

[GA6]

Developing protocols against the Mexican drug war while
retaining international law.



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Introducing Your Chairs

Hello, my name is Siyanda Msimango and I'm 18 years old. I will be the deputy chair of GA6 this year's FAMUN conference. I am quite excited to meet all of you in February.

I'm from a school in the Netherlands, in Laren, which is down South East from Utrecht. This is my last year in school and my last MUN conference, my fourth.

I hope that this research report assists you and invites plenty of arguments and debate.

An Introduction To The Topic

The Mexican Drug War is an ongoing conflict involving drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), government forces and various factions within Mexico. It began on December 11, 2006¹, when the Mexican Government, under President Felipe Calderón, intensified efforts to combat drug cartels.

The United States and Mexico share a border that along with a myriad of other issues, allowing the proliferation and expansion of the drug issue stemming from within Mexico.

This is an issue revolving around the control, production, and distribution of illegal narcotics. Powerful and organized drug cartels, wielding substantial influence, such as 'Sinaloa Cartel' and 'CJNG' have engaged in conflict for dominance over lucrative drug routes and territories in and around the Americas. This quest for control has, unfortunately, led to rampant violence, characterized by assassinations, kidnappings, and turf wars.

Definition of Key Terms


1. Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs):

Powerful and organized criminal groups control the production, transportation, and distribution of illegal drugs, primarily cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin. Drug cartels take make around.

1. Illicit Drugs/Narcotics/Opioids:

These terms refer to substances that are illegal to product, possess or distribute under certain laws and regulations.

- a. **Illicit Drugs:** This term broadly refers to substances that are prohibited by the law, including but not limited to narcotics, stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens, and other controlled substances. The production, sale, or use of illicit Drugs are restricted or banned due to their potential or overall, for abuse, dependence, and societal harm.
- b. **Narcotics:** Traditionally, narcotics specifically refer to opium-derived drugs or synthetic derivatives that have pain-relieving properties and a high potential for addiction or dependence. This includes substances like heroin, morphine, and opium.



c. **Opioids:** This term refers to a class of drugs that includes natural, synthetic, or semi-synthetic substances that interact with opioid receptors in the body, primarily used for pain relief. Opioids include both legal medications (like oxycodone, hydrocodone, and fentanyl) when prescribed by a doctor and illicit substances like heroin. They are known for their potential for addiction and overdose.


2. Money Laundering: This refers to the process of disguising the origins of copious amounts of money obtained through illegal means and making them to appear as though it appears from a legitimate source.

A General Overview of the Issue

Drug trafficking is a global problem that has persisted across generations and nations. Its fundamental activity is a profitable, covert industry run by strong criminal networks that manage the importation, exportation, and manufacturing of drugs. This trade undermines societal stability and poses serious health hazards globally by feeding a cycle of crime, corruption, and violence. To tackle this complex web of unlawful operations, governments—most notably the United States—have launched a protracted "War on Drugs," utilizing legislation, law enforcement tactics, and international cooperation.

The fight on drugs faces a variety of challenges despite concerted efforts. Racial imbalances within the criminal justice system are an issue, and mass incarcerations worsen societal rifts, particularly hurting marginalized populations, since the war on drugs has led to an increased effort to incarcerate those who are found with any number of drugs. Substance misuse and addiction continue to be significant public health concerns, which has led to a growing demand for a more balanced approach that integrates law enforcement with rehabilitation and harm reduction methods. Governments and law enforcement organizations around the world are constantly faced with challenges due to the drug trade's dynamic character, which is driven by technical improvements and its capacity to evade enforcement efforts.

A controversy about the effectiveness of current methods develops in the middle of this intricacy. As calls for more sophisticated approaches that tackle socioeconomic causes and the potential legalization of drugs gain popularity, old



policies are being reexamined to lessen the dominance of the illegal market. Drug trafficking and the war on drugs that goes along with it are still pressing worldwide issues that require complex solutions and a careful balancing act between law enforcement, public health, and socioeconomic factors.

