggling in the United States.

Today, the trafficking of overseas-produced illicit fentanyl, heroin, and other opioids into the United States is fueling a national epidemic with fatal consequences. The CDC reports that U.S. drug overdose deaths surpassed 72,000 in 2017, representing a worrying increase from the already high 2016 number. Trafficking of illicit methamphetamine, produced outside U.S. borders, into the country is also increasing.

Over the past few decades, the United States and Mexico have worked together to varying degrees to combat drugs and security threats. The Merida Initiative has been the focus of recent efforts; since the collaboration was established by Presidents George W. Bush and Calderon in 2007, the United States has appropriated more than $3 billion towards it. President Barack Obama widened the scope of aid to target fundamental reforms to Mexico's justice system and to develop crime-prevention programs at the community level, among other efforts. Priorities were changed for Merida by President Donald J. Trump to include border security, fighting drug manufacturing, and stopping money laundering. Trump authorised the deployment of thousands of active-duty military personnel to the border in February 2019 in a highly contentious decision, alleging an inflow of illegal narcotics, criminals, and undocumented immigration.

Drug use in the United States is rising again and faster than ever, despite a sharp reduction in illicit drug use in prior years. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the percentage of Americans 12 and older who use illegal drugs increased to 13% in 2019, almost hitting a 40-year high. The war on drugs hasn't achieved much progress if the objective was to reduce drug use and avoid drug-related fatalities.[16]

[16] Lee, Nathaniel. "America Has Spent over a Trillion Dollars Fighting the War on Drugs. 50 Years Later, Drug Use in the U.S. Is Climbing Again." CNBC, CNBC, 17 June 2021, https://www.cnbc.com/2021/06/17/the-us-has-spent-over-a-trillion-dollars-fighting-war-on-drugs.html.

Figure 4: US-Mexico Border

Peru

Large-scale narco-trafficking in Latin America began when coca and products derived from coca were produced in Peru. The Republic of Peru is currently in the top three producers of coca bush in the world, with 62,500 hectares of its land being under cultivation in 2011. However, the vast majority of that, some 95 percent, is produced illegally and sold to drug-traffickers who turn it into about 400 tons of cocaine a year. All legally grown coca must be sold to the state coca company ENACO but that amounts to only 2,500 tons a year. Legal coca leaf producers are on a register that includes 95,000 growers. Yet, the government wants to create a new register for the other 400,000 unregistered producers. [17]

Soldiers have been stationed in the south-central area since 2006, due to the continued presence of the Shining Path Maoist guerrilla movement, which is allied with drug trafficking groups. For instance, Abdón was one of 40 Indigenous people from the Flor de Ucayali municipality in Peru who walked to the boundary between his community and the town of Santa Sofa for the final time a year ago. According to reports, this region in Flor de Ucayali's northeastern region has turned into a dangerous hub for drug trafficking and illicit logging. The main forest is allegedly being surrounded by coca plantations, and the indigenous Shipibo-Conibo people who once protected it have left due to an armed wing of drug traffickers. The district attorney conducted an investigation when the leaders of Flor de Ucayali protested in 2020 about what they claimed was continuous deforestation and death threats. In late 2020, IDL, FECONAU, the Federation of Indigenous Kechua Chazuta Amazonian Peoples (FEPIKECHA), and the international organisation Forest Peoples Programme sent a report to the Congress of the Republic of Peru that documented the "immense and devastating deforestation" observed during the inspection in Flor de Ucayali. The report also claimed the Public Ministry of Peru's account of the situation was inaccurate, and that more deforestation had occurred than the ministry had reported.

[17] "Peru." *United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime*, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/alternative-development/peru.html.

