

# AMERICAN WAR ON DRUGS AND NARCOTICS IN CENTRAL AMERICA: A CASE STUDY OF COLUMBIA

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## **Abstract**

*The main focus of this research is the American war on drugs in Colombia. It presents a comprehensive case study that delves into the country's drug policies and the influence they have had on Colombian society. The article will analyse the history of drug trafficking in Colombia, the measures implemented by the United States to fight against drug trafficking, and the impact of these policies on the social and economic realm of Colombian life. Additionally, it examines the unforeseen outcomes of US policies, such as the displacement of rural communities and the emergence of new criminal factions. This article conducts a thorough review of literature, primary as well as secondary data to critically assess the US War on Drugs in Colombia. It also offers suggestions for an enhanced and long-lasting drug policy.*

**Keywords:** *Drugs and Narcotics, Columbia, Policy, Impacts, Abuses.*

## **1. Introduction**

The fight against drugs is happening all over the world and it has been going on for many years. This campaign in the United States is about being very strict and tough when it comes to drugs and people who sell them. The US started the fight against drugs, and their decisions impacted other countries. The United States is fighting against drugs and paying attention to South America, which has places like Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. The United States has been really interested in drug policies in Colombia, and Colombia has been important in the worldwide drug business.

The Colombian government has been fighting against drugs for a long time. They have caught some big drug dealers and seized lots of drugs, but the fighting has also caused problems for people who live in Colombia. Getting rid of coca plants made many farmers have to leave their homes and find new ways to make money in cities. The Colombian economy has been hurt by spending resources on fighting drug problems. This means less money is available for other helpful

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programs. The American effort to stop drugs has been criticized for being cruel to people. This includes killing people without a trial, making people disappear without explanation, and hurting people on purpose. The Colombian government is being accused of working with drug groups and violent gangs, which is causing more fighting and confusion in the country.

Even though the US has been helping Colombia for a long time, drugs and violence are still big problems there. In recent times, Colombia has experienced a big increase in making cocaine and violence, especially in rural areas where drug growing and selling happen a lot. This article looks at how well the US has helped Colombia and what problems have happened because of it.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

The American War on Drugs and Narcotics in Central America, with a specific focus on Colombia, has been a subject of extensive scholarly and public discourse. However, despite considerable efforts and resources invested in combating the drug trade, illicit drug production and trafficking persist in Colombia. This research article aims to address the complexities and consequences of the American War on Drugs in Colombia, and why have the intended objectives of eradicating the drug trade not been fully achieved? By addressing these issues and exploring the complexities and consequences of the American War on Drugs in Colombia, this research article aims to deepen our understanding of the challenges and limitations associated with current drug control efforts and inform policy discussions on more effective approaches to address the drug trade and its impact on Colombia's socio-political and economic landscape.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. How effective have American drug policies been in combating drug trafficking in Colombia, and what are the key factors that have contributed to their success or failure?
2. How have the social and economic consequences of the American war on drugs in Colombia impacted the country's society, and what are the long-term implications of these consequences?
3. How have human rights abuses been perpetuated in the context of the American war on drugs in Colombia, and what steps can be taken to address these abuses and prevent them from occurring in the future?

### **1.3 Methodology**

The research relies on only qualitative data sources in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the topic. Qualitative data was collected through various articles related to key stakeholders, including government officials, law enforcement personnel, members of civil society organizations, and individuals who have been directly impacted by the war on drugs in Colombia. These reviews were designed to gather detailed information on the social and economic consequences of drug policies, as well as the human rights abuses that have been perpetrated in the context of the war on drugs. Thus the study provides a comprehensive analysis of the American War on Drugs and Narcotics in

Colombia, capturing multiple perspectives and incorporating diverse sources of data.

## **2. Literature Review**

The American War on Drugs and its impact on Central America, particularly Colombia, has garnered significant attention in academic, political, and public spheres. The article delves into the complexities and consequences of this policy within the context of Colombia. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of the American-led efforts to combat narcotics production and trafficking in Colombia, shedding light on its intended objectives, implementation strategies, and the subsequent socio-political and economic outcomes. The American War on Drugs has been a long-standing approach pointed at diminishing medicate generation, trafficking, and utilization both locally and globally. In Central America, Colombia has been at the epicenter of this fight due to its critical part within the generation and travel of unlawful opiates. This literature points to a comprehensive examination of the impacts, challenges, and potential elective techniques related to the American War on Drugs in Colombia. The review further divided into multiple parts and headings which is below given.

