

Committee: DISEC 2

Topic: The Question of the Mexican Drugs War

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Summary

Drug trafficking has plagued Mexico for many decades, but the violent and ruthless cartels the country is facing today only emerged around the 90s. The three main cartels were Sinaloa, Juarez and Gulf. Crime rates peaked and the cartels were getting more powerful and holding a grip on the country. On the 1st of December 2006, to stop the escalating cartel warfare, Mexican president Felipe Calderon launched a military operation aiming to combat cartels and recover security at the U.S – Mexican border and Mexico's neighbours in central America. The offensive however backfired on the Mexican government and the crime rates exploded as well as a significant increase in drug violence, torture and deaths. During Felipe Calderon's six-year siege from 2006 to 2012 the statistics on the deaths from the Drugs War was estimated at over 60 000 and 20 000 disappearances. Moreover, the drugs war has been accused of violating human rights as police forces continue to torture prisoners in the aim to extract information which could lead them to dismantling the cartels which causes a loss of support from the public on the Drugs War.

Definition of Key Terms

Drug cartel – A criminal organisation which consists of an association of suppliers and/or manufacturers which purpose is to eliminate competition and gain more profit.

Background Information

It is hard to know exactly how much money cartels gain from drug trafficking but government research have estimated in 2006 the amount to range from \$6 billion to \$29 billion. While drug cartels profit, violence and crime rates escalate alarmingly along with drug related crimes and deaths and fatal overdoses. After president Calderon's offensive launch, drug violence has significantly increased but to some extent the war on drugs has proven to be effective.

In 2014, the drug lord Joaquin Guzman 'El Chapo' is arrested. That same year, three other major cartel leaders are fatally shot during an attempted arrest by the Mexican police and Hector Beltran Leyva, head of the Beltran Leyva Cartel is arrested. Helped by the U.S forces, the Mexican police made multiple arrests and captured several powerful drug cartel leaders.

However, one of the reasons why the Mexican Drugs War is so controversial is because it severely breaches human rights on many occasions. The Mexican government is capable of going to many lengths in order to captures major drug dealers and dismantle cartels such as resorting to torture and murder in order to obtain information. This is in violation of the human rights act of 1998 as well as the united nation's 'Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatments or Punishments' adopted in 1984.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

The United States of America

A CRS report for congress has stated that 'Mexico is the main supplier of marijuana, major supplier of methamphetamine to the United States and that over 90% of cocaine on U.S grounds transited from Mexico'. Many U.S citizens at the border are being kidnapped and suffer from cartel violence as well. The United States offered military and financial support to the Mexican government in order to combat drug trafficking and related crimes. In December 2008, an LOA (letter of agreement) was signed for the 'Merida initiative'. Through this initiative a programme to assist Mexico would be elaborated and increase security at borders and reduce airport trafficking. This initiative is referred to as the four pillars which each have strategic objectives and these objectives 'strengthen both societies in the fight against organized crime and violence.

Mexico

Like Mexico, Columbia used to be a fragile and Cartel-ridden state before becoming an ally to the United States and a great economic partner after the launch of 'plan Columbia'. The U.S offered military help and training for the Columbian army as well as arms.

Australia

The Australian Senior Liaison Office has stepped up to help combat drug cartels and aid law enforcement in Mexico. In October 2018 Conrad Jensen (an SLO) led the international liaison office in

Mexico to 'enhance law enforcement cooperation and intelligence sharing between Australia and Mexico. The Australian government and federal police's support is mostly aimed at fighting the import of cocaine and methamphetamine from Mexico to Australia.

Canada

Canada has an Anti-Crime Capacity Building Program (ACCBP) which gives support and aids states to respond to international criminal activity. This programme includes help to the Mexican government in combatting drug related crimes.

Mexican drug cartels

Sinaloa cartel – leading drug trafficking organisation in Mexico

Gulf cartel – now based in Matamoros and split into smaller competing gangs

Cartel Jalisco new generation (CJNG) – Formerly allied with the Sinaloa cartel but split in 2010, referred to as the most powerful cartel in Mexico and the fastest growing.

Other cartels such as 'los Zetas' or 'Guerreros Unidos' (GU) are detached former allies of major drug cartels Sinaloa and Gulf cartels.

Timeline of Events

More than 28,000 people have died in drug violence since Calderon launched his crackdown on cartels in late 2006. Following is a timeline of key events in the war on drugs in Mexico, a major transit point for narcotics smuggled into the United States.

2001 - Joaquin "Shorty" Guzman escapes from a Mexican prison in a laundry van. Mexico's most-wanted drug lord, he builds a coalition of drug gangs from the western state of Sinaloa and vows to take control of Mexico's vast drug trade.

2002 - Police weaken the Tijuana cartel by killing drug boss Ramon Arellano Felix and arresting one of his brothers.

2003 - Mexican soldiers capture Osiel Cardenas, leader of the Gulf cartel based in eastern Mexico, after a shootout between troops and gunmen in the border city of Matamoros.

2004 - Trying to take advantage of Cardenas' arrest, Guzman sends well-armed enforcers to border cities south of Texas to take over Gulf cartel smuggling routes. Heavy fighting breaks out before Guzman's fighters are eventually repelled.

2005 - Guzman seeks control of the border city of Tijuana and trafficking routes into California. Violence escalates across Mexico and about 1,500 people are killed over the year.

2006 - Killings spread to the resort of Acapulco, the industrial city of Monterrey and to Michoacan in western Mexico, the home state of Felipe Calderon. After taking over as president on December 1, Calderon immediately sends out troops and federal police to stem the violence. Drug gang killings rise to 2,300 and beheadings, torture and other atrocities increase.