Bolivia

The State of Bolivia is the third-largest coca bush grower in the world. In 2010, the area under coca bush cultivation was estimated at 31,000 hectares, concentrated mainly in the Yungas and Chapare areas. Currently, the country's overall cultivation remains well below the levels reached in the early and mid-1990s, though it has increased compared to the levels in the late 1990s. A project between Bolivia and UNODC consists of forest development, the conservation of soil, rivers and watersheds, and institutional strengthening.[18]

Bolivia's economic depression and a severe drought in the mountain provinces during the 1982-83 growing season, has made the coca/cocaine trade attractive. Caught in an international debt-repayment squeeze, Bolivia's gross national production since 1980 has fallen by 17 percent, its per capita consumption by 30 percent and its per capita income by 20 percent. During this same period, unemployment doubled. In light of this, it may seem that the flow of economic advantages from the coca/cocaine trade has been overwhelmingly favourable. The 35,000 coca leaf growers in the Chapare region may make up to $9,000 per year from their 2.2 acres of cultivation. The peculiar qualities of the coca leaf, which make it a "wonder crop," also help small growers. Coca has been fine-tuned over the course of a millennium in the Andean ecosystem. It may be harvested four to five times per year, grows rather well in marginal soil, and has a life expectancy of 18 years. Its lightweight and non-perishable properties also make it perfect for inexpensive, long-distance mountain transportation, and its manufacture doesn't call on expensive institutional finance or imported petrochemicals.

The increased demand for cocaine in the US is drastically changing the economic and social relations of the indigenous people of Andean Bolivia who have been cultivating and ingesting coca leaves for many years. Underground, illicit economic activity has grown significantly in recent years. These illegal enterprises are affecting patterns of economic development and the social welfare of the Andean peasant majority more than most other legitimate economic activity combined. The Chapare tropical rain forest region in the Department of Cochabamba alone provides 70% of the country's coca leaf harvest, even though Bolivia produces 40 to 45 percent of the world's supply of coca leaf and coca paste. Tens of thousands of hectares were removed by farmers from the highlands who came here to cultivate the plant on small pieces of land.

Honduras

In contrast to other nations where drug gangs collaborate with dishonest members of the government or the security services, in Honduras the persons in charge of the political apparatus are also those who traffic in drugs. Juan Orlando Hernández, the former president of Honduras, has been linked to what US prosecutors describe as the "state-sponsored drug trafficking" and was sent to the US to face charges on April 21, 2022, although his name has already been mentioned in court. US prosecutors also allege that President Hernández accepted bribes in exchange for the protection of his security forces and planned to "shove the drugs right up the noses of the gringos", referring to potential foreign users. During the recent trial in New York of Honduran drug trafficker Geovanny Fuentes Ramírez, the prosecutor painted a grim picture of Honduras as a "narco-state" where the cartels had infiltrated "police,

[18] "Bolivia." *United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime*, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/alternative-development/bolivia.html.

military and political power… mayors, congressmen, military generals and police chiefs, even the current president". "In the 10 years before 2010, the traditional narcos had acquired so much political power in Honduras that they then began to co-opt the state itself to ensure their safety," says a former Honduran state attorney, Edy Tabora.

Venezuela[19]

The nation's cocaine trade has witnessed dramatic transformations since 2013. Venezuela might soon overtake Colombia as the fourth-largest producer of cocaine in the world. And the Maduro government has established itself as the nation's drug trade's gatekeeper, regulating access to cocaine's riches not just for drug traffickers but also for corrupt politicians and the "Cartel of the Suns," a trafficking network with military ties. As of right now, cocaine manufacturing in Venezuela is still in its infancy and is inferior to the historically high levels observed in Colombia in previous years. However, the border region of the nation, which is underdeveloped, remote, abandoned by the state, and controlled by armed groups, serves as the ideal propagation medium. And that is a risky situation in a nation that is mired in an economic crisis, governed by a corrupt government, and overrun by crime.