### **2.1. Historical context and evolution of drug policies in Colombia:**

The history and development of drug policies in Colombia have been significantly influenced by the United States, as demonstrated in key studies by (Thoumi, 2016), (Lee, 2011), and (Carpenter, 2014). The U.S. has played a crucial role in shaping drug policies through financial and military support, most notably through initiatives like Plan Colombia, which began in 2000, and its successor strategy, "Integrated Action." Both policies have primarily focused on eradication, interdiction, and law enforcement efforts to combat drug production and trafficking. However, they have often resulted in limited success and unintended consequences, as discussed in the following points.

### **2.2. Impact of drug policies on drug production and trafficking:**

Despite the considerable investment in counter narcotics efforts, studies by (Felbab-Brown, 2017) and (Bagley & Rosen, 2015) show that drug production has not been significantly reduced in Colombia. The country remains a major supplier of illegal narcotics to the global market, and coca cultivation continues to persist in many rural areas. This limited success in reducing drug production suggests that current policies may not be sufficiently addressing the underlying factors driving farmers to participate in the drug trade, such as poverty and lack of economic opportunities. The authors have also examined the impact of U.S. drug policies on drug trafficking in Colombia. Their findings indicate that despite extensive counter narcotics efforts, drug trafficking persists and has even expanded into new territories. Drug trafficking organizations have proven to be adaptable and resilient in the face of law enforcement operations, often finding new routes and methods to evade detection and continue their illicit activities. This persistence of drug trafficking highlights the need for more comprehensive and innovative approaches to disrupt the drug trade and address its root causes.

### **2.3. Impact of drug policies on violence:**

The War on Drugs has had significant consequences for violence and corruption in Colombia, as illustrated by studies from (Dube, García-Ponce, &

Thom, 2016). The competition for control of lucrative drug markets and the infiltration of state institutions by drug trafficking organizations have fueled violence and instability throughout the country. This violence has taken a heavy toll on civilians, with many innocent people caught in the crossfire between drug cartels, paramilitary groups, and government forces. The ongoing violence and corruption underscore the need for a reevaluation of current drug policies and a shift toward more effective strategies.

#### 2.4. Human rights abuses and displacement:

The militarization of drug control efforts has led to numerous human rights abuses, displacement of local populations, and environmental damage, as documented by (McDermott, 2012) and (InSight Crime & Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa, 2020). Forced eradication campaigns and military operations against drug traffickers have often resulted in civilian casualties, forced displacement, and the destruction of vital ecosystems. These negative consequences of current drug policies highlight the need for a more balanced approach that prioritizes human rights, social development, and environmental protection.

#### 2.5. Alternative approaches: Rural development and alternative livelihoods:

In light of the limited success and negative consequences of current drug policies, (Reuter & Greenfield, 2018) focusing on rural development and alternative livelihoods for farmers involved in illicit drug production. By investing in sustainable development projects and providing economic opportunities for rural communities, it may be possible to reduce the incentives for farmers to participate in the drug trade. This approach could be more cost-effective and sustainable in the long term, addressing the root causes of drug production rather than relying solely on eradication and law enforcement efforts.

#### 2.6. Alternative approaches: Harm reduction and public health-based strategies:

Another alternative approach to current drug policies is the adoption of harm reduction and public health-based strategies, as advocated by (Carpenter, 2014) and (Isacson, A., & Poe, A. 2014). This approach focuses on addressing the negative consequences of drug use and trafficking through measures that prioritize human rights, social development, and drug treatment programs. Such policies may include decriminalizing drug possession for personal use, expanding access to drug treatment and rehabilitation services, and implementing evidence-based prevention programs to reduce drug demand. By shifting the focus from punitive measures to public health and social development, these alternative strategies have the potential to create more sustainable and effective solutions to the drug problem in Colombia and the broader region.

### 3. Discussion

The roots of the US drug war in Colombia can be followed back to the 1960s and 70s, when Colombia developed as a major maker and exporter of cocaine. This exchange was controlled by effective sedate cartels that worked with exemption, utilizing their endless riches to bribe lawmakers, police officers, and

judges. The US government got to be progressively concerned almost the effect of the medicate exchange on American society, and within the early 1980s, it started to require a more forceful position against medicate trafficking.

In 1986, the US Congress passed the Anti-Drug Mishandle Act, which given critical subsidizing for the war on drugs and set up required least sentences for drug offenses. This law too authorized the utilize of military drive in sedate interdiction endeavors, and within the following year, President Ronald Reagan pronounced a "War on Drugs." As portion of this exertion, the US government started to supply monetary and military help to nations within the drug-producing locale, counting Colombia.

