

War on drugs effective criminology essay



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Supply and demand is the major problem we have with combating drugs. Many Central and South American governments are often targeted as objects of its now age old and publicly demonized “ War on Drugs.” Many of these governments have been singled out as cooperators in the production or trafficking of drugs. Now America has started a new war: a war on terrorism. Many of the aforementioned governments have withstood the half-hearted efforts of the “ War on Drugs,” but now the question arises, will they withstand the more widely supported “ War on Terrorism?”

The Nixon Administration

In 1969, Richard Nixon became president, narcotic usage had already reached crisis levels in the United States (Marcy, 2010). Contrary to what many people believe, this was not something that developed under his administration, President Nixon took action against it. Nixon’s strategy was arguable successful but he did not have a lot of more options, it was either ignoring it or doing something about it and he decided to do what he thought was right. Nixon felt that he had a “ national responsibility” to stop the nation from being “ destroyed” by drugs; in his administration’s view, narcotics threatened the very fabric of U. S. society (Marcy, 2010). The war on drugs started in the middle of a war; Vietnam was in its prime and the drug addiction problem inside the U. S. military was immense. In early 1966, military authorities began to investigate the levels of illegal drug use in their ranks; the Department of Defense estimated that between 1967 and 1970, the use of marijuana, heroin, and hard narcotics in the armed forces had double each year (Marcy, 2010). The problem was not a local problem; it had

spread across the United States, from college students to factory workers and the military.

President Nixon's administration attempted several strategies to stop the use of drugs in the United States. To address the narcotics epidemic, the Nixon administration proposed the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act in 1969 (Marcy, 2010). This plan was designed to consolidate most of the drugs legislation already in place. This plan was geared towards cutting supply and demand for drugs in the United States by creating rehabilitation and education programs while strengthening law enforcement. This plan increased law enforcement training and cooperation between the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) and the Customs Bureau and created two new enforcement agencies: the Office of Drug Abuse Law Enforcement (ODALE) and the Office of National Narcotics Intelligence (ONNI) (Marcy, 2010). The plan was to overwhelm drug trafficking organizations and therefore win the war against drugs while educating and rehabilitating drug addicts in order to be effective in the long run.

The Nixon administration's efforts at international narcotics control during the late 1960s were focused on stemming the flow of heroin from Turkey, France, and Mexico into the United States (Marcy, 2010). Lack of resources and a weak economy due to 'The Great Depression' impeded United States' access to areas outside of Mexico. This and other factors let drug trafficking organizations develop more sophisticated ways of trafficking illicit drugs to the United States almost freely and without much hassle.

The war on drugs was a disaster; between the 1970 and 1975, the number of first-time cocaine users in the United States jumped from 301, 000 to 652, 000 people annually (Marcy, 2010). Instead of the numbers declining, the numbers kept increasing. By the late 1970s not only Peru and Bolivia were a threat to the war on drugs but Colombia had become the “ pillar” of drug trafficking to the United States. By 1976 it was clear that approximately 90 percent of the cocaine shipments destined for the United States passed through Colombia (Marcy, 2010). After that, Colombia started to produce marijuana and increased their shipments of drugs to the United States repeatedly, their violent mode of operations had them atop drug trafficking organizations and earned them respect across the globe.

Drugs and the Reagan Administration

By the time, Ronald Reagan was elected president drugs in the United States were being sold at an alarming rate. In fact, crack cocaine was so large, that the epidemic was on the consciousness of every American (Marcy, 2010).

President Reagan’s War on Drugs allowed the military to not only help fight it, but to provide “ intelligence, equipment, and training to federal, state, and local law enforcement” (Marcy, 2010). The Reagan War on Drugs put pressure on the Joint Chiefs of Staff to get the military even more involved in the War on Drugs (Marcy, 2010). The Joint Chiefs of Staff were pressured so hard, that the Army gave \$277 million in equipment to help fight the drug trade.

In the early 80’s, Reagan redoubled efforts at curbing imports, further militarized drug policy, and brought about mandatory minimum sentences for minor drug offenses. In 1980, the FBI’s Uniform Crime report listed fewer

than a hundred thousand arrests for heroin and cocaine, which were tabulated together. By 1989, that figure had jumped to more than seven hundred thousand arrests (Grim, 2009).

The drug enforcement bill President Reagan signed in 1986 was criticized for promoting significant racial disparities in the prison population and critics also charged that the policies did little to reduce the availability of drugs on the street, while resulting in a great financial burden for America. The Reagan administration was criticized for its slow response to the growing HIV epidemic. As thousands became infected with the virus, he did not increase funding to try to discover cures – rather he downplayed the situation.

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act required a minimum of 10 years to life for a first drug conviction, 20 years to life for a second and life in prison if the possession could be tied to a death or serious bodily injury. In addition, the Comprehensive Crime Control Act of 1974, was also established to empower the Department of Justice (DOJ) to seize assets derived from drug trafficking (Libby, 2008).