Colombia's northeastern Catatumbo region and Venezuela's northwestern state of Zulia have long been criminal counterparts. The Sierra de Perijá, a mountain range that provides both good climatic conditions for coca growing and the appropriate topography for keeping crops, laboratories, and the armed organisations who protect them concealed from law enforcement, serves as the border between the two nations. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia - FARC) and the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional - ELN) encouraged coca planting on the Colombian side by taking use of their connections to local peasant communities. The ex-FARC Mafia, the FARC rebel organisations that do not accept the peace agreement, are still active in the drug trade today. Zulia is a crucial hub for the distribution of drugs from Venezuela to Central America and the Caribbean due to its proximity to Lake Maracaibo and numerous covert airstrips.

Figure 5: Colombia-Venezuela Border

[19] "Venezuela's Cocaine Revolution." *InSight Crime*, 13 May 2022, https://insightcrime.org/investigations/venezuelas-cocaine-revolution/.

An anti-drug operation in the state of Zulia resulted in the destruction of eight cocaine laboratories, leading to the seizure of over half a tone of cocaine and nearly ten tones of coca paste, according to a statement from the Venezuelan Ministry of the Interior in October 2021. But in addition to that, they had also destroyed almost 300,000 plants on 32 hectares of coca fields.

Spain

Since the first drug distribution and transportation cartels in Europe developed in Galicia, in north-west Spain, Spain has been in control of the importation of cocaine, which has increased at an uncontrollable rate. Seizures in Spain have increased by 5,000% since 1987, which is when the drug was first introduced into the country. The nation has suffered greatly as a result of the war on drugs, both economically and in terms of public health. Spanish cocaine consumption has ranked first in the European Union for the past ten years, tied with that of the United Kingdom. It came last in 1990. Authorities have not yet been able to reverse the increased trend in trafficking and consumption that has been present for the previous ten years. The effects of the overproduction of cocaine in Colombia was particularly evident in 2018, when the largest shipment of cocaine on a container ship in Europe was intercepted in Algeciras, and then in Málaga. The two shipments, which amounted to almost 15 tons of cocaine, came from South America and were hidden among bananas.

United Kingdom

The number of people in the UK who passed away last year as a result of drug abuse rose. The most recent statistics indicated that 2.593 UK fatalities were related to drug abuse. This increase has been attributed to the use of more recent synthetic opioids, such fentanyl. Bilateral representations and multilateral action are the primary components of the UK's approach for handling international drug issues. With its unique membership in the UN, EU, and Commonwealth, the UK seeks a coordinated strategy across the three organisations through its international drugs strategy, which unites domestic and foreign agencies to combat demand and trafficking. Both Afghanistan and Colombia are producing record amounts of opium and cocaine. Due to the criminals' decreased need to utilise cutting agents, this rise in production also offers the additional benefit of a high degree of drug purity at the street level, which carries its own risks. The amount of chemicals needed to produce amphetamines continues to enter the country, and as street prices decline, this further indicates increased availability. Evidence suggests that while demand for all prevalent drug types is still high, crack cocaine use—a specific driver of violence—is increasing in England and Wales.

Aruba – Dutch Caribbean

Aruba's reputation as a 'Mafia island' became public in March 1993 when it was described by the Italian daily Corriere della Sera as "the first state to be bought by the bosses Cosa Nostra." In December 1996 President Clinton put Aruba on the list of Major Illicit Drug-transit Countries. The island is used as a base for bulk transhipment of cocaine to the US and Europe, through its Free Trade Zone. Off-shore corporate banking facilities, the casino/resort complexes, high volume tourism, and a stable currency all make Aruba attractive to money laundering organisations. The US is concerned about credible reports that some members of the Aruban government met regularly with individuals associated with drug trafficking and money laundering syndicates. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the denials by Aruba officials,

the US remains convinced that entrenched money laundering organisations direct large cash deposits into land development and other construction projects on the island. The Netherlands is equally worried. "I think we are going to lose it on Aruba," the Dutch Attorney General said about the counter-narcotics efforts on the island. "Aruba is in the hands of some powerful families and Holland can't do anything about it, due to constitutional restraints."[20]

Hong Kong

Colombian drug cartels are more aggressively entering Asian markets, using Hong Kong as a point of entry into China and Thailand. Hong Kong is a major port centre and has a strategic location with reference to the Golden Triangle and southern China, giving Hong Kong a long history as a base for the transit/transshipment of drugs from Southeast Asia to overseas markets. The network for importing heroin into Hong Kong is well established. The emergence of these drugs is one of the most significant changes in the history of Hong Kong's drug market. The Hong Kong Police Force has a frontline role in countering the possession, manufacturing, and trafficking of drugs within the territory.