2007 - Calderon extradites Gulf cartel leader Cardenas to the United States and makes a historic 23-tonne cocaine seizure. U.S. President George W. Bush pledges \$1.4 billion (905,490 million pounds) in drug-fighting gear and training for Mexico and Central America. Violence escalates and more than 3,000 people are killed over the course of the year.

2008 - Guzman's hitmen take on the Juarez cartel in the northern border city of Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas, which quickly becomes the drug war's bloodiest flashpoint. Drug violence kills around 6,300 people across Mexico over the year.

2009 - Calderon sends 10,000 more troops to Ciudad Juarez but the killings continue. Violence spills over the border into Arizona. U.S. President Barack Obama visits Mexico and vows to clamp down on smuggled guns but the annual drug war death toll soars above 7,000.

In December, an elite navy squad tracks down and kills drug lord Arturo Beltran Leyva, head of the cartel of the same name and one of Mexico's most-wanted traffickers. Six bodyguards also die in the raid on a luxury apartment in the city of Cuernavaca near the capital.

2010 - In January police capture drug kingpin Teodoro "El Teo" Garcia Simental, known for having rivals tortured, killed and then dissolved in acid.

But the cartels grow more brazen, killing three people linked to the U.S. consulate in Ciudad Juarez, murdering a gubernatorial election candidate in the increasingly lawless northeastern state of Tamaulipas and setting off car bombs. Mass killings at drug rehabilitation centres and parties become common and mayors and local officials are assassinated.

In late July, Ignacio “Nacho” Coronel, No. 3 in Guzman’s Sinaloa cartel, dies as soldiers try to arrest him near Guadalajara.

On August 30, in Calderon’s second coup of the year, authorities capture Edgar “La Barbie” Valdez, the U.S.-born trafficker who was fighting to lead the Beltran Leyva gang based in central Mexico. Valdez was said to put up little resistance when he was captured in the State of Mexico.

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

The three major international drug control treaties are mutually supportive and complementary. An important purpose of the first two treaties is to codify internationally applicable control measures in order to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes, and to prevent their diversion into illicit channels. They also include general provisions on trafficking and drug abuse.

Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961

This Convention aims to combat drug abuse by coordinated international action. There are two forms of intervention and control that work together. First, it seeks to limit the possession, use, trade in, distribution, import, export, manufacture and production of drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes. Second, it combats drug trafficking through international cooperation to deter and discourage drug traffickers.

Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971

The Convention establishes an international control system for psychotropic substances. It responded to the diversification and expansion of the spectrum of drugs of abuse and introduced controls over a number of synthetic drugs according to their abuse potential on the one hand and their therapeutic value on the other.

United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988

This Convention provides comprehensive measures against drug trafficking, including provisions against money laundering and the diversion of precursor chemicals. It provides for international cooperation through, for example, extradition of drug traffickers, controlled deliveries and transfer of proceedings.

CND Res.45/3: Efforts to reduce the impact of illicit drug demand on organized crime.

This resolution recommends that States intensify their efforts, including initiatives and activities aimed at reducing illicit drug demand, and to increase the number of programmes and the resources for such

programmes, without prejudicing current activities and strategies aimed at prohibiting and reducing illicit drug supply and, in general, combating the diverse manifestations of the world drug problem.

World Drug Report 2022

Consisting of five separate booklets, the World Drug Report 2022 provides an in-depth analysis of global drug markets and examines the nexus between drugs and the environment within the bigger picture of the Sustainable Development Goals, climate change and environmental sustainability.

The World Drug Report 2022 is aimed not only at fostering greater international cooperation to counter the impact of the world drug problem on health, governance and security, but also, with its special insights, at assisting Member States in anticipating and addressing threats from drug markets and mitigating their consequences.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The Mexican government has implemented a series of different policies to try to eradicate the pervasive power of cartels, and the violence accompanying them. However, an effective policy will require eliminating the source of cartels' power, rather than just undermining it.

Drug violence seems to dominate any dialogue on Mexican relations. The issue is pervasive, not just in international relations, but also the internal politics and everyday lives of Mexicans. Since Mexico's democratisation in 2000, government policy has attempted to address the problem. In 2006, then-President Felipe Calderón ordered soldiers to Michoacán state to end drug violence in the region. But this combatant approach has been unsuccessful in eliminating violence. Instead, cartels have responded with equal aggression, increasing public killings and torture. The "kingpin" strategy of removing cartel leaders has caused power struggles within the cartels that create further conflict.

Possible Solutions

Five pathways to ending the drug war recommended by the Global Commission on Drug Policy:

1. Putting health and community safety first requires a fundamental reorientation of policy priorities and resources, from failed punitive enforcement to proven health and social interventions.
2. Ensure equitable access to essential medicines, in particular opiate-based medications for pain.
3. Stop criminalizing people for drug use and possession -- and stop imposing "compulsory treatment" on people whose only offense is drug use or possession.

4. Focus on reducing the power of criminal organizations as well as the violence and insecurity that result from their competition with both one another and the state.

5. Allow and encourage diverse experiments in legally regulating markets for currently illicit drugs, beginning with but not limited to cannabis, the coca leaf and certain novel psychoactive substances.

The leadership of the U.N. Secretary-General is essential to ensure that all relevant U.N. agencies -- not just those focused on law enforcement but also health, security, human rights and development -- engage fully in a "One-U.N." assessment of global drug control strategies. The U.N. Secretariat should urgently facilitate open discussion, including new ideas and recommendations that are grounded in scientific evidence, public health principles, human rights and development.

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