Drugs in the “Golden”

The Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent are very much two distinct areas of the globe, the former located in the areas around Burma, Thailand, and Laos, the latter located around Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran. (Chouvy, 2010) The Golden Triangle, encompassed by Burma or Myanmar has a very bloody history. The Chinese people became addicted to the drugs in return China had made such a stand outlawing the import of opiates once the government learned the ill effects of the drug. Consequently, Britain went to

war in the Opium Wars to try to force free trade onto the Chinese in order to foster British exports (Marchant, 2002).

Afghanistan, which is majority of the area known as the Golden Crescent, has been known to be the world's greatest producer of opium and drug trafficking account for a third of the total Afghan economy. Alongside the “War of Terrorism” the control and eradication of the opium production and related trafficking is a main concern of the international community, Drug use is often a response to war, poverty, and under-development, however, street opium and heroin manufactured in the country are widely available, affordable and of high purity (Maguet & Majeed, 2010).

The Taliban were smart economists you could say amongst other things and used the Opiates to create a so called shortage to sky rocket the price before increasing the development of the poppy to export for a higher fee. Through Islam law, the Taliban government got over half of profits via taxes from every crop sold and used the money to finance an army of insurgents. While the Taliban has been disrupted by the US following the attacks on the WTC and their support of Al-Qaieda the economic structure they created in their mountainous ranges continue to grow unanswered.

The Golden Crescent came to be also out of the outlawing of the drug in neighboring countries; namely China and Iran. It is striking that the Golden Crescent became so lucrative so fast directly following a sheer drop off in the output and demand for the Golden Triangle Opiates.

Drugs and Terrorism

The merger of trans-national crime, terrorism and corruption is profound; the idea that these ideas can be discussed separately is problematic. (Shelley, 2003). Terrorist organizations like Hezbollah and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have changed the way law enforcement and governments see terrorist, guerrillas, and organized crime. They represent a greater danger than organized crime organizations because they adopted tactics from all kinds of different criminal, terrorist, and other organizations. A terrorist organization is connecting with scholars, international organizations, and the government. This represents a particular danger because they are usually more aggressive and violent than an organized crime group but working as an organized crime group. It is a complicated situation; terrorist organizations like Hezbollah have seen the benefits or expanding their networks outside the border of where their ideology originally started. They are connecting with other organizations and at the same time exploiting the illicit drug market in order to conduct further operations and to make a profit.

The illicit businesses are now the largest and most profitable to be located in the developing world; for example, the drug trade now represents about 7% of world trade according to late 1990s estimates of the United Nations and their vast profits and enormous assets make them powerful actors in their home countries and in their regions (Shelley, 2003). When these guerrillas' organizations deal with outside markets, they often make more money than what they would make in their respective countries and that makes them powerful. They often manipulate and bribe government officials taking

advantage of the economic situations in certain areas. The biggest difference and danger is the ideology of terrorist organizations/guerrilla, organized crime often seeks to profit and do not have other agendas that could endanger innocent people as long as they stay of their way but terrorist organizations and guerrillas do. They are groups that were created in order to fight for a cause and by profiting they way they do they become more dangerous.

Latin America and Drugs

In Latin America, various criminal organizations operate like any multinational corporation, with separate divisions for cultivating the drugs, exports, transportation, distribution and finance. The guerrillas protect the drug traffickers because the latter supply weapons mainly from Cuba and Libya. These guerrillas reportedly attacked prisons to free drug traffickers who were, for example, caught along the northern coast of Colombia.

Terrorists and guerrilla organizations in Latin America exchange not only arms, but also intelligence and services for money laundering. The drugs provide quick and assured financial gain, they also serve an international currency funding terrorist activities and guerrilla warfare (Ehrenfeld et. al, 1986, p. 1). In parts of Colombia, guerrilla groups are allied with narco-traffickers who pay them to guard their laboratories. In areas such as Magdalena River Valley, traffickers have armed paramilitary groups to protect their property against the guerrillas, who maintain they are fighting for land reform to benefit poor peasants (US Department of State Dispatch, 1992).

As a result of the significant decline in funding of guerrilla and terrorist groups, these groups have become increasingly reliant on drug trafficking as a principal funding source. The terrorist and extremist groups derive much of their drug-related income from taxation levied for protection of drug powers, laboratories, clandestine landing fields, and transport of drugs of chemicals through guerrilla-controlled territory (Library of Congress, 2002, p. 1).

Conclusion

In spite of documentation showing the effectiveness of the current war on drugs, I do not see the light at the end of the tunnel. When the numbers of production of drugs, such as coca in Columbia are down, everyone is quick to claim the end of the 40-year battle against cocaine. Really, these numbers do not mean much for slowing, stopping, or eradicating drugs. This drug war is raging more violently than ever. The drugs are plentiful, cheap and as addictive as ever. The violence used to obtain the drugs has turn into terrorism at a global level.