Additionally, methamphetamine imports by air and sea have increased recently, pointing to an irrefutable fact: Hong Kong has established itself as Mexico's main entry point for its methamphetamine trade into East Asia. For the drug cartels in Mexico, the move east is a no-brainer. The majority of the world's methamphetamine demand comes from East Asia, and it appears that Mexico is becoming a more popular source for drug traffickers and Hong Kong stands as a bridge between the two regional drug markets. Local officials have long recognized Hong Kong's status as a waypoint for drug trafficking. Hong Kong's airport has captured synthetic drugs passing from Europe to Japan, as well as methamphetamine travelling to Guam. Alongside South Korea, it's emerged as a favoured link for Mexican drug exports.

Nigeria

Cocaine and heroin are transported via Nigeria before being sold in markets in Europe, East Asia, and North America. Nigeria is one of the West African nations that drug traffickers have been exploiting more often since 2004 to smuggle big quantities of cocaine from South America into Europe and North America. Due to the continuous availability of drugs the nation has a relatively high prevalence of drug usage. Cannabis, mostly in its herbal form, is the substance that is most frequently misused in West Africa. The country has also become a dumping ground for illicit pharmaceutical opioids, especially codeine and tramadol, just as it remains Africa's major transit country for cocaine and heroin, reports had shown.

Presently, the world is looking more at the dangerous health issues posed by drug trafficking and abuse rather than criminalising users. Consequences of drug abuse, including chronic health conditions and untimely death, are such that cannot be ignored by any responsible government. The survey's results indicated that about three million Nigerians, or one in every five drug users, had a drug use disorder, with at least 155, 000 of them in critical need of medical attention. Last year, the World Drug Report 2021 warned of a likely 11per cent

[20] "The Rothschilds of the Mafia on Aruba." Transnational Institute, 2 Nov. 2015, https://www.tni.org/my/node/2785

increase in the number of people who abuse illicit substances over the next eight years. About 40 percent of that increase is projected to come from Africa alone.[21]

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

For two decades, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has been helping make the world safer from drugs, organized crime, corruption and terrorism. They are committed to achieving health, security and justice for all by tackling these threats and promoting peace and sustainable well-being as deterrents to them. [22]

The UNODC and most Latin American governments work closely to implement projects focusing income generation and environmental protection activities that tackle poverty. The projects consist of forest development, the conservation of soil, rivers and watersheds, and institutional strengthening. The project team supports local organisations and strengthens the capacities of entities in charge of forest supervision and the maintenance of protected areas. UNODC supports the introduction of alternative development in areas like forest management, the protection of ecosystems in indigenous communities, livestock raising and the development and consolidation of legal and self-sustained economies through the marketing of palm oil, heart of palm, cacao and coffee.

Timeline of Events

1860	Cocaine was isolated by German chemist Albert Nieman from coca leaves.
1900-1905	Nearly two dozen cocaine factories were in active operation.
1914	The Harrison Narcotics Act of 1914 was introduced by Representative Francis Burton Harrison of New York, it effectively outlawed the sale and use of coca and opium products.
1920s	The United States led a global campaign to outlaw cocaine.

[21] Tobias.schoessler. "United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime." *Drug Prevention*, https://www.unodc.org/nigeria/en/drug-prevention.html.

[22] "ABOUT UNODC." *United Nations : Office on Drugs and Crime*, https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/about-unodc/index.html.