Historical Background

The History of the Mexican Drug War is closely tied to the rise and proliferation of drugs in and around Mexico and the United States. Below is a brief history and context surrounding the Mexican Drug War.

1950s-1960s:

- **Increased Drug Use:** Recreational drug use rises in the United States.
- **Government Initiatives:** The Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs is established. Treatment efforts, like providing methadone to heroin addicts, begin.

1970s:

- **War on Drugs:** President Richard Nixon coins the term "War on Drugs," beginning an extensive anti-drug effort and resistance.
- **International Impact:** United States & Mexican collaboration involves military intervention to suppress guerrilla movements and combat drug trafficking.
- **DEA Establishment:** The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) is created to combat drug-related crimes.

1980s – 1990s:

- **Rise of Cartels:** Emergence of powerful drug cartels in Colombia, notably the Medellin Cartel, leading to violence and smuggling operations.
- **Crack Epidemic:** Crack, a potent form of cocaine, becomes a significant

issue in the United States.

- **Enforcement and Legislation:** Mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses are introduced. The U.S. ramps up efforts against drug trafficking with law enforcement actions and extraditions.
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2000s – 2010s:

- Beginning in 2006, The then newly elected President of Mexico, Felipe Calderón launches “Operativo Conjunto Michoacán” - Operation Michoacán, sending an army of 6,500~ soldiers and federal officers battle the ongoing drug crisis in the country.
- In 2015 President Barak Obama back the Mexican government even as complaints arise from Human Rights Groups to suspend military aid.
- Tragic incidents, such as the killing of Juan Francisco Sicilia Ortega, son of renowned poet Javier Sicilia, galvanized national outrage, igniting movements demanding an end to the War on Drugs.

Overall, in between 2010 and 2015, Mexico faced escalating cartel violence and grim atrocities. The Allende Massacre saw around three hundred disappearances amid media silence, reflecting widespread fear. The emergence of the Knights Templar Cartel, preaching ethics but engaging in violence, highlighted the contradictions within criminal groups. Tragic events, like Juan Francisco Sicilia Ortega's murder and the discovery of mass graves, revealed the brutal impact of cartel warfare. Accusations of government collusion in cases like Iguala's student disappearances exposed deep-rooted corruption, drawing global condemnation.



Major Parties Involved

Mexico:

Through its national army, police force and National Guard

The United States of America:

Through the Mérida Initiative, which is a partnership between the United States and Mexico to with the aim to combat the threat of drug trafficking.

Columbia:

Mexican DTOs;

1. Sinaloa Cartel

Considered by the United States to be the most powerful and prolific, drug cartel, this cartel specializes in drug trafficking and money laundering. It was established in Mexico during the late 1980s²

2. CJNG

The Jalisco New Generation Cartel (Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación) (CJNG) is a Mexican Cartel established in 2009. The Cartel is known for its extreme and aggressive violence and is a result of the divisions and disagreements with other cartels.

² (InSight Crime, 2021)

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

1. Security Sector Enhancement (2008 - Present): The Mexican government, in collaboration with the United States, implemented a comprehensive security enhancement plan, including police capacity-building courses for law enforcement. Over the years, this initiative trained thousands of personnel in crime investigation, intelligence, forensics, and specialized anti-crime units, aiming to strengthen law enforcement capabilities against cartels.

2. Anti-Corruption Programs (2009 - Present): Establishment of anti-corruption initiatives involved the vetting of police personnel and the creation of trained internal affairs units. However, despite these efforts, corruption remains a persistent issue, with over 90% of drug crimes in Mexico going unpunished due to systemic corruption within law enforcement and political leadership.

3. Border Security Measures (2012 - Present): Support for the Mexican government's border security was extended through the delivery of specialized equipment and training to enhance the detection of illicit goods at internal checkpoints and ports of entry. This effort included the provision of over four hundred trained canines to federal agencies for narcotics, weapons, and currency detection.