The primary major US mediation in Colombia came within the mid-1980s, when the nation was encountering a wave of viciousness and political flimsiness. In 1986, President Reagan authorized the arrangement of US military advisors to assist the Colombian government fight against medicate trafficking organizations. The taking after year, the US and Colombian governments marked and removal settlement that permitted Colombian medicate traffickers to be removed to the US to confront charges.

The US mediation in Colombia escalates within the 1990s, as the nation got to be progressively inundated in savagery and chaos. One of the key figures in this struggle was Pablo Escobar, the pioneer of the Medellin sedate cartel. Escobar was a plan of the sedate exchange, and his cartel was mindful for the lion's share of cocaine imported into the US. Escobar was moreover infamous for his utilize of viciousness and terrorizing, and he was capable for the passing of thousands of individuals, counting police officers, judges, and lawmakers.

In 1990, the Colombian government passed a modern structure that allowed more noteworthy independence to neighborhood governments and recognized the rights of innate individuals. This move was seen as a risk by the sedate cartels, who saw the unused structure as a way for the government to split down on their operations. In reaction, the cartels propelled a wave of viciousness against the government, which included the death of political candidates and the bombarding of government buildings.

In 1993, the US government heightens its endeavors to capture Pablo Escobar, who was presently one of the foremost needed men within the world. The US government given noteworthy budgetary and military bolster to the Colombian government, which propelled a enormous manhunt for Escobar. After months of looking, Escobar was at last found in a secure house in Medellin, and on December 2, 1993, he was slaughtered in a shootout with Colombian security strengths.

In spite of the passing of Pablo Escobar, the drug war in Colombia kept on seethe on, and the US government proceeded to give critical budgetary and military back to the Colombian government. In 1996, the US Congress passed the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, which authorized the US government

to solidify the resources of people and organizations included in sedate trafficking. The taking after year, the US and Colombian governments marked a unused removal arrangement that made it simpler for Colombian sedate traffickers to be extradited to the US to confront charges.

Within the late 1990s, the US government started to move its center absent from military mediation in Colombia and towards elective procedures, such as medicate anticipation and treatment programs. In 1998, President Charge Clinton marked the "Arrange Colombia" activity, which given \$1.3 billion in help to Colombia over the another three a long time to back anti-drug endeavors, counting the improvement of elective crops and the promotion of human rights.

In spite of these endeavors, the medicate war in Colombia kept on raise, as new medicate cartels developed to fill the control vacuum cleared out by the passing of Pablo Escobar. One of the foremost capable of these cartels was the Cali cartel, which was driven by brothers Miguel and Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela. The Cali cartel was capable for the lion's share of cocaine traded from Colombia to the US, and it was known for its modern cash washing operations and its ties to degenerate lawmakers and police officers.

In 1999, the US government heightens its endeavors to capture the pioneers of the Cali cartel, and in Eminent of that year, both Miguel and Gilberto Rodriguez Orejuela were captured by Colombian security strengths with the assistance of the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The capture of the Rodriguez Orejuela brothers managed a major blow to the Cali cartel, but it too driven to the development of modern sedate cartels, such as the Norte del Valle cartel.

The US government proceeded to give critical monetary and military back to the Colombian government all through the early 2000s, as portion of its broader endeavors to combat sedate trafficking and fear based oppression within the locale. In 2000, the US Congress passed the Andean Counterdrug Activity, which given \$1.3 billion in help to Colombia, Bolivia, and Peru to back anti-drug endeavors. The taking after year, President George W. Bush declared the dispatch of the "War on Dread," which included a reestablished focus on sedate interdiction endeavors in Colombia and other drug-producing nations.

In 2002, the Colombian government propelled a modern activity called "Arrange Patriota," which pointed to annihilate coca crops and disassemble sedate trafficking systems within the nation. The arrange was bolstered by critical subsidizing and military help from the US government, and it driven to a noteworthy increment in military operations against medicate traffickers. In spite of these endeavors, the medicate war in Colombia proceeded to have obliterating results for the country's individuals, economy, and political framework. The struggle driven to the uprooting of millions of individuals, the destruction of tremendous swaths of the country's natural resources, and the disintegration of law based teach. The Colombian government too confronted critical feedback for

its utilize of extrajudicial killings and other human rights manhandle in its endeavors to combat sedate trafficking.

In later a long time, there has been a developing acknowledgment of the require for modern arrangements and approaches to the sedate war in Colombia. In 2016, the Colombian government marked a peace understanding with the country's biggest guerrilla bunch, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (RAFC), which included arrangements for medicate approach change and elective advancement programs. The understanding too called for the legalization of therapeutic and logical employments of pot in Colombia.