1948	The United Nations adopted the goal of eradication of the Andean coca bush.
1971	the US Government declared the War on Drugs
1970-1975	Colombia had surpassed Mexico as the country with the highest marijuana output, because of a dramatic increase in demand in the United States. Following persistent American pressure, the Mexican government launched Operation Condor in 1975, which targeted the distribution and manufacturing of opium and marijuana in the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Durango, and Sinaloa in the country's north-west.
1984-1985	Individuals linked to the international drug trade assassinated the Colombian minister of justice. The next year M-19 guerrillas entered the Palace of Justice in Bogotá and took scores of hostages; some 100 people were killed, including half of the Supreme Court judges.
Around 1985	The president of Colombia gave practically amnesty to all guerrillas, and in the years that followed he was successful in persuading the FARC and the M-19 to sign cease-fire agreements.
1889	The bloodiest year in Colombia's cruel history.
1990-2008	The Sinaloa cartel imported and distributed almost 200 tons of cocaine and large amounts of heroin.
2006	Nearly 50,000 individuals have died in drug-related incidents across Mexico and 66,000 vanished
2015	The number of homicides rose to the highest level in modern Mexican history, when Enrique Pena Nieto took office

2019	There were four times as many cocaine seizures in Europe as in 2009
2022	The former president of Honduras, has been linked to what US prosecutors describe as the "state-sponsored drug trafficking" and was sent to the US to face charges

Relevant UN documents

1. **General Assembly Resolution A/RES/76/188, 16/12/2021**
   This resolution refers the itnternational cooperation to address and counter the world drug problem

2. **General Assembly Resolution A/RES/32/124, 1977**
   This resolution refers to the international co-operation in the field of narcotic drugs relating to treatment and rehabilitation

3. **General Assembly Resolution A/RES/3145, 14/12/1973**
   This resolution refers to the assistance to the developing countries in the field of narcotics control.

Possible Solutions

Illicit trafficking will never be completely eliminated, but it can be shaped to become less violent and increasingly marginal to the economies and societies of Latin America. Both relatively prosperous nations like Uruguay and Chile and some of the poorest nations like Nicaragua have achieved success in this effort.

Global and National Public Policy Changes

By adequately **funding public health initiatives** to limit and lessen the harm posed by drug use, both in the developed world and in Latin America, it is necessary to address the demand side of the equation. To inspect and separate the rising (and positive) tide of trade from the mixed illicit flows of drugs flowing north and guns flowing south, it is necessary to shift towards **cooperative border security strategies**, such as pre-clearance of goods and people from trusted sources and joint binational inspection facilities more effectively. It means that nations that are significant hubs for human trafficking should **implement effective temporary worker programs and participate in immigration reform** to direct otherwise law-abiding migrants towards legitimate avenues for gaining access to employment opportunities. It also entails a **change in law enforcement strategy** that focuses on enhancing the ability to control criminal activity and prevent the violence that so gravely jeopardises public safety and erodes citizens' faith in the legitimacy of the state.

Solutions in Latin Nations

Legalising some of the Substances
A possible solution to combat the effects of drug trafficking is to legalise the market of some substances like marijuana and cannabis, as Uruguay did. In order to achieve that, Latin nations could create a state-owned company which would buy all the produced cannabis and marijuana and sell them in licensed pharmacies, which would be the only ones that will have a permit to sell drugs. This would not only help the farmers start a legal and stable business but unemployment as well. Yet, it will be unlawful to sell other substances except from the aforementioned which have been legalised in many nations. Public policy makers should also regulate the amount of drugs that can be possessed by an individual.

Supporting Framers to grow other plants
Another solution towards this issue is the cultivation of typical plants of palm oil, heart of palm, cacao and coffee and the funding of such projects by governments or international organisations and NGOs. However, governments should consider how these cultivations will be transported to the markets. For instance, in Colombia even though farmers are encouraged to cultivate other plants, there is a lack of funding to the infrastructure of the country. Thus, the farmers aren't able to sell their products to the market.

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