4. Cross-Border Information Sharing (2015 - Present): A secure telecommunications system was established between ten U.S. and Mexican border sister cities to enable public security forces on both sides to exchange information on active criminal investigations. This initiative aimed to improve coordination and intelligence sharing to combat transnational criminal activities.

5. Prison Reforms and Accreditation (2017 - Present): Support for Mexican prisons aimed at achieving independent accreditation from the American Correctional Association (ACA). To date, 42 Mexican facilities have received accreditation, signaling efforts to improve corrections systems and address issues within the criminal justice system.

6. Drug Treatment Courts Expansion (2019 - Present): Expansion of specialized Drug Treatment Courts across five Mexican states focused on treating addiction as a public health issue rather than a criminal one. Despite the establishment of these courts, challenges persist in providing alternatives to incarceration for drug abusers and addressing addiction's root causes.

Possible Solutions For The Issue

Reevaluate drug policies, shifting focus from criminalization to regulation and harm reduction. Decriminalization or legalization of certain substances could reduce cartel influence. According to the Australian Outlook, The method of removing Cartel leaders creates further conflict and violence and does little to eliminate violence.

There is a need to bolster law enforcement and judicial systems to combat corruption. Mexico's current method lowers recruitment rates that would help in replacing the amount corrupt officers in the force.

Through government & international assistance the Mexican government can afford to pay officers a higher wage.

There are various comprehensive strategies that can be employed to address the influence of drug cartels in Mexico. These include tackling underlying social issues like poverty and lack of opportunities through education, job creation, and community development initiatives.

Additionally, fostering international cooperation among nations to combat cross-border trafficking, share intelligence, and counter money laundering is vital. Prioritizing human rights protections, especially for vulnerable groups affected by violence, and ensuring justice for victims and their families are crucial aspects. Treating drug abuse as a public health concern by providing addiction treatment, mental health support, and harm reduction programs is essential.

Empowering local communities to resist cartel influence through community policing, civic engagement, and grassroots movements promoting peace is imperative. Encouraging media freedom and transparency to report on cartel activities is also essential in raising public awareness and mobilizing against criminal activities.

Timeline Of Key Events

- **December 11, 2006:** Mexican President Calderon deploys soldiers, marines and police officers to Michoacán to battle drug traffickers, marking the beginning of the drug war. There have been more than 360, 000 homicides since the this declaration.³
- **2006-2007:** The U.S. and Mexico Jointly announce the Merida Initiative, a multi-year agreement where the United States government will provide assistance to Mexico in the hopes to curb, drug trafficking and organised crime.⁴ Initial clashes between government forces and drug cartels; significant arrests of cartel leaders and high-ranking figures.
- **2008:** Increase in violence with high-profile killings, grenades thrown into crowds, and attacks on law enforcement officials. The mexican government government launches the Operation Nuevo León-Tamaulipas to combat the Gulf and Zetas Cartels.³
- **2009:** Escalation of conflict, including more deaths and arrests of cartel leaders. Shootouts between the Mexican Government and Cartel members led to the deaths of more thanm 12 people. ³
- **2010 - 2011:** Continued arrests, including significant cartel leaders, and discovery of mass graves, showcasing the brutality of the conflict. Arrests of key cartel figures, attacks on US officials, and increased efforts to stem the flow of weapons from the U.S. to Mexico. Around 100,000 people protest the War on Drugs and its negative effects on civilians.
- **2012 - 2014:** Calderon's term ends; continued arrests and captures of high-ranking cartel leaders. Capture of "El Chapo" Guzman, a major victory in the fight against drug trafficking.
- **2015-2016:** Guzman escapes and is rearrested; continued arrests and deaths of cartel leaders. The considerationof liberalising cannabis is discussed in the U.S.
- **2017-2022:** Ongoing arrests, extraditions, and confrontations between law enforcement and cartel members, showcasing the persistent nature of the drug war.

³ *Mexico's Long War: Drugs, Crime, and the Cartels*, 2019

⁴ *Research Guides: Mexico's Mass Disappearances and the Drug War (Ayotzinapa: The Missing 43 Students): Drug War Timeline 1930-2015*, 2015

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