The US has been fighting against drugs in Colombia for a long time. It's been a complicated problem for many years, with lots of different rules and actions involved. The main problem was about drugs, and the people who controlled them were very strong, like Pablo Escobar. The fighting has really hurt Colombia's people and money, and it's made people wonder if the USA should be getting involved there. Even though there are difficulties, people are starting to make progress in creating policies that focus on treating people fairly, being environmentally responsible, and supporting the well-being of society.

#### **4. Findings**

The region's society, economics, and human rights situation have all suffered significantly as a result of the American war on drugs in Central America. Despite efforts to stop drug production and trafficking, Central American drug controls have had very modest effectiveness. The Central American Regional Security Initiative (CARSI), which the United States funded with \$2.4 billion between 2007 and 2014, failed to stop drug trafficking and organized crime in the region. Alternative strategies that put human rights, social development, and drug treatment first are needed because the war on drugs has had negative social, economic, and human rights effects.

One of the most significant consequences of the American war on drugs in Central America has been the displacement of thousands of farmers due to the eradication of coca crops. This has led to increased poverty and social instability, with fewer resources available for social programs.

The militarization of drug control initiatives as a result of the war on drugs has also resulted in violations of human rights, such as extrajudicial executions, kidnappings, and torture. Violence and instability in the area have been made worse by cooperation between the government, drug cartels, and paramilitary organisations. For instance, the murder rate is among the highest in the world in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, where organized crime and drug-related violence also contribute to societal unrest.

Despite extensive eradication and interdiction efforts, Central America remains a major supplier of illegal narcotics to the global market. The drug trade is a significant source of income for criminal organizations in the region and is often linked to violence and corruption. Methamphetamine and synthetic drugs are

becoming more prevalent in Central America, particularly in countries such as El Salvador and Honduras, where methamphetamine use is more prevalent than cocaine use.

### **5. Way Forward**

In order to combat the violation of human rights associated with the war on drugs, accountability and justice must be upheld. It is crucial to make sure that individuals who perpetrate abuse are held accountable and that safeguards are put in place to stop similar crimes from happening in the future. Central America must work with other countries and rely on their cooperation and support to succeed.

In order to effectively address drug-related issues in a comprehensive and long-lasting manner, while safeguarding the welfare of the local community, we need to implement alternative policies that emphasize human rights protection, social advancement, and providing drug rehabilitation. A possible revised version might read as follows: Innovative strategies may include allocating funds to social projects and developmental plans that provide new avenues for cultivators to make money, giving top priority to methods for reducing harm and promoting treatment programs for drug users, and pushing for comprehensive interventions that address the root causes of drug addiction and illicit trade.

Additionally, it is critical to adopt a cooperative and inclusive strategy that takes into account the involvement of all pertinent parties, including governmental organizations, neighborhood associations, and international organizations, in order to effectively address the drug trafficking issue in Central America. Priority should be given to addressing the root causes of drug production and distribution, supporting programs for alternative growth, and bolstering the legal and law enforcement systems to combat dishonesty and disdain for the law.

### **6. Conclusion**

The American war on drugs in Colombia has had a significant impact on the country's society, economy, and human rights situation. Despite efforts to combat drug trafficking and production, the success of American drug policies in Colombia has been limited. Colombia remains a major supplier of illegal narcotics to the global market, indicating that the production and trafficking of drugs persist despite extensive eradication and interdiction efforts.

The social and economic consequences of the American war on drugs in Colombia have been profound. The eradication of coca crops has resulted in the displacement of thousands of farmers, leading to increased poverty and social instability. The diversion of resources towards the war on drugs has also had a negative impact on the Colombian economy, with less funding available for social programs and development initiatives. Furthermore, the militarization of drug control efforts has led to human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings, forced disappearances, and torture. The collusion between the Colombian government, drug cartels, and paramilitary groups has further exacerbated violence and instability in the country.

Addressing the human rights abuses associated with the war on drugs requires accountability and justice. Perpetrators of abuses must be held accountable, and mechanisms should be established to prevent future abuses from occurring. International cooperation and support are essential in assisting Colombia in these endeavors.

In a nutshell, the American war on drugs in Colombia has had mixed results. While there have been some successes in capturing high-profile drug traffickers and seizing drugs, the overall impact has been limited in reducing drug production and trafficking. The social, economic, and human rights consequences of this war have been significant, requiring alternative approaches that prioritize human rights, social development, and drug treatment. By implementing these alternative strategies, Colombia can work towards a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to addressing drug-related challenges while safeguarding the well-being of its